

Demos

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





RUPA BALASUBRAMANIAN
BOARD CHAIR



XAVIER DE SOUZA BRIGGS
BOARD VICE-CHAIR

“

Witnessing Taifa’s leadership at Dēmos—both as our former colleague on the board and as President—we’ve been thrilled by the intention, resolve, and vision that she brings to the work of building a more just world. It’s energizing to see Dēmos take off anew in this critical moment for our country, as we implement a new strategic plan. We are in solidarity with our state and grassroots partners to build real, lasting power for Black and brown communities, and foster the multiracial coalition that durable and inclusive change requires.

—RUPA BALASUBRAMANIAN AND XAVIER DE SOUZA BRIGGS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04 A Letter from Taifa

06 Strategic Plan and Theory of Change

12 Movement Building

10 Power Agenda

22 Our Funders

A LETTER FROM TAIFA

Friends,

As I reflect on my first two years of leading Dēmos, I am so proud of what we have achieved for the people—the *dēmos*. From fighting voter suppression and expanding opportunities for voter registration at federal agencies, to uplifting the transformative work of state and grassroots organizers building power in our democracy, we have made our big ideas become reality. And, we have yet to scratch the surface of what is possible.

Following record voter turnout and significant pro-democracy wins in recent years, we are facing a new season of retaliation and intimidation. We see significant voter suppression, a host of new legislation and lawsuits intended to limit the power of Black and brown communities, and even the far right weaponizing the Supreme Court to maintain white supremacy and uphold racist, unjust systems. Fear is the root of these strategies. They are tactics and narratives that galvanize a fringe base of supporters, at the direction of politicians, corporations, and wealthy elites who see the rising multiracial electorate as a threat to their power.

Most recently, provocative lawsuits use SCOTUS's recent affirmative action decision to intimidate and attack philanthropy and nonprofits committed to

addressing structural racism. At Dēmos, we know that we cannot respond with fear of our own. Instead, we need to be explicit and bold in our commitment to build power with and for Black and brown communities. That is the only way to realize our vision for a just, inclusive, equitable society.

In the past year and a half, Dēmos has brought this courageous race-forward vision to our work. We developed and implemented a strategic plan and theory of change that roots our work in relationships with grassroots movement partners, so that the solutions we advance are people-centered and grounded in the real lived experiences of Black and brown families. We built clear and robust strategies to put our ideas into action to change the conditions and the systems that are not working. And we have served as convener, partner, thought leader, storyteller, and strategist in the movement for a just and multiracial democracy and economy.

I am delighted to share this report with you, which looks back on all we have accomplished since July 2022 and charts our vision and strategies for the future. Your support and partnership have been critical to this work. In the face of critical threats to our democracy and the progressive movement, I hope you will continue to stand with us as we work to dismantle the forces of white supremacy, promote people-centered policy solutions, and commit to building power for Black and brown communities. Let's co-create the world we all deserve.

In solidarity,



TAIFA SMITH BUTLER
PRESIDENT



“
WE NEED TO BE EXPLICIT AND
BOLD IN OUR COMMITMENT
TO BUILD POWER WITH AND
FOR BLACK AND BROWN
COMMUNITIES.”



STRATEGIC PLAN AND THEORY OF CHANGE

In November 2022, Dēmos finalized a strategic plan that reaffirmed our theory of change by centering our relationships with state-based and grassroots partners and placing a renewed focus on building power with and for Black and brown communities. In this critical moment for the safety and well-being of our communities and our democracy, Dēmos is committed to being a think tank that grounds progressive solutions in the ideas and strength of grassroots partners and works alongside them to put those ideas into action.

WE WILL DO THIS BY FOCUSING ON FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

01

Center transformative state and grassroots partnerships in service of building a stronger movement

A strong, connected, and well-resourced grassroots movement is essential to long-term power building. Dēmos will elevate state and grassroots partners' power and insight through campaigns, policy, and research support, and create opportunities for local leaders from across the country to connect and strategize together.

03

Advance long-term systemic change

We heard from many partners that rather than simply offering ideas for structural change, they need Dēmos to help advance those ideas to realize change in structures and institutions that form the basis of racial inequity. Dēmos will work alongside national, state-based, and grassroots partners to advocate for concrete policy solutions and support campaigns and litigation for systemic change.

