

CITY OF OAKLAND

DEMOCRACY DOLLARS:

Outreach & Engagement Strategy

A framework for equitable outreach, education, and participation

December 2025



Prepared by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oakland is the first city in California—and only the second in the nation—to establish a “Democracy Dollars” program, an innovative approach to public campaign financing. Administered by the Public Ethics Commission (PEC), the program seeks to increase transparency, accountability, equity, and accessibility in how local elections are financed. Approved by more than 70 percent of Oakland voters in 2022, Democracy Dollars aims to curb the influence of large donors and expand civic participation by empowering residents to direct public campaign funds to the candidates of their choice. The program’s ultimate goal is to enable candidates to run viable campaigns funded solely by public dollars, leveling the playing field and strengthening public trust in Oakland’s local electoral system.

This report provides the Public Ethics Commission and the City of Oakland with a comprehensive outreach and engagement strategy to guide the successful implementation of Democracy Dollars. Developed by the Local Policy Lab (LPL) in collaboration with PEC staff, the strategy draws on stakeholder interviews, national program research, and local data analysis. It establishes a roadmap for building awareness, understanding, and participation in the program—particularly among communities historically underrepresented in civic and electoral processes—leading up to its anticipated launch during the 2028 election cycle.

Local Policy Lab recommends an outreach and education framework grounded in the City of Oakland’s established principles of racial equity, inclusive community engagement, and accessible communications.

In alignment with [Measure W](#)’s mandate to “ensure all Oakland residents have an opportunity to participate in local elections” and to “prioritize expanding participation among historically underrepresented communities,” as well as the City’s Race & Equity Administrative Instruction (AI 580) and Inclusive Community Engagement Policy (AI6802), the strategy adopts a layered, equity-centered approach to reaching residents who face the greatest barriers to civic participation.

Key elements of the recommended framework include:

- **Cross-departmental coordination:** Establishing a Democracy Dollars Working Group to align messaging, coordinate outreach, and leverage existing City infrastructure.
- **Community-led outreach:** Launching a Community Outreach Grant Program to resource trusted community-based organizations to lead culturally and linguistically relevant engagement.
- **Accessible communications:** Ensuring all materials comply with the City’s ADA Effective Communication Policy ([AI 123](#)) and language-access requirements, including plain-language, multilingual, and accessible formats.
- **Trusted messengers:** Implementing a community ambassador program to train neighborhood messengers, particularly in priority districts, to serve as peer educators.
- **Evaluation and accountability:** Defining clear metrics, public reporting expectations, and feedback loops aligned with City best practices to support inclusive engagement and continuous program adaptation.

Implementation will unfold in phases leading up to the 2028 election cycle, with key milestones tied to program readiness, funding, and staffing capacity.

Phase 1: Strategy and Infrastructure Development (Late 2026)

By late 2026, the City should:

- Finalize the outreach and engagement strategy;
- Establish interdepartmental coordination structures;
- Identify design and evaluation partners; and
- Launch the internal Democracy Dollars Working Group.

Phase 2: Program Build-Out and Pilot Engagement (2027)

In 2027 (key milestones tied to the July 2027 Democracy Dollars Fund appropriation decision) the City should:

- Convene a Community Advisory Committee;
- Develop program branding and multilingual outreach materials;
- Issue the first round of Community Outreach Grants; and
- Pilot engagement activities across districts.

Phase 3: Full Implementation and Evaluation (2028)

In 2028, the program will move into full implementation and evaluation, including:

- Tracking participation, Democracy Dollar use, and engagement outcomes; and
- Post-election report assessing program reach, impacts, and lessons learned.

Collectively, these recommendations provide a pragmatic and equity-centered path to engaging Oakland’s diverse communities in the Democracy Dollars program. Implemented together, they are designed to expand participation in local elections and strengthen public confidence in Oakland’s electoral processes.

Local Policy Lab Project Team

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Defining a “Layered, Equity-Centered” Outreach Approach

Oakland defines equity-centered engagement across several citywide policies. This report uses the term consistent with those definitions.

1. Prioritizing those most impacted by barriers to participation

Oakland’s Race & Equity Administrative Instruction ([AI 580](#)) directs departments to “remove barriers to opportunity” and focus on communities most impacted by historic and current disparities.

2. Designing engagement that is inclusive and accessible

The City’s Inclusive Community Engagement Policy ([AI 6802](#)) requires staff to remove obstacles such as language, transportation, childcare, digital access, and power imbalances.

3. Communicating in plain-language, multilingual, and ADA-compliant formats

The ADA Effective Communications Policy requires all public materials to be accessible and usable by all residents.

4. Using multiple layers of outreach and trusted messengers

AI 6802 emphasizes partnering with community-based organizations and trusted leaders to reach communities historically underserved by City processes.

5. Aligning with Measure W’s requirement to expand participation in local elections

Measure W directs the PEC to “ensure equitable participation,” including by conducting outreach in all major languages and by partnering with community organizations to help residents understand and use Democracy Dollars.

This framework is not new—it implements existing City policy and operationalizes Measure W’s intent to increase participation among underserved communities.

Part 1: Background & Context

Measure W & the Oakland Fair Elections Act

In November 2022, Oakland voters approved Measure W, with more than [70 percent support](#), establishing the Oakland Fair Elections Act ([OFEA](#)) and creating the Democracy Dollars program—a public financing system designed to make local elections more inclusive, transparent, and representative. By providing every eligible Oakland resident with publicly funded Democracy Dollars to contribute to candidates of their choice, the program seeks to expand participation in campaign financing, reduce the influence of large donors, and strengthen accountability between elected officials and residents.

Importantly, residents do not need to be registered voters to participate in the Democracy Dollars program. Eligibility is limited to individuals legally permitted to make campaign contributions under federal law, U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and lawful permanent residents. meaning that while participation extends beyond registered voters, it does not include all non-citizen residents.

Democracy Dollars expands participation beyond traditional voters by allowing all eligible residents to contribute to local campaigns—reshaping who can participate in Oakland’s elections.

Funding and Launch Timeline

Although Measure W established the legal foundation for Democracy Dollars, the program’s launch has been delayed due to ongoing fiscal constraints. In 2023, the City of Oakland declared an [“extreme fiscal necessity,”](#) and the [2025–2027 adopted budget](#) did not allocate funding for the program’s launch or permanent staff.

In 2024, the City authorized a [five-year contract with MapLight](#), a civic technology partner, to design and build the digital infrastructure necessary for Democracy Dollar distribution, redemption, and tracking. Development is expected to take 9–12 months, followed by ongoing maintenance costs and user testing.

HOW DEMOCRACY DOLLARS WORKS

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

- Oakland residents who are 18 or older and are U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or lawful permanent residents
- Voter registration is not required to participate

HOW RESIDENTS RECEIVE DEMOCRACY DOLLARS

- Registered voters automatically receive Democracy Dollars by mail
- Eligible non-registered residents may apply through the Public Ethics Commission

HOW DEMOCRACY DOLLARS ARE USED

- Each resident receives **\$100** in Democracy Dollars
- Residents may assign their Dollars to participating candidates
- Dollars may be used all at once or over time and are valid through November 30 of the election year
- Dollars can be submitted: Online, Directly to a Candidate's Campaign, to PEC or at drop off sites

**(All submissions must include a resident signature and a clearly identified candidate.)*

ELIGIBLE OFFICES

- Mayor
- City Attorney
- City Auditor
- City Council (District and At-Large)
- Oakland School Board Directors

CANDIDATE PARTICIPATION

- Candidates must opt in to participate
- Participating candidates are subject to program requirements, including campaign expenditure limits, such as:
 - Mayor: \$500,000
 - City Attorney / City Auditor / At-Large Council: \$275,000
 - District Council: \$150,000
 - School Board Director: \$100,000

Source: [Oakland Public Ethics Commission Website: Democracy Dollars Program](#)

The current planning timeline anticipates:

- Additional program support beginning in 2027, following the onboarding of the PEC's newly funded 1.0 FTE analyst (with exact role and responsibilities to be finalized based on program needs);
- System development and testing through late 2027;
- Public outreach and education ramp-up beginning in early 2028 in alignment with candidate cycle (Q3);
- Program launch aligned with the 2028 municipal election cycle.

This timeline positions the Democracy Dollars program to launch in 2028, contingent on confirmed funding during the Summer 2027 City Council budget process. While Measure W requires the City to provide a minimum level of funding for the program, ongoing revenue shortfalls or a broader fiscal crisis could still affect the timing or scale of implementation. In such circumstances, coordinated support from civic organizations, community partners, and residents may play a critical role in ensuring the program receives the resources necessary to move forward.

Importance of Community Engagement

Community engagement is essential to achieving the goals of Measure W. The Democracy Dollars program will succeed only if residents understand how it works, trust the process, and feel confident using their Democracy Dollars. Early, inclusive, and sustained outreach will be vital to building public understanding and ensuring all Oaklanders, regardless of language, income, age or other barriers, can access the program and participate fully.

Effective engagement will:

- Build trust and legitimacy: Transparent communication and visible community partnerships will increase public confidence in the program's fairness and integrity.
- Drive participation and equity: Targeted outreach will ensure residents in underrepresented neighborhoods—particularly those historically excluded from political processes—are aware of and can easily access Democracy Dollars.
- Inform design and messaging: Input from residents and community-based organizations will help tailor program language, visuals, and materials to Oakland's cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Strengthen partnerships and networks: Collaborate with trusted messengers and local organizations to amplify reach and foster shared ownership of the program's success.
- Enable continuous improvement: Ongoing feedback loops between the Public Ethics Commission (PEC), City departments, and residents will allow outreach strategies to evolve based on real-time learning.

These principles align with nationally recognized engagement frameworks, including the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#) and the [Community Toolbox](#).

Local Policy Lab's Scope and Approach

The Local Policy Lab (LPL) is a nonprofit organization that helps cities engage residents to strengthen democracy and address local challenges. Given the innovative nature of the Democracy Dollars program, the PEC engaged LPL to develop a Community Engagement Framework to guide the City's outreach and implementation planning for a 2028 launch.

The objective of this partnership was to develop strategic outreach recommendations to inform the City's planning process and lay the groundwork for a successful and equitable rollout of the Democracy Dollars program. The resulting deliverables include: (1) a Stakeholder Interview Summary Memo synthesizing insights from interviews with local, regional, and national experts; (2) an Outreach Landscape and Gap Assessment summarizing existing City engagement tools and identifying opportunities for expanded reach and inclusion; and (3) a Strategic Outreach Framework that offers a practical roadmap for the PEC to structure partnerships, messaging, and outreach efforts.

LPL's approach combined research, discovery, and collaborative design. The team conducted a review of existing reports, resident surveys, and background materials on the Democracy Dollars program, and interviewed 34 individuals [See Appendix A] identified by PEC and LPL staff to understand local outreach capacity, challenges, and opportunities. Drawing from these interviews and comparative examples from other jurisdictions, LPL identified cross-cutting themes and practical recommendations that informed the development of this report. The process emphasized learning from local expertise and building on Oakland's strong community engagement ecosystem.

By implementing a plan based on these recommendations, the City and PEC can build a Democracy Dollars program that is both trusted and accessible. The framework is designed to increase resident participation in shaping and using the program, ensuring that Oaklanders understand how it works and how it benefits their communities. It also encourages an inclusive communication strategy that reflects the city's linguistic and cultural diversity, while strengthening collaboration with nonprofit and community partners who serve historically underrepresented groups. Through improved coordination across City departments and civic organizations, the approach aims to make better use of existing resources and build decision-maker confidence that outreach strategies are evidence-based and resource-efficient. Ultimately, this process lays the foundation for more effective implementation, stronger public trust, and lasting improvements in civic engagement across Oakland.

Part 2: Roadmap to 2028

Local Policy Lab (LPL) recommends a phased implementation approach to ensure Democracy Dollars is launched effectively, equitably, and within available resources. The following roadmap outlines two potential pathways, a full launch and a targeted pilot, both aligned with the November 2028 municipal election.

2025 Phase 1: Foundation and Capacity Building

Objective: Establish internal coordination, partnerships, and prerequisite structures needed for any rollout, whether full or pilot.

Key Actions:

- Form the Internal Democracy Dollars Working Group to coordinate across City departments and align outreach infrastructure.
- Conduct foundational stakeholder interviews and finalize this Outreach Strategy Report.
- Identify budget and grant funding options for outreach, translation, and technology support.
- Develop the branding, design, and core messaging framework (with community testing).
- Explore partnership opportunities with philanthropic and civic foundations (e.g., Haas Jr. Fund, East Bay Community Foundation).

*No separate pilot vs. full-launch planning is needed at this stage. All Phase 1 activities are foundational and required under both scenarios.

2026

Phase 2: Preparation and Budget Advocacy

Objective: Build early community buy-in, finalize program design, and secure budget authorization for either:

- a) a citywide launch, or
- b) a district-based pilot, depending on funding approved in July 2027

Planning in late 2027 should also include scheduling outreach for periods of high campaign visibility to ensure 2028 activation aligns with when residents are learning about candidates.

Timeline and Key Actions:

Early 2027 (January–May)

Baseline work that occurs regardless of whether the final program will be citywide or pilot-scale

- Conduct limited, low-cost preparatory work using existing PEC resources:
- Continue stakeholder engagement and finalize messaging and branding frameworks.
- Begin outreach to potential CBO partners to design the Community Outreach Grant Program structure (RFP draft, eligibility criteria).
- Identify prospective Democracy Dollars Ambassador networks and potential Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members.
- Develop public-facing materials and pilot-test content through small focus groups or community meetings.

Mid-2027 (February–April)

Budget Window: PEC [submits its formal funding request](#) to the Mayor and City Council for inclusion in the FY27–29 budget.

- Outside civic supporters (e.g., Oakland Rising, League of Women Voters, BAYPEC, Haas Jr. Fund) may publicly advocate for Democracy Dollars funding through testimony, letters, or public forums.
- Budget availability, along with the timing of fiscal decisions and staffing approvals, will determine whether a full launch or a scaled pilot proceeds in 2028.

2027

Late 2027 (August–December)

- If funding is approved:
 - Launch the Community Outreach Grant Program (release RFP, select CBO partners).
 - Recruit and train Democracy Dollars Ambassadors from priority districts (1, 3, 5, 7).
 - Convene the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to review messaging, accessibility, and outreach plans.
 - Pilot outreach events in select neighborhoods to test materials and logistics.
- If partial funding is approved:
 - Implement a targeted district-based pilot (2–4 districts) using the same structural components:
 - Smaller-scale Outreach Grant Program
 - Ambassador recruitment limited to pilot districts
 - CAC still convened, but focused on refining pilot implementation
 - Conduct scaled-down pilot outreach events in selected districts to test materials under constrained resources.

