

CHANGING WHAT'S POSSIBLE IN RURAL AMERICA

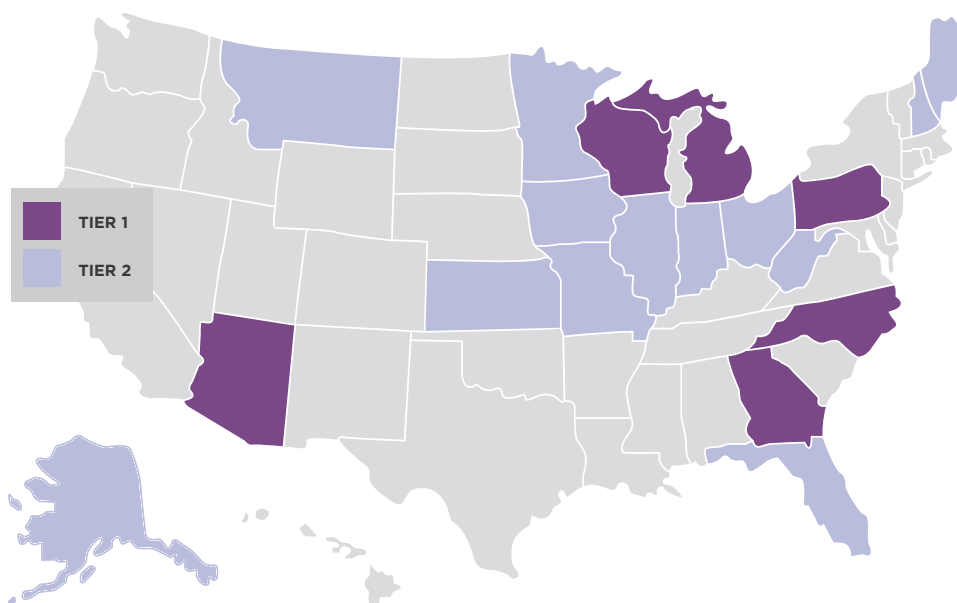
2020 IMPACT REPORT



The big challenges facing our country can only be met by a progressive movement that transcends the key divides holding us back - racial, economic *and* geographic.

The 501(c)(3) Heartland Fund, part of the Rural Democracy Initiative, is the first funding collaborative building progressive power across racially diverse communities in rural areas and small cities.

2020 AT A GLANCE



In our first full year, we raised over \$12 Million, and we granted nearly \$10 Million to 91 organizations across 19 states. We prioritized innovation and experimentation, and invested deeply in six priority states: **ARIZONA, GEORGIA, MICHIGAN, NORTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, AND WISCONSIN.**

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

48%

Grants to organizations led by/focused on people of color.

OVER
1M

invested in Black-led organizing in Georgia.



NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED voter registration and mobilization programs with the Navajo Tribe in Arizona.

Expansion of **FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY** organizing in rural communities.

Campaigns to **PROTECT THE POSTAL SERVICE.**

MULTI-RACIAL ORGANIZING with low wage workers and mobile home tenants in Iowa, Michigan and Florida.



ALLIANCE BUILDING between Wisconsin's rural farmers and immigrant workers.



Campaigns to protect at-risk communities from exploitation amid COVID risks.

33%

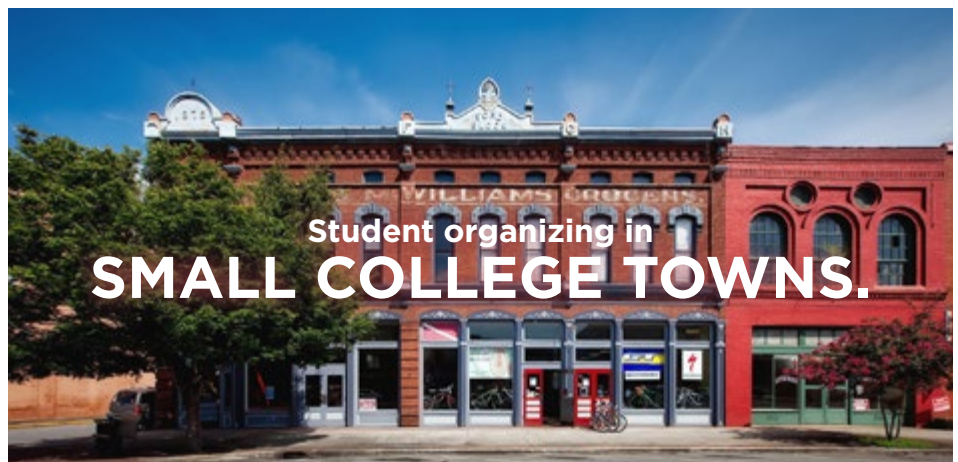
Grants focused on innovation, experimentation, and pilot projects.

