

Impact Report: **N.J. Voting Block**

Prepared for the Center for Cooperative Media and The Center for Investigative Reporting
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 **IMPACT** ARCHITECTS

I. Background

In 2017, New Jersey faced what promised to be a challenging gubernatorial election. Media throughout the state were especially concerned that the combined effect of Chris Christie's legacy and Donald Trump's presidency would contribute to increased polarization, decreased civil discourse, and a likelihood that voters would check out of the electoral process. Recognizing the importance of the moment and the precariousness of the media environment (both locally and nationally), NJ media companies wanted to do something new and different to engage citizens and provide information to help people navigate the election.

The Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University convened a phone call with media throughout New Jersey to spur a collaborative reporting effort in the lead up to the election. Over the course of 12 months, CCM, together with The Center for Investigative Reporting, coordinated what came to be called Voting Block, a collaborative reporting initiative with 30 partners that included text, audio, and video stories, community events, and even a comedy show.

The goals of this initiative included:

- Catalyze civil conversation and get together people who are geographically proximate but who wouldn't normally talk about these issues;
- Raise awareness about governor's election;
- Create relationships and structures to support collaborative reporting; and
- Build capacity and expertise for partner news organizations to do direct community engagement.

At the close of the project, CCM and CIR identified the following learning questions:

- How, if at all, did community members who participated in events change their news consumption habits?
- Did community members who participated in events and/or consume content have higher sense of self-efficacy and/or increased levels of civic engagement?
- How did gameshow work for partners, and how could partners have been more integrated in this event?
- How can workflow be improved?
- Were partners clear on the point of the collaboration, and how can collaborative efforts maintain a focus on the intended impact of a project?
- What new skills or capacities were developed within partner organizations?
- What additional resources were needed but unavailable for this initiative, if any?

This report analyzes data gathered through events and interviews to assess the effectiveness of Voting Block in achieving its stated goals and, when possible, to answer CCM and CIR's learning

questions.¹ In general, it finds support for the claim that Voting Block contributed to stronger ties among participating community members and news organizations. However, there is little concrete evidence about the effect Voting Block had on civil conversations or raising awareness about the gubernatorial election among community members. It also finds that media partners created new relationships, learned new methods for collaboration, and built capacity internally, both for collaboration and community engagement.

¹ Data include a survey with media partners, 13 semi-structured interviews with media partners, and a survey with community member potluck participants.

II. Activities

The project was coordinated by the Center for Cooperative Media and The Center for Investigative Reporting and consisted of four foundational reporting partners: WNYC, WHYY, NJ Spotlight, and The Record. The project's coordinators at the CCM, Stefanie Murray and Joe Amditis, worked with the partners to design the project. Cole Goins and Cristina Kim of CIR were responsible for community engagement coordination and support. New America Media, a fellow Dodge Foundation grantee, was also brought on as a coordinating partner to ensure participation by ethnic media in N.J. Once the project had been sketched out, the group identified additional partners to invite to participate, especially with a goal to ensure the collaborative was racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse. In total, 21 hyperlocals, ethnic media organizations, and college newsrooms were recruited for the project.

Due to the large and diverse group of partners, Murray and Amditis created subgroups that accounted for partners' different capacities and types of involvement. Beginning in May 2017, Murray met weekly with the large partners and Amditis did the same with hyperlocals. The organizing partners - CCM, CIR, and NAM - also had separate weekly calls. CIR held regular check-in calls with engagement leads. During the weekly calls, partners reviewed upcoming deadlines, discussed any issues, and identified next steps.

Materials were shared through Google Drive and included: the main project document that has a project description, identifies roles and responsibilities, and highlights deadlines; a shared language document to ensure that partners used consistent language when referring to the project; folders for images, audio and video files; and more. In addition to the weekly phone calls, partners communicated through a dedicated Slack channel.

For reporting and engagement, partners worked independently to recruit neighbors from one block, which would serve as the "Voting Block" for their reporting throughout the election season. Stories were meant to focus on neighbors learning about candidates' platforms and engaging with their neighbors in civil conversations and debates in order to highlight how everyday people were dealing with the election and each other. Partners edited and published their own work, and larger organizations did their own photography, audio collection, and/or videography. Hyperlocal partners wrote their own stories, but were also offered back-editing on their stories and video and audio support.

