

Centro por la Justicia
Southwest Workers' Union

**Summer 2018 Promotorx
Canvass Program**



SAN ANTONIO CLIMATE CONTEXT

The challenges faced by low income families are rooted in a legacy of segregation and structural barriers that have produced a system of exclusion, unequal opportunity and blighted neighborhoods suffering from a lack of public investment in infrastructure.

The failure to address the root causes of these societal challenges, coupled with an austerity approach to public goods and services, has burdened communities with poor social capital and a low wage environment that perpetuates poverty, financial insecurity, low educational attainment, poor health, and long-entrenched problems in juvenile and criminal justice.

It is in this context that climate change is playing out and causing very unequal impacts for communities of color and low income families in the region.*

“The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the campaign, methodology, tools used, and share initial finding with SWU partners advancing local Climate Action.”

- Isaac Garcia, Policy Organizer

Nuestra Voz Campaign

In order to maintain the momentum of grassroots voter engagement in South Texas, SWU developed a comprehensive civic engagement campaign and policy platform aimed at empowering working families and enabling their voices to shift the public narrative.

These community residents signed on as members of Nuestra Voz (Our Voice) sharing a concern for healthy communities, quality education, and just wages, as well as a shared desire to participate in the political and civic processes. Nuestra Voz works to bring about an even greater political impact and hold elected officials accountable to the needs of working class families as we navigate the current and volatile political climate. The Nuestra Voz universe has 15,000 contacts in Bexar and Medina County.



Community Engagement

For 30 years, community engagement has been at the center of our environmental justice principles. We define community engagement as building ongoing relationships with community members and creating a collective vision for our community, as we seek out the tools that help us reach that vision together.

We utilize community organize to achieve our shared goals for environmental and economic justice.



BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Part of our work with the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) is to acknowledge and address the barriers community members have with access to information, participation, and the process. This means that we must center, bridge the gap, and address the issues affecting community members who are impacted the most, but benefit the least from economic and environmental disparities.

In conversation with residents these were a few a few reasons that lead to low participation.

illness, transportation, understanding of issues, work and family commitments, literacy, language and cultural competency, fear of deportation, and access to the internet

These barriers are part of a larger systemic issue associated with education, workforce, income inequality and environmental racism.

BREAKING THE BARRIERS



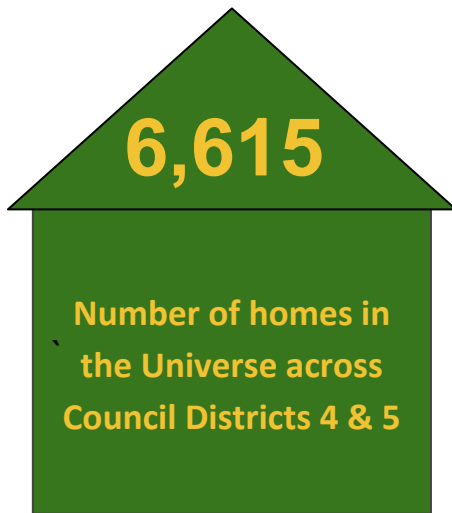
Our comprehensive work plan on community engagement directly addresses these barriers through direct door-to door canvassing (block-walking) with the help of the Voter Access Network. VAN gives us access to every single registered voter in Bexar County. This is data that many non-profit organizations use for the purpose of voter and civic engagement among other issues.*

We acknowledge that VAN also presents its own barriers to equity, with community members not being registered to vote by other systemic issues like voter suppression, citizenship, and voter registration.

We address these additional gaps by community meetings, workshops and cold canvassing, where we attempt to knock on doors not in our lists or databases, and conduct programming on civil and human rights.

