

# 2025 IMPACT REPORT

FROM MOBILIZATION TO MOVEMENT: Building the Foundation for Lasting Power



Prepared by  
**RISE Action Fund**

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# LETTER FROM OUR CEO



## Mary-Pat Hector

CEO, RISE

This past year, we asked ourselves a hard question: What happens after the election?

For too long, the cycle has been the same. We spend months finding young voters, energizing them, turning them out—and then the day after the election, the energy dissipates. The organizers move on. The infrastructure packs up. The relationships we started to build go dormant until the next frantic cycle begins.

In 2025, we decided to break that cycle.

We chose to stop chasing momentum and start building the foundation that makes momentum last. This report is the story of that shift. It's about the 25 extraordinary fellows we bet on, the dozens of local partners we empowered, and the deep, patient work of building power in communities, not just for one election, but for the long haul.

This year, we deepened our commitment in a critical way: we expanded into more Southern states than ever before. This wasn't about shifting all our focus to one region, but about recognizing where growth, youth, and opportunity for progressive power are converging. The South is the youngest and fastest-growing part of the country, and for too long, national infrastructure has treated it with a last-minute, parachute-in approach. In 2025, we changed that by planting deeper, more intentional roots where it matters most. Training local leaders, equipping homegrown organizations, and building capacity that won't disappear after November.

This report isn't about magic bullets. It's about the unglamorous, powerful work of training leaders, sharing tools, forging real partnerships, and winning the kinds of races that shift power for generations.

In community,

*Mary Pat Hector*

# 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

## THE WORK BEHIND THE MOVEMENT

Numbers alone do not capture the full impact of our work, but they reveal the discipline, scale, and intention behind it. This section highlights how RISE transformed resources into action, demonstrating strong financial stewardship, strategic investment, and sustained growth. Each figure reflects deliberate choices to deepen impact, strengthen infrastructure, and ensure long-term resilience. As our reach has expanded, so too has our responsibility to manage resources with transparency and care. Together, these numbers show how financial health fuels our mission, positioning RISE to meet this moment and sustain impact. They remind us that every investment and decision is part of a larger story of change, one that empowers young people to thrive.



25 RISE Fellows invested in across **15 states**, turning local leaders into national forces.



**\$1.3 Million** directly invested in the leadership and infrastructure built by our RISE 25 Fellows.



**600+** Pieces of Original Content created by organizers, for organizers, cutting through the noise online.



organizers made **550,000** voter contacts and collected **45,000** pledges to vote specifically targeting young voters.

# BUILDING WHAT LASTS:

## OUR 2025 INFRASTRUCTURE

This year, we made a fundamental shift. Instead of pouring all our energy into short-term election pushes, we focused on constructing the permanent, resilient foundation that turns moments of mobilization into a lasting movement. Here's what that looks like on the ground:

### FROM MOBILIZATION TO SUSTAINABLE POWER

In 2025, rather than simply mobilizing young voters election after election, we invested in building the permanent infrastructure that transforms short-term turnout into long-term political power. Here is how we did it:

#### ORGANIZER PIPELINE

RISE didn't just hire organizers for one cycle—we created pathways for young people to become lifetime organizers through training sessions with established leaders from across the political and social spectrum through our newly launched program, RISE 25. Over several months, RISE fellows learned to find their authentic voice online, organize people around the issues most important to them, and craft messages that resonated across cultural boundaries.

#### PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

RISE continued to invest in RWI (Run With It) local and smaller nonprofits, sharing technology, providing training and technical assistance, funding, and creating a collective action model in which every dollar invested generates \$2–3 in organizing value.

#### DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We expanded RISE Free Media to reach millions of young voters online, developed content creation capabilities, and built partnerships with influencers reaching 50k+ viewers weekly—meeting young voters where they already spend time.

#### A YEAR OF STRATEGIC EXPANSION

In 2025, we significantly grew our reach and deepened our presence in more Southern states than in any prior year. This expansion was intentional and strategic. We directed new resources and forged new partnerships in these new key states because we recognize that building a truly national movement requires a commitment to regions where young, diverse populations are shaping the future.

# RUN WITH IT

## SUPPORTING RISE 25 FELLOWS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

### COLLECTIVE ACTION, NOT EMPIRE BUILDING

In 2025, RISE invested in numerous nonprofit organizations; recognizing that sustainable youth political power is built by movements, not by any single organization.

#### OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDE:

- Campus organizing networks at HBCUs and universities
- Local community-based organizations with deep roots in target communities
- Issue advocacy groups working on climate action, reproductive rights, healthcare access, gun violence prevention
- Cultural institutions connecting art, organizing, and youth engagement
- State-based progressive coalitions coordinating electoral and issue campaigns

### WHAT PARTNERS RECEIVED

**DIRECT GRANTS:** RISE provided support in direct grants to partner organizations based on their organizing capacity and number of organizers employed

**TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** RISE provided training worth \$50,000+, including:

- Organizer training for partner staff
- Technical assistance on voter contact, data, and campaign strategy
- Connection to RISE 25 Fellows for mentorship and support
- Participation in RISE Action Convening and learning sessions

**NETWORK & ECOSYSTEM:** Partners gained:

- Connection to RISE's network of trained organizers for recruitment
- Partnerships with other organizations in their regions
- Shared learning and best practices across the ecosystem
- Long-term relationships extending beyond single election cycles

# RISE 25 FELLOWSHIP

## INVESTING IN PROVEN ORGANIZERS

### THE NEW MODEL FOR YOUTH ORGANIZING

We threw out the old fellowship playbook. Instead of recruiting newcomers, we went looking for organizers who were already moving mountains in their own communities—and we gave them the resources to move ranges.

We invested in three types of organizers, recognizing that power is built in different ways:



### THREE PATHWAYS TO POWER

- ♦ **DIGITAL ORGANIZING:** Fellows who have built authentic online audiences and use their platforms to mobilize young people around progressive issues and electoral participation. These fellows excel at creating compelling content, building online communities that translate to real-world organizing, and leveraging social media to reach young voters where they spend time.
- ♦ **ON-THE-GROUND ORGANIZING:** Fellows who lead community-based organizations or campus organizing groups with demonstrated success in face-to-face organizing, coalition building, and community mobilization. These fellows excel at traditional field tactics, building deep relationships within communities, and mobilizing volunteers and organizational infrastructure.
- ♦ **BLENDED ORGANIZING:** Fellows who integrate both digital and on-the-ground organizing, using online platforms to amplify their community work while maintaining strong face-to-face organizing infrastructure. These fellows demonstrate the emerging model of 21st-century organizing.

# RISE 25 FELLOWSHIP

## INVESTING IN PROVEN ORGANIZERS

### WHAT FELLOWS ACCOMPLISHED IN 2025

**1M+**

Young people reached through combined digital and on-the-ground organizing

**100+**

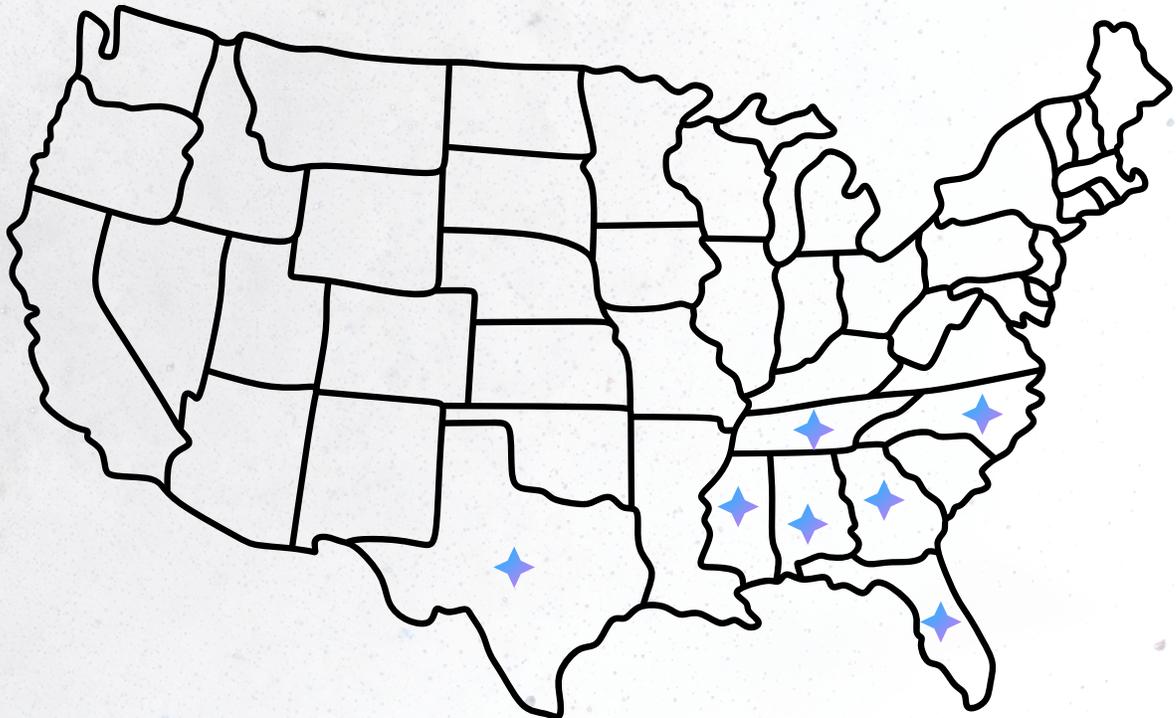
Created pieces of original content showcasing authentic organizing work