As organizations published and/or aired their stories, Amditis collected links to the digital versions and cross-posted the content on the Voting Block website. He also added links and images to the Google Drive folder and shared them through email and Slack so that other organizations could cross-post (with proper credit, as laid out in the shared language document). Partners were encouraged to republish other partners' work and/or link to it on social media

The main community engagement activities were block level potlucks through which reporters convened community conversations to inform their reporting. With guidance from CIR, partners were responsible for arranging their own potlucks. In addition to planning documents and trainings, CIR supported some potlucks through stipends to cover the costs of the food and by arranging a facilitator, if needed. As a result of the potlucks, the reporting produced for Voting Block was driven by community interests and information needs as uncovered through direct community engagement.

CIR also worked with community partners to host additional potlucks. Partners included arts organizations and public libraries. For example, at Artworks Trenton, CIR co-hosted a conversation among the organizations artist members, and together with Streetlight (also in Trenton), CIR and CCM facilitated a conversation among community members experiencing homelessness.

Voting Block timeline²

Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2016: First conference call hosted to discuss potential collaboration around the upcoming NJ Governor's race. Gene Sonn, news director at WHYY/Newsworks, had first suggested collaboration in fall 2016 and we decided to wait until after the election and Thanksgiving holiday to discuss it.

Feb. 9, 2017: Follow-up call with interested partners to discuss collaboration. We started to envision what exactly it would look like and created a shared document.

March 1: Additional call with partners to further discuss out ideas. (We have emails back-and-forth from this time)

March 15: Additional call with partners to finalize ideas. We decided to call it Voting Block from here on out, and decided to do the neighbor/block approach.

Monday, May 1, 2017: First of weekly Voting Block group call (NOTE: calls continue on a weekly basis for the duration of the project -- last call was in November 2017)

May 10-June 12: "Large" partners identified blocks.

June 7: Funding received from Dodge to expand project to add hyperlocal and ethnic media outlets

Monday, June 12: Official launch date; first stories published. CCM published column announcing the project.

June 29: hyperlocal and ethnic media partners still being recruited

July 5: Potluck guide in final edits

² Timeline prepared by CCM and CIR.

July 12-ish: Another round of stories published

mid-July: outreach to gubernatorial candidates to join block gatherings, and attend a town hall at Montclair State

July 31: First call with new hyperlocal partners

Aug. 3: First call with NAM

Aug. 16: Reveal launches Political Potluck campaign

Aug. 16: weekly planning calls with hyperlocal partners start

Early Aug.: planning underway for Voting Block game show, to be held Oct. 21

Sept. 11-18-ish: Next stories published by both large and hyperlocal partners

Sept. 25: Reveal finalizes game show promo materials and circulates

Oct. 10: Candidate debate and viewing parties among blocks

Oct. 18: Second debate

Oct. 21: Game show at WFMU

Oct. 25-ish: Next round of stories published

Nov. 1: Next stories published and Groundsource campaign publication begins

Nov. 7: Election

Nov. 9: First Voting Block wrap-up stories published

Nov. 15: Final Voting Block weekly call and discussion of People's Agenda; Groundsource campaign continues; survey to Voting Block citizen participants circulated for final edits

Nov. 16-18: Wrap-up stories published

Nov. 28: Voting Block media partner survey circulated

Dec. 9: People's Agenda published, sent to governor

Activities and content³

³ Activities and Content prepared by CCM and CIR.

- 1) Founding partners produce profiles on their neighborhoods.** To kick off Voting Block, the founding cohort (WNYC, WHYY, NJ Spotlight and The Record) each chose a neighborhood to follow through the election and produce an overview story on their respective neighborhood's attitude toward politics and the election. The Asbury Park Press was originally in the partner cohort, but dropped out after their first story. Links to these first stories are below:
 - a) WNYC: [West Orange](#)
 - b) NJ Spotlight: [Long Valley](#)
 - c) WHYY: [Paulsboro](#)
 - d) The Record: [Westwood](#)
 - e) Asbury Park Press: [Jackson](#)

- 2) Founding partners host potlucks and produce second stories.** For the second batch of stories, founding partners convened a meal with neighbors in their chosen community with support from CIR, which paid for food and venue rental (if needed). Each partner produced a follow-up story sharing highlights from the conversation. Their stories are below:
 - a) WNYC:
 - i) [On the menu for this NJ barbecue: politics](#)
 - ii) [When a candidate for governor drops by a block party](#)
 - b) NJ Spotlight: [Peace in Long Valley? Not when it comes to politics](#)
 - c) WHYY: [Over dinner, Paulsboro residents dish over politics](#)
 - d) The Record: [Gov. candidates, want our vote? Come to Westwood](#)