BUILDING OUR CAMPAIGN

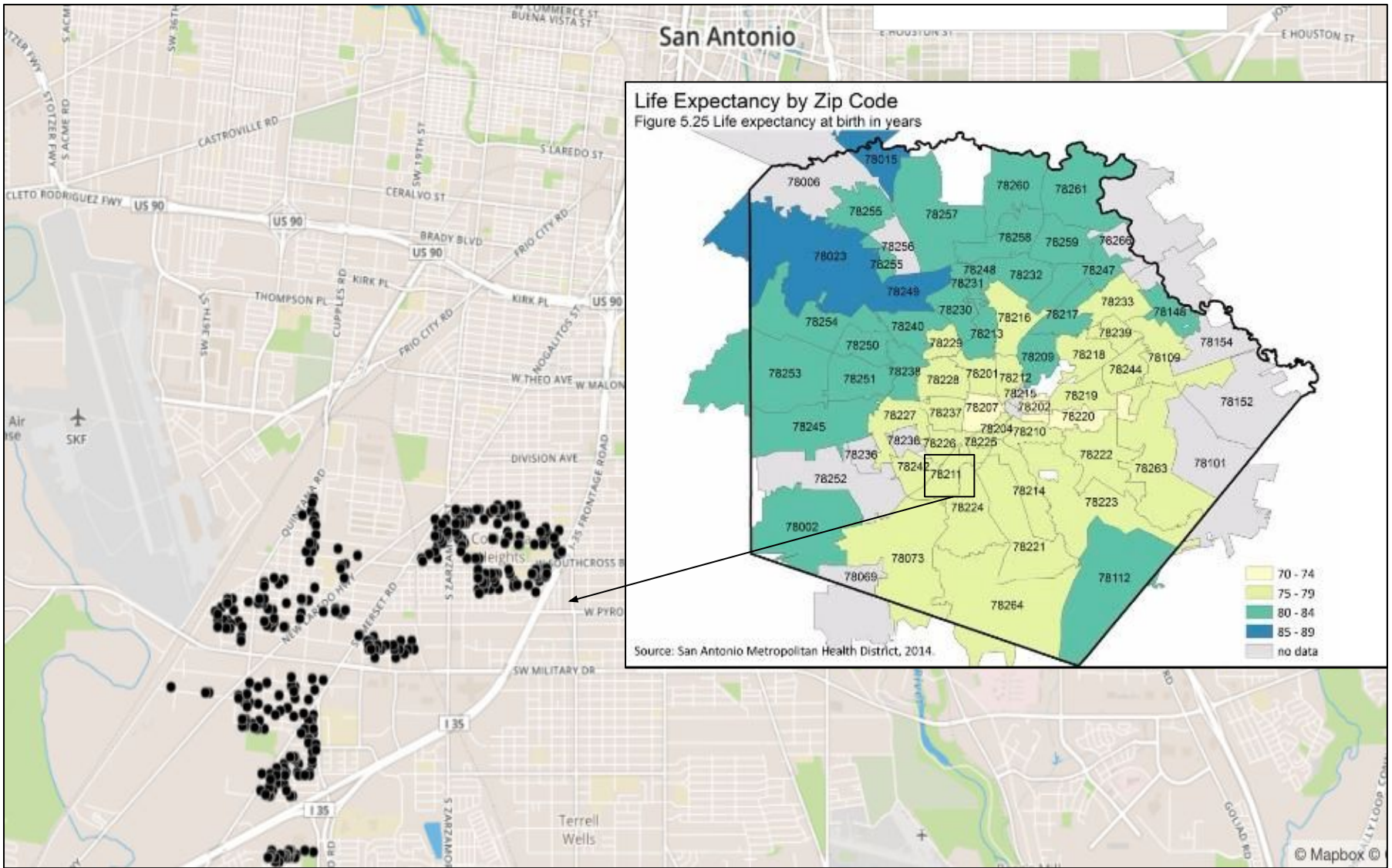
Our first step was to decide where to canvass. We corroborated historical data (Kelly A.F. Base contamination, Census 2010, and a 2016 health study report by the Bexar County Health Collaborative) to map out the region to canvass. During this campaign, we selected community members living in the 78211 zip code (City Council District 4 & 5). *