02

Develop strategies and analysis to facilitate power building

We aim to identify solutions that empower Black and brown communities to have real power over the systems and institutions that impact their lives. Grounded in the expertise and lived experiences of our grassroots and state-based partners, Dēmos will develop and advance a power analysis and policy agenda that articulates the necessary strategies to shift power toward Black and brown communities—a necessary ingredient to realize a multiracial democracy.

04

Disseminate new narratives around the realities and possibilities of our democracy and economy

Dominant narratives about our democracy and economy are insidious and reductive. They obscure the realities of who wields power and uphold the status quo by making inequity and racial injustice appear inevitable. Through strategic research and communications, Dēmos will work to build and advance alternative narratives that unveil the truth about the roots of structural injustice and engage the public in imagining what is possible.

DĒMOS SUPPORTS OUR GRASSROOTS AND STATE-BASED PARTNERS BY SERVING AS:



PARTNER AND CONVENER

Dēmos cultivates spaces where national and grassroots partners can connect, build relationships, strategize, and work together.



THOUGHT LEADER

Dēmos provides expertise and develops policy, research, and narrative strategies to inform policymakers, movement leaders, and national dialogue on economic justice and democracy.

Tamieka Atkins, executive director of Pro-Georgia, speaking at the 2023 Inclusive Democracy Project National Convening





POLICY STRATEGIST

Dēmos advances the strategies and narratives we develop through litigation, policy advocacy, strategic communications, and technical support for our grassroots and state-based partners.



STORYTELLER

Dēmos creates and advances affirmative narratives about how we can, and why we should, build a multiracial, inclusive democracy and economy.

POWER AGENDA

The Power Agenda is Dēmos' answer to the challenges of the current moment—the product of decades of misalignment in the balance of economic, political, and civic power in this country. We know that this reality requires a long-term strategy and commitment that reconsiders what is needed to produce a just, multiracial democracy and economy and invests in progressive movements from the bottom up. Dēmos is well-positioned to lead in this way, given our over two decades as policy strategists taking actionable steps for systemic change and resourcing grassroots and state-based partners.

The Dēmos Power Agenda will center the voices of grassroots organizers to advance the strategy we need to achieve a just, multiracial economy and democracy in the long-term. The Agenda will include a slate of publications and resources designed to serve as a clear governing agenda and strategic roadmap for policymakers, advocates, and movement leaders to build power for Black and brown communities.

The initial launch of the Power Agenda will be in early 2024, with additional resources to follow over the next two years.



THE AGENDA WILL INCLUDE:



50 STATE POWER MAP

Dēmos will develop a web-based map visualizing key indicators across the country to illustrate the landscape of economic, political, and civic power. The analysis and data will be a resource for policymakers and movement groups to assess opportunities and challenges in each state, make the case for proposing or passing new laws and policies, and hold government accountable for implementing existing laws and policies.



POWER AGENDA FRAMEWORK

Dēmos will develop an agenda that lays out a bold vision for a just, multiracial democracy and economy based on building economic, political, and civic power for Black and brown communities. This agenda will highlight where we need to go and what Dēmos is focusing on to get us there.



POWER AGENDA MOVEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (POWERMAC)

Dēmos has convened a movement advisory committee (PowerMAC) consisting of eight grassroots and academic partners to provide expert, community-centered insight into the creation of the Power Agenda. The PowerMAC will help us identify key indicators, issues, and policies that should be represented in the Agenda and help shape the narrative, research, and analysis. The PowerMAC will provide commentary, feedback, and recommendations on Power Agenda work products.



POWER POLICY TRACKER

This online tracker will monitor policies related to the Power Agenda at the state level and will provide a tool to measure success, demonstrate the impact and importance of grassroots work, and identify roadblocks for organizers.



2023 Inclusive Democracy Project National Convening

MOVEMENT BUILDING

Dēmos' Movement Building program is a policy, organizing, and leadership development hub for grassroots, state-based, and national organizations. At its core, the Dēmos Movement Building team is focused on building transformative relationships across the field, hosting strategic conversations, sharing campaign insights, and building intersectional political power for people of color. In 2023, our Movement Building team worked closely with our partners to conduct voter education and outreach, advocate for just and accessible voting and economic policies in their communities, mobilize community members for progressive campaigns, and connect and strategize with other leaders across state lines.

