



Sister District Due Diligence Document

1.5°Climate Strategy Group: Due Diligence Document

Executive Summary:

Sister District is the only organization that combines volunteer organizing with an exclusive focus on state legislatures. Everything we do – not only drives impact for our candidates, but also builds lasting infrastructure that endures from cycle to cycle. Our work falls into two buckets: winning urgent elections each cycle, and building Democratic infrastructure for the long term. Our flagship program organizes our 70k members around the country into local teams, and we “sister” these teams—like a sister cities concept—with several state legislative races running in close winnable districts in key battleground states, to support. Our teams then raise money, make phone calls, write postcards, and travel to knock on doors. We ensure that funds are used efficiently by also providing strategic campaign services to assist candidates and staff, offering guidance that is rooted in research and tailored to the district. Every year, Sister District builds a portfolio of states where we can flip a chamber, hold a chamber, or make inroads into badly gerrymandered states. In 2024, Sister District is focusing on seven key presidential battlegrounds—[Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin](#)—with a focus on states with critical Senate, Congressional, and Gubernatorial races on the ballot. With additional resources, Sister District will expand our work into Minnesota and New Hampshire as well.

Fundraising:

Our goal is \$7.2M this year, with a stretch goal of \$9M. Half of our budget is PAC/527 to support our electoral work, and the other half is split between 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(3) for our civic engagement and research. The next \$100k of funding to our electoral work would help us turbocharge our current phase of electoral work, including:

- Adding 12 “all-in” endorsements for a total of 20 priority candidates receiving our highest tier of support, including volunteer field and fundraising, campaign services, and digital fundraising
- Adding 20+ additional endorsements, receiving a mix of volunteer phone banking, digital fundraising, and direct donations
- Expanding our map to include Minnesota and New Hampshire, for a total of 9 states

- Supporting 600+ virtual and in-person volunteer events driving field and fundraising support to candidates while building lasting organizing infrastructure
- Training and deploying 30+ student fellows to augment voter contact in key districts

Theory of Change:

Historical and structural disparities between conservatives and progressives in power-building at the state level have resulted in a seismic devolution of power from the federal government. As a result, state legislatures have unprecedented—and growing—influence over our lives. To counterbalance progressives' generational disinvestment in state legislatures, Sister District supports candidates, mobilizes volunteers, empowers lawmakers, and educates voters. We strengthen progressive infrastructure as an institution that centers small-d democracy to create thriving civic participation and an empowered electorate. Together, we can build enduring power to achieve our vision of a country where everyone enjoys health, wealth, fairness and freedom.

Primary Influence Tactic:

Our primary tactic is winning elections. In addition to our robust voter contact program (e.g., phonebanking, postcarding, textbanking, and canvassing) fueled by battle-tested, expertly trained volunteers, we also put candidates on the map by fundraising early in the cycle. And we ensure that the money is being spent effectively by providing strategic campaign services rooted in research and tailored to the district.

Unique Strategy/Special Sauce:

- **Signature model:** We are the only national grassroots organization dedicated solely to state legislatures, “sistering” blue state volunteers with swing districts.
- **Early engagement:** We engage early—often well before other organizations—to maximize the impact of our endorsements, fundraising, and voter contact.
- **Data and research:** We combine our award-winning research with deep political expertise to develop data-informed campaigns that are tailored to their districts.
- **Long-term trajectory:** Our programs go beyond elections to build Democratic infrastructure that drives progress for years to come.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Statement:

To root out structural racism and address the centuries of oppression inflicted on communities of color, Sister District will conduct its programs and operations to make concrete and tangible gains toward racial equity:

- We will build a portfolio of candidates who are not only running in strategic, winnable races, but also who represent all voices and will fight for progressive change.
- We will cultivate a community of volunteers who are representative of the nation as a

whole, as well as knowledgeable, curious, and intentional about how their work is connected to racial justice.

- We will seek partnerships with allies who are incorporating equity into their work and holding themselves accountable to it.
- We will conduct research that advances racial equity.
- We will seek to achieve racial justice within our organization and create an organizational culture that is welcoming and inclusive. We are committed to viewing our work through a racial equity lens to assess the impact of all our