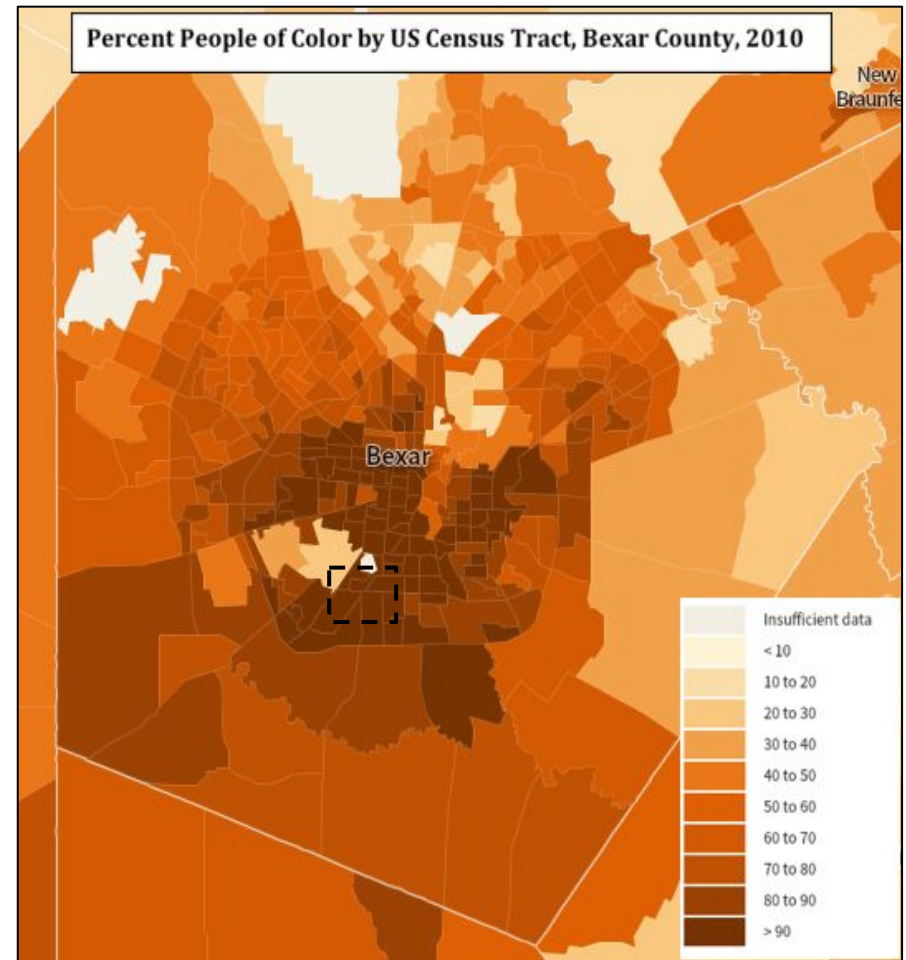
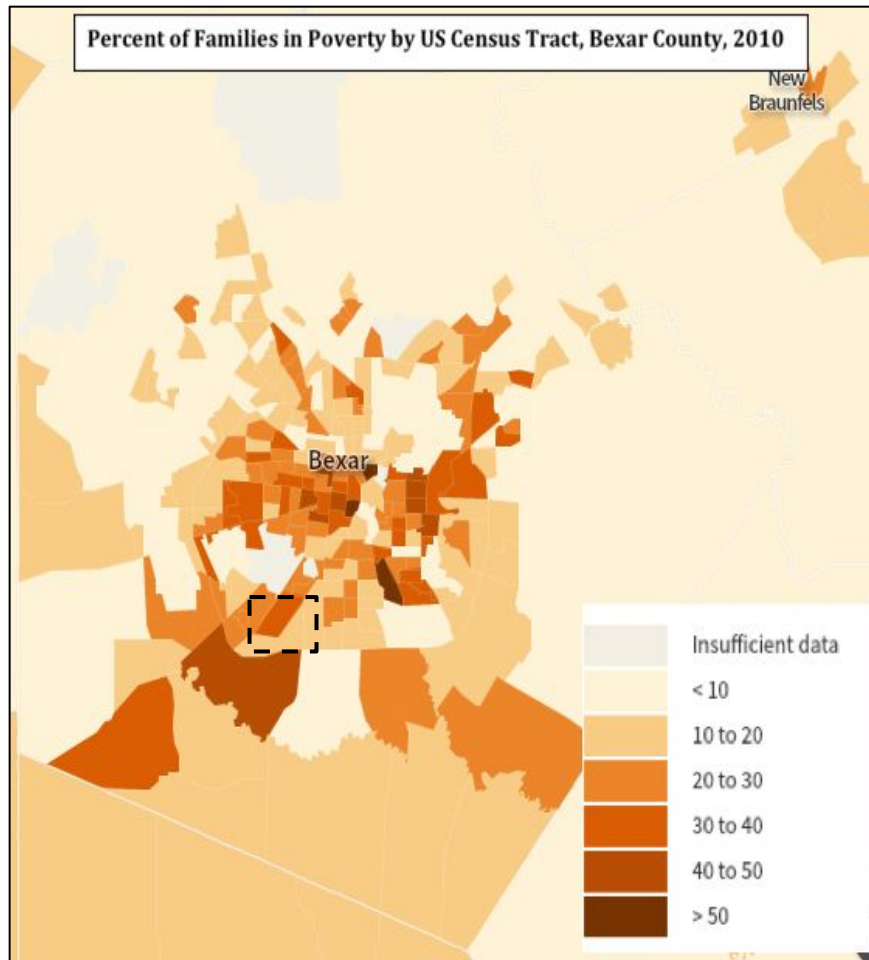
Our purpose for the canvass was to introduce community members to the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, to gain general support in asking CPS to invest in renewable sources of energy and eliminate coal production, as well as base-building.