In its eighth year, Dēmos' [Inclusive Democracy Project](#) provided technical, research, legal, and communications support to a network of over 30 state-based and grassroots leaders. We were excited to welcome Organize Tennessee as a new addition to the cohort this year.

In May, more than 60 leaders from our Inclusive Democracy Project partner organizations joined us in Atlanta, Georgia, for our annual Inclusive Democracy Project Convening. We spent three days co-strategizing, building relationships, and facilitating intimate discussions on narrative, campaigns, and the tools we need to sustain and grow a thriving grassroots movement.

THREE STATE STRATEGY (3SS)

Dēmos launched the Three State Strategy (3SS) project in the Summer of 2023 to provide support for our partners OLÉ, BLOC, and Organize Tennessee as they advance voter mobilization and organizational policy priorities ahead of the 2024 election.

Our 3SS project is an opportunity to advance racial equity work that our Inclusive Democracy Partners are already championing in New Mexico, Wisconsin, and Tennessee by offering critical policy, research, communications support, and technical assistance for state convenings.

TENNESSEE: ORGANIZE TENNESSEE

Organize Tennessee is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to promote democratic principles by upholding safe, secure, and accessible elections, protecting voting rights, coalition building, and grassroots organizing to empower disenfranchised communities across Tennessee.



Photo Credit: 353 Media Group

“Tennessee has a severe problem. Among the lowest ranks in the country for voter registration, voter participation, and ease of voting, the Volunteer State is plagued by widespread voter suppression measures enacted by lawmakers including restricting mail-in ballots, early voting, and voter registration, purging voter rolls, and limiting voting by people with a felony conviction who have completed their sentences. These measures disproportionately disenfranchise voters of color. Democracy means little without the right to vote. Organize Tennessee is working to make it easier to vote, secure the voting process, and ensure equal access to the ballot box.”

—Nadira Freeman, Executive Director, Organize Tennessee

NEW MEXICO: ORGANIZERS IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT (OLÉ)

OLÉ is a non-profit, grassroots member organization of working families. Since 2009, our members and staff have worked together to strengthen our communities using issue-based campaigns and electoral engagement to ensure that working families are playing a critical role in shaping New Mexico's future with a united voice. By centering the experiences of people of color, early educators, parents, workers and immigrants, OLÉ creates a space for people to grow their leadership and create lasting change in New Mexico.



Photo Credit: OLÉ



Photo Credit: Mabel Gonzalez

“OLÉ members and staff have fought alongside our partners to build power in our state that puts people ahead of corporations and puts our lived experiences at the center of decisions that are made for New Mexico. Building state power is one of the keys to creating lasting change in the United States and our partnership with Dēmos has brought us together with so many people doing similar work in their own states. By understanding state power as a vehicle for transformative change, Dēmos has created a space for our organization to learn, share knowledge, and build the kind of future we deserve.”

- Andrea Serrano, Executive Director, OLÉ



Photo Credit: BLOC

WISCONSIN: BLACK LEADERS ORGANIZING FOR COMMUNITIES (BLOC)

BLOC organizes members of the Black community in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin to build long-term political power, ensure access to economic opportunity, and empower and support Black leaders. BLOC works to build transformational—not transactional—relationships to understand and address the concerns and needs of the communities they represent.



“BLOC is the only organization in Wisconsin with a year-round civic engagement program dedicated to the Black community. Our year-round approach allows us to have deeper relationships with our community and continue to be trusted messengers.”

—Angela Lang, Executive Director, BLOC

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Dēmos' Economic Justice program advances an affirmative vision for a just and inclusive economic future by creating direct pathways to build economic power for Black and brown people and communities. We aim to identify and uplift methods for Black and brown people to gain economic and political power by having a clear and specific role in making decisions about the institutions, structures, and services that impact their lives.





ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY CASE STUDIES

In collaboration with partners working to reclaim power over local economic resources, Dēmos finished the publication of a series of case studies documenting the process, reasoning, and strategies of four successful community campaigns across the country.

Water As a Public Good: Pittsburgh’s Our Water Campaign

Followed Pittsburgh United as they sought to restore public governance over the local water authority.

Banking for the Public Good: Public Bank NYC

Followed the New Economy Project as it organized a cross-sector coalition of local worker collaboratives, housing cooperatives, and community wealth-building organizations to win public banking infrastructure in the city and state of New York.