- 3) Ethnic media partners produce family profiles.** Through coordination by New America Media, four ethnic media organizations contributed stories that were profiles of different families and communities in New Jersey and their attitudes toward politics and the election. NAM received a separate grant from the Dodge Foundation to support the production of these stories, so they were a bit different in approach than the other partners, but were included in the overall Voting Block project. Two publications, Zaman Amerika and Reporte Hispano, produced additional stories for Voting Block, including a potluck and a post-election wrap-up piece. All pieces produced by ethnic media organizations are listed below:
 - a) Reporte Hispano:
 - i) ["I can't vote, but my daughter can"](#)
 - ii) [For small biz owners, taxes a priority in NJ governor's race](#)
 - iii) [Hispanics in Elizabeth City apathetic about the election](#)
 - b) Zaman Amerika:
 - i) [Immigrant, Muslim and voting Republican in New Jersey](#)
 - ii) [More questions than answers in upcoming gubernatorial election](#)
 - iii) [Turkish-American voters look for lower taxes and a friend to immigrants in next NJ governor](#)
 - iv) [Woodland Park's Turkish community looks ahead after election](#)

- c) Sing Tao Daily:
 - i) [New Jersey couple continues lifetime of activism in Chinese community](#)
 - ii) [For one entrepreneur, American dream means helping immigrants live with “pride and dignity”](#)
- d) African Sun Times: [Nigerian community chief: “We need a change in the mansion”](#)

4) Hyperlocal partners join and produce profiles of their neighborhoods. In late July, Voting Block added more than a dozen hyperlocal news publications to participate in Voting Block. Each outlet was tasked with producing two main stories: A profile of a neighborhood in the community they serve and a story based on a potluck they hosted in their neighborhood. Here’s a list of the hyperlocals’ profile stories:

- a) Montclair Local: [Cloverhill](#)
- b) TAPinto Newark: [Downtown Newark](#)
- c) Shorebeat: [Ortley Beach](#)
- d) SNJ Today: [Vineland](#)
- e) Village Green: [Maplewood](#)
- f) Jersey Shore Hurricane News: [Asbury Park](#)
- g) Route 40: [Bungalow Park](#)
- h) Brick City Live: [Forest Hill](#)
- i) Morristown Green: [Washington’s Headquarters](#)
- j) NJ Pen: [Collingswood](#)
- k) CivicStory: [Berkeley Heights](#)
- l) New Brunswick Today: [Downtown New Brunswick](#)

5) Hyperlocal partners host their potlucks. For their second story as part of Voting Block, each hyperlocal partner convened a meal with neighbors in their community and produced a recap of the conversations. Attendance and participation for each potluck ranged. Links to the potluck recap stories are below:

- a) Trenton 365: [Jacques Howard hosts voter roundtable to discuss issues](#)
- b) SNJ Today:
 - i) [Vineland residents gather to discuss issues in governor’s race](#)
 - ii) [South Jersey residents feel ignored in state politics](#)
- c) Village Green: [Maplewood residents age 9 to 90 hash out political divide on Elmwood Avenue](#)
- d) Montclair Local: [Murphy candidacy prompts unease in Montclair](#)
- e) Route 40: [Fix the bulkhead on your way out: Atlantic City’s Bungalow Park addresses next governor](#)
- f) CivicStory: [Berkeley Heights neighbors talk list of priorities for new governor](#)
- g) TAPinto Newark: [For residents of downtown Newark at dinner, who becomes governor matters as city changes](#)
- h) NJ Pen: [Apathy, anxiety ahead of Tuesday’s vote](#)
- i) Brick City Live: [Forest Hill residents: Newark and New Jersey must lock arms and embrace the future](#)

