



2023 – 2024 SOLVE Southern Spark Grants

The Southern Leadership for Voter Engagement (SOLVE) Network is excited to announce a funding opportunity for Southern organizations and groups to increase civic participation and engagement in historically underrepresented communities across the region.

About SOLVE

The SOLVE Network is a multi-state collaborative of organizations dedicated to sharing strategies, resources, and support in the ongoing struggle to protect and expand voting rights. The mission of the SOLVE Network is to provide a space for Southern grassroots and Southern state-based organizations to address and rectify policies that have weakened the voting strength of communities. SOLVE accomplishes its mission through grassroots mobilization by providing data-driven communications, organizing, advocacy, legal, and legislative strategies and support, as well as funding. For more information, visit solvenetwork.org.

About the Program

The 2023-2024 SOLVE Southern Spark Grants are designed to provide support to community-based organizations in their efforts to fight for a participatory, responsive, inclusive, and expansive democracy. As we prepare for upcoming election cycles, these grants are intended to spark organizational capacity building related to civic education, engagement, and participation work around issues that are most pressing in your community.

The SOLVE Southern Spark Grants are one-year project support grants. Grant awards will be in the amount of \$5,000 or \$10,000 and will be determined by an organization's annual operating budget. We anticipate making 30-40 grant awards for this program. The SOLVE Leadership Council Re-grants Subcommittee will make funding decisions based on evaluations of the eligibility criteria and priorities below. Administrative support for the grant program is provided by Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ).

Eligibility

To be eligible for the 2023-2024 SOLVE Southern Spark Grant opportunity, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Organize for equitable and inclusive representation with historically underrepresented communities.
- Possess a vision for how voting rights advance social, economic, racial, political, and environmental justice.
- Be led by Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Indigenous, Asian American Pacific Islander, queer and trans, rural, low-wealth, and/or working-class communities.
 - Leadership is defined as individual members of these communities who hold decision-making authority over the applicant's priorities. Examples of decision-making roles could include executive directors, founders, presidents, board members, an advisory council, or group leaders.
- Have an annual operating budget under \$1 million.
 - Applicants with annual operating budgets under \$500,000 can apply for a grant award amount of \$10,000.

- Applicants with annual operating budgets over \$500,000 and below \$1,000,000 can apply for a grant award amount of \$5,000.
- Be located in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia.

Note: 501(c)3 status is not required to apply. This opportunity is open to proposals from 501(c)3s, fiscally sponsored groups or organizations, LLCs, individuals, or unincorporated groups or organizations. If you have any questions about IRS tax-exempt status, please contact solve@scsj.org.

Funding Priorities

We will prioritize supporting organizations or groups that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Have a focus on rural engagement. We define rural in multiple ways, including:
 - Areas with low population density and high amounts of underdeveloped land;
 - Open countryside with population densities of less than 500 people per square mile and places with fewer than 2,500 people;
 - Areas not within a metropolitan statistical area, urbanized area, or urban cluster; and/or
 - Areas within the Southern Black Belt.
- Have an existing civic engagement project serving historically underrepresented populations that could be expanded with additional funding.
- SOLVE Network members.
- Previous SOLVE grant recipients and applicants.
- Participants in Community Redistricting Organizations Working for Democracy (CROWD) Academy trainings.

What We Fund

The 2023-2024 SOLVE Southern Spark Grants are one-year project support grants intended to support projects focused on increasing civic participation in historically underrepresented communities, especially rural communities. As anti-democratic efforts are on the rise, we seek to fund projects that support communities in fighting for their right to responsive representation and combating white supremacy. We are most interested in projects that use advocacy, education, organizing, mobilization, and/or communications strategies to promote civic participation and engagement in rural and other underrepresented communities.

Below are examples of potential projects:

- Community education initiative to explain the redistricting process and how it can be improved with community input.
- Communications campaign about the importance of engaging with local democracy issues like school boards, affordable housing, or living wage.
- Trainings for non-English speaking community members to spread civic engagement knowledge and inspiration in their own communities.
- Education project about voter ID requirements, which disproportionately impact communities of color, disabled communities, trans communities, and many others.
- Projects that engage multiple identities and multi-racial alliance building as core to their pro-democracy work.

These are just examples of potential projects and are not an exhaustive list of projects that may be funded.

Award levels are progressive based on eligible organization size. Applicants with an annual operating budget under \$500,000 can apply for a grant award of \$10,000. Applicants with an annual operating budget above \$500,000 and below \$1,000,000 can apply for a grant award of \$5,000.

What We Cannot Fund

- 501(c)4 organizations.
- Projects that include voter registration activities.
- Projects that include [lobbying](#), political, or [partisan activity](#).
- Projects with indirect costs equal to or greater than direct costs. Direct costs are expenses specific to the program or project, while indirect costs are expenses required to run the organization as a whole.
- Projects that focus exclusively on direct services without a civic engagement or participation component.
- Organizations or groups who are current legal clients of SCSJ.
- Organizations, groups, and/or projects based outside of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia.
- Organizations or groups that do not meet the eligibility requirements.
- SOLVE Leadership Council Member organizations.
- Current/Previous SOLVE grantees that have not met the reporting requirements.

Process and Timeline

Grant Application

Please click the link [HERE](#) to access the grant application portal. Instructions for completing your application are available in the portal. Further information about the grant process can be found at southerncoalition.org/voting-rights/solve-2023/. If you need help accessing the portal, please email solve@scsj.org.

The application deadline is **Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 11:59 PM CST**.

Application Review

The SOLVE Leadership Council Re-grants Subcommittee will review and evaluate all eligible applications. The SOLVE Re-grants Subcommittee is supported by SCSJ. SCSJ staff will contact applicants with any questions or further information needed.

Notifications

Applicants who submit proposals by the July 12, 2023, deadline will be notified about whether or not their project will be funded by the end of August 2023. Projects approved for funding will receive their grant awards once we receive their signed Grant Agreement Letter. Grant funds will only be distributed with a signed Grant Agreement Letter.

Grant Reporting Criteria

All selected organizations must submit interim and final reports. Further reporting instructions will be provided in the Grant Agreement Letter.

SOLVE Support

An informational video about the program and application process can be found [HERE](#). We will also offer Open Zoom Hours for additional application support. To register for one of the Open Zoom Hours, please click [HERE](#). We recognize that SOLVE partners and others doing important work in the South have

varying capacities. We do not want the application or reporting processes to be a burden or a barrier. If you have questions throughout the application process, please contact us via email at solve@scsj.org.

Key Dates

Application opens: June 14, 2023

Application deadline: July 12, 2023

Open Zoom Hours:

- [June 21, 2023](#), 6:30 – 7:30 pm EST
- [June 28, 2023](#), 6:30 – 7:30 pm EST
- [July 10, 2023](#), 6:30 – 7:30 pm EST

Please click on the dates for the registration links.

The informational video about the program and application process can be found [HERE](#).

Contact Information

Questions or concerns? Please contact us at solve@scsj.org or visit our website southerncoalition.org/voting-rights/solve-2023/