In addition, with the help of the Environmental Justice coordinator and historical data, Nuestra Voz set out to conduct a health survey to willing participants.

The Voter Access Network (VAN) was used to build our lists and collect data.



The larger map represents the homes promotoras visited during the three week program, layered with a map from the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District on Life Expectancy in a district SWU historically has organized in. *



Two additional layers used in developing the universe include Census 2010 data on families living below poverty line and percent of people of color. The box shows zip code 78211. *

WHAT IS VAN?

The screenshot shows the StateVoices Texas VAN interface. The top navigation bar includes the StateVoices logo, 'Powered By everyaction', and 'Texas'. Below this are tabs for 'My Voters' and 'My Campaign'. The main content area is titled 'Welcome Isaac' and features a 'View Your Dashboard' section with a list of items: My Requests (1 New), My Export Files (0), My PDF Files (0), Counts/Crosstabs Outputs (1), Follow Ups (0), Support Requests (0), Contact the Admin, Request a User Account, NGP VAN Help and Training Guides, and State Voices Training Site. An 'Administrative Menu' is also visible with links to MiniVAN, Exports, and Letters. On the right, there are sections for 'Quick Look Up' (Quick Look Up), 'Lists' (Create A New List, Go to My List (401 People), View My Folders), 'Canvassing' (Canvass Results, Turfs, MiniVAN), and 'Quick Tasks' (Relationships, Virtual Phone Bank).

The Voter Activation Network (VAN) is a privately owned voter database and web hosting provider used by non-profit organizations authorized by the Democratic Party. It is used by political and social campaigns for fundraising, campaign finance compliance, field organizing, and digital organizing.*

With the support of State Voices and Grownswell, SWU utilize VAN for social campaigns, base building and field organizing. All of which fall under 501-C3 organizing.

