

BAY
RISING

CONNECTING THE DOTS:

Digital Organizing
to Build Power



● ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who spoke with us about your experiences and recommendations for the Digital Organizing Training and Strategy (DOTS) Fellowship. Your willingness to share your opinions, insights, and stories provided the backbone for this report and will help us to make meaningful improvements in future DOTS Fellowship programs. We thank the funders of the 2021 DOTS Fellowship: the San Francisco Foundation, the California Endowment, the Haas Jr. Foundation, and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. This report was prepared by reimagine collective on behalf of Bay Rising.



A NOTE FROM BAY RISING

Appreciation goes out to our first DOTS Fellows! They are an amazing group of young people that persevered through an organizing program entirely online, while taking classes, and dealing with the everyday challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

THANK YOU to all our organizational leaders that jumped into this program with us. We only had a few months to design the program and recruit fellows and it would not have worked without them. Finally, we want to thank Myra Chow from the San Francisco Foundation, and the leadership team from the Haas Jr. Foundation, who were our initial funders for the project.

This report features the 2021 DOTS Fellowship, which was designed by Bay Rising to provide training and capacity building to young organizers and partner organizations. The report summarizes the results of the evaluation of the DOTS Fellowship, shares learnings gained, and describes the impact and value of the program. Collectively, these findings make the case to continue to build and grow the DOTS Fellowship.

THE REPORT WILL ADDRESS:

- **THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL ORGANIZING IN OUR TIME: COVID-19 AND BEYOND**
- **WHY A FELLOWSHIP WORKS: ADDRESSING EMERGENT COMMUNITY NEEDS**
- **THE DOTS FELLOWSHIP YEAR 1: ITS VALUE AND ITS IMPACT**
- **OUR NEXT PHASE: SUPPORTING DOTS 2.0 TO START IN SUMMER 2022**

Bay Rising is a growing alliance of community-led organizations across the Bay Area. Bay Rising is the only regional civic engagement organization that organizes with working-class people and people of color as voters in the Bay Area year-round. We organize so that we'll have what it takes to shift the power back to our communities and become co-creators of our future alongside our elected officials.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL ORGANIZING IN OUR TIME: COVID-19 AND BEYOND

We live in a time when there are many new, creative ways to bring community members into our fights for justice and to apply pressure to our campaign targets.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, movement organizations in the Bay Area were trying to connect the dots between online and offline organizing in order to strengthen their campaigns.

Digital organizing is about using new digital tools to widen and deepen our organizing reach and integrating these tools with offline or in-person organizing work. It is a major growth edge for our organizations and a critical strategy for reaching more people and winning ambitious campaigns that will build the power of working-class communities of color.

It's such an honor and I'm actually grateful to be part of somebody's development, you know, personally, professionally, politically. I think it's just really, really important for our movement. We need that pipeline of people who are coming in and we need that training, we need that mentorship.

Partner Organization

A lot more organizations are seeing digital organizing through a different lens that incorporates the offline with online a little bit more: where the online is a terrain on which you can meet people and bring them into collective action, or... where you can link people together who are excited about the same things.

DOTS Trainer

WHY A FELLOWSHIP WORKS: ADDRESSING EMERGENT COMMUNITY NEEDS

Bay Rising made two observations in the fall of 2020. First, the imperative to grow our digital organizing capacity was compounded by the sudden onset of the pandemic. Many organizations within our network were exhausted from trying to quickly transition so much of their organizing work online, and had limited capacity to learn new tools and integrate them into their ongoing organizing campaigns.

In addition, there were a number of young BIPOC organizers in the Bay Area who had just completed a rigorous electoral organizing fellowship with Seed the Vote and Generation Rising, and were eager to continue building power in their communities beyond the election. These talented organizers were energized and uniquely positioned to address the emerging needs of our network organizations.

Bay Rising found a way to respond to both of these needs by creating a fellowship that would place these young people in local grassroots organizations within our alliance, provide them with the support and training they needed to make meaningful contributions to these organizations, and help add much-needed capacity to our region's digital organizing work.

Organizing for collective change is hard work, and we believe that it's important for young people committed to building power in their communities to be able to deepen this commitment in a supportive environment. It is critical that young BIPOC organizers build the skills and relationships needed to grow into the organizers they want to be and to find their place within our movement landscape.

FELLOWS

"We are in charge of our future."

"I was [host org]'s tech-savvy niece."

"Engaging, welcoming, confusing (at first), hopeful, community, resistance."

"Exactly what I needed."

"Vital in gaining confidence & pushing my limits."

PARTNERS

"Exposure to what is possible."

"Zero to hero very quickly."

"Representative of our community, building strength."