DEEP CANVASS EXPERIMENTS (doors and phones) in Michigan, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

Highly effective **PEER-TO-PEER VOTER MOBILIZATION** with new digital platforms in rural Latinx communities.

Extensive rural public opinion research and messaging toolkits.

New rural communication hubs, resources, and spokesperson development.



Student organizing in **SMALL COLLEGE TOWNS.**

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

In the next two years we must support organizing that helps elected decision-makers deliver concrete solutions that make a real difference in the lives of rural people who are struggling.

“RURAL” DOES NOT EQUAL WHITE AND CONSERVATIVE

Rural America is far more diverse than most understand - one in five rural residents are people of color. It's becoming more diverse - from 2000 to 2018, new immigrants made up 37% of the growth in rural communities. And public opinion research in partnership with a lead grantee, RuralOrganizing.org, shows that rural voters are far more aligned with progressives on policy than their voting behavior would sometimes indicate.

ORGANIZING WORKS TO ENGAGE MARGINALIZED RURAL COMMUNITIES

Marginalized communities in rural areas have been ignored for too long. Our grantees, working among rural Indigenous, Latino, and Black communities, as well as counties battling persistent poverty, responded to the urgent needs in these communities to fight the pandemic and meet basic needs first. Building on the trust gained through this work, groups in our network were able to significantly increase participation among these historically marginalized populations. The far-reaching impact of their boosted participation has built greater visibility and power for these emerging rural voices.

THERE'S AN ENORMOUS INVESTMENT GAP

There has been a chronic absence of funding for progressive organizing and communications capacity in rural America. While there have been a few notable sustained and successful efforts in rural areas, so much more is needed to build back power in these communities.

WE MUST COUNTER DISINFORMATION

The channels of disinformation in rural communities are rampant and, absent other trusted sources, provide a filter through which many rural residents now perceive the world. While rural people actually support many progressive policies to a greater degree than is widely understood, the overwhelming dominance of disinformation campaigns hampers efforts to engage on these issues. Heartland Fund supports organizing outreach, social media, and traditional communications experiments that can punch through the noise of disinformation in rural places - using existing channels like rural radio, local news, and even yard signs and billboards, in addition to promising new digital platforms.

WHAT'S NEXT?

OUR TOP PRIORITIES IN 2021



1 ADVOCATE FOR A BOLD PROGRESSIVE RURAL AGENDA

In early 2021, we convened a landmark Rural Policy Summit from Feb 2-3, bringing together 60 top rural policy experts and advocates from across sectors - including health, housing, democracy, public lands, small business, labor, climate and energy, agriculture, broadband and other infrastructure. The Summit catalyzed a rural policy agenda that can inform policy debate in Washington and provide a framework for media coverage, as well as tools for our organizing partners.



2 DEVELOP A WORKING CLASS JOBS NARRATIVE

We need a progressive jobs narrative that's as powerful in Fond du Lac's rural dairy communities as it is in Milwaukee's urban neighborhoods. We are leading a research and messaging project in partnership with the New Economy Fund and other allied progressive organizations that will develop a powerful narrative toolkit for engaging economically marginalized communities across the urban-rural continuum.



3 LIFT UP LOCAL VOICES TO ENSURE RURAL PERSPECTIVES

Rural voices, including rural communities of color, must be centered in the dialogue about how we make progress. By boosting communications capacity both internally and through our grantmaking, we will work to lift rural perspectives into the national debate and drive progressive messages into rural areas through earned media, targeted paid media, and social media platforms.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: When more rural black men vote, it changes America



In Georgia, 460,000 Black men were eligible but hadn't voted in the past five general elections. Black men are staunchly progressive, but tend to turn out at rates 10% lower than Black women. Last year, Mondale Robinson - an Atlanta-based political strategist and organizer from rural North Carolina - had a plan to change this. Heartland Fund provided the Black Male Voter Project (BMVP) with critical seed funding to start their Brotha's Be Voting series, described as the "largest barbershop conversation in the world, with nothing but Black men." They brought 4,000 Black men together across a dozen states in rural areas and cities to talk about whether they vote, why, and what would make a difference. What they heard was different from polls or focus groups - about the need to put trades education back in schools to free Black men from racial profiling in hiring, and to end cash bail which robs Black men of years of their life. It formed the platform that could motivate Black men across 17 states to participate in record numbers. Skilled organizers contacted all registered Black men 13 times before they asked them to vote, through doors, interactive literature, peer-texting, phones, and ringless voicemails from community leaders. The result? 134,000 of those Georgia voters, many of them rural, who didn't get out to vote for the first Black president in 2008 or the first Black woman to run for governor in 2018, cast their votes to make the difference last year.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: ARIZONA Rural Utah/Arizona Project