Phase 2 Outcome

- By December 2027, PEC will have either:
 - (a) Full funding and partnerships secured for citywide rollout; or
 - (b) A tested, district-based pilot ready for 2028, with strong community networks in place.

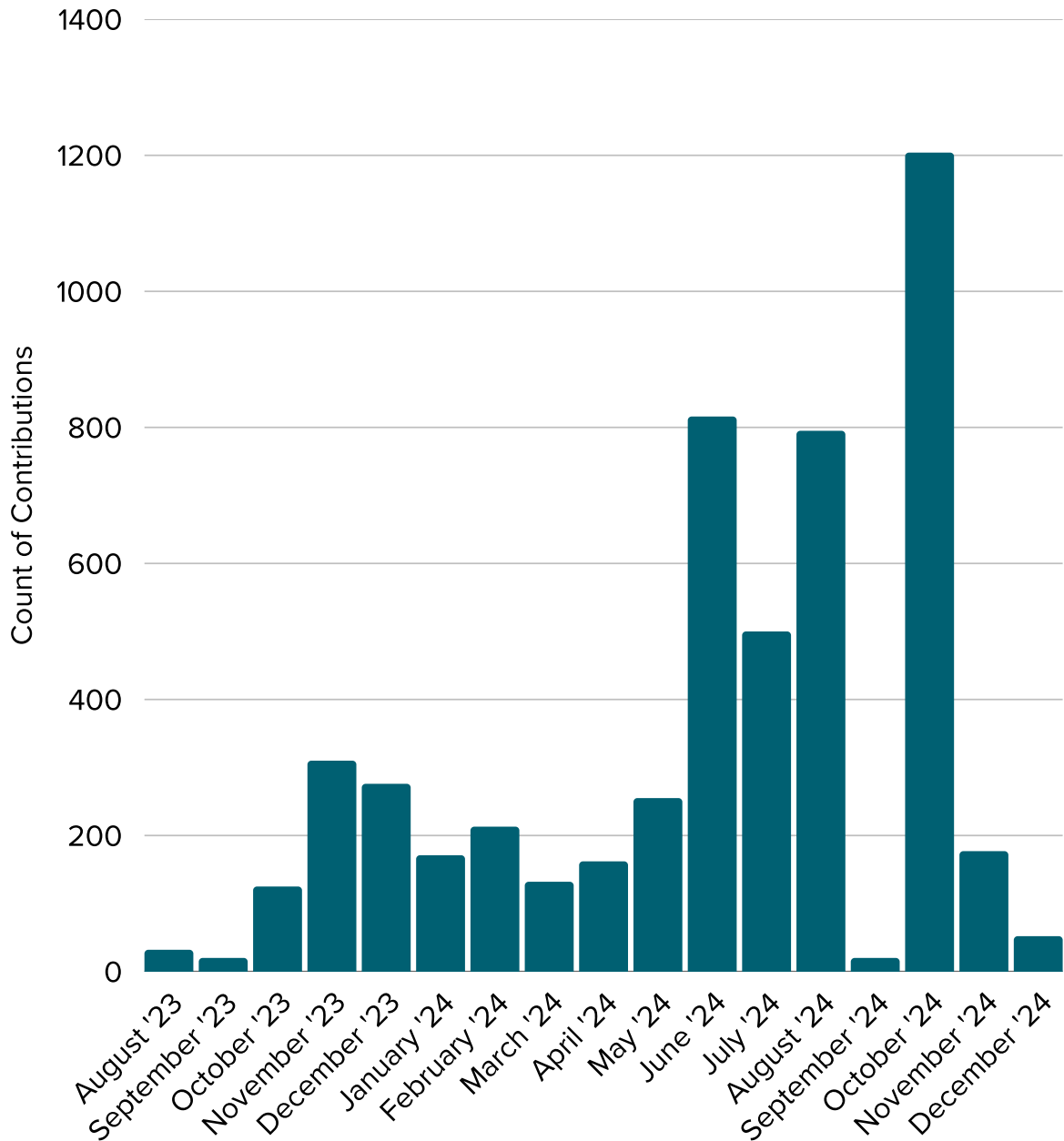
2028

Phase 3: Launch

Outreach intensity in 2028 should be aligned with the municipal campaign cycle. Public engagement, ambassador activities, and media visibility should increase during periods when candidate activity and voter interest are highest, typically late summer through Election Day. This alignment ensures residents receive Democracy Dollars at a moment when they feel informed about candidates and when vouchers are most useful to campaigns, especially because candidates themselves will be key motivators encouraging residents to use their Democracy Dollars.

FIGURE 1. Campaign Contribution Activity by Month (2024 Cycle)

Contribution activity is concentrated in the Summer and Fall months preceding the election.



Local Policy Lab analysis of campaign contribution data from the City of Oakland Open Data Platform (Campaign Finance – FPPC Form 460, Schedule A), provided by the City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission; last updated December 19, 2025.

2028 Phase 3A: Full Citywide Launch (All Municipal Races)

If sufficient funding is secured, the Democracy Dollars program would launch across all 2028 municipal contests, including: City Council At-Large; City Attorney; City Council Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7; and Board of Education Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7.

Full Launch Strategy Includes:

- Citywide Outreach Campaign: Comprehensive multilingual education through city, media, and CBO channels.
- Democracy Dollar Distribution: All eligible residents receive Democracy Dollars (mailed and available online), paired with a citywide “How It Works” campaign.
- Expanded Ambassadors Program: At least 50 trained ambassadors conducting outreach citywide, supported by 20+ funded CBO partners.
- Continuous Feedback: CAC and Working Group jointly review engagement metrics and provide recommendations for the next cycle.

Equity Impact: Expands participation by reducing long-standing racial, age, income, and neighborhood gaps in political engagement, ensuring that all eligible Oakland residents have a meaningful opportunity to understand the program, participate in local elections, and consider running for office.

Phase 3B: Pilot Launch (Council Districts 1, 3, 5, 7)

If resources are more limited, the PEC may implement a targeted pilot program in four districts, Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7, representing a cross-section of Oakland’s geographic, racial, and economic diversity.

Pilot Strategy Includes:

- Democracy Dollar eligibility is limited to residents of the four participating districts.
- Focused outreach and evaluation in these areas to test systems, partnerships, and messaging.
- Use of existing City and CBO networks to minimize new costs.
- Evaluation Framework: Compare Democracy Dollar use, awareness, and participation rates across pilot vs. non-pilot districts to assess program scalability.

Equity Impact: Prioritizes neighborhoods with both high and low historical participation, ensuring lessons reflect Oakland’s diversity while controlling implementation costs.

2029

Phase 4: Evaluation and Future Planning (Post-Election)

- Conduct independent evaluation of program awareness, participation, and equity outcomes.
- Produce a public report summarizing lessons learned and recommendations for future election cycles.
- Determine whether to expand from pilot to full citywide implementation in 2030 or next election cycle.

Summary

Whether launched citywide or as a focused pilot, the Democracy Dollars program should follow a build–test–scale model that emphasizes:

1. Equity-first design grounded in community partnerships.
2. Data-driven evaluation to inform program scaling.
3. Sustained city coordination to ensure long-term institutional capacity.

This roadmap gives the Public Ethics Commission flexibility to adapt to funding realities while maintaining steady progress toward a successful, equitable 2028 launch.

Part 3: Outreach Goals & Principles

The Democracy Dollars outreach strategy is grounded in a clear and measurable purpose: to ensure that every Oakland resident, regardless of income, or language, can understand, access, and participate in the program. Building on the Public Ethics Commission interviews, findings from Race for Power, and lessons from national models, this approach positions equitable engagement as both a moral and operational foundation for Democracy Dollars implementation.

Outreach Goals

At its core, the Democracy Dollars program seeks to expand participation and trust in local democracy by reaching communities that have historically been excluded from campaign finance and electoral processes. Outreach efforts will focus on broad awareness across all City Council districts while prioritizing neighborhoods and populations underrepresented in political participation, including low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, non-citizens, youth, monolingual households, and formerly incarcerated residents.

The goals guiding this work are to:

- **Increase awareness and participation** among residents who are least likely to donate or engage in local elections.
- **Build trust and visibility** for the program by partnering with community-based organizations, cultural institutions, and trusted messengers.
- **Eliminate participation barriers** by providing multilingual, multimodal, and accessible materials that clearly explain how the program works.
- **Align with civic education** efforts by pairing Democracy Dollars outreach with voter registration, early voting information, and guidance on civic participation.
- **Promote consistency and credibility** through shared branding and messaging across all City communications and partner channels.
- **Ground outreach in ongoing** community input through the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), ensuring that materials and activities are culturally relevant, responsive, and co-created with residents.

Equity Principles and Framework

The outreach framework is guided by inclusive engagement principles emphasizing data-informed targeting, community partnership, and continuous learning. Participation and demographic data will be analyzed by PEC staff or external partners (such as academic or civic research organizations) depending on available capacity, and used to identify gaps in participation and direct resources toward neighborhoods with the greatest barriers to campaign engagement.

Outreach will be shaped through community input, using listening sessions, partnerships, and the CAC to refine messaging and methods that resonate locally, and disseminated through trusted community-based organizations and trained community ambassadors.

Reducing barriers is central to the Democracy Dollars initiative. The outreach and education strategies outlined in this report will proactively address language access, digital exclusion, time and childcare constraints, and limited trust in government institutions. Transparency and accessibility will be maintained through plain-language, multilingual communications and public reporting on program outcomes. By partnering with trusted local organizations and ambassadors, the PEC can help rebuild relationships between City institutions and residents who have historically felt unseen or underserved.

Evaluation and adaptation will be built into every phase of the rollout. Outreach effectiveness will be tracked through participation data, awareness surveys, and qualitative feedback to ensure that strategies remain responsive and equitable. The outreach framework also recognizes and builds upon Oakland's existing civic infrastructure including faith groups, neighborhood associations, youth networks, and libraries, rather than duplicating efforts or working in isolation.

Alignment with Established Principles

The Democracy Dollars program should align with national best practices in public participation, particularly the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\) Core Values](#) and [Spectrum of Public Participation](#). These standards affirm that residents have a right to participate in decisions that affect them, that their input must meaningfully influence outcomes, and that inclusion and transparency are essential to building public trust. Democracy Dollars outreach should embody all levels of the IAP2 Spectrum: informing residents, consulting for feedback, involving them in design, collaborating with partners on implementation, and empowering communities to lead outreach through grants and ambassador programs.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation © Federation of International Association for Public Participation 2024. All rights reserved. This work was created with contributions from Lewis Michaelson, Martha Rozelle, and Doug Sarno. www.iap2.org.

Together, these goals and principles position Democracy Dollars outreach not only as an information campaign but as a long-term investment in civic inclusion and trust-building across Oakland's neighborhoods.

This approach directly addresses disparities identified in the [Race for Power report](#), which found that more than half of all campaign contributions in Oakland originate from four affluent, predominantly white zip codes, while neighborhoods such as 94601, 94603, and 94621 accounted for less than one-seventh of contributions (Race for Power, 2020). The Democracy Dollars program seeks to correct this imbalance by expanding civic power and representation through inclusive education, equitable resource allocation, and visible public accountability.

Finally, the outreach plan fulfills the [Oakland Fair Elections Act \(OFEA\)](#) requirements that the Public Ethics Commission provide clear, accessible public education in multiple languages and formats, including print, online, and in-person distribution. Under OFEA, the PEC must translate materials into all languages required under [Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act](#) and any additional languages spoken by at least two percent of Oakland's limited-English-proficient population. The Act also requires collaboration across City departments and with community organizations, ensuring transparency through a public-facing database of Democracy Dollar use and post-election reporting on participation and equity outcomes.

Part 3: Audiences & Barriers

Priority Audiences

The Democracy Dollars program will focus its outreach on communities and populations historically underrepresented in Oakland’s political and electoral processes. These groups have faced systemic barriers to participation and are disproportionately affected by inequities in campaign finance, access to information, and trust in government.

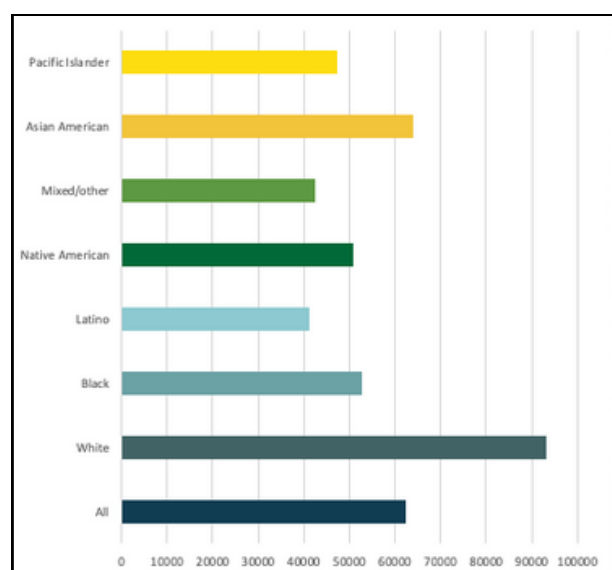
Low-Income Residents

Economic inequality remains one of the most significant predictors of civic participation in Oakland. The city’s median earning is \$62k, but this figure masks sharp geographic and racial disparities: families in the northern and hill neighborhoods earn substantially more than those in East and West Oakland. The city’s poverty rate is 13.7%, and nearly 60% of residents rent their homes, above the national homeownership average of 64% ([Bay Area Equity Atlas](#)).

In districts with high rent burden and limited disposable income, residents are less likely to donate to campaigns or engage in local elections. As one community leader observed, many families “are focused on surviving,” leaving little time or energy to participate in civic life.

Democracy Dollars offers a tangible way to reduce these economic barriers by providing every resident with a public resource to amplify their political voice.