"Wonderful experience learning with talented young organizers!"

"[Our fellow] brought creativity and wow'ed us all!"

DIGITAL ORGANIZING TRAINING AND STRATEGY FELLOWSHIP

The DOTS Fellowship was designed to build the long-term digital organizing capacity of Bay Rising and its partner groups so that even after the COVID-19 restrictions on in-person organizing ease, the region will emerge stronger with an integrated set of tools to engage community members, amplify Bay Rising's collective voice, and build power for the long haul.

The fellowship connected young organizers to Bay Area organizations rooted in working-class communities of color. Over the course of six to eight months, each fellow dedicated fifteen to twenty hours per week building and innovating the digital organizing capacity at their assigned organization.

Fellows received about 40 hours of digital organizing training, peer support, and coaching. They also had the opportunity to earn a Digital Campaigning Certification from Social Movement Technologies (SMT).

Partner organizations assigned a site supervisor to facilitate orientations to their organization, clarify projects and priorities, and provide consistent support for the duration of the fellowship. Each organization also received optional digital organizing coaching and grant support to help them invest in digital organizing tools.

THE DOTS FELLOWSHIP YEAR 1: ITS VALUE AND ITS IMPACT

The impact of the DOTS Fellowship is organized into three levels:

Fellows, Partners, and Community.¹

The DOTS Fellowship developed digital organizing skills among young organizers and connected some to job opportunities. Most importantly, the fellowship built a community of like-minded peers, which deepened fellows' commitment to staying in movement work long-term.

At the organizational level, the DOTS Fellowship:

- Provided needed digital organizing capacity for partner organizations
- Identified additional support that partners needed to implement a more systematic digital organizing program

At the community level, the DOTS Fellowship:

- Developed the workforce of young organizers and motivated them to work with organizations in the Bay Area
- Contributed to multiple campaign efforts in the Bay Area

The DOTS Fellowship was successful in developing young organizers' skills in digital organizing. For some fellows, the fellowship led them to new career opportunities (e.g., hired as staff, promoted within the organization). Most survey respondents (77%; 10 out of 13) shared that their confidence in digital organizing increased through their participation in DOTS. The fellows, in their interviews and on the surveys, shared that trainings on work planning and time management, social media posting, and graphic design were most helpful and useful in their work.

The fact that you can plug into an [organization] that maybe you've had your eye on, but you [didn't] know how to get started... I never thought I would interact with [the organization that hired the fellow] and yet here I am... That is the relationship that I got from DOTS and I think it's relationship building, and it's communicating, and it's deep community [building] with folks who I think share a similar vision of organizing, and [of] radical politics.

Fellow

"I think I'm celebrating just becoming more comfortable with organizing using digital tools. So in that way I feel like it was a really successful fellowship because I do feel more confident [about] being able to create graphics and advocate for campaign work to be done online, and to do a better job at integrating... some on-the-ground work that I know that org[anization]s are doing... then matching that with their social media as well."

Fellow

¹ DOTS Fellows and partners were invited to participate in a voluntary, anonymous, survey mid-program (April) and post-program (June and August). Selected fellows, partners, and Bay Rising staff were interviewed post-program. Data from the surveys and the interviews were used to identify the impacts of the DOTS Fellowship.

THE DOTS FELLOWSHIP YEAR 1: FELLOWS

DOTS created a supportive and safe community for the fellows to connect personally and professionally with other young organizers going through similar experiences.

It created a space for them to collectively brainstorm, problem-solve, and learn together while navigating a new organization, new skill set, and new experiences as a whole.

Most survey respondents (92%; 12 out of 13) reported that having a sense of community with other DOTS Fellows was important to them and reported that they trust, care for, and can talk to other fellows about their problems. These respondents also reported that they felt important needs were met through this community. The fellows, in their interviews, shared a similar sentiment:

92%



“A lot of them [fellows] I would consider friends. We do support each other. It's not just we follow each other on social media. We actually talk. Recently I made a crowd fund because of my dad's hospital bills. Some DOTS fellows actually donated and I was like, 'Wow, that's so sweet.'”

Fellow



“I am celebrating the relationships I've made through fellows and the organizations and through Bay Rising. I [am] just celebrating the future of my work with [the organization] because I feel really tied to their cause, or just yeah their values and so I'm still gonna volunteer.”

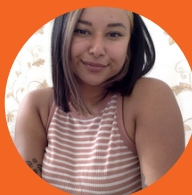
Fellow



“[DOTS] is like a really special place and opportunity to build community across like a lot of communities, if that makes sense. And meet other young people that are really passionate and really ready to see really big change and implement really big change in the world. ... It was a really special place to learn alongside people who were really critical of our society and they genuinely want to change it because they also have a stake, like their well being is tied [to] that change.”