**450k+**

Voters reached through GOTV

### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Following RISE's Southern Strategy, 60% of RISE 25 Fellows (15 fellows) were based in Southern states, with a particular focus on organizers connected to HBCUs, Southern youth movements, and communities of color.



# MOMENTS THAT STOOD OUT

## FELLOW SPOTLIGHT



### Cameron Samuels

RISE 25 Fellow | Austin, Texas

Cameron Samuels exemplifies the power of the RISE 25 Fellowship's blended organizing model. Hailing from Austin, Texas, Cameron sits at the helm of the organization, **SEAT** (Students Engaged in Advancing Texas), a movement of young people developing transferable skills and demonstrating youth visibility in policymaking.

**DIGITAL ORGANIZING:** Cameron's digital presence reached over 30k people through compelling content that made politics accessible and engaging to young voters. By sharing personal stories, breaking down complex policy issues, and creating shareable content, Cameron transformed online engagement into offline action. Cameron generated 40k views, with content regularly going viral and reaching audiences far beyond the initial follower base.

**ON-THE-GROUND IMPACT:** But Cameron didn't just build an audience online—Cameron translated that digital power into real-world organizing.

Cameron's work is a masterclass in modern organizing. They built a massive, engaged online following not through viral stunts, but through relentless authenticity—breaking down complex policy, sharing personal stories, and making politics feel accessible. But the real magic happened offline. SEAT Texas mobilized volunteers who registered and organized thousands of voters across the state to ensure young people's voices were heard on censorship and redistricting. Cameron didn't just build an audience; they built an army, proving that digital influence and field organizing aren't separate strategies—they're two sides of the same coin.



*"Inspire young people to embody pride, confidence, and fearlessness I wish I had, as a student, to dismantle oppression and elevate the voices of the marginalized."*

# MOMENTS THAT STOOD OUT

## FELLOW SPOTLIGHT

### Carrington Whigham

RISE 25 Fellow | Dallas, Texas

Carrington's work in Houston and across the globe demonstrates how RISE 25 Fellows leverage local organizing expertise to deliver global impact. As a RISE 25 Fellow, Carrington is a self-starter whose favorite quote, "We are the ones we've been waiting for," by June Jordan propels her forward in the work of connecting, uplifting and centering community.



Carrington's sizeable online following helped amplify RISE's work and bring attention to topics most important to our shared audience of young voters and civically engaged youth.

**ON-THE-GROUND IMPACT:** Carrington empowers people worldwide by sharing information and resources that illuminate new possibilities.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING EXCELLENCE:** Carrington built power through deep relationship-building online and off. Rather than relying solely on digital tactics, Carrington traveled extensively and invested in the face-to-face organizing that builds lasting political infrastructure.

*I want to leave a world where more people feel powerful, informed, and unafraid to use their voice.*



# MOMENTS THAT STOOD OUT

## FELLOW SPOTLIGHT: GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION VICTORY



KIJANA GEORGE & MIATTA HARRIS | RISE GEORGIA ORGANIZERS

**The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC)** race became one of 2025's most significant progressive victories—and Rise 25 Fellows Kijana and Miatta were at the center of the youth mobilization strategy that flipped these critical seats in partnership with Black Youth Vote and Equity for All; on the ground in Georgia.

**WHY THE PSC MATTERS:** The Public Service Commission regulates Georgia's utilities, controlling decisions about energy policy, climate action, and utility rates that affect every Georgian. For years, the PSC was controlled by commissioners who blocked clean energy investments and sided with utility companies over consumers. The 2025 elections changed everything.

**YOUTH ORGANIZING MADE THE DIFFERENCE:** Kijana and Miatta led Georgia's PSC organizing through our Run With It grantee initiative, recognizing that young voters—especially those concerned about climate change and energy costs—could be decisive in these low-visibility but high-impact races.

# MOMENTS THAT STOOD OUT

## VOICES FROM THE GROUND

The work of building power isn't in the reports. It's in the conversations. Here's what it sounded like in 2025.