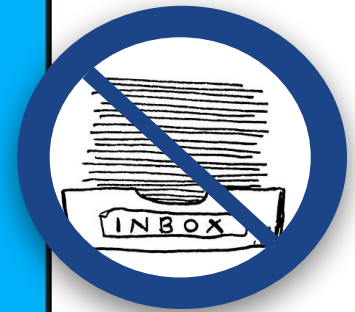
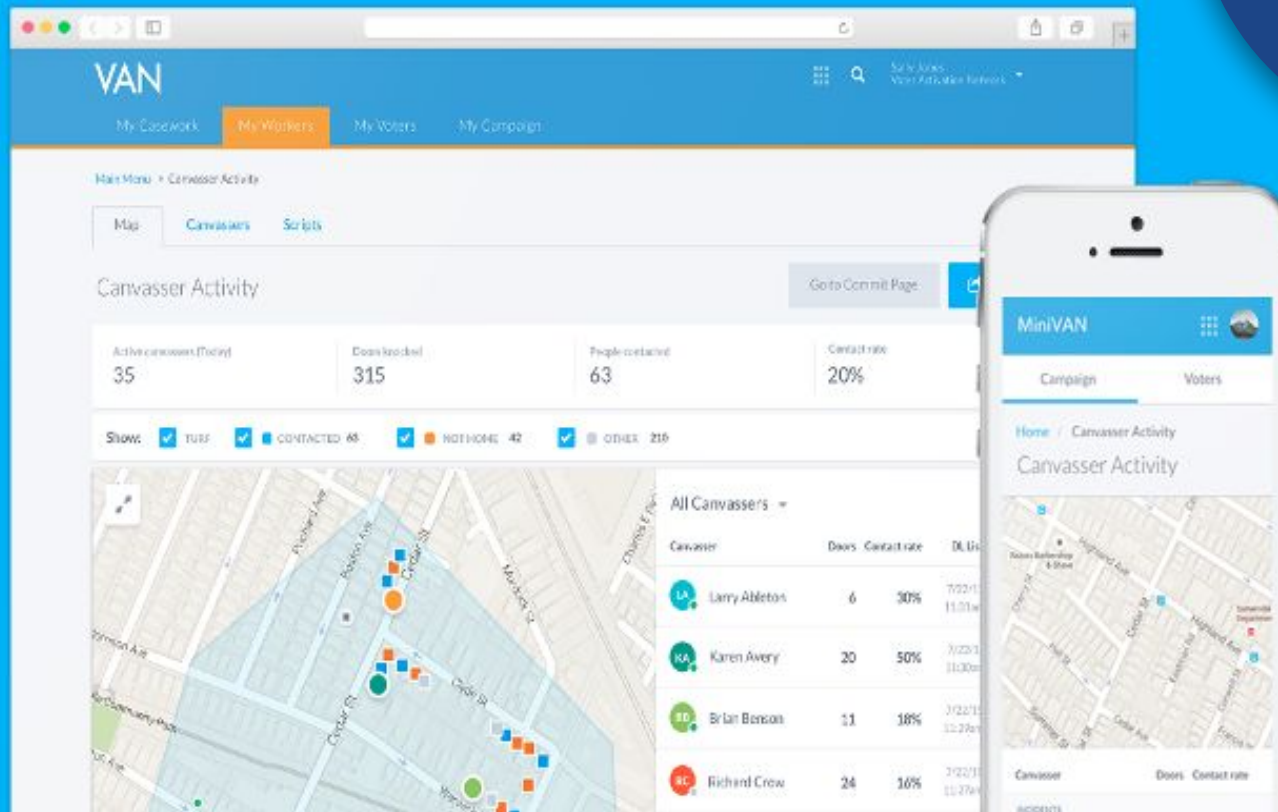
VAN was most popularized by political candidates such as Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

VAN TOOLS

VoteBuilder: is one of the software systems created by VAN. It is used by the Democratic Party and associated campaigns to track interaction with potential voters. It is used as part of campaign voter persuasion. It stores information like phone calls and other methods of contact with voters in the system. SWU utilizes the database to build lists of registered voters across Bexar County so that we may connect them to the issues affecting their community. We use phone banking and block walking in our attempts to reach community members and have one on one conversations with them about their community needs and concerns.*

MiniVAN: is a mobile canvassing application that allows for campaigns and organizations to contact voters or supporters, collect data, and sync the information back to their VAN or EveryAction database in real time, thus eliminating the need for paper lists and data entry.*

With the use of tablets, we took the campaign paperless, saving time & money. Data was synched automatically, instead of tedious manual inputting.



BARRIERS TO VAN

Although VAN has elevated campaigns to victory, community building and data capture, the system is not without its flaws.

The tools of VAN tend to be more successful in suburban, affluent and middle class communities.

The reason being that these community members tend to move less often, change their phone numbers less often and be home during phone banking and block walking shifts.



In addition, systemic issues that affect low income communities of color, more often, add additional barriers to voter contact. This includes many people not being home during a block walk shift, distrust in frontline communities with outsiders visiting their neighborhood and physical barriers such as locked gates, guard dogs and no trespassing signs. The system also only includes registered voters.*

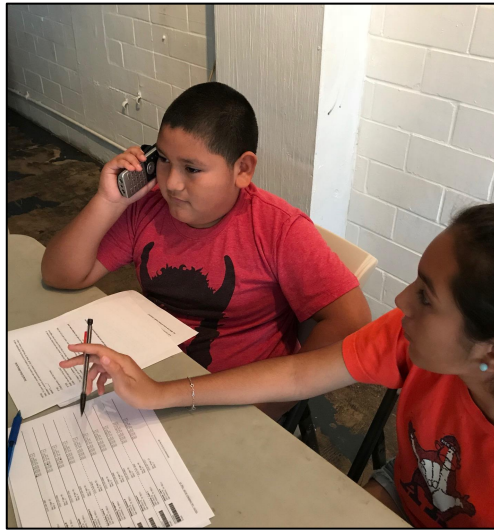
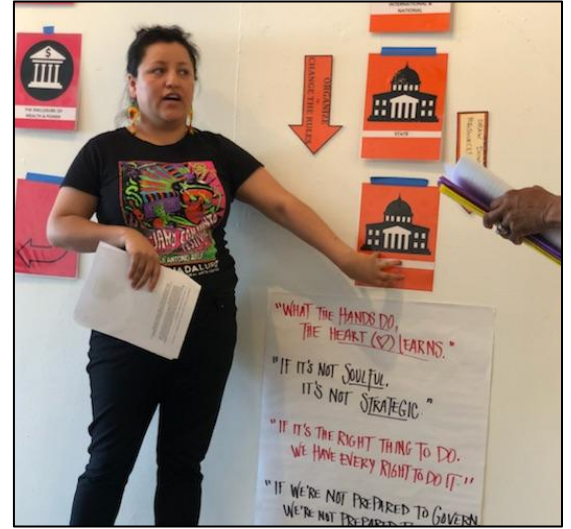
HITTING THE STREETS