Fellow

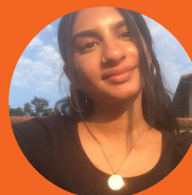
MEET THE FELLOWS



RICHA



AASIYA



BISMA



FATIMA



JOSHUA



ALEX



RIO



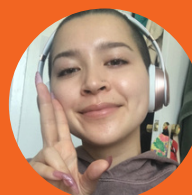
STELLA



EMILY



ISABEL



FEI



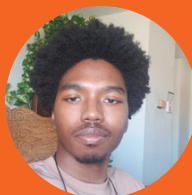
DABNEY



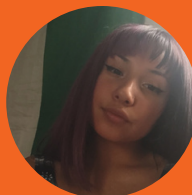
SABRINA



FERNANDA



SEAN



SOPHIE



SARAH



FELIZ



JENNIFER



RICARDO



SAM

Not pictured: Caleb, Paula, Jackie and Natalie
[find out more about our Fellows here](#)

- [Asian Pacific Environmental Network \(APEN\)](#)
- [Black Organizing Project](#)
- [Causa Justa::Just Cause](#)
- [Chinese Progressive Association of SF](#)
- [Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth](#)
- [Communities for a New California Education Fund](#)
- [Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice \(CURYJ\)](#)
- [Dolores Street Community Services](#)
- [East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy \(EBASE\)](#)
- [Fresno Barrios Unidos](#)
- [Housing Rights Committee of SF](#)
- [Jobs with Justice SF](#)
- [Justice Reinvestment Coalition](#)
- [Justice Teams Network](#)
- [Lift Up Contra Costa](#)
- [Mujeres Unidas y Activas](#)
- [Oakland Rising](#)
- [People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights \(PODER SF\)](#)
- [SF Rising](#)

MANY
THANKS
TO OUR
PARTNERS

THE DOTS FELLOWSHIP YEAR 1: PARTNERS

Having a DOTS Fellow helped the partner organizations to do more and explore new strategies. For the partners, the COVID-19 pandemic posed new challenges, such as keeping their community members engaged virtually. The DOTS Fellowship provided an opportunity to grow the organization's capacity in digital organizing.

“

“The fellowship gave our [communications] team much needed added capacity especially around posting to social media, graphic design, and running analytics.”

Partner Organization

“

“[The DOTS fellowship] allowed us to deploy new digital [organizing] experiments and level up our comms work. It was also deeply needed during a year filled with rapid response and crisis communications.”

Partner Organization

This did not come without challenges. The DOTS Fellows and partner organizations helped identify some critical needs the partner organizations had around digital organizing. However, this pilot DOTS program was not able to address these larger issues, which we plan to address in the program design for the next round of the fellowship. These needs are discussed later in the report.

COMMUNITY

THE DOTS FELLOWSHIP YEAR 1: COMMUNITY

100%

The DOTS Fellowship has developed the workforce in the Bay Area by providing young organizers with on-the-ground digital organizing training. The fellowship has also strengthened a community of young organizers that can function as a long-term support network. All survey respondents (13 out of 13) indicated that they are very likely to work with organizations in the Bay after completing the DOTS Fellowship. A few of the fellows were hired at the partner organizations or other Bay Area organizations.

“

I actually just got that [digital campaigning] certificate from SMT. That's a big accomplishment for me. That and also getting my communications job with [organization name]. At first I wasn't so sure like I really want to work with [organization name] but once I got more involved with DOTS and my other fellowship and I had more time with a full time staff, I got to see that I really enjoyed working with them. [I got] my certificate and [got] the job.

Fellow

In addition, the DOTS Fellowship has the potential to increase community engagement and bring campaign wins. Some partner organizations shared that they had some campaign wins and increased community engagement in numbers or quality. However, this depended on the organization's capacity to utilize the fellow's skills and interests to advance the digital organizing work of their organization, and the match between the fellow's skillset and the organization's needs.

“

“There was [a situation] around May Day, she really helped... tell the story of Manuel being evicted from home. [Fellow] helped get that story out there and do a campaign countdown toward May Day... that particular social media campaign... generated a lot of support. We did a fundraiser that raised \$900 for costs to move [Manuel] into another place. [Fellow] helped get a lot more exposure for this case... [they helped] tell the story and get more visibility so that's what really kicked [campaign] into gear.”

Partner Organization

“

“We won the \$32 million in rent relief in the city's budget. [The fellow] did more blasting stuff... tweeting or writing an appeal to engage people around housing [and] demand that issue.”