- j) Morristown Green: [Change governors? The whole system needs an overhaul, say these voters](#)
- 6) Founding partners post additional, issue-based stories from their neighborhoods.** Our cohort of founding partners produced several stories that looked at specific issues in the election and how participants in their chosen neighborhoods felt about them. Here's a list of the issue-specific stories:
- a) The Record: [Property taxes too high? Yes. But maybe that's ok, say some Westwood residents](#)
 - b) WNYC: [For these NJ voters, Washington trumps governor's race](#)
 - c) WHYY: [What will NJ's next governor do about the decline in housing affordability?](#)
 - d) NJ Spotlight: [Long Valley neighbors find accord and affinity across party lines](#)
- 7) Founding partners host debate watch parties with their neighborhoods.** Each of our founding partners gathered participants in their neighborhood to watch the debate together and discuss their opinion afterward for a story.
- a) WNYC: [New Jersey gubernatorial debate recap](#)
 - b) NJ Spotlight: [Long Valley block on the debate: unimpressed and unconvinced](#)
 - c) The Record: [Stop attacking each other, voters say](#)
 - d) WHYY: [In gubernatorial debate, Paulsboro residents see politics as usual](#)
- 8) Students from three colleges participate in Voting Block.** As part of Voting Block classes at both Rutgers and Montclair State University reported stories in New Brunswick and Montclair, respectively, to get local insights on the election. In addition, The Wall, a student newspaper at The College of New Jersey that primarily serves people experiencing homelessness, [hosted a potluck](#) with homeless participants in Trenton.
- 9) Residents and community organizations host their own Voting Block potlucks.** We received interest from more than 20 individuals and organizations who wrote us about hosting a Voting Block potluck in their own neighborhood. All told, we had about five additional potlucks that were hosted in different communities by community members, including a meal hosted by the Newark Public Library, and an event that we [co-facilitated with Artworks Trenton](#).
- 10) WNYC solicits and answers questions for the candidates from the public.** As part of Voting Block and their election coverage, WNYC created a tool that allowed anyone to submit a question for the gubernatorial candidates, which partners in Voting Block would try to help answer. Partners helped promote the campaign, which garnered more than 400 questions from the public. WNYC then grouped the questions by topic and answered them in bulk.
- a) [Ask a New Jersey gubernatorial candidate anything](#)
 - b) [5 top questions voters have for New Jersey gubernatorial candidates](#)
 - c) [Answers to your big questions for the next NJ governor](#)

11) WNYC aired segments promoting other news outlets' reporting in Voting Block.

WNYC's Nancy Solomon appeared on-air several times to tout not only her own reporting as part of Voting Block, but others' work as well, helping thread some of the themes we were hearing. Here are the main segments:

- a) [As blocks multiply, a patchwork quilt of politics emerges](#)
- b) [In Westwood, NJ, the left and right meet on one issue: affordability](#)
- c) [Downtown Newark voters grapple with growth](#)
- d) [Forget red or blue. In governor's race, it's all about green for Westwood voters](#)

12) CIR and CCM host Electorama game show with WFMU. Building on the stand-up comedy show that CIR created with WFMU during a previous statewide reporting collaboration, Dirty Little Secrets, we teamed up to host another comedy show around the governor's election, this time with a game-show twist. CIR and WFMU commissioned comedian Jo Firestone to design and host a game show in the style of The Dating Game that featured gubernatorial candidates as potential suitors for three comedians. The event, Electorama was hosted at WFMU on October 21 and livestreamed on WFMU's website. Here's a [recap](#) of the show, with a full video of the performance. CIR also hosted a remote viewing party and a trivia party in Trenton with WHYY.

13) Creation of a People's Agenda. For one of the last components of Voting Block, news partners used an SMS campaign created through Groundsource to ask NJ residents to share the main thing they wanted Governor-elect Phil Murphy to address in his first 100 days. We received more than 370 responses, which we used to create the People's Agenda, compiled from quotes and grouping the main topics that we heard about. Here's the [final agenda](#), which we sent to Murphy's incoming administration.

14) Partners publish post-election stories to wrap up the project. Many partners in Voting Block produced stories after the election to gauge participating neighbors' reaction to Murphy's victory and hopes for his administration. Their stories are below:

- a) [Berkeley Heights Voting Block voices hope, with a side of caution](#)
- b) [In the wake of Murphy victory, downtown Newark hopes for action, not hype](#)
- c) [Woodland Park's Turkish community looks ahead after election](#)
- d) [End the takeover already: residents want to know the governor's Atlantic City plans](#)
- e) [Cloverhill Place residents ready for Murphy to get to work](#)
- f) [Sitting down for a peaceful, post-election conversation in Long Valley](#)
- g) [Murphy wins, campaign signs disappear and Elmwood Avenue neighbors remain divided](#)

III. Impact

A. Impact on audiences / community members

In total, Voting Block partners published more than 70 stories and held two dozen neighborhood potlucks, at which more than 100 people participated. CCM conducted a survey among potluck participants; however, the small number of responses (ten) do not allow for generalizations to be made from the survey results. In interviews with media partners, they were asked questions about community participation and audience feedback on the project. Taken together, these data suggest that potluck participants appreciated the engagement, have a deeper relationship with the media organization based on a gratitude for taking their perspectives seriously, and that they were potentially more civically engaged and/or informed as a result of their participation. There are little data to suggest impact of published Voting Block content on audiences.