It was important for our campaign to be culturally competent and well versed with issues affecting our communities. SWU uses bottom up organizing to make sure we are meeting the needs of all community members most affected.*

Ten community members were hired as climate justice promotorxs for this 21-day long campaign. This included members of the neighborhood we were canvassing including women, femmes, non-binary, and transgender community members of color. All of which have been involved in SWU's work and campaigns throughout the years.



A training prior to the launch of the campaign was held to ensure that all promotorxs understood the work, script, survey questions and health study.



THE NUMBERS

During the 21 day campaign, Climate Justice Promotorxs were able to knock on 6,615 doors.

would like CPS Energy to move away from coal to a more renewable source of energy

940

would like to become more connected to SWU to learn more about climate change and how it affects their everyday lives, through community meetings and workshops in their neighborhoods

717

health studies
conducted

168

32

People Trained in Block walking, Phonebanking, and VAN

14% contact rate.

Low contact rate is a result of several factors which include:

- Individuals not home, and
- household being inaccessible to the canvasser

OUR FINDINGS

Residents in district 78211:

- lack mobility, access, and understanding of climate change impacts
- expressed interest in addressing climate change for their families and future generations.
- are interested in programs that will help them reduce their impact on climate change.
- feel disconnected from the decision making process.

What we learned by going door-to-door:

- meet people where they are at (bring the resources to them)
- address the systems that created the disparities in the first place, not just a one time engagement
- by patiently listening to concerns, and interests, each neighborhood presents its own unique needs to addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental justice.

NEXT STEPS

In our efforts to bridge these gaps, SWU is planning a climate themed events to address the issues brought forth by community members on the front lines of climate justice. SWU will continue to intersect issues related to climate, and participate in ensuring the Climate Action & Adaptation plan will impact those most affected by the change in climate.



An equitable policy works to dismantle barriers to access, engagement, and solutions by:

- Making one-on-one connections with residents.
- Breaking down environmental issues at play.
- Investing in community organizing so that a just San Antonio's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan is impactful, and beneficial for San Antonians who bear the largest burden of the damage.
- Address current issues, while building towards long term solutions.
- Including historical analysis around race, class, gender, and age.

* References *

Slide 2 - Kresge Foundation Climate Resilience and Urban Opportunity Grant Proposal. 2015. Centro por la Justicia.

Slide 6 - NGP Van About Us. ngpvan.com/about.

Slide 7 - Kelly AFB Campaign Archives. Centro por la Justicia Offices

Community Health Needs Assessment. 2016. San Antonio Metropolitan Health Department.

Residents in North Bexar County Live 20 Years Longer than those in the South. Jan Ross Piedad. Nov 8, 2017. Texas Public Radio.

Slide 8 - Life Expectancy by Zip Code Map. 2014. San Antonio Metropolitan Health Department.

Slide 9 - Nuestra Voz Campaign Archives. 2009 - 2011. Centro por la Justicia Offices.

Page 10 - NGP Van About Us. ngpvan.com/about.

Page 11 - The Gold Standard In Political Campaign Technology. act.ngpvan.com/votebuilder. Canvassing With Minivan.

ngpvan.com/go/minivan

Slide 13 - Barriers To Access Presentation. Groundswell National Convening 2017.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

SWU's approach to voter engagement is rooted in eliminating barriers through education, leadership development, and advocacy promoting bold cross-cutting politics that support a healthy community development with an emphasis on empowering marginalized groups to build programs that are not only good for the environment but for the economy as well.

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