### IN THEIR WORDS:



**Darrell Coles**  
RISE 25 FELLOW



Thanks to RISE's support, from Michigan to Florida, young leaders engaged tens of thousands of voters and created sustainable pathways for civic leadership. Their work reiterated the value of youth-led, culturally relevant engagement, leveraging digital tools, investments in training and leadership development, and strong partnerships with other community organizations.

— **Darrell, RISE 25 Fellow, DMV**



**Dakota Adeyemi**  
RISE 25 FELLOW



With our support from RISE this year, we were able to empower young people to enhance voter engagement initiatives, mobilize a dedicated volunteer base, and effectively address community needs related to voter registration, ultimately strengthening our capacity to promote civic participation and protect electoral integrity in high schools across GA.

— **Dakota, RISE 25 Fellow, Georgia**



**Khadida Stone**  
RISE 25 FELLOW



Thanks to the support of RISE, we were able to engage Mobile-area residents in Alabama, particularly justice-impacted youth ages 16–30, in the civic process through voter registration and education, distribute legal education resources (justice toolkits) to underserved communities, build lasting connections with community members for ongoing engagement, and demonstrate an innovative, culturally-responsive model for civic engagement.

— **Khadidah, RISE 25 Fellow, Alabama**

# ELECTORAL VICTORIES THAT MATTER

## WINNING THE RACES THAT BUILD PROGRESSIVE POWER

RISE's 2025 electoral work delivered victories that will shape progressive politics for years to come. These weren't just symbolic wins—they were strategic victories that give progressives real power over policy, governance, and future electoral maps.

### STATE BY STATE VICTORIES

**GEORGIA:** PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ✓ Flipped 2 PSC seats, giving progressives control of the Public Service Commission. The PSC regulates utilities and energy policy. This victory means Georgia can now advance clean energy investments, regulate carbon emissions, hold utility companies accountable, and create thousands of clean energy jobs.

**NEW YORK CITY:** Mayoral Election ✓ Helped elect a mayor committed to affordable housing, criminal justice reform, and expanding opportunity for all New Yorkers.

**VIRGINIA:** Gubernatorial & State Election ✓ In Virginia, candidates advocating for progressive rights secured 13 seats in the House of Delegates, while Gov. Spanberger, a strong ally for progressive values, was elected governor.

**RISE Fellows and Run With It partners made 550,000 voter contacts and collected 45,000 pledges to vote, specifically targeting young voters for these down-ballot races (AL, GA, TX, VA, MI, MS, LA, and FL).**

## WHAT THESE VICTORIES MEAN FOR 2026

The infrastructure, relationships, and momentum from 2025 victories position us perfectly for 2026:

- Organizers who delivered wins in 2025 are now training the next generation of leaders for 2026 campaigns
- Voter outreach data captured in 2025 allows targeted, efficient mobilization in 2026
- Partner organizations we strengthened are now prepared to scale their impact across multiple states
- Media relationships built through 2025 victories give us platforms for 2026

# RISE FREE MEDIA

## MEETING PEOPLE ONLINE

### REACHING MILLIONS WHERE THEY ARE

In 2025, RISE expanded our digital presence, recognizing that engagement happens both online and offline. Our influencer partners reached 1 million+ people through social media, original content, and strategic partnerships.

### THE NUMBERS:

#### CONTENT CREATION

**3.5M+**

Views on original videos produced featuring RISE organizers and Fellows

**100+**

Instagram Reels/TikToks showcasing authentic organizing work

**552M**

Audience reach on articles, post, and earned media by RISE and our Fellows

**INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS:** RISE built and activated partnerships with influencers and creators, reaching 50k+ weekly viewers and amplifying organizing messages to audiences that might not otherwise engage with political content.

### WHY DIGITAL ORGANIZING MATTERS FOR 2026

Young voters spend over 3 hours per day on social media. If we're not reaching them online with authentic progressive content, someone else is reaching them with misinformation. RISE Free Media ensures that when young people are scrolling, they encounter:

- Real organizers doing real work (not polished corporate content)
- Accessible information about voting and issues
- Calls to action that lead to offline engagement
- Trusted voices from their peers and communities

The digital infrastructure we built in 2025—follower bases, content systems, creator networks, influencer partnerships—means that in 2026, we can reach countless young voters instantly with organizing messages, voter information, and mobilization calls to action.