The survey results, while limited, show some interesting trends. When asked what participants “liked best” about Voting Block (open ended), all respondents pointed to the opportunity to speak with neighbors, and particularly those whom they did not previously know and who held different political opinions and/or perspectives.

Survey results also suggest that participants were motivated to look up more information about issues that came up during the community conversations. Nearly all respondents said they’d recommend participating in future Voting Block events to a friend.

Participants in Voting Block events overwhelmingly said they voted in the N.J. gubernatorial election, but that their participation in Voting Block did not contribute to their decision to vote.

Voting Block reporters said that the feedback they received from community members who participated in potlucks was different than that which they typically get. In particular, they said that community members often expressed gratitude for the opportunity to get involved and meet their neighbors, but also for the journalist taking the time to listen to their perspectives. One reporter said:

“I think they saw that there was some kind of public service element in having a journalist sit and listen to them. They felt like they had opinions and views and thoughts that matter and were important. It was really significant to them that we were listening and recording and going to disseminate their thoughts.”

And some participants told reporters that they were thinking about their role in politics in a new way. For example, one media partner relayed:

“One of the women who I did a story on about an undecided voter was telling me that because she was a part of this project, she’s not paying much more attention to politics and thinking about it more. One of the guys even suggested that she run for office.”

On the other hand, the same reporter said that getting community participation for community conversations through potlucks was “like pulling teeth.”

In interviews, media partners said that they did not receive audience feedback on the content they produced for Voting Block that was significantly different than normal.

Community organization partners that held potlucks said that the participants felt like their experiences were validated through their interactions with CIR and CCM staff.

B. Impact on partners

Media partners

Voting Block had significant impact on media partners - both at the organizational and individual levels. Through surveys and interviews with media partners, this report finds evidence that Voting Block created effective structures to support collaborative reporting, deepened relationships among media outlets and reporters in the greater N.J. area, and, to a lesser extent, built capacity and expertise for partner news organizations to do direct community engagement.

According to survey results, the most important aspects of Voting Block to media partners were:

- Hosting potlucks to spark political conversations among neighbors. (57%)
- Being part of a larger network of New Jersey newsrooms covering the election in a unique way. (49%)
- Having each newsroom focus on one community in New Jersey. (49%)

Collaboration is difficult, especially when it involves established institutions with competing interests. In order to encourage participation, organizing partners provided financial support to most participants. Additionally, information and expectations about the project were made accessible through a shared Google Drive folder. Organizing partners made weekly phone calls the central pillar of their communication strategy, and complemented this with a Slack channel, one-on-one phone calls and meetings, and email.

In interviews, most media partners said they they had participated in at least one other collaborative reporting initiative in the twelve months prior to Voting Block, at least two of which were CCM projects (Shadows of Liberty, and Dirty Little Secrets, also with CIR). In the case of Voting Block, participants said that it was an easy decision to participate for three main reasons. First, partners had pre-existing relationships with CCM, CIR, and/or NAM, and assumed that the project would be well-organized and worthwhile, based on these relationships. Second, many partners referred to the financial support available for the project and said they can't afford to turn down money, regardless of the initiative. And finally, partners said they would have been covering the elections, anyway, and so a collective effort was appealing.

When asked how Voting Block was different than a reporter's normal workflow, many said that the engagement was a new way to connect with audiences. Reporters emphasized that they don't typically get together with community members just to listen.

“It was a really eye-opening experience for me. I’m so glad that we did it because we got to strengthen our ties to the community.”

“Getting a whole bunch of people together for the express purpose of just listening - that wasn’t something we had done before.”

“In my normal working world I would never do the stories where I get people together and have them talk to each other and then air some version of that. We just don’t really do stuff like that.”

Newsroom partners also said that they built relationships with peers in other organizations, and that they liked feeling like they were part of something bigger than themselves and their organizations. Reporters for hyperlocals especially emphasized the value of feeling like they were part of a network.

“It’s a hugely different feeling when you’re part of a collaborative network. Just the feeling of being part of a bigger newsroom again was a big lift and an incentive to do the work.”