Building Civic Power: Equitable Access to Flood Recovery in Harris County, TX

Followed our IDP partner, Texas Organizing Project, as it worked to redistribute political and economic power in greater Houston after Hurricane Harvey.

Challenging the Dominance of Big Tech: For Us, Not Amazon in Arlington, VA

Followed For Us, Not Amazon and members of the Athena Coalition as they organized to Amazon from taking over the civic, social, and political life of Northern Virginia and beyond.





ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY EXPLAINERS

The Economic Democracy Explainers are high level issue briefs focusing on the concepts that form the foundation of economic democracy. This year we have released three explainers:

Deconcentrating Corporate Power outlines the consequences of corporate actors consolidating their power to act against the public good, and how we can work to rein in their influence.

Reimagining Public Goods explains the importance of expanding our definition of public goods and protecting them from profit-seeking private interests.

Community Control over Institutions through Co-Governance makes the case for directly empowering frontline communities to help govern public and private institutions that impact their lives.



PUBLIC BANKING RESEARCH

Alongside our state-based partner New Economy Project, Dēmos launched new research on public banks—publicly-owned financial institutions that invest funds in community projects, such as affordable housing and renewable energy. This work will analyze how public banks can be designed and implemented to help build community wealth and reduce the racial wealth gap. Over the next year, we will conduct research and interviews to analyze five different proposed public banking models across the United States, resulting in a report and public banking convening in early 2025.



DEMOCRACY

Dēmos' Democracy program seeks to shift institutional and political power toward Black and brown communities to achieve our vision for a just, inclusive, multiracial democracy in which the people govern. We remove barriers to and advance an affirmative vision of full democratic participation through voting and building collective power.

FLORIDA STATE LAW SB7050

In May 2023, Dēmos and partners filed a [federal lawsuit](#) challenging new Florida state law SB7050, which targets community-based civic engagement groups by banning noncitizens from “collecting” or “handling” voter registration forms and imposing \$50,000 fines for noncompliance. In July, the judge issued a preliminary injunction, blocking the parts of the law we are challenging while the lawsuit is being litigated, allowing our partners to continue their civic engagement work in this critical moment. The state is appealing the injunction, but it currently remains in place, and we are moving forward with the discovery process for a trial date in the spring of 2024.

SOUTH DAKOTA NVRA COMPLIANCE

In late August 2022, Dēmos and partner Native American Rights Fund reached a settlement in our National Voter Registration Act enforcement [lawsuit in South Dakota](#), requiring improvements in voter registration training, procedures, and data reporting. Since then, we have monitored and worked with the state to ensure thoughtful implementation of the settlement, including filing a notice of non-compliance in November 2022.

EVALUATING THE EXECUTIVE ORDER PROMOTING ACCESS TO VOTING

In March, Dēmos co-authored a [comprehensive report](#) evaluating the progress of 10 federal agencies in their implementation of the Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting. Endorsed by more than 50 partner organizations, the report received significant news coverage and informed updates to a White House fact sheet on agency action. As a result of our collective advocacy, several federal agencies made concrete commitments to expand voter registration programs, notably [Veterans Affairs](#), [Indian Health Services](#), and [Health and Human Services](#).

