April 8, 2021

California Citizens Redistricting Commission
721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via electronic transmission

Dear Commissioners,

We continue to greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness and thoroughness in developing the RFA for the third party to manage the selection and distribution of grants to community-based organizations (CBOs), as well as the overall plans to ensure local organizations receive funding to support their redistricting outreach efforts in the community.

The 23 undersigned organizations make up a diverse network across California united by a mission to strengthen the political empowerment of low-income communities, communities of color, and disability communities in the redistricting process. Our network includes base-building grassroots organizations, civil rights litigation and advocacy organizations, good government organizations, and voter education organizations.

We write to share our recommendations for criteria to include in your selection of grantees, as well as uplift key issues to consider in this process to ensure the hardest-to-reach communities in California will be effectively engaged throughout the redistricting process. Our hope is that these recommendations will also be integrated as part of the RFA so that potential applicants are fully knowledgeable of the kinds of criteria they will need to prioritize in the selection of grantees.

Recommendations to Select Grantees
In order to ensure that communities that face the greatest barriers to public participation in our democracy are effectively engaged and empowered to fully participate in the redistricting process, we recommend the following:

1) Prioritize CBOs that work directly with any of the following hard-to-reach communities:
   a) Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) underrepresented communities
   b) Communities with low technology/broadband access
   c) Communities most affected by environmental challenges
   d) Farmworkers
   e) Formerly incarcerated individuals
   f) Homeless population
   g) Immigrants and/or refugees
h) Individuals facing literacy challenges
i) Individuals with limited tech proficiency
j) LGBTQI, gender non-conforming, non-binary
k) Limited English Proficiency (LEPs) communities
l) Low-income communities
m) Parents, primarily of BIPOC and low-income communities
n) People with disabilities
o) Rural communities
p) Youth, especially BIPOC and low-income youth.

2) Ensure the grantee-selection process is inclusive of:
   a) Local organizations that may not be formally incorporated as 501c3 nonprofits, but are fiscally-sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Many of these organizations are trusted messengers well-positioned to engage directly with any of the foregoing communities.
   b) Small organizations with a low budget threshold.

3) Give additional consideration to CBOs that:
   a) Will also be engaging and mobilizing residents to participate in local redistricting processes.
   b) Are involved with a redistricting table or coalition effort in their region and/or statewide.

Additional Considerations
In order to ensure applicants, especially those that may be the most effective and trusted messenger for particular hard-to-reach communities, do not face additional barriers as part of the application process or as a future grantee, we like to uplift the following points for your consideration:

1) Ensure no organization is dismissed or rejected based on the appearance of their application. Many local groups may not have the staffing capacity or ability to produce a more “polished” application. This should not be taken as a reflection of their quality of work, expertise, and/or effectiveness to engage with their respective community.
2) Exclude a complicated matrix for reporting progress of their work.
3) Do not impose restrictions that would impair the ability of grantees to use funding to cover the full range of expenditures needed for effective redistricting activities, such as hiring, printing, materials, and similar expenditures.
4) To the extent feasible, develop a timeline to release funds to CBOs that allows time for capacity-building and implementation of outreach programs.
5) Establish administrative support to CBOs early on after the selection of grantees to ensure strong program development and regional alignment of established outreach goals for CBOs to deliver on.
We hope that these recommendations are helpful in your further deliberations and are integrated in the final RFA and application and selection process of grantees. For more information, please contact Alejandra Ponce de León with Advancement Project California and Rosalind Gold with NALEO Educational Fund.

Sincerely,

AAPIs for Civic Empowerment Education Fund
Advancement Project California
Alliance San Diego
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
California Black Census and Redistricting Hub
California Common Cause
California League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
California Native Vote Project
Central Coast Alliance United for Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Council on American-Islamic Relations - California (CAIR - CA)
Disability Rights California
Dolores Huerta Foundation
Equality California
Inland Empire United
League of Women Voters of California
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Mi Familia Vota Education Fund
National Association of Latino & Appointed Elected Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
Orange County Civic Engagement Table (OCCET)
PICO California
Power California