Over the course of the project, partners say that they learned to work better with other organizations. Partners said that they liked being able to share content across publications, even if their organizations didn’t do so as frequently as they might have wished. Increased capacity for collaboration is especially demonstrated as print partners began to gather audio for use by radio partners. One partner from a radio station said, “I’ve seen a real progression and growth in working with print partners, and how much more time and effort they’re putting into sending us tape. It used to be impossible to get tape from anybody who wasn’t already a radio producer or reporter, and now it’s like we got some great tape from some of our partners, even from some of the hyperlocals. So that really helped because that allowed us to get stuff on the air from other blocks.”

Most partners said that Voting Block community engagement was different than their normal way of reporting and engaging with their audiences. Partners said that the goals and activities for the community engagement elements were less clear than the reporting goals and requirements. While the information was covered in phone calls and available in Google docs, not all partners participated in every call and perhaps did not carefully review all materials provided. Once the engagement activities were understood, partners said that they required more effort to get community members to participate than they had anticipated. For example, partners said it was often difficult to identify participants for the potlucks.

NAM was the key organizing partner for ethnic media, and was going through its own organizational challenges at the time of this project (NAM ultimately dissolved its organization in December 2018). Due to this, ethnic media partners said they felt, at times, like they got information later than other media partners and didn’t have as much time to plan events as the larger partners. One former NAM employee said that, from their perspective, the most beneficial

part of Voting Block for their member organizations was the partnering of larger organizations with ethnic media to “actually do the reporting.”

“Usually the bigger outlet would just do the whole thing themselves and just offer the ethnic reporter a contributing byline. This way was better, because the perspective was actually from their community, which means its more nuanced. Rather than just giving news tips to the top dog reporter. That actually happened on this project which I thought was great.”

Regardless of the difficult nature of community engagement, most partners said they want to do more in the future. One partner said, “I thought it was a really useful kind of exercise in reaching out directly to community members and featuring their viewpoints and their stories.” When asked specifically about the comedy show, partners said they were unsure what it was, but that they would have liked to be more involved.

Overall, 71% of survey respondents said they are “very likely” to participate in another collaborative project like Voting Block in the future. For the next project, 21% of participants said they could use more help on pre-story brainstorming, multimedia, and project and story feedback and editing.

Community partners

Community partners said that hosting potlucks with CIR and CCM allowed them to engage their members in conversations about politics in a new way. Community partners said that the potluck guide was helpful for organizing the event and only had to be “slightly tweaked” for their purposes. Community partners emphasized that CIR’s support was instrumental in organizing the potlucks.

“Cristina and Annie were great. We had numerous conversations leading up to the event and they were always very flexible and open to tailoring the conversation format to meet the needs of our artists and community. That paid dividends. It definitely was a meaningful evening for us.”

IV. Learning and recommendations

1. Relationships matter.

Most partners said they joined the collaborative due to a preexisting relationship with CCM, CIR, or NAM. Regardless of how partners felt about the success of Voting Block, they emphasized that they value their relationships with these coordinating partners, and especially praised the work CCM is doing in N.J.

2. So does money.

In addition to relationships, partners said they did the work because there was money attached. Many said that they'd be willing to do collaborative work in the future - especially if there is money attached.

3. Simplify engagement.

Clearly state the goals and activities associated with community engagement at the outset, as done with reporting requirements and goals. Because community engagement, and especially structured events that promote deep listening to community members in order to inform reporting, is new to many reporters, the process can seem confusing. A simple graphic representation of how engagement and events dovetail with reporting and content could help to alleviate some confusion. Additionally, partnering journalists and/or organizations with local non-media partners (i.e., libraries, arts organizations, community associations) that have experience convening community members and organizing events could create fruitful partnerships and support the engagement work done by journalists.

4. Good communication, but less frequent and/or shorter phone calls, and ditch the Slack channel.

Only 8% of partners said Slack was useful. Weekly partner calls were generally seen as useful, but many participants suggested they could be shorter or bi-weekly.

5. Fully loop in hyperlocals and ethnic media to the project.

Hyperlocals and ethnic media appreciated the weekly phone check ins, but they said they felt out of the loop. Future projects might consider an "all team" monthly check in to ensure that all partners are on the same page and have ample opportunity to build relationships.

6. Gather more audience data from partners.

Main goals of Voting Block was to increase awareness, knowledge, and engagement among partners' audiences; however, little to no data were gathered from partners to indicate whether these goals were achieved. In the future, identify key indicators and data necessary and include access to this data in partner MOUs. For example, MOUs can include sharing audience reach indicators (unique page views, downloads, broadcast #s).