VOTER PURGE REPORT

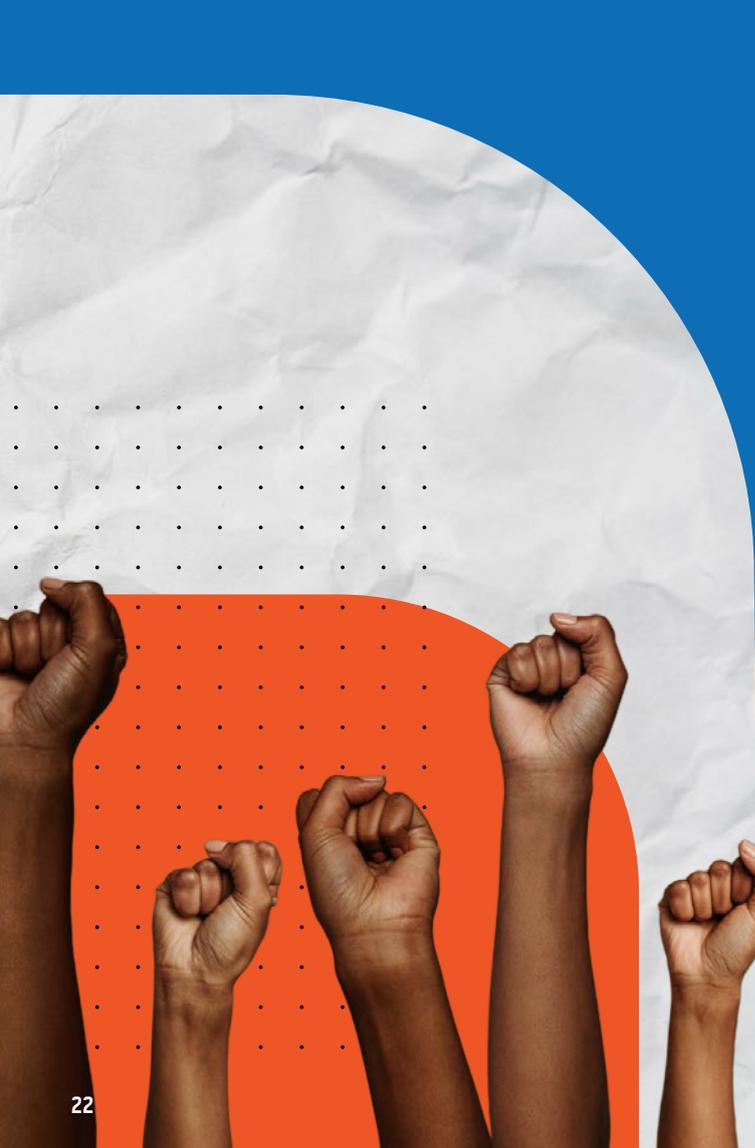
In August 2023, Dēmos published a [Voter Purge report card](#) that evaluates 10 states on policies and practices governing the removal of voters from rolls. The report was covered by several publications, including NPR, Chicago Tribune, and Common Dreams. On National Voter Registration Day, we hosted a webinar to discuss the report and the problem of wrongful purges.

VOTER PURGE TABLE

Dēmos continued leading our Voter Purge Table (VPT), bringing together national and local legal organizations to coordinate to prevent wrongful purges, share resources, and strategize. Dēmos and the VPT worked closely with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice in North Carolina to create the [North Carolina toolkit](#) on how to respond to problematic voter purges in the state, released in February 2023. In November 2023, we also collaborated with the VPT on the release of a [Voter Purge Legislative Resource Guide](#) to provide concrete resources and policy guidance to advocates working to prevent wrongful purges in their states.

COURT REFORM

In response to the highly damaging impact federal courts have had on our democracy in recent years, Dēmos launched a new area of work advancing court reform. In July 2023, Dēmos released a [report](#) highlighting the unprecedented ways SCOTUS has expanded its own authority via the shadow docket to disproportionately harm Black and brown people. We are also serving on the steering committee of the new [United for Democracy coalition](#), which is working to translate the threats SCOTUS poses to a broader audience by connecting SCOTUS rulings to people's lived experiences.



OUR FUNDERS

Our deepest gratitude to the many partners, organizations, individuals, and foundations who have helped make this work possible. Your support and partnership have been critical to Dēmos' impact over the past 18 months.

The following pages list the names of our financial supporters. Thank you for your support and generosity, as well as that of our anonymous donors. Together we will build a just and inclusive democracy and economy.

MAJOR GIFTS OF \$1000+

- Mr. Robert E. Friedman
- Rupa Balasubramanian
- Sarah Kroll-Rosenbaum
- Ashley Allison
- Clifford Albright
- Catherine Raphael
- Mark T. Munger and Katherine Bourne
- The Dena and Chris Moore Family Foundation
- Ronald and Gina Glantz
- Ruth Wooden
- The McMurtry Family Foundation
- Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation
- Shakeeb A. Alam and Aida A. Arain
- Richie Goldman

MAJOR GIFTS OF \$10,000+

- Lebowitz-Aberly Family Foundation
 - Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation
 - Jun Choi
 - Marilyn Clements Charitable Fund
 - Paul and Joanne Egerman
 - Kenneth J. Floryan
 - William and Jean Graustein
 - Stephen Gunther & Adam Gunther
 - John R. McCune Charitable Trust
 - Stephen McConnell and Shirley Fiske
 - Nancy Meyer and Marc Weiss
 - Kicking Assets Fund
-