Partner Organization

OUR NEXT PHASE

supporting
supporting
supporting

DOTS 2.0

to start in summer 2022



While the program had tremendous impact on the fellows, and in turn on the partner organizations they worked for, there is opportunity to amplify the impact in further DOTS Fellowship programs.

EXPAND DOTS PROGRAM

Timing was a significant challenge mentioned by both fellows and partners. They shared that the impact on organizations and fellows would have been exponentially higher if the program was longer than six months.

INCREASE PARTNER SUPPORT

The relationships varied between partner organizations and their fellows. Organizations that had greater capacity in digital communications were able to integrate their fellows into their larger communications strategy quickly, easily and effectively. For partners with less digital organizing capacity, the “on ramp” for fellows took some more time. Specifically, partner organizations requested capacity building on developing digital organizing strategies and integrating digital and off-line strategies. Some organizations also needed additional support in navigating how to work with fellows and their skillset, including supervision and coaching. A tiered capacity building approach may be used to support the different levels of partner organization capacity.

[The fellow] spent a lot of time learning... I felt like that was a big curve. We didn't really start to see it manifest [until] more toward the last couple months. It seems like right when we were all getting a little more proficient... she transitioned out. It felt like a lot of investment. I think what would have had more impact if [it was] a longer period of time.

Partner Organization

Many of our organizations would say they're just getting started [in] building out all of their hopes and dreams when it comes to digital organizing.

Bay Rising Staff Member

TELL THE STORY OF DOTS

There were many successful and inspirational stories of fellows and the impact of being a part of the DOTS Fellowship. It would be worthwhile to support creative projects like digital storytelling, in depth case studies, and written pieces that can serve as best practices and inspiration for other organizations.

(like this one)

The story of OLIVIA²

Olivia started working at her organization prior to joining DOTS. Although she had started working at the organization (i.e., editing videos, supporting events), she did not have specific tasks. She was a “floater” doing tasks “all over the place.” Through DOTS, she built concrete digital organizing skills and meaningful relationships with her coworkers. Knowing how much her organization needed the digital organizing skills that this fellowship provided, she was able to find her niche. In addition, time with other DOTS Fellows helped her feel less alone. But more importantly, the group helped her by validating the types of questions and challenges she faced at work. They were there to provide the support she needed, whether it was emotional or technical support. Olivia shared that “DOTS is a really good program for young people who want to mix or expand more on their digital organizing careers or if they want to go that pathway... It’s a really good program to find yourself and your career path.” At the end of DOTS, she received a digital organizing certificate from SMT and became the first communications coordinator at her organization.

Being in the 2021 DOTS Fellowship has been life changing. Definitely one of the most important stepping stones in my life as well as for the work I hope to accomplish and be a part of.

Fellow

Every single fellow participating in the DOTS Fellowship has been [one] of the most passionate young organizers I have met and I know we will all continue to cross paths in the work we do even after the fellowship has ended.

Fellow

CALL TO ACTION

CONCRETE STEPS WE CAN MAKE TOGETHER

In the increasingly virtual landscape, here are some concrete next steps that we can make together to continue to build power and keep our communities organized, supported, and powerful.

1

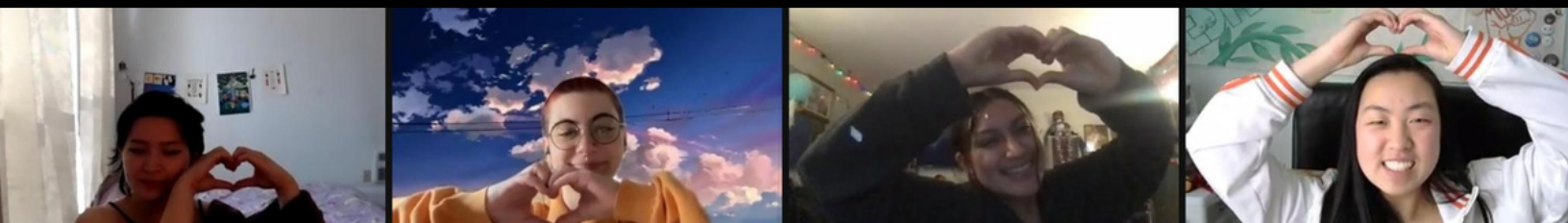
LEARN: Visit [our website](#) to learn more about our leadership development work and sign up for updates.

2

RESOURCE LONG-TERM DIGITAL ORGANIZING IN THE BAY: Connect with us and Bay Rising partner organizations to explore potential alignment and partnerships.

3

COMMIT: Get in touch and discuss how you can help. Registration for the 2022 DOTS Fellowship opens in Spring 2022. Please share with young BIPOC leaders ready to connect the DOTS.





BAY
RISING

END