# RISE FREE MEDIA

## MEETING PEOPLE ONLINE

### THE CONTENT:



#### Okay, But Listen Podcast

Hosted by Mary-Pat Hector

"Okay, But Listen" is a raw, unfiltered podcast that breaks through political echo chambers to amplify the voices from Gen Z, millennials, and Gen Alpha across the political spectrum. Hosted by Mary-Pat Hector, this podcast dives deep into the kitchen-table issues reshaping our political landscape—from economic challenges to healthcare access—bringing together young leaders with diverse perspectives to have the conversations we're told we shouldn't have.



#### Black In Motion Podcast

Hosted by Braxton Simpson

[Black In Motion] is where culture, career, and real-life collide. We're talking about the highs and lows of adulting while Black—navigating relationships, mental health, and the hustle, all while holding it down for the culture. From the influence of HBCUs and the Divine Nine to reclaiming our power in a shifting world, this is the space where we keep it real, uplift each other, and figure out what's next. Tap in—it's about us, for us.



#### CaptainChris808

Hosted by Chris Solomon

'CaptainChris808' is on a mission to promote humanitarian values via fandom and nerd culture, creating engaging content that blends gaming, fandom storytelling, and community interactions. Christian Solomon's organizing journey is firmly rooted in fandom and the forward-thinking nature of the media he grew up with, from science fiction television to comic books and video games.

# RISE ACTION CONVENING

## LAUNCHING THE 2026 CYCLE

### BRINGING THE ECOSYSTEM TOGETHER

In October 2025, RISE hosted its inaugural RISE Action Convening in Atlanta, GA, bringing together 100+ organizers, fellows, partners, and youth leaders for a multi-day gathering that launched our 2026 organizing cycle with energy, strategy, and momentum.

#### WHO ATTENDED:

**80+** partner organization leaders and staff

**20+** guest speakers, including elected officials, movement leaders, and organizing veterans



#### CONVENING PROGRAMMING:

- ◆ **PLENARY SESSIONS:** Movement leaders, elected officials, and RISE organizers shared victories, lessons, and a vision for building youth political power heading into 2026
- ◆ **SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOPS:** Intensive sessions on voter contact tactics, digital organizing, content creation, deep canvassing, organizing around key issues, volunteer management, and campaign strategy for the 2026 cycle
- ◆ **STRATEGY SESSIONS:** RISE 25 Fellows and partner organizations planned 2026 organizing campaigns, coordinated efforts across states, shared best practices, and built state-level and regional coalitions
- ◆ **NETWORKING & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:** Dedicated time for organizers to connect across states and campaigns, build relationships that sustain organizing through challenges, form coalitions and collaborative projects, and strengthen the broader ecosystem

The RISE Action Convening provided a safe space for young leaders – who are apt to drive positive change – an opportunity to connect on strategy, execution, and a pathway forward.

For them to talk candidly about the world they want to shape and how they plan to do so.

# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

## THE FOUNDATION IS BUILT. NOW WE ORGANIZE.

Everything RISE accomplished in 2025—training organizers, investing in fellows, building partnerships, expanding media reach, hosting convenings, winning elections—was preparation for 2026 and beyond.

### THE 2026 MIDTERMS WILL DETERMINE:

- Control of the U.S. House and Senate
- Governorships across the country
- State legislatures that will draw new district maps after 2030 census
- State supreme courts that protect voting rights and reproductive freedom
- Critical down-ballot offices like PSC seats that control climate policy

## YOUNG VOTERS WILL BE DECISIVE—IF WE MOBILIZE THEM EFFECTIVELY.

### 2026: WHAT WE'RE GROWING AND LAUNCHING

- ✦ **10 CITY TOUR:** Bringing RISE's full organizing ecosystem—training, voter contact, pledge collection, media content, partner activation—kicking off the organizing season directly in the communities we serve across battleground states
- ✦ **RISE 25 FELLOWS SCALE UP:** Our RISE 25 fellows, now with a full year of infrastructure building, will scale their organizing exponentially with established audiences, volunteer teams, and systems
- ✦ **PARTNER ORGANIZATION MOBILIZATION:** 30+ partner organizations, equipped with technology, training, and resources from, will mobilize their communities at an unprecedented scale
- ✦ **RISE FREE MEDIA BLITZ:** Our expanded digital presence and influencer partnerships will reach millions of young voters online with organizing content, voter information, and mobilization calls to action

## THE INFRASTRUCTURE WE BUILT IN 2025 MAKES THIS POSSIBLE.



 [www.risefree.org](http://www.risefree.org)

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## CONTACT

[Mary-pat@risefree.org](mailto:Mary-pat@risefree.org)

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