FIGURE 2. Average Household Income by Race in Oakland



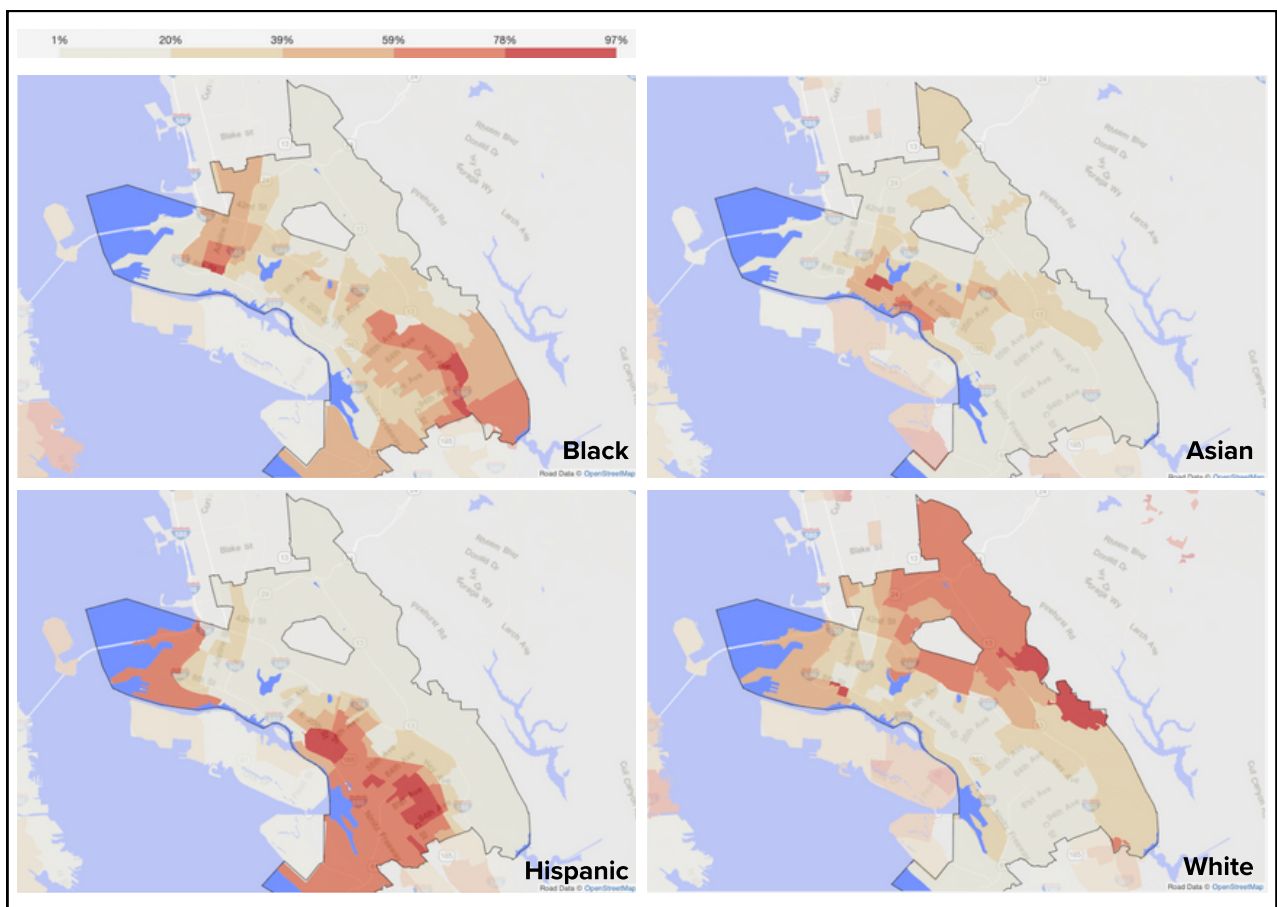
Source: Oakland Open Data Portal; chart created by Local Policy Lab.

Communities of Color

Oakland’s population includes large racial and ethnic communities whose civic participation vary widely. White residents make up roughly 30% of the population, Black residents about 21%; Asian residents about 16%, residents identifying with another race or two or more races comprise more than 18%. Hispanic/Latino residents, who may identify with any races, represent one of Oakland’s largest ethnic groups, at approximately 27% of the population (City of Oakland Alameda County Census Data, 1860-2020).

FIGURE 3. Racial and Ethnic Population Density in Oakland

Darker shading indicates higher concentrations of residents within each racial or ethnic group. Maps are shown at the same scale to allow visual comparison across neighborhoods, highlighting patterns of residential concentration across Oakland’s hills and flatland areas.

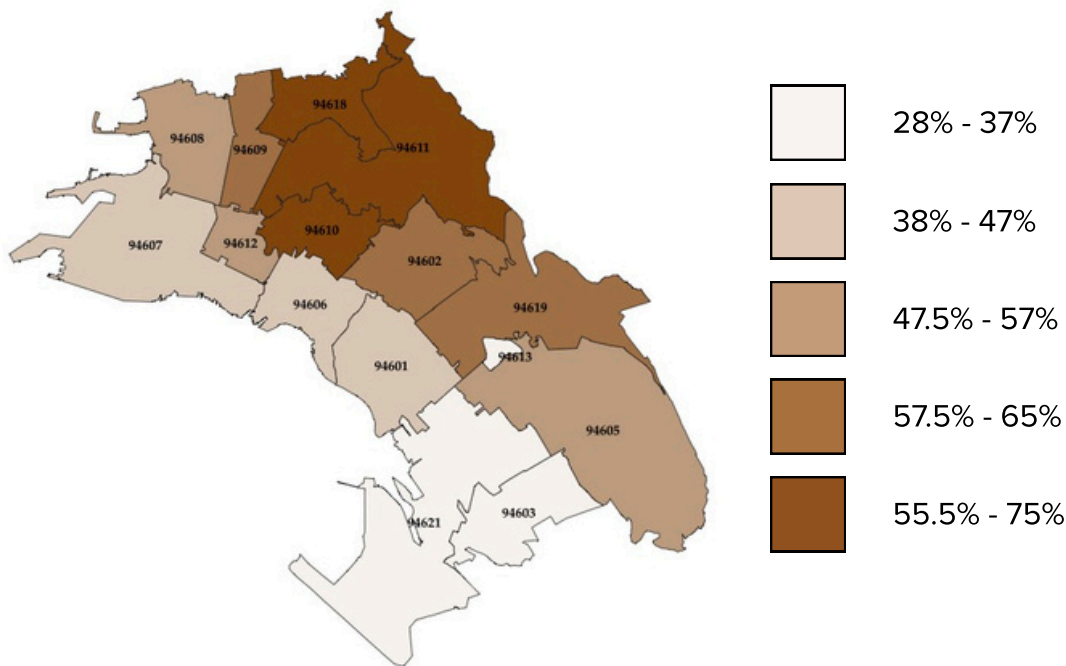


Source: U.S. Census Bureau; visualization adapted from Statistical Atlas, “Race and Ethnicity by Block Group in Oakland.”

Campaign contribution patterns do not reflect this demographic diversity. Available data shows that political donations are heavily concentrated in higher-income ZIP codes in the Oakland hills (94610, 94611, 94602, and 94618), while racially and ethnically diverse flatland neighborhoods such as 94601, 94603, and 94621 account for only a small share of local contributions, according to [Race for Power, 2020](#). Although precise percentages vary by election cycle, the geographic imbalance in political giving is consistent and substantial, highlighting disparities in who is able to financially participate in local campaigns.

FIGURE 4. 2022 Voter Turnout by Zip Code

Darker shading indicates higher voter turnout rates within each ZIP code.



Map created by the Local Policy Lab (LPL) using voter turnout data provided by the Oakland Public Ethics Commission (PEC).

Voter turnout patterns mirror these disparities in political giving. In the 2022 election, turnout in higher-income Oakland hills ZIP codes, such as 94618 (75%), 94611 (70%), 94610 (68%), and 94602 (65%), substantially exceeded turnout in flatland neighborhoods with larger Black and Latino populations, including 94601 (38%), 94603 (31%), and 94621 (28%). These gaps reflect more than individual voter choice; they are the cumulative result of longstanding structural inequities that shape access to information, trust in government, and opportunities for participation. Residents in lower-turnout communities frequently describe a disconnect between City institutions and their lived experiences, citing limited follow-through and inaccessible processes. For Democracy Dollars to succeed, outreach efforts must therefore go beyond awareness-building to actively rebuild trust and demonstrate accountability.

These disparities are not simply the product of individual disengagement but of decades of structural inequities. Residents in these communities often describe a disconnect between City Hall and their lived experiences, citing limited follow-through and inaccessible processes. Democracy Dollars outreach must therefore not only inform but also rebuild trust and demonstrate accountability.

Immigrant Communities and Lawful Permanent Residents

Roughly 41 percent of Oakland residents are foreign-born, and about 17 percent—approximately 30,000 people—are non-citizens. Under the Oakland Fair Elections Act, only a portion of these residents, specifically lawful permanent residents (green-card holders), are eligible to receive and assign Democracy Dollars, since eligibility follows federal campaign-finance rules.

Among immigrant households, roughly one-third experience linguistic isolation, and 44 percent lack reliable internet or a computer, limiting access to traditional election information channels. These realities underscore the need for in-person, multilingual, and culturally grounded outreach. In particular, Mam, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Arabic-speaking residents remain underserved by English- or Spanish-language election materials.

Because many immigrant residents are not eligible to participate, the City's outreach strategy must be designed to avoid confusion or inadvertent participation by ineligible non-citizens, while still providing clear general information about the program. Drawing on lessons from Seattle's voucher program, this includes:

- Working with trusted community-based organizations to explain eligibility clearly during workshops, canvassing, and events;
- Using plain-language, multilingual materials that specify that only U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and lawful permanent residents are eligible;
- Training Ambassadors and CBO partners to redirect interested but ineligible residents to other civic engagement opportunities (e.g., voter education for future citizens); and
- Ensuring the application process includes simple, non-intrusive eligibility verification steps that prevent confusion or accidental requests from ineligible residents.

Partnering with ethnic media outlets, cultural organizations, and community liaisons will be essential to ensure that eligible residents can confidently use their Democracy Dollars, and that ineligible community members are not misled or put at risk.

[\(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B05001, 2022.\)](#)

Non-Voters and Newly Eligible Participants

The Democracy Dollars program's inclusive design extends [eligibility](#) to all Oakland residents aged 18 and older, who are legally permitted to make campaign contributions under federal law—that is, U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and lawful permanent residents (LPRs). This structure creates a meaningful opportunity to engage [non-voters, first-time voters](#), and residents previously [excluded from the electoral process](#). Outreach should emphasize accessibility, empowerment, and clear guidance on eligibility so that eligible residents feel confident participating, and ineligible residents, such as non-LPR immigrants, are not misled or put at risk.

Unhoused Oakland residents who meet eligibility requirements under the Oakland Fair Elections Act are eligible to participate in the Democracy Dollars program. However, residents experiencing homelessness often face heightened barriers to participation in civic and electoral processes, including lack of stable mailing addresses, limited internet access, competing survival priorities, and deep mistrust of government institutions.

Outreach to unhoused residents will therefore require tailored strategies that meet people where they are. This may include:

- Partnering with service providers, shelters, and outreach teams that already engage unhoused residents;
- Offering in-person assistance for program education and Democracy Dollar assignment at trusted locations;
- Developing alternatives to mail-based outreach and digital-only participation pathways; and
- Training ambassadors and community partners to clearly explain eligibility requirements while avoiding burdensome documentation or processes.

Including unhoused residents in outreach planning aligns with Oakland's broader equity commitments and ensures that the Democracy Dollars program does not unintentionally exclude residents who are among the most disconnected from traditional political systems.

Youth and Transitional-Age Residents (16-24)

Young people represent a growing civic constituency in Oakland. Following the implementation of [Measure QQ](#), 16- and 17-year-olds were enfranchised to vote in school board elections beginning in 2024, creating an emerging generation of voters with early exposure to civic participation. Engaging students and young adults through schools, youth-serving organizations, and digital platforms can help normalize participation in the Democracy Dollars program and foster lifelong civic habits.

Formerly Incarcerated Residents

Justice-impacted residents continue to face barriers to full participation in civic and political life, including misinformation about eligibility and persistent distrust of government institutions ([California Secretary of State, 2023](#)). Partnering with reentry service providers, advocacy groups, and peer educators can help ensure these residents understand their rights and feel empowered to engage.

Monolingual and Multilingual Households

A significant share of Oakland households speak languages other than English, primarily Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Mien ([City of Oakland Language Access, 2023](#), [U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Table B16001, 2022](#)). Written translation, while essential, is not sufficient for effective outreach. Democracy Dollars materials should be supplemented by oral interpretation, community workshops, and partnerships with bilingual messengers who can explain program details in accessible, culturally resonant ways.

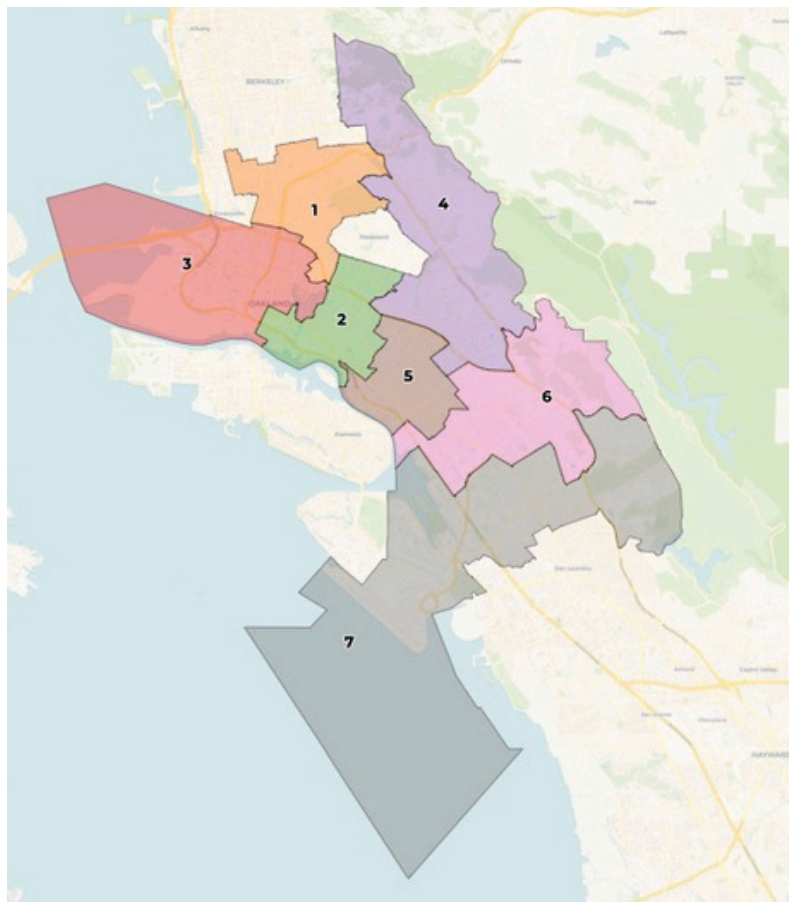
Geographic Focus

While outreach will be citywide, targeted engagement will prioritize neighborhoods with low voter turnout, limited campaign contributions, and high indices of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Districts 5, 6, and 7, encompassing Fruitvale, East Oakland, Castlemont, and Sobrante Park, consistently record the lowest voter participation in the city, with turnout rates 10–20 percentage points below those of the northern districts. In the 2022 [mayoral election, turnout](#) in these areas hovered around 36%, compared to over 50% citywide in 2022 and nearly 70% in 2018. These same neighborhoods are home to many of Oakland’s Black, Latino, and immigrant residents, with District 7 alone comprising nearly half Black and one-third Latino voting-age populations.