FOUNDATIONS

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Arnold & Porter Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies
- Compton Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Fore River Foundation
- Friedman Family Foundation
- General Service Foundation
- Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
- Johnson Family Foundation
- Joyce Foundation
- JPB Foundation
- Levi Strauss Foundation
- Libra Foundation
- Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund
- State Infrastructure Fund
- Mertz Gilmore Foundation
- Ms. Foundation for Women
- Omidyar Network
- Open Society Foundations
- Overbrook Foundation
- Panta Rhea Foundation
- Park Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Scherman Foundation, Inc
- Surdna Foundation
- The Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation
- The WhyNot Initiative
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Anonymous Funder (1)

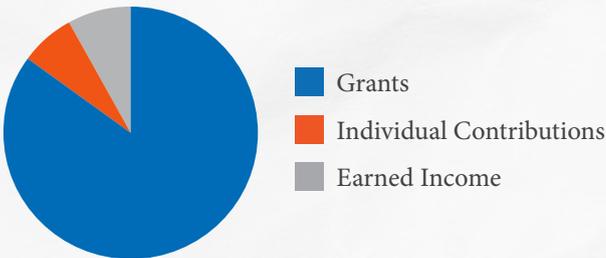
FISCAL YEAR 2023

JULY 1, 2022-JUNE 30, 2023

REVENUE

Revenue Stream	Percentage	Revenue
Grants	84.8%	8,675,261
Individual Contributions	7.2%	733,675
Earned Income	8.0%	816,831
Total Revenue		\$10,225,766

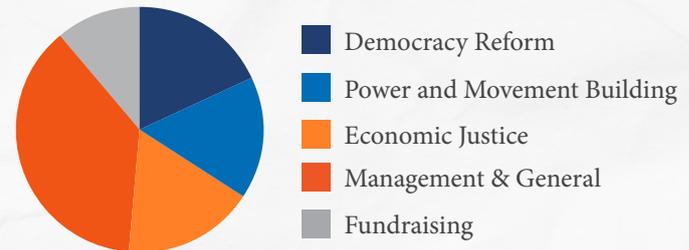
FY23 REVENUE



EXPENSES

Department	Percentage	Expenses
Democracy Reform	18.0%	1,845,112
Power and Movement Building	16.3%	1,662,969
Economic Justice	17.0%	1,742,251
Management & General	37.3%	3,814,296
Fundraising	11.3%	1,160,134
Total Expenses		\$10,224,762

FY23 EXPENSES BY DEPARTMENT



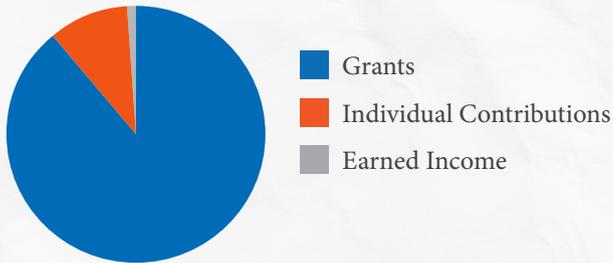
FISCAL YEAR 2024

JULY 1, 2023-JUNE 30, 2024

PROJECTED REVENUE

Revenue Stream	Percentage	Revenue
Grants	88.42%	7,825,000
Individual Contributions	10.45%	925,000
Earned Income	1.13%	100,000
Total Revenue		\$8,850,000

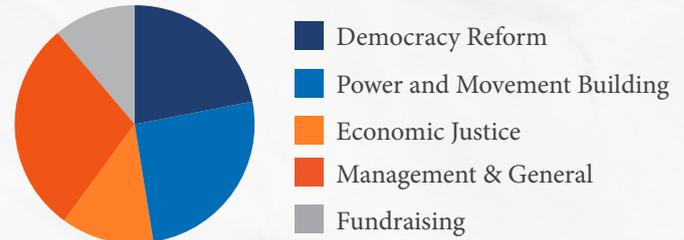
FY24 PROJECTED REVENUE



PROJECTED EXPENSES

Department	Percentage	Expenses
Democracy Reform	22.2%	2,519,920
Power and Movement Building	25.5%	2,893,844
Economic Justice	12.5%	1,423,642
Management & General	28.8%	3,274,142
Fundraising	10.9%	1,238,088
Total Expenses		\$11,349,637

FY24 PROJECTED EXPENSES BY DEPARTMENT



Demos