THE NATIVE VOTE: MEETING EVERY CHALLENGE, AND DELIVERING

At the invitation of tribal leadership, Rural Utah/Arizona Project led one of the most important efforts to organize with the Navajo Nation in Northern Arizona. Contending with the ravages of COVID-19 in the community, and working through the challenges of vast distances and lack of communication infrastructure, RUP's 9 Indigenous organizers worked with the tribe to register over 5,000 new voters and turning out many more. Overall turnout in Arizona's Navajo and Hopi counties increased by 20,000 compared to 2016, an amazing result considering the pandemic. RDI played a catalytic role, leveraging our \$80K grant to bring together a coalition of funders and help raise the \$900K needed to run their ambitious program.





GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: MICHIGAN

We the People Michigan



A “MASTER CLASS” IN BRIDGING THE RURAL/URBAN DIVIDE

We the People Michigan (WTP) provided one of the clearest examples in 2020 of building power through a multi-racial coalition that unites rural and urban leaders. Beyond their work carefully stitching together a statewide coalition, WTP also led one of the most expansive deep canvass operations in the country across 14 mostly rural counties. Extensive small town news coverage highlighted WTP’s policy and civic engagement efforts, and leaders developed by WTP are now in decision making roles in 19 municipal and school board positions across seven counties in rural northern Michigan.

And their dedicated activists did not stop on Nov 4 - they became the public force defending the results in the harrowing weeks that followed. WTP Executive Director Art Reyes made national news as he confronted Michigan legislative leaders at the Detroit airport en route to meet with Donald Trump at the White House and hear Trump’s request to block Michigan’s election results.

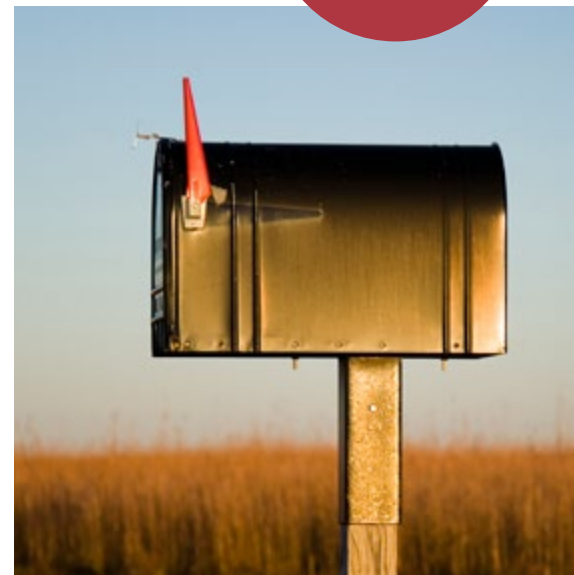
GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation



A STORIED ORGANIZATION PLOWING NEW GROUND

The oldest organization in our grantee network, Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) was founded in 1930 at the start of the Great Depression. But this historic organization broke incredible new ground in 2020 with innovative and timely campaigns. Their inspiring partnership with Wisconsin’s immigrant advocacy group (and RDI grantee), Voces de la Frontera, won better conditions for meat-packing workers in rural Wisconsin. WFU also led a high impact advertising campaign that urged action to protect the USPS from the attacks geared toward undermining confidence in voting by mail. And WFU trained dozens of their farmer members to lead conversations with thousands of rural voters about local “fair maps” anti-gerrymandering policy. By the end of 2020, 54 counties had passed fair maps resolutions, and 28 counties had passed referendums. WFU is a model for boldly progressive programs and creative tactics that serve as inspiration for farmers unions across the country.





GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: WISCONSIN

Catalyzing rural small business organizing



CATALYZING RURAL SMALL BUSINESS ORGANIZING

Small businesses, along with family farms and schools, are the backbone of most small towns and rural communities. In 2020, we supported Main Street Alliance (MSA) to pilot their first dedicated rural program in Wisconsin. MSA engaged 200 small businesses across five rural counties. These new leaders identified the most important issues affecting their businesses, employees, and communities: COVID-19 relief, expansion of BadgerCare (Wisconsin's Medicaid program), and the urgent need for more access to child care and paid family and medical leave. MSA then brought small business owners together with policy experts and elected decision makers to craft solutions, and held a five-stop budget "road show" throughout the state to elevate these issues to the Governor's team as they developed the state budget. Polls show that the public trusts small business owners more than churches, government, and even the military. Rural small business voices have been enthusiastically received by elected leaders and the media, changing the dialogue on these key issues. MSA's Wisconsin pilot, which would not have been possible without RDI's investment, was so successful they plan to expand to other states.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: NATIONAL GALvanize USA



"GALS" VOTING THEIR VALUES

There may be no other space in the progressive movement where we learned as much about a misunderstood core constituency than through GALvanize USA in 2020. GALvanize is an exciting new organization that brings women together to learn, share ideas, and support each other in voting their values. Their focus on testing and measurement has added incredible value across our movement. They cracked the code for engaging women in rural and conservative communities in new and powerful ways that actually changed how they thought about issues. GALvanize built a network of more than 96,000 women, and did it with heart and rigorous research, resulting in truly transformative learning.





2020 FINANCIALS

HEARTLAND FUND

REVENUE

Contributed funds	\$12,148,909
-------------------	--------------

EXPENSES

Grants & contributions	\$9,950,000
------------------------	-------------

Personnel & contractors	\$286,732
-------------------------	-----------

Other operating expenses	\$740,712
--------------------------	-----------

Net assets beginning of period	\$1,898,004
---------------------------------------	--------------------

Net assets end of period	\$3,069,471
---------------------------------	--------------------

HEARTLAND FUND GRANTEES

NATIONAL \$2,985,000

RuralOrganizing.org
Family Farm Action Alliance
People's Action Institute
One Fair Wage
GALvanize USA
Race Class Narrative Project (ISAIAH)
Faith In Action
United for Respect Education Fund
Working America Education Fund
Rural Electric Cooperative Project
Alliance for Youth Action
Manufactured Home Action
National Vote at Home Institute
Lower Drug Prices Now
Black Male Voter Project
The Hometown Project
VotER
Women Effect Fund
HEAL Food Alliance
State Voices
Center for Rural Strategies
Clean and Prosperous America

ALASKA \$100,000

Alaska Progressive Donor Alliance
Alaska Native People's Action Community Fund

ARIZONA \$390,000

Rural Arizona Engagement (RAZE)
Progress Arizona Institute
Rural Utah / Rural Arizona Project
Chispa
One Arizona

FLORIDA \$260,000

Faith in Florida
Freedom for Florida
New Florida Majority Education Fund (SWAG)

GEORGIA \$1,040,000

New Georgia Project
Georgia Shift
Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute
Pro Georgia
Black Male Voter Project
Faith in Public Life Georgia

INDIANA \$225,000

Faith in Indiana
Hoosier Action

ILLINOIS \$790,000

Grassroots Collaborative
People's Lobby Education Fund
Worker Center for Racial Justice
Other IL community based organizations

IOWA \$75,000

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Women, Food and Agriculture Network

KANSAS \$200,000

Loud Light
Neighboring Movement

MAINE \$100,000

Maine People's Resource Center

MICHIGAN \$375,000

We the People Michigan
Progress Michigan Education Fund
Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition
Michigan Voices

MINNESOTA \$275,000

Land Stewardship Project
Minnesota Voice

MISSOURI \$325,000

Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Missouri Organizing and Voter Engagement Collaborative (MOVE)

MONTANA \$470,000

Montana Voices
Montana Women Vote
Northern Plains Resource Council
Big Sky 55+
MontPIRG Education Fund
Western Native Vote

NEW HAMPSHIRE \$100,000

New Hampshire Youth Movement
Rights and Democracy New Hampshire

NORTH CAROLINA \$430,000

Poder NC Action
Down Home North Carolina
Blueprint NC
A. Phillip Randolph Education Fund
North Carolina Black Alliance

OHIO \$100,000

Ohio Student Association (Ohio Organizing Collaborative)

PENNSYLVANIA \$525,000

PA Stands Up Institute
Pittsburgh United
Make the Road PA
CASA Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Voice
Center for Coalfield Justice

WEST VIRGINIA \$40,000

For West Virginia's Future

WISCONSIN \$1,115,000

Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation
Mainstreet Alliance
9 to 5
Freedom Inc
WISDOM
Wisconsin Public Education Network
Wisconsin Voices
Wisconsin Native Vote
Voces de la Frontera
Wisconsin Citizen Action
Progress North Wisconsin
A Better Wisconsin Together
Wisconsin Race Class Narrative