By contrast, Districts 1 and 4, which include Rockridge, Montclair, Temescal, and the Oakland Hills, exhibit the highest turnout, household income, and political donation rates. These districts will require less targeted outreach but should remain part of a consistent citywide communications effort to promote legitimacy and awareness across all communities.

FIGURE 5. City of Oakland City Council Districts (Final District Map Plan, 2022)



Map reflects the final district boundaries adopted by the Oakland Redistricting Commission on February 23, 2022, through Resolution No. 22-004. The map was created by Redistricting Partners and sourced from the City of Oakland website.

Contribution and voter participation data further reveal how geographic inequities mirror socioeconomic divides. For instance, ZIP codes 94610 and 94611 together produced more than 3,300 individual campaign contributors in recent election cycles—ten times the number in lower-income ZIP codes 94603 and 94621 ([Race for Report, 2020](#)). Democracy Dollars outreach will therefore concentrate on communities in these underrepresented areas to help equalize influence across the city.

Barriers to Participation

Interviews with city staff, community partners, and civic organizations highlight several recurring and interrelated barriers that limit equitable participation in Oakland’s democratic processes (Local Policy Lab stakeholder interviews, 2024–2025).

Trust and Institutional Confidence

Many residents, particularly in East and West Oakland, express skepticism that civic participation leads to meaningful outcomes. Years of perceived government inaction and fragmented communication have weakened confidence in public institutions ([City of Oakland, Equity Indicators Report](#)). Without visible accountability, residents may view Democracy Dollars as “just another city initiative.” Building credibility through consistent messaging, trusted messengers, and transparent reporting will be essential to overcoming this distrust.

Without visible accountability, residents may view Democracy Dollars as ‘just another city initiative.’

Language and Cultural Access

With over 40% of residents speaking a language other than English at home and one-third of immigrant households experiencing linguistic isolation, access to information remains a major barrier ([City of Oakland, Language Access Implementation Plan, 2023](#); [U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Table B16001, 2022](#)). Written translations alone cannot ensure comprehension or trust. Outreach must incorporate oral interpretation, multilingual media, and community-led events designed around cultural norms and preferred communication styles.

Digital Divide

Nearly half of Oakland’s Black households and one-third of Latino households lack reliable high-speed internet, and 44% of immigrant households do not have a computer at home ([U.S. Census Bureau, \(2022\). ACS Table B28002: Presence and Type of Internet Subscriptions in Household — Oakland, CA](#)). These disparities limit access to online materials and Democracy Dollar tools. To bridge this gap, outreach should combine digital strategies with in-person information sharing, print materials, text messaging, and low-bandwidth communication channels such as WhatsApp and local radio.

Because many residents access the internet primarily through smartphones, the program’s online voucher system should be optimized for mobile use. MapLight’s platform, the leading system currently under consideration, supports mobile-friendly voucher allocation, though final functionality will depend on the City’s configuration and implementation decisions.

Economic and Time Constraints

In neighborhoods where residents juggle multiple jobs or face housing insecurity, time and financial pressures make it difficult to attend meetings or seek out new civic opportunities. Outreach must meet people where they already are, supermarkets, parks, schools, transit stops, and community festivals, and integrate education into daily life rather than expecting attendance at separate events ([Race for Power, 2020](#)).

Fragmented Outreach Infrastructure

City departments often operate with limited coordination, resulting in inconsistent messaging and unclear points of contact. To ensure Democracy Dollars information is seen as credible and unified, outreach should feature a single brand identity, shared messaging templates, and coordination through the City’s internal working group.

Engagement Fatigue

Communities frequently report being “over-surveyed and under-heard.” Repeated outreach efforts that do not result in visible action or clear outcomes can erode trust and breed cynicism. To avoid this, the Democracy Dollars campaign should intentionally close the feedback loop by clearly communicating how resident participation influences program design, candidate funding, and representation. Leveraging structured [feedback-loop practices](#) can help ensure engagement feels purposeful, transparent, and responsive rather than extractive.

Communities frequently report being ‘over-surveyed and under-heard.’

Safety and Displacement Pressures

Concerns about neighborhood safety, [policing](#), and displacement can further discourage civic engagement, particularly in communities experiencing heightened surveillance or housing instability. Research and practitioner experience consistently show that participation increases when outreach occurs in trusted, familiar spaces. Outreach efforts should therefore prioritize venues such as [libraries](#), schools, faith institutions, and community centers, and partner with organizations that already provide stability, services, and support within these neighborhoods.

Part 5: Infrastructure to Support Democracy Dollars Outreach

Delivering an equitable and effective Democracy Dollars outreach campaign will require more than strong messaging—it will depend on the City’s ability to coordinate internally and remain meaningfully connected to Oakland’s communities throughout program development and rollout. Establishing clear governance structures and communication pathways early will help ensure that outreach efforts are aligned across departments, grounded in local context, and responsive to community needs.

To support this work, the Local Policy Lab recommends a two-part engagement infrastructure: an Internal City Working Group to coordinate cross-departmental outreach capacity and institutional alignment, and a Community Advisory Committee to provide ongoing, structured community feedback during program development and implementation. Together, these bodies create the foundation for a coordinated, transparent, and community-rooted Democracy Dollars launch.

Internal City Working Group

To ensure coordination across City departments and leverage existing outreach infrastructure, the Local Policy Lab recommends establishing an Internal City Working Group dedicated to supporting the successful rollout of the Democracy Dollars program. A strong, coordinated internal structure will allow Oakland to leverage existing communication channels, institutional knowledge, and community relationships, while ensuring that outreach efforts reflect the city’s diverse populations and needs.

The City of Oakland currently convenes a Citywide Community Engagement Working Group, coordinated by the City Administrator’s Office, which brings together staff across departments to share engagement practices and align outreach efforts. This existing group provides a valuable foundation for cross-departmental coordination and information sharing.

The proposed Internal Democracy Dollars Working Group is intended to complement, not duplicate, this existing structure. While the Citywide Community Engagement Working Group focuses broadly on engagement practices across City initiatives, the Democracy Dollars Working Group would be time-bound and program-specific, focused on the unique legal, operational, and outreach needs of the Democracy Dollars program. Coordination between the two groups, such as shared updates, cross-participation, or use of existing engagement protocols, could help streamline efforts and leverage established relationships while ensuring dedicated attention to Democracy Dollars implementation.

This Working Group is a Phase 1 activity (2026) and should be formed early so that cross-departmental coordination is in place before budget advocacy and program design intensify in Phase 2.

Membership and Composition

The working group would bring together representatives from key City offices and departments whose work regularly intersects with Oakland residents. Suggested members include:

- Office of the Mayor
- City Administrator’s Office
- City Council
- Department of Race and Equity
- Department of Transportation
- Department of IT
- Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development Department
- Oakland Public Library
- Oakland Unified School District
- City Attorney’s Office
- City Clerk
- Advisory bodies:
 - Oakland Youth Commission
 - Mayor’s Commission on Aging
 - Mayor’s Commission on Persons with Disabilities

Formation and Leadership

To achieve meaningful participation and alignment across departments, the invitation to join this working group should ideally come from the Mayor, or jointly from the Mayor’s Office and the Public Ethics Commission. This framing signals that Democracy Dollars is a citywide initiative, not solely a PEC-led program.

The group could begin meeting 2-4 times in 2026 to establish goals, roles, and timelines, then shift to monthly meetings in 2027 as Phase 2 program development and outreach planning accelerate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Working Group's primary purpose is to coordinate citywide efforts to support an effective rollout of Democracy Dollars. Members will:

- Share updates across departments
- Identify ways to integrate DD into existing City communication channels
- Surface opportunities where departments can support public education and outreach
- Coordinate translation, accessibility, and digital communications needs

Examples of Working Group–led opportunities include:

- Translating materials through the City's language access program
- Posting DD information in libraries, recreation centers, and City facilities
- Including inserts in City newsletters
- Partnering with community events in parks or cultural centers
- Exploring options for City-supported media placement

Expected Outcomes and Benefits

Early and regular collaboration will build institutional buy-in. Participation from the Mayor's Office, City Council, and the City Administrator's Office will help increase visibility and support for program funding during the FY27–29 budget cycle. Establishing a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities also prepares the City to deliver a coordinated outreach and education campaign before the 2028 launch.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will serve as a structured advisory body connecting the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) with Oakland's diverse communities during the development and rollout of the Democracy Dollars program. The CAC's purpose is to provide grounded, community-informed input to ensure outreach, communications, and program design are accessible, culturally responsive, and aligned with the intent of Measure W.

The CAC is a Phase 2 activity, convened after the Internal City Working Group is established and launched once funding and staffing are clarified in mid-to-late 2027. This sequencing ensures that internal coordination and operational planning are in place before structured community advising begins.

Purpose and Goals

The CAC's role is advisory and consultative, not decision-making. Members will provide structured feedback on outreach strategies, messaging, accessibility, and implementation considerations, supporting PEC staff in refining program design and rollout. This approach aligns with the Consult level of the IAP2 Spectrum, emphasizing transparency, partnership, and community input while retaining PEC's administrative authority.

Consistent with national best practice and Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program, the CAC is designed to inform decisions rather than govern them, ensuring meaningful participation without adding administrative burden.

Core Objectives

- Build a trusted network of community and advocacy representatives who can share program information within their networks.
- Center the perspectives of historically underrepresented communities in outreach and engagement design.
- Provide timely, actionable feedback on materials, messaging, forms, and strategies.
- Strengthen public trust through transparent, structured, and ongoing community input.

Structure and Timeline

- Size and Term: 10–15 members serving approximately 15 months (September 2027–November 2028), spanning program development, rollout, and post-election evaluation.
- Formation: Mid-2027, following establishment of the Internal City Working Group.
- Meetings: Monthly during rollout; quarterly post-election. Hybrid format to support accessibility.
- Support: Convened and facilitated by PEC staff, with administrative, translation, and accessibility support provided.

Membership and Representation

Membership should reflect Oakland's demographic, linguistic, and geographic diversity, with intentional representation from East Oakland, Fruitvale, and West Oakland. Consistent with the Seattle model, members should primarily be drawn from community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and civic organizations.

- Community-based organizations (e.g., Oakland Rising, Unity Council, El Tímpano).
- Faith and education institutions (e.g., Faith in Action East Bay, OUSD).
- Cultural and identity-based organizations (e.g., Oakland Asian Cultural Center, Intertribal Friendship House).
- Civic engagement and equity groups (e.g., BAYPEC, League of Women Voters).
- Residents-at-large, particularly individuals not affiliated with formal organizations, recruited through an open application process or public call for interest hosted on the City or Public Ethics Commission website

An open call for resident participation, supported by clear role descriptions, time commitments, and stipends where feasible, can help ensure the Community Advisory Committee reflects lived experience as well as organizational perspectives, and includes voices that may otherwise be absent from formal civic processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

CAC members will:

- Advise PEC staff on outreach strategies, messaging, and accessibility.
- Review and provide feedback on draft materials, forms, and outreach tools.
- Share program updates within their networks and bring community feedback.
- Identify outreach opportunities, trusted messengers, and engagement venues.
- Review high-level program evaluation findings and recommend improvements.
- Share synthesized insights with the PEC at quarterly public meetings.

Training, Engagement, and Evaluation (Consultative Approach)

CAC members will participate in onboarding covering PEC operations, Democracy Dollars rules and procedures, and outreach goals. Throughout rollout, members will help surface community feedback and reflect on what is resonating locally. Post-election, the CAC will contribute to evaluation and lessons learned.

Success will be assessed based on:

- Diversity and consistency of participation
- Quality and usefulness of advisory input
- Evidence that CAC feedback informed outreach and implementation decisions
- Improvements in public awareness and understanding of Democracy Dollars

Compensation and Resources

To promote equitable participation, CAC members should receive stipends (suggested at \$50 per meeting, up to \$600 for full participation), along with translation, childcare, and transportation support as needed. PEC will provide meeting space, materials, and light refreshments.

Estimated annual cost: \$7,000.

Precedent and Alignment

Oakland's CAC builds on the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program Advisory Committee, which was composed primarily of advocates and community organization representatives and provided structured input on implementation, outreach, communications, and policy decisions. Seattle's committee played a key role in reviewing materials, advising on outreach strategies, and sharing information back to communities, strengthening transparency and trust without diluting administrative authority.

Oakland's proposed CAC reflects these same principles, while incorporating expanded multilingual access and broader demographic representation tailored to Oakland's local context.

Case Study

Effective Advisory Committees

Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) Advisory Committee offers a strong precedent for Oakland. The committee was composed primarily of advocates, campaign finance reformers, and representatives from community-based and civic organizations, with City entities participating selectively as subject-matter contributors. Its role was explicitly advisory, not decision-making, providing structured input to staff on program implementation, outreach, communications, and evaluation.

In practice, the Seattle Advisory Committee met regularly during program development and early rollout to:

- Review and provide feedback on outreach materials, forms, and website content;
- Advise on implementation and policy choices, such as postage-paid envelopes, replacement voucher processes, and campaign compliance materials;
- Share insights from community networks and help disseminate program information back to trusted messengers;
- Inform outreach strategies, language access approaches, and evaluation priorities.

This structure strengthened transparency and community trust while allowing staff to retain clear administrative authority and move efficiently on implementation.

National research on advisory committees reinforces this approach. Effective advisory bodies are characterized by clear purpose statements, realistic scopes of work, and members who understand their role as advisors rather than decision-makers. These committees are most impactful when their recommendations meaningfully inform program design and outreach strategies, while final decisions remain with agency staff ([Seattle Democracy, Democracy Dollar Program Evaluation Report, US Department of Ed Fact Sheet, Effective Advisory Committees. In Brief: Fast Facts for Policy and Practice](#)).

Oakland's proposed Community Advisory Committee builds on these principles, positioning community and advocacy representatives as trusted partners who provide actionable feedback and community insight within a clearly defined, consultative framework aligned with both local capacity and national best practice.

Part 6: What Has Worked Elsewhere: Lessons for Oakland

Insights from Oakland's community engagement efforts, along with findings from Seattle's Democracy Democracy Dollar Program, New York City's Ranked Choice Voting and small-donor matching system, and California's 2020 Census outreach, highlight proven strategies for building understanding and trust around complex civic programs. These examples reinforce that effective outreach requires layered communication, partnerships with trusted messengers, multilingual accessibility, and ongoing transparency.

Lessons from Oakland's Engagement Practices

Oakland's departments have developed strong localized outreach practices that offer valuable templates for Democracy Dollars implementation.

Leverage Community Infrastructure. The DOT's programs such as [Paint the Town!](#) and East Oakland Planning for Paving demonstrates how creative, place-based, and low-barrier engagement can activate neighborhoods that have historically been under-represented in city decision-making ([City of Oakland Department of Transportation Strategic Plan, 2016 and Progress Report, 2019](#)). These models show that visible, participatory activities build awareness and trust more effectively than one-time informational meetings.

Integrate Equity and Data in Outreach Design. DOT's equity prioritization framework using demographic and safety data to focus on East Oakland offers a replicable model for Democracy Dollars outreach targeting low-turnout and underserved areas.

Community Ambassadors and CBO Partnerships. Oakland's CBO on-call contracting system and Department of Neighborhood community liaison model illustrate how formal partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and local ambassadors extend City capacity, create accountability, and ensure multilingual reach.

Institutional Pitfalls to Avoid. Evaluations of past City engagement emphasize the need for consistent branding, adequate staffing, and follow-up communication. Departmental silos, short-term outreach contracts, and limited feedback loops have historically weakened community trust.

Lessons from Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program

Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program (launched 2017) remains the most relevant precedent for public campaign financing aimed at equity and participation. ([Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, Democracy Voucher Outreach Toolkit, 2023, Participation and Representation, 2023, University of Washington Seattle Democracy Dollar Report](#))

Community Partnerships and Micro-Grants. Seattle allocated micro-grants to community organizations and ethnic media to conduct in-language education and assist residents with Democracy Dollar requests and candidate selection. These grants included deliverables and timelines for outreach activities, ensuring accountability and measurable reach.

Multilingual and Accessible Infrastructure. Materials were available in 18 languages and distributed through mail, online portals, and public spaces. Democracy Dollars were mailed to all registered voters and made available to non-citizen residents through simple application processes in multiple languages. Pre-paid return envelopes and low-bandwidth digital tools reduced participation barriers.

Education through Civic Institutions. Partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations integrated Democracy Dollar education into civic learning, normalizing participation among young residents and first-time voters.

Transparency and Evaluation. Partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations integrated Democracy Dollar education into civic learning, normalizing participation among young residents and first-time voters.

Outcomes. Research from the University of Washington (2022) found that the Democracy Voucher Program significantly increased both the number of small donors and the diversity of contributors. Subsequent analyses in 2023 and 2025 indicate that Democracy Dollar users were more representative of the city's population than traditional cash donors, and candidate participation increased correspondingly.

Lessons for Oakland.

- Establish clear, multilingual public education explaining Democracy Dollar value and redemption.
- Provide micro-grants to CBOs with clear scopes of work and timelines.
- Pair education with transparent data reporting.
- Budget early for translation, interpretation, and accessibility infrastructure.

Lessons from New York City’s Ranked Choice Voting & Matching Funds Programs

Clear, Consistent Messaging. NYC’s RCV campaign (“More Choice, More Power”) used plain-language messaging and visuals developed with the Center for Civic Design. The campaign’s interactive tools, practice ballots and online ranking simulations, helped over 500,000 residents learn by doing. Democracy Dollars could replicate this with a “Practice Your Dollars” simulator to demystify Democracy Dollar assignment.

Citywide, Multi-Channel Campaign. NYC invested \$1.1M in multilingual advertising, social media, and mailings, paired with a printed voter guide sent to every household. Repeated, coordinated messaging across government and community partners proved crucial.

Community Partnerships and Ambassador Programs. Rank the Vote NYC coordinated 750+ partners, equipping them with presentation kits, slides, contests, and stipends to host educational sessions, an ideal model for Democracy Dollars’ CBO grant program and Ambassador networks.

Accessibility and Inclusion. The City’s matching funds program mails accessible Voter and Candidate Guides in multiple languages and formats (large print, captioning, online). This inclusive communication design demonstrates how accessibility can sustain confidence in complex financial or electoral systems.

Lessons for Oakland.

- Partner with design experts (e.g., Center for Civic Design) to develop cohesive messaging and visuals.
- Use practice tools and interactive demos to make participation tangible.
- Ensure all materials are ADA-compliant and translated in key local languages (Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic).

References: [Brennan Center for Justice, New York State’s Public Campaign Financing Program Empowers Constituents \(2024\)](#), [NYC Voter Analysis, 2021-2022](#), [NYC Campaign Finance Board, Voter and Candidate Guides \(2019–2023\)](#)

Lessons from California’s Complete Count Census 2020

Trusted Messenger Networks. California’s Census campaign mobilized over 120 CBOs through regional partnerships and micro-grants, showing that layered, local outreach outperforms mass media in hard-to-reach communities.

Education Systems as Multipliers. County Offices of Education embedded census lessons in classrooms and reached 4M+ students statewide, offering a model for integrating Democracy Dollars education into school civics and youth programming.

Data-Driven Targeting and Real-Time Feedback. The state used response-rate data to adjust ad placement and partner funding in real time. This agile model demonstrates how Oakland could monitor participation rates and reallocate outreach resources as needed.

Lessons for Oakland.

- Partner early with education and faith institutions.
- Use local data (turnout, registration, demographics) to target low-participation areas.
- Treat media, digital, and grassroots outreach as concurrent, not sequential, efforts.

References: [Evaluating the California Complete Count Census 2020 Campaign](#), [Counting California: Challenges for the 2020 Census](#).

Implications for Democracy Dollars in Oakland

Across these examples, effective outreach programs share six core principles that Oakland should adopt:

1. **Center Equity and Access** – Invest in translation, interpretation, and accessibility infrastructure from the start.
2. **Invest in Partnerships** – Fund trusted CBOs and faith-based groups to deliver in-language, community-led education.
3. **Simplify the Message** – Use clear, relatable visuals and examples (e.g., “\$10 becomes \$90”) to explain Democracy Dollar value.
4. **Engage Youth and Schools** – Collaborate with OUSD and Youth Vote initiatives to normalize participation early.
5. **Maintain Transparency** – Publish dashboards and annual reports tracking participation by geography and demographic.
6. **Institutionalize Feedback Loops** – Convene a recurring cross-sector working group (CBOs, youth, multilingual leaders) to evaluate engagement and refine outreach.

Together, these lessons establish a blueprint for Democracy Dollars outreach that is comprehensive, scalable, and grounded in equity, ensuring every Oakland resident can see, understand, and participate in the program by 2028.







Part 7: Proposed Engagement Strategies

The Democracy Dollars outreach strategy combines direct community engagement, organizational partnerships, and citywide visibility to ensure broad awareness and equitable participation. These strategies emphasize accessibility, coordination, and trust-building across Oakland’s diverse communities, with a focus on reaching residents historically underrepresented in local elections and campaign finance participation.

7.1 Tactics at a Glance

The Democracy Dollars outreach framework prioritizes layered, scalable engagement that builds awareness, trust, and equitable access ahead of the 2028 pilot.

The Democracy Dollars outreach framework consists of seven core tactics:

	Neighborhood Outreach	Face-to-face engagement in priority neighborhoods
	Organizational Outreach	Fund trusted partners for in-language outreach
	Public Visibility	Build citywide recognition through events and signage
	Media & Digital Platforms	Multilingual awareness through trusted media and digital tools
	Public Spaces & Institutions	Embed information into trusted, everyday spaces across the city
	Trusted Messengers	Build trust through paid, peer-to-peer outreach

7.2 Citywide Coordination & Leadership

This coordination structure supports all tactics and maps to Phase 1 and Phase 2 in Part 2.

Successful implementation of the Democracy Dollars outreach strategy will require coordinated leadership across City departments and sufficient staff capacity to support the Public Ethics Commission (PEC). While the PEC will serve as the lead agency, broad participation from the Mayor’s Office, the City Administrator’s Office, and key partner departments is essential to ensure equitable reach, consistent messaging, and efficient use of existing city resources.

<p>Mayor’s Office & City Administrator</p> <p>The Mayor’s Office and City Administrator play a central role in positioning Democracy Dollars as a citywide priority. Their leadership includes issuing clear directives to ensure cross-department participation in outreach, aligning messaging across City communications, and convening the Internal Democracy Dollars Working Group (see Section [X]) to coordinate implementation and share resources.</p>	<p>Public Ethics Commission</p> <p>The PEC will serve as the program’s administrative and operational lead. Core responsibilities include planning, communications, and evaluation; administering the grant program for CBOs; developing educational materials and coordinating implementation with City departments and civic partners. These functions require dedicated outreach staff to support coordination, management, and data tracking.</p>	<p>Department of Race and Equity</p> <p>The Department of Race and Equity will provide guidance on inclusive engagement practices, language access, and equity-centered evaluation. In partnership with the PEC, they will help identify participation gaps and ensure that metrics related to language access, neighborhood reach, and demographic participation remain central to outreach design.</p>
<p>Partner Departments</p> <p>Partner departments—such as the Oakland Public Library, Parks, Recreation and Youth Development, Department of Transportation, and Oakland Unified School District, can expand Democracy Dollars visibility by integrating it into existing touch points. These agencies can provide public venues, distribute materials, and embed civic learning within ongoing programs.</p>		

Examples:

- Libraries host information tables and provide multilingual materials at branch locations.
- Parks & Recreation includes Democracy Dollars in community fairs and newsletters.
- OUSD integrates short civic learning modules on Democracy Dollars through Youth Vote and Linked Learning programs.

Embedding Democracy Dollars outreach within the City’s existing community engagement ecosystem—and reinforcing it through the Internal Working Group and added staff capacity—will ensure the program operates as a collective civic initiative rather than a stand-alone campaign.

This approach mirrors the coordinated structures used in New York City’s Ranked Choice Voting rollout and California’s Census 2020 campaign, where strong executive sponsorship and cross-agency collaboration were critical to reaching linguistically and culturally diverse audiences.

The following table outlines proposed outreach strategies for Democracy Dollars, drawn from Oakland’s engagement practices and national precedents. Each strategy includes its equity impact, priority level, and resource implications, allowing the Public Ethics Commission to tailor implementation based on available capacity and funding.

Table 1. Engagement Strategies Overview

Menu of Engagement Strategies for Democracy Dollars: Each strategy includes the expected equity outcomes, priority level, and resource implications to guide implementation leading to the 2028 launch.

	Key Tactics	Equity Outcome	Priority Level	Cost
1. Direct Neighborhood Outreach	Neighborhood-based engagement through tabling, door-to-door canvassing, pop-up information booths, and attendance at existing community events.	Reduces barriers for low-turnout residents; builds visibility in East/West Oakland; reaches renters, youth, and nontraditional voters	Must-Have	Medium
2. Organizational Outreach	Establish a DD Community Outreach Grant Program administered by PEC to fund CBOs for outreach, education, and translation support. Grantees receive small, flexible grants.	Shifts resources to trusted messengers; increases linguistic and cultural access	High-Impact / Must-Have	High
3. Public Visibility	Citywide physical presence through posters, banners, bus shelter ads, and pop-up booths at festivals, supermarkets, and transit hubs.	Ensures citywide awareness; normalizes participation across all demographics	Good-to-have	Medium
4. Media & Digital Platforms	Combine traditional and digital media for multilingual outreach: radio (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic), community newspapers, podcasts, and social media. Develop a dedicated website, integrate with WhatsApp and explore text message updates.	Expands reach to multilingual and younger audiences; reduces digital divide	Good-to-have	Medium
5. Public Spaces & Institutions	Partner with libraries, recreation centers, schools, polling places, and transit agencies as outreach venues. Distribute materials and host interactive demos.	Makes information accessible at family, trusted civic spaces (libraries, schools, parks)	Must-Have	Low-Medium
6. Trusted Messengers / Ambassadors	Create a DD Ambassador Program recruiting residents from priority communities as paid peer educators. Ambassadors lead outreach at community events and support CBO partners.	Builds credibility and trust via peer educators from underrepresented groups	Good-To-Have (if funding available)	Medium

7.4 Tactic 1: Direct Outreach

Direct engagement will serve as the foundation of Democracy Dollars public education efforts. Face-to-face interactions in neighborhoods, especially those with historically lower civic participation, are critical for building trust, awareness, and understanding of how the program works.

At A Glance

Goal: Build awareness and trust in Democracy Dollars through face-to-face outreach.

Methods: Neighborhood tabling, community events, paid ambassadors, and interactive demos.

Focus Areas: Districts 3, 5, 6, and 7, with a visible citywide presence.

Equity: Reduces participation barriers through local, multilingual, in-person engagement.

Estimated Cost: \$29,000

7.4.1 Neighborhood-Based Engagement

Conduct in-person outreach through tabling, door-to-door canvassing, and pop-up information booths at everyday gathering spaces such as grocery stores, parks, bus stops, and libraries.

- **Example:** California’s 2020 Census “Count Me 2020” coalition used neighborhood canvassing and mobile booths at markets and transit hubs to boost response rates in low-response tracts.

Action for Oakland: Develop a 2027–2028 outreach calendar that mirrors this model, scheduling recurring “Democracy Dollars Days” in priority neighborhoods (Districts 3, 5, 6, and 7) in coordination with local CBO partners.

7.4.2 Community Event Participation

Participate in existing community and cultural events rather than creating standalone gatherings, ensuring outreach feels organic and accessible.

- **Target Events:** First Fridays, Juneteenth at San Antonio Park, Chinatown StreetFest, Temescal Farmers Market, Día de los Muertos Festival, and neighborhood fairs.
- **Example:** The NYC Campaign Finance Board’s RCV team hosted educational tables at cultural festivals, distributing multilingual materials and interactive handouts, reaching over 500,000 voters in-person and online before the 2021 primary.

Action for Oakland: Secure commitments from event organizers (by 2027) to include Democracy Dollars booths, live demos, and short “Democracy Dollar practice” activities.

7.4.3 Staff and Ambassador Presence

Deploy trained Democracy Dollars Ambassadors, paid local residents representing priority communities, to facilitate peer-to-peer conversations, distribute materials, and answer basic program questions.

- **Example:** Seattle’s Democracy Voucher program used neighborhood ambassadors and volunteers to lead small-group sessions in multiple languages, increasing Democracy Dollar use among immigrant and low-income residents.

Action for Oakland: Recruit ambassadors through CBO partners, provide short training sessions on voter education, and supply them with branded outreach kits (tablecloths, multilingual flyers, sample “practice Democracy Dollars,” and QR codes).

7.4.4 Interactive Demonstrations

Use hands-on, visual tools to help residents understand how Democracy Dollars work.

- **Example:** New York City’s Ranked Choice Voting campaign developed “practice ballots” and interactive online simulations (via RankedVote) that allowed residents to test the ranking process before voting. Over half a million New Yorkers visited the site, and local partners used printed “practice ballots” at community events to make learning tangible.
- **Parallel Models:** California’s Count Me 2020 outreach and Seattle’s Democracy Voucher team both used gamified tools, raffles, quizzes, and “practice sessions,” to encourage participation among youth and multilingual residents.

Action for Oakland:

- Develop a “Practice Your Democracy Dollars” station, either physical or digital, allowing residents to assign mock Democracy Dollars to example candidates or community projects.
- Feature the tool at community events, libraries, and youth programs to normalize participation and demystify the process.
- Partner with a civic design or UX firm (such as the Center for Civic Design) to ensure clarity, accessibility, and multilingual usability.

7.4.5 Geographic Prioritization

Direct outreach will concentrate in Districts 3, 5, 6, and 7 (West and East Oakland), areas with lower historical voter turnout, higher concentrations of renters, and greater linguistic diversity, while maintaining citywide presence for visibility and credibility.

- **Example:** Both Seattle’s Democracy Voucher Program and California’s 2020 Complete Count campaign used data mapping, Democracy Dollar redemption rates, census tract response data, and language isolation indices, to target canvassing, digital ads, and pop-up events in underrepresented areas.

Action for Oakland:

- Partner with the Department of Race and Equity and PEC research staff to create a neighborhood-level Democracy Dollars Outreach Heat Map, identifying priority blocks, civic hubs, and community gathering spaces for ambassador deployment.
- Use City GIS data, voter turnout records, and equity indices to inform resource allocation.
- Update maps quarterly (2027–2028) to reflect real-time engagement data and adjust outreach routes accordingly.

7.4.6 Implementation Considerations

Timeline:

- **Mid–Late 2027:** Recruit ambassadors, finalizing outreach materials, and piloting tabling or pop-ups at select neighborhood events to test messaging.
- **Early 2028:** Begin public-facing outreach 3–4 months before Democracy Dollar distribution, focusing on awareness and education in priority districts.
- **April–November 2028:** Conduct full-scale neighborhood outreach once Democracy Dollars are distributed, maintaining consistent presence through Election Day.

Resources: Requires one outreach coordinator, ambassador stipends (~\$20/hour), printed and translated materials, and light logistics support for pop-up setups.

Equity Outcome: Builds visibility and trust in historically underrepresented communities through in-person, culturally relevant interactions and employment of local residents as paid ambassadors.

7.4.7 Estimated Cost Model

- Staffing & Ambassadors: 15-20 DD Ambassadors, ~8-10 hours / month for 6 months. Estimated: ~\$20,000
- Materials & Supplies: Multilingual flyers, signage, practice DDs, pop-up kits. Estimated: ~\$7,000
- Data Mapping & Geographic Targeting: GIS analyst, dashboard/visualization updates. Estimated: \$2,000

7.5 Tactic 2: Organizational Outreach

Recognizing the critical role of community-based organizations (CBOs) and civic partners in reaching underrepresented populations, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) should establish a Democracy Dollars Community Outreach Grant Program.

This program will distribute small, flexible grants to trusted community organizations to lead localized, in-language outreach and education campaigns.

At A Glance

Goal: Expand participation by funding trusted community organizations to lead outreach.

Methods: Mini-grants to CBOs for events, door-to-door outreach, ethnic media, and outreach.

Focus Areas: Citywide, priority for low-turnout and historically underrepresented communities.

Equity: Shifts resources and decision-making power to trusted local organizations.

Estimated Cost: \$140,000–\$180,000

7.5.1 Program Design

PEC will issue competitive mini-grants to local CBOs, neighborhood associations, and civic organizations to conduct in-language, culturally relevant, and accessible outreach.

- Grants will support:
 - Community events, workshops, and door-to-door engagement;
 - Translation and interpretation services;
 - Social media and ethnic media outreach;
 - Staff stipends or part-time community liaisons embedded in target neighborhoods.
- PEC staff will provide training, core messaging templates, and data collection tools to ensure consistency and measurable outcomes.

7.5.2 Model and Precedent

- Seattle’s Voter Education Fund (VEF): Jointly run by the City and King County Elections, this fund awarded grants (\$5,000–\$25,000) to CBOs to conduct voter and Democracy Voucher education. Between 2017–2021, it reached 600,000 residents in-language across 18 communities and increased use among first-time and low-income donors.
- California’s “Complete Count” Census Campaign: Used a regional grantee model, where trusted local organizations received flexible sub-grants to tailor outreach and messaging for hard-to-count communities, leading to a 99.9% enumeration rate statewide.
- New York City RCV Education: Partnered with local senior centers, immigrant groups, and libraries, providing small stipends and resource kits to run interactive sessions, demonstrating how small investments in local capacity yield wide reach.

7.5.3 Eligible Organizations

Priority partners will include groups with deep neighborhood roots and demonstrated experience in civic engagement and equity-centered communication, such as, but not limited to:

- Civic & Voter Education: League of Women Voters of Oakland, Oakland Rising, Common Cause California.
- Community Hubs: Unity Council, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Black Cultural Zone, Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Alameda County Latina Chamber of Commerce, Oakland African-American Chamber of Commerce, Oakland Latino Chamber of Commerce, Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Oakland Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce.
- Media & Communication: El Tímpano, Ethnic Media Services, local faith-based networks, and youth-led media projects.

7.5.4 Implementation Timeline

Early 2027

- Finalize grant framework, application materials, and outreach criteria in consultation with Race & Equity.
- Begin early conversations with potential CBO partners to gauge interest and capacity.

Mid–Late 2027

- Launch pilot RFP to fund 6–8 organizations for small-scale outreach, testing coordination and message consistency.

January–November 2028

- Expand grant program to 10–15 partners, focusing on neighborhoods with low voter turnout and linguistic diversity.

Post-Election 2028

- Evaluate grantee reports and participation data to refine future cycles and identify long-term partners for citywide engagement.

7.5.5 Estimated Cost Model

- Grant Pool: 8–10 pilot grants at \$7,500–\$12,500 each = \$75,000–\$100,000 total.
- Program Administration: 0.5 FTE PEC staff or contractor for grant management, reporting, and training = \$50,000–\$60,000.
- Training and materials: Shared messaging kits, data forms, and translation templates = \$5,000–\$8,000.
- Evaluation: Optional external evaluator or graduate fellow = \$10,000–\$15,000.
- Total Estimated Pilot Cost (2027–2028): \$140,000–\$180,000, scalable based on funding availability.

7.6 Tactic 3: Public Visibility & Presence

Public visibility efforts will build broad awareness and reinforce the credibility of the Democracy Dollars program. A consistent, recognizable visual identity across physical and digital spaces will help normalize the program and signal that it is a trusted city initiative.

At A Glance

Goal: Build broad awareness and normalize Democracy Dollars as a trusted, citywide program.

Methods: Multilingual advertising, pop-up booths, and integration into cultural and civic events.

Focus Areas: Citywide, emphasis on East & West Oakland and major hubs and transit corridors.

Equity: Expands access to information in public spaces for residents with limited digital access.

Estimated Cost: \$30,000–\$45,000

7.6.1 Outdoor and Transit Advertising

Develop multilingual signage and posters for bus shelters, BART stations, libraries, and along commercial corridors.

- Prioritize routes and stations in East and West Oakland and near community hubs (Fruitvale, Chinatown, West Oakland BART, San Antonio Park).
- Use simple, inclusive visuals showing residents “using” their Democracy Dollars to strengthen recognition.
- **Example:** Seattle’s 2019 Democracy Voucher campaign used bilingual bus ads and transit station banners, which correlated with a measurable uptick in awareness in Democracy Voucher-eligible ZIP codes.

7.6.2 Pop-Up Information Booths

Deploy temporary kiosks or mini-installations at high-traffic locations such as supermarkets, farmers markets, and transit hubs.

- Feature interactive elements, mock Democracy Dollar cards, QR codes to practice portals, and short multilingual video explainers.
- **Example:** California’s Complete Count 2020 used branded tents and folding booths in grocery store parking lots and swap meets, particularly effective for reaching multilingual households.

Action for Oakland: Coordinate with AC Transit, BART, and Parks & Recreation to allow booth placement in public spaces at no or reduced cost.

7.6.3 Event Integration

Align visibility efforts with cultural and civic events (e.g., Art + Soul Oakland, First Fridays, Día de los Muertos Festival, Juneteenth at San Antonio Park).

- Use consistent branding (“Democracy Dollars: Your Voice, Your Vote”) across banners, flyers, and ambassador shirts to maintain recognition between events.
- Collaborate with the Mayor’s Office and City Administrator’s communications teams to include Democracy Dollars in citywide campaigns, newsletters, and social media.

7.6.4 Estimated Cost Model

- Design and translation: \$10,000–\$15,000 for multilingual creative assets, including design firm or graphic contractor.
- Printing and production: \$10,000–\$20,000 for posters, banners, signage, and pop-up materials.
- Transit and ad placements: \$5,000–\$10,000 for AC Transit/BART posters and bus shelter ads (some in-kind city channels).
- Pop-up booth supplies: \$2,000–\$4,000 for tents, tables, and portable signage.
- Total estimated pilot cost (2027–2028): \$30,000–\$45,000, depending on the mix of paid and in-kind placements.

7.6.5 Implementation Considerations

Timeline

- Late 2027: Finalize designs, translations, and brand guidelines; coordinate placements with city departments.
- Early 2028: Launch visual campaign 2–3 months before Democracy Dollar distribution; rotate designs to keep content fresh through Election Day.

Resources

- Requires coordination between PEC, City communications staff, and contracted designers; printing budget and outreach logistics support.

Equity Outcome

- Ensures broad visibility across all neighborhoods, particularly where digital outreach is limited; builds recognition and trust through consistent, multilingual public presence.

7.7 Tactic 4: Media and Digital Engagement

Digital and media engagement will extend the reach of Democracy Dollars to residents who rely on community media, radio, and mobile platforms as primary information sources. A strong digital strategy will make the program visible across online spaces while reinforcing trust through culturally relevant, multilingual content.

At A Glance

Goal: Extend awareness of Democracy Dollars through trusted digital and media channels.

Methods: Multilingual social media, a mobile-friendly site, community and ethnic media.

Focus Areas: Multilingual, mobile-first residents, including immigrant communities and youth.

Equity: Expands access through accessible digital tools and trusted community media.

Estimated Cost: \$35,000–\$55,000

7.7.1 Multilingual Digital Campaigns

Create clear, accessible, and multilingual messages for short-form videos, carousel posts, and story graphics explaining how Democracy Dollars work. Prioritize platforms most used in Oakland, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube, while maintaining coordinated City communications through official channels.

- **Example:** California’s Complete Count 2020 campaign used micro-targeted ads in over 12 languages across Facebook, Instagram, and Google, achieving over 250 million impressions statewide. New York City’s Ranked Choice Voting campaign produced concise multilingual video explainers and digital ads targeted by ZIP code and language, leading to millions of impressions and improved understanding among non-English-speaking voters.

Action for Oakland: Produce short (15–30 second) mobile-friendly videos in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic. Feature local ambassadors and community leaders to build authenticity and trust.

7.7.2 Dedicated Microsite

Develop a stand-alone, mobile-optimized Democracy Dollars microsite linked to the PEC homepage. Include plain-language FAQs, explainer graphics, a “practice your Democracy Dollar” feature, and an accessibility dashboard tracking outreach and participation.

- **Example:** Seattle’s Democracy Voucher portal allowed users to request Democracy Dollars, check eligibility, and see citywide redemption data; it became the top-visited page on the city’s elections site during campaign season.

Action for Oakland: Design the site with translation in at least six languages, low-bandwidth optimization, and ADA compliance. Integrate QR codes from printed materials to direct residents easily to digital resources.

7.7.3 Community and Ethnic Media Partnerships

Collaborate with trusted ethnic and community media outlets (El Tímpano, Ethnic Media Services, Radio Bilingüe, Sing Tao Daily, La Opinión, KTSF) for interviews, explainer stories, and op-eds. Provide partner outlets with pre-approved story templates, graphics, and scripts for short radio or social ads.

- **Example:** Seattle’s 2019 outreach used bilingual radio PSAs and ethnic press inserts to reach Chinese- and Somali-speaking residents. And see [California Census 2020, Ch. 6 “Regional Micro Media Planning” and Ch. 7 “Media Planning”](#)

Action for Oakland: Issue small stipends (\$500–\$1,000) to local media outlets for content placement and community-language coverage.

7.7.4 Messaging Platforms

Establish neighborhood-based WhatsApp groups or broadcast lists to share event details, registration links, and reminders. Encourage ambassadors and CBO partners to use WhatsApp, WeChat, and Signal for micro-community communication.

- **Example:** California’s Census outreach found WhatsApp broadcasts 4–5x more effective in reaching immigrant households than email.

Action for Oakland: Work with CBO partners to create multilingual templates and training for partners to manage local groups and maintain message consistency.

7.7.5 Accessibility

Ensure all digital tools meet ADA and WCAG standards, include captions and alt text, and function on low-bandwidth connections.

- Provide downloadable PDFs and printable flyers for residents who prefer offline formats.
- Partner with the Department of Race and Equity to review accessibility compliance before launch.

7.7.6 Estimated Cost Model

- Website & hosting: \$10,000–\$15,000 (design, development, analytics setup, accessibility review).
- Digital advertising: \$15,000–\$25,000 for multilingual, geotargeted social and Google campaigns.
- Translation & captioning: \$5,000–\$8,000 for multilingual content creation.
- Community media partnerships: \$5,000–\$10,000 for stipends and placement fees.
- Total estimated cost (2027–2028): \$35,000–\$55,000, scalable with campaign reach.

7.7.7 Implementation Considerations

Timeline:

- **Mid 2027:** Develop site and creative assets; onboard media partners.
- **Late 2027:** Launch teaser content.
- **Early 2028:** Launch digital education campaign 3–4 months before Democracy Dollar distribution.
- **April–November 2028:** Maintain consistent social and community media presence; update content monthly.

Resources: Requires one digital communications consultant or 0.25 FTE PEC staff member, translation services, and modest ad-buy budget.

Equity Outcome: Expands reach among multilingual, mobile-first residents; normalizes the program for younger voters; and ensures equitable access for residents with limited in-person engagement opportunities.

7.8 Tactic 5: Public Spaces and Institutions

City facilities and community institutions will serve as essential access points for Democracy Dollars outreach, helping normalize the program as part of Oakland's civic ecosystem.

At A Glance

Goal: Normalize Democracy Dollars by integrating information into trusted, everyday spaces.

Methods: Libraries, schools, youth programs, recreation centers and parks, and transit hubs.

Focus Areas: Citywide, emphasis on public facilities and neighborhood-based spaces.

Equity: Expands access in trusted locations with multilingual, low-barrier education.

Estimated Cost: \$15,000 - \$25,000

7.8.1 Libraries

Leverage Oakland's library network as trusted public spaces for information and engagement. Host small workshops, pop-up info tables, and permanent displays at key branches (Fruitvale, Elmhurst, West Oakland, and 81st Avenue). Train multilingual library staff or volunteers to answer basic program questions.

- **Example:** Seattle Public Library partnered with the city's Democracy Voucher program to provide FAQs and forms at 26 branches, resulting in over 20,000 direct resident interactions.

Action for Oakland: Install Democracy Dollars kiosks or displays in branch entryways and include materials in library newsletters and ESL classes.

7.8.2 Schools and Youth Programs

Collaborate with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and youth organizations engaged in Oakland Youth Vote (Measure QQ) to reach first-time voters and their families. Integrate short Democracy Dollars lessons into government or civics classes and youth leadership programs.

- **Example:** NYC's Campaign Finance Board partnered with public schools to distribute student-designed RCV posters and classroom materials ahead of the 2021 election.

Action for Oakland: Pilot a youth-designed communications campaign in partnership with OUSD's Linked Learning or youth media programs (e.g., Youth Beat, YR Media).

7.8.3 Recreation Centers and Parks

Use recreation centers as neighborhood outreach bases by hosting booths at community events, after-school programs, and city festivals. Coordinate with Parks & Recreation staff to include Democracy Dollars flyers in program mailers and on bulletin boards.

- **Example:** California’s Complete Count 2020 campaign used local parks and rec centers as activation sites for outdoor “Census Saturdays,” which proved particularly effective for families and multilingual households.

7.8.4 Polling Places and Civic Centers

Distribute Democracy Dollars information alongside voter guides and registration materials at polling and ballot drop-off locations. Include simple visuals (“How to use your Democracy Dollars”) and QR codes linking to the microsite.

- **Example:** King County Elections placed Democracy Voucher handouts at ballot boxes and city service centers to ensure visibility during early voting.

7.8.5 Transit Hubs

Partner with AC Transit and BART to display Democracy Dollars posters, ads, and digital screens at major stations. Coordinate pop-up booths at key hubs (Fruitvale BART, West Oakland BART, Eastmont Transit Center) during commute hours.

- **Example:** Seattle’s 2019 campaign used bilingual digital ads in transit shelters and kiosks, generating 2 million impressions among city residents.

Action for Oakland: Combine transit placements with ambassador-led pop-ups during peak hours in summer/fall 2028.

7.8.6 Estimated Cost Model

- Materials and signage: \$5,000–\$8,000 for posters, flyers, and displays across libraries, parks, and schools.
- Workshops: \$3,000–\$5,000 for materials and refreshments for community sessions.
- Transit placements: \$5,000–\$10,000 (may be offset through city in-kind advertising).
- Total estimated pilot cost (2027–2028): \$15,000–\$25,000, scalable based on the number of participating facilities.

7.8.7 Implementation Considerations

Timeline:

- Late 2027: Identify city facilities and confirm participation; design and print outreach materials.
- Early 2028: Install displays and begin workshops at libraries and rec centers; launch transit and polling site materials 1–2 months before Democracy Dollar distribution.
- April–November 2028: Maintain rotating displays and host recurring pop-ups through Election Day.

Resources: Requires coordination with PEC, Library, Parks & Rec, OUSD, and AC Transit communications teams; minimal staffing once materials are developed.

Equity Outcome: Expands access through trusted, familiar public spaces; provides multilingual, low-barrier education for residents who may not engage online or at formal events.

7.9 Tactic 6: Trusted Messengers & Ambassador

To build credibility, trust, and cultural resonance, the Democracy Dollars program will launch a Democracy Dollars Ambassador Program. This initiative will recruit, train, and compensate residents from priority communities to serve as local educators and peer messengers for the program.

At A Glance

Goal: Build trust and program credibility through peer-to-peer outreach led by local residents.

Methods: Recruit, train and compensate Ambassadors for in-person, multilingual education.

Focus Areas: Districts 3, 5, 6, & 7, with ambassadors reflecting underrepresented communities.

Equity: Centers lived experience by paying trusted community members to lead outreach.

Estimated Cost: \$35,000–\$50,000

7.9.1 Program Structure

Ambassadors will be recruited from high-priority neighborhoods and demographic groups identified in the outreach heat map (Districts 3, 5, 6, and 7).

- They will be compensated for conducting outreach, providing education, and offering basic assistance with program understanding and participation.
- Ambassadors will support both city-led outreach (e.g., tabling, events, pop-ups) and CBO-led efforts under the Community Outreach Grant Program.
- The program will be administered by the Public Ethics Commission (PEC), with training and supervision coordinated in partnership with CBO grantees and the Department of Race and Equity.

7.9.2 Role and Function

Ambassadors will:

- Lead tabling, door-to-door, and event-based outreach;
 - Support multilingual communication by translating materials and engaging residents in their preferred language;
 - Provide feedback to PEC and CBO partners on what messages and tactics resonate locally;
 - Participate in data collection to help evaluate reach and impact.
- Training will include program mechanics, plain-language messaging, legal compliance, and inclusive engagement practices to ensure consistent, high-quality communication.
 - **Example:** Seattle’s Democracy Voucher program trained neighborhood ambassadors and paid stipends (\$300–\$600 per cycle) for 20–30 outreach sessions annually, resulting in significant awareness gains in underrepresented ZIP codes.
 - **Example:** California’s Complete Count 2020 campaign used trusted messenger networks—such as promotores, youth liaisons, and senior advocates—to deliver culturally competent messages through interpersonal networks.

7.9.3 Representation

Recruitment will prioritize:

- Youth leaders (via OUSD and Oakland Youth Vote partners);
- Multilingual residents (especially Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabic speakers);
- Community elders and long-term residents respected within their neighborhoods;
- Faith leaders, reentry advocates, and small-business liaisons to ensure diversity of reach and credibility.

Ambassadors will reflect the demographic composition of the communities most underrepresented in campaign finance participation.

7.9.4 Estimated Cost Model

- Compensation: \$20/hour for 15–20 ambassadors, averaging 6–8 hours of outreach per month over 6–8 months = \$25,000–\$35,000 total stipends.
- Training & coordination: \$5,000–\$8,000 for materials, orientation sessions, and supervision (could be shared with CBO partners).
- Outreach kits & uniforms: \$2,000–\$3,000 for branded tablecloths, flyers, badges, and QR cards.
- Administration: 0.25 FTE PEC staff or contractor to coordinate recruitment, scheduling, and data tracking.
- Total estimated pilot cost (2027–2028): \$35,000–\$50,000, scalable citywide with additional funding or partner integration.

7.9.5 Implementation Considerations

Timeline:

- **Late 2027:** Design program structure, recruit ambassadors, and conduct initial training.
- **Early 2028:** Ambassadors begin outreach in priority neighborhoods, working alongside CBO partners.
- **April–November 2028:** Ambassadors maintain visible presence at events, markets, libraries, and transit hubs throughout the election cycle.

Resources: Requires modest stipends, a part-time coordinator, and logistical support for training and reporting.

Equity Outcome: Empowers residents from historically underrepresented communities to lead outreach efforts, strengthens community trust in the program, and ensures messaging reflects Oakland’s linguistic and cultural diversity.

Part 8: Messaging

Effective communication will be central to ensuring every eligible Oakland resident understands and trusts the Democracy Dollars program. Because the program introduces new concepts around public campaign funding, its success depends on materials that are clear, culturally resonant, multilingual, and accessible. This section outlines strategies for framing, designing and distributing materials that meet Oakland’s equity and communication goals.

8.1 Framing and Development

Democracy Dollars messaging should balance two goals: civic empowerment and practical instruction. Communications must help residents feel that their participation has real power while making it easy to understand how the program works.

Three-Phase Cadence (Late 2027 through November 2028)

- **Educate:** what the program is, who is eligible, and how Democracy Dollars works
- **Motivate:** why it matters for fairness, new candidates and neighborhood power.
- **Activate:** step-by-step “do this now” actions

Civic and Empowering Messaging

Messaging should frame Democracy Dollars as a tool for fairness, equity, and community representation. Communications should highlight that Democracy Dollars help ensure that Oakland’s leadership reflects all its neighborhoods, not just those with wealth or influence.

Potential Message Pillars:

1. **Your Voice, Your Power.** Every eligible resident has the opportunity to participate and be heard. (See [Seattle Democracy Voucher Flyer - “Your Voice Matters”](#) example)
2. **Fair Elections for Every Neighborhood.** Democracy Dollars helps level the playing field so communities shape elections. (Race and Power or turnout map visual?)
3. **Simple. Free. Yours.** The program is straightforward, free to use, and designed for everyday residents. (see NYC CFB “\$10 = \$90” message example)

Short, memorable phrases such as “Every Oaklander gets Democracy Dollars” or “Fair elections start with you” should be used consistently across formats.

Practical and Procedural Messaging

Residents need clear, digestible explanations of:

- What Democracy Dollars are
- Who receives them and when
- How to assign them to a candidate
- Why the program increases fairness and representation
- Where to get help

Partnering with professional civic design organizations. [Center for Civic Design](#), to test and refine language, layout and visuals. ([NYCVotes Ranked Voice Voting Explainer Video](#), Center for Civic Design [Report on How to Community with Low Propensity Voters](#) and [Report on Community with Voters](#))

8.2 Tone, Accessibility, and Cultural Relevance

All materials should:

- Use plain language, 5th - 8th grade level, and avoid bureaucratic or campaign finance terminology.
- Reflect Oakland's diversity through imagery and examples showing real residents.
- Include translations in all languages required under the Oakland Fair Elections Act (OFEA) and any language spoken by at least two percent of the city's adult population.
- Use accessible design practices: high-contrast colors, large fonts, and simple layouts that meet ADA and universal design standards.
- Provide oral and audio formats, such as voiceovers and radio spots, for residents with limited literacy or language access.
- Feature local voices and narrators from the communities being reached, building familiarity and trust.

*For example, during the 2020 Census, Fresno County partnered with trusted community messengers for ethnic radio and TV interviews in Punjabi, Hmong, and Spanish, demonstrating the importance of culturally grounded audio outreach for linguistically diverse communities.

Visual identity should generally align with City of Oakland communications standards while allowing Democracy Dollars to have a recognizable community-driven look.

8.3 Recommended Materials

A comprehensive suite of materials should be produced to support City-led outreach and CBO engagement.

Material Type	Audience	Purpose	Example
Flyers and Posters	General Public	Explain core program concepts	NYC RCV multilingual flyer
Democracy Dollar “How-To” Guide	Residents Ready to Participate	Step-by-step participation	NYC Matching Funds Video and Graphic
Short Videos/PSAs	Multilingual + digital audiences	Tell personal stories; build trust	NYCVotes videos , Seattle DVP Video
Partner Toolkit	CBOs + Ambassadors	FAQs, templates, graphics	Seattle (King County) Flyer Toolkit and CA Counts Partner Toolkit
Interactive Demonstration	Event attendees	Mock DD assignments	RankedVote practice simulation
Social Graphics	Online users	Bite-sized explainers	CA Partner Social Media Guide

8.4 Testing and Collaboration

All messaging and materials should undergo iterative testing to ensure comprehension, resonance, and trust.

Recommended steps:

- **Messaging Focus Groups:** CAC or CBO-led sessions reviewing draft materials
- **Field Testing:** Walk-up usability tests at libraries, community centers, and transit hubs
- **Partner Review:** Each CBO grantee tests materials with constituents
- **Continuous Improvement:** Refine templates before translation and mass production

This approach mirrors the Center for Civic Design’s participatory testing model ([Design Review Guide](#)) and [California Complete Count messaging testing](#).

8.5 Scenario-Based Messaging Adaptation

Messaging must adapt depending on whether the program launches citywide or as a four-district pilot. While core values remain the same, clarity is essential to avoid confusion about eligibility and voucher issuance.

- **Citywide launch:** Emphasize universality (“every eligible Oaklander receives Democracy Dollars”)
- **Pilot:** Emphasize clarity (“Residents in Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7 are part of Oakland’s Democracy Dollars pilot”). Include simple maps and district-specific materials.

Focus Area	Full Launch (All Municipal Races)	Pilot (Four Council Districts: 1, 3, 5, 7)
Tone	Citywide pride and democratic inclusion.	Localized relevance. “Be the first in Oakland to try Democracy Dollars.”
Reach	Broad awareness campaign across city channels, transit, and digital platforms.	Targeted, hyperlocal outreach through trusted neighborhood networks.
Equity Emphasis	Emphasize citywide fairness and transparency in elections.	Emphasize accessibility, community leadership, and program testing.
Evaluation	Highlight transparency and citywide metrics.	Invite participants to share feedback to shape the citywide rollout.
Budget Focus	Requires large-scale translation, creative production, and advertising.	Streamlined messaging with customizable partner templates and CBO amplification.

Note: Include sample language tailored to each scenario once PEC decides pilot vs. full launch framing.

8.6 Implementation

Timeline:

- **Early 2027:** Begin message development, translation, and visual identity work with design partners.
- **Fall 2027:** Test materials with community partners during pilot outreach.
- **Early 2028:** Launch full suite of printed and digital materials two to three months before Democracy Dollar distribution.

Resources:

- A design and communications contractor
- Translation and accessibility budget
- Coordination with City Communications + Race & Equity
- Potential creative firms: [Mercury Public Affairs](#), [Lunia Blue](#), [A Bright Idea](#), [Pentagram](#), [Blue State](#), [Big Duck](#), [Bellweather](#), [Civic Center for Design](#), and [Once-Future Office](#). [Voice Media Adventures](#), [American Community Media](#), [impreMedia](#)

Budget Note: Production scale and media placement will depend on FY27-29 budget authorization. Messaging should be designed in modular, scalable formats to allow adjustments based on funding availability.

Part 9: Evaluation and Metrics

Measuring the effectiveness of Democracy Dollars outreach and implementation will be critical to understanding the program's impact, identifying gaps and guiding improvements for future cycles. Evaluation should assess (1) the success of public outreach and education efforts and (2) the outcomes of the Democracy Dollars program after each election.

Where possible, PEC should use disaggregated data (race, language, age, income and district) to assess equitable reach and participation, in alignment with the [Oakland Fair Elections Act](#) and City equity standards.

9.1 Outreach and Education Metrics

Evaluation should measure awareness, access and engagement across Oakland's diverse communities. Success will be defined both by overall reach and by reducing gaps between high- and low-engagement neighborhoods and demographic groups.

Key Indicators:

- **Public Awareness and Understanding** – percentage of residents who have heard of the program and can explain how it works.
 - Potential Benchmark: 60–70% awareness in priority districts prior to distribution.
- **Equitable Reach** – awareness and participation measured by race, language spoken at home, age, income, and district.
 - Potential Benchmark: Awareness rates in low-turnout districts (3, 5, 6, 7) within 10 percentage points of high-turnout districts (1 and 4).
- **Engagement Activity** – volume of events, CBO partnerships, ambassador interactions, and direct contacts through canvassing, tabling and demonstrations.
 - Potential Benchmark: 8–10 active CBO grantees and 20–25 ambassadors.
- **Language and Accessibility Compliance** – Extent of translations, trans-adaptations, and ADA-compliant designs across all materials and formats.
 - Potential Benchmark: All required translations completed; key languages represented in materials.

- **Digital & Media Engagement** – Website traffic, video views, social-media reach, and placements in ethnic media.
 - Potential Benchmark: 25,000+ website visits and 10,000+ video views during core outreach period.
- **Community Feedback** – clarity, trust and resonance measured through CAC discussions, focus groups, surveys and field testing.

(Example: California’s 2020 Census campaign used similar metrics, awareness, language reach, and trusted messenger effectiveness, to evaluate its “hard-to-count” outreach, [Mercury Final Report, Ch. 9](#))

9.2 Program Metrics (Post-Election)

Following each election, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC), in collaboration with the Department of Race and Equity, should evaluate program outcomes, equity impact, administrative performance, and candidate participation.

Key Indicators

- **Democracy Dollar Participation** – number of Democracy Dollars distributed, assigned, and redeemed; percentage of residents who used at least one Democracy Dollar.
 - Potential Benchmark: 5–8% of eligible residents redeem at least one Democracy Dollar in the first cycle (pilot or full launch).
- **Equity in Participation** – demographic and geographic distribution of Democracy Dollar users compared with citywide populations.
 - Potential Benchmark: No demographic group underrepresented among voucher users by more than 15%.
- **Candidate Participation and Diversity** – number of candidates certified, demographic diversity, and competitiveness of races.
 - Potential Benchmark: One-third of candidates are first-time candidates or from underrepresented communities.
- **Impact on Campaign Financing** – share of campaign funds from Democracy Dollars and small donations; reduction in reliance on large-donors.
 - Potential Benchmark: 40% or more of total campaign funds from Democracy Dollars and small donations.
- **Resident Trust and Satisfaction** – Trust, usability, and experience with the program measured through post-election surveys, CBO feedback, and CAC reflection.
- **Administrative Performance** – efficiency and accuracy of program operations.
 - Potential Benchmark: 95% of Democracy Dollars processed within five business days; error rate below 1%.

Seattle’s Democracy Voucher Program uses similar indicators to assess equity and effectiveness (Seattle DVP [2017](#), [2019](#), [2021](#) and [2023](#) Evaluation Reports)

9.3 Pilot and Full-Launch Evaluation

If Oakland implements a four-district pilot in 2028, evaluation should emphasize:

- Depth of engagement within pilot districts
- Democracy dollars usage and understanding in comparison to non-pilot districts
- Lessons for citywide expansion

For a citywide launch, metrics should reflect broad participation, geographic equity, and administrative scalability .

9.4 Potential Research Partnerships

To strengthen evaluation design and rigor, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) may partner with local academic institutions, such as the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, or other community research organizations.

These partners could:

- support mixed-methods evaluation
- conduct demographic and geographic analysis
- produce independent assessments for public reporting
- inform improvements for subsequent election cycles

Such partnerships would enhance methodological rigor, support equity impact analysis, and provide independent insights to inform future Democracy Dollars cycles.

Appendix A

Stakeholder Interviews

Between June and December 2025, Local Policy Lab conducted a series of structured stakeholder interviews to inform the development of Oakland’s Democracy Dollars Outreach Strategy. Interviewees represented City departments, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, academics, commissioners, and public finance experts. The insights gathered helped shape the recommendations across outreach tactics, accessibility, coordination, and equity considerations.

Below is a list of all individuals successfully interviewed, grouped by organization.

City of Oakland		
Michael Enslow	City Administrator’s Office	Digital/Website lead
Brianna Orton	City Auditor’s Office	Engagement Lead
Anwar Baroudi	City of Oakland / Commission on Persons with Disabilities (MCPD)	MCPD Commissioner
Benjamin Bartu	City of Oakland / Commission on Persons with Disabilities (MCPD)	MCPD Commissioner
Fatimah Aure	City of Oakland / Commission on Persons with Disabilities (MCPD)	MCPD Commissioner
Mark Romoser	City of Oakland ADA	Program Analyst
Manuel Corona	Department of Transportation	Transportation Planner
Monica Pelayo Lock	Inspector General	Director of Communications and Engagement
LaNiece Jones	Mayor's Office	Director of Community Engagement
Carina Lieu	Oakland City Administrator's Office	Sr. Inclusive Community Engagement Officer

City of Oakland Cont.

Jacque Larrainzar	Oakland Department of Race and Equity	Analyst
Alea Gage	Oakland Public Ethics Commission	DD Subcommittee Member (Chair)
Bobby Zaidi	Oakland Public Ethics Commission	Community Engagement Specialist
Karun Tilak	Oakland Public Ethics Commission	DD Subcommittee Member
Suzanne Doran	Oakland Public Ethics Commission	Program Manager - Democracy Dollars
Tanya Bayeva	Oakland Public Ethics Commission	DD Subcommittee Member
Adriana Villegas	Oakland Unified School District	Student Engagement Specialist
Sara Nuno	Oakland Unified School District	Family Community Engagement Specialist
Adam Semt	Oakland Unified School District	OUSD Alumni

Community-Based Organizations & Advocacy

Sietse Goffard	Asian Law Caucus	Sr. Program Coordinator, Voting Rights
Darlene Azarmi	Common Cause	Money In Politics Program Manager (Previous Goldman Fellow)
Raul Macías	Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund's Democracy Program	Program Director
Gail Wallace	League of Women Voters	President
Perfecta Oxholm	PolicyLink	Sr. Associate
Chagan Sanathu	The Greenlining Institute	Chief of Staff
David Shor	Empowered Politics; Previous Common Cause	Previous Money In Politics Program Manager
Nicole Neditch	SPUR	Governance and Economy Policy Director

Democracy Reform Experts / Researchers		
Wayne Barnett	Seattle Public Ethics Commission (Democracy Vouchers Program)	Executive Director
Rene LeBeau	Seattle Public Ethics Commission (Democracy Vouchers)	Democracy Voucher Program Manager
Jennifer Heerwig	Stony Brook University	Associate Prof and Chair
Elected Officials		
Councilmember Rowena Brown	City of Oakland	At-Large Councilmember
Councilmember Charlene Wang	City of Oakland	District Councilmember
Councilmember Zachary Unger	City of Oakland	District Councilmember

In addition to the interviews listed above, the project team attempted outreach to additional stakeholders across City departments, community-based organizations, labor, faith-based organizations, and political groups. Scheduling constraints and timelines limited participation in some cases. These outreach attempts informed the overall understanding of stakeholder landscape and helped identify gaps for future engagement.

Overview of Stakeholder Interview Themes

Across interviews with City officials, Public Ethics Commission members, elected leaders, community-based organizations, researchers, and practitioners with experience implementing Democracy Dollars–style programs, several consistent themes emerged. Stakeholders broadly expressed strong support for the goals of Democracy Dollars and emphasized its potential to rebalance political influence toward residents historically excluded from campaign finance. At the same time, interviewees underscored that success will depend less on the novelty of the program and more on the quality, trustworthiness, and coordination of outreach and education efforts.

A dominant theme was the importance of trust and credibility. Many stakeholders noted that Oakland residents, particularly in East and West Oakland, are skeptical of new City initiatives due to past experiences with limited follow-through. Interviewees emphasized that outreach must be led by trusted messengers, including community-based organizations, neighborhood leaders, and paid ambassadors with lived experience, rather than relying solely on City-branded communications. Several participants pointed to Seattle’s experience as evidence that early missteps in outreach can be corrected through deeper investment in community-led engagement.

Stakeholders consistently highlighted language access and cultural relevance as critical. Interviewees stressed that translation alone is insufficient; effective engagement requires oral communication, culturally grounded messaging, and partnerships with ethnic media and community institutions. Immigrant-serving organizations and advocates emphasized the need for clear eligibility messaging, particularly for lawful permanent residents, to avoid confusion or fear among non-citizen communities.

Another recurring theme was the need for early coordination and internal capacity. City staff and PEC representatives noted limited staffing and resources dedicated to Democracy Dollars, underscoring the importance of cross-departmental coordination, shared infrastructure, and realistic timelines. Several interviewees emphasized that outreach planning should begin well before the 2028 launch to support both public education and budget advocacy.

Interviewees with experience from Seattle and other jurisdictions emphasized the value of data-informed targeting and continuous learning. Stakeholders recommended using turnout data, language access data, and real-time engagement feedback to adjust outreach strategies over time. They also stressed the importance of measuring not just awareness, but understanding, trust, and participation.

Finally, many stakeholders raised the importance of addressing skepticism and criticism directly, particularly around program cost, complexity, and effectiveness. Rather than avoiding these concerns, interviewees encouraged transparent communication, clear explanations of program benefits, and proactive storytelling about impact to build durable public and political support.

Together, these interviews reinforced that Democracy Dollars outreach in Oakland must be community-centered, multilingual, data-informed, and coordinated across City systems to build trust and achieve equitable participation.

Appendix B

Potential Community Advisory Committee and Outreach Partners

The following list highlights potential organizations, networks, and community stakeholders who could serve on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) or participate as outreach partners in the Democracy Dollars program. These examples represent a cross-section of Oakland’s civic, cultural, and neighborhood ecosystems, with deep ties to communities historically underrepresented in local political and campaign finance processes. Inclusion of partners such as these would help ensure Democracy Dollars implementation is equitable, multilingual, accessible, and grounded in trusted relationships across the city.

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive and is intended to support planning and outreach strategy development. Inclusion does not imply endorsement or commitment. Final CAC membership and outreach partnerships would be determined through a transparent recruitment and selection process led by the Public Ethics Commission, in coordination with relevant City departments.

Potential Partners

Category	Potential Organizations / Networks	Notes
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Coalition for a Better Oakland; Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; Phat Beets Produce (North Oakland / food justice network); Intertribal Friendship House; Urban Habitat; Oakland Chinatown Improvement Council (OCIC)	Deeply rooted in neighborhoods and communities; trusted messengers for outreach in underserved areas. Many have experience in civic education and community engagement.

Category	Potential Organizations / Networks	Notes
Faith-Based, Educational, and Youth Programs	Faith in Action East Bay; Bay Area Community Benefit Organization; Interfaith Council of Alameda County; local churches in East Oakland, Fruitvale, and West Oakland; school-based student organizations and PTAs; East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC)	Existing networks that can mobilize congregations, students, and families; effective channels for multilingual and intergenerational outreach.
Social, Cultural, and Identity-Based Organizations	Oakland Asian Cultural Center; Oakland Black Cowboy Association; Intertribal Friendship House; neighborhood arts and cultural associations	Serve as cultural anchors and conveners; well positioned to host events and develop culturally resonant materials.
Disability and Accessibility Advocates	Senior & Disability Action (SDA); Regional Center of the East Bay; California Disability Rights; BART Transit Accessibility Committees; local disability coalitions	Ensure program materials, events, and platforms meet accessibility standards and reflect lived experience of residents with disabilities.
Youth Networks	Youth leadership programs run by CBOs; student government and activism groups in community colleges and high schools; youth advisory councils; young professionals in civic, tech, and social justice spaces	Engage youth and young adults as ambassadors, peer educators, and first-time participants.

Category	Potential Organizations / Networks	Notes
Neighborhood, Tenant, and Block Associations	Tenant unions and associations in East Oakland, West Oakland, and Fruitvale; neighborhood councils and block associations	Trusted hyperlocal networks for door-to-door and peer-to-peer outreach; valuable for geographic targeting in low-turnout districts.
Civic Engagement, Equity, and Voter Education Coalitions	BAYPEC; League of Women Voters of Oakland; Common Cause California; Oakland Rising; Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach; ACLU Northern California; other democracy reform and voting rights groups	Bring civic expertise, outreach infrastructure, and community trust; potential technical and accountability partners.
Residents-at-Large	Unaffiliated community leaders, neighborhood advocates, and residents with lived experience in priority communities	Helps ensure CAC representation reflects lived experience beyond organizational leadership and reaches residents not traditionally engaged in formal civic structures.

Appendix C

Preliminary Budget Framework

Purpose: This preliminary budget highlights major cost categories associated with implementing the proposed outreach strategy. Estimates reflect a rollout aligned with Phase 2 (2027) and Phase 3 (2028) preparation and launch activities. Costs are scalable based on the number of partners, intensity of outreach, and availability of in-kind City resources.

High-Level Budget Summary (Estimated)

Cost Category	What It Covers	Estimated Range (2027–2028)
A. Direct Neighborhood Outreach	Tabling/canvassing/pop-ups; printed materials; outreach kits; GIS targeting support	\$29,000
B. Community Outreach Grant Program (CBO Grants + Admin)	8–10 grants; grant management; shared templates; optional evaluation support	\$140,000–\$180,000
C. Public Visibility & Presence	Branding/design; printing; posters/banners; limited paid transit/outdoor placements; pop-up booth supplies	\$30,000–\$45,000
D. Media & Digital Engagement	Microsite; multilingual content; digital ads; translation/captioning; community media stipends	\$35,000–\$55,000

Cost Category	What It Covers	Estimated Range (2027–2028)
E. Public Spaces & Institutions	Materials/signage for libraries/schools/rec centers; workshops; transit placements (some may be in-kind)	\$15,000–\$25,000
F. Ambassador Program (Trusted Messengers)	Ambassador stipends; training; kits/uniforms; part-time coordination	\$35,000–\$50,000
Estimated Total		~\$284,000–\$384,000

Note: Several tactics overlap operationally (e.g., ambassadors support direct outreach and CBO-led outreach). The ranges above reflect the full cost envelopes described in the report; final budgeting may consolidate line items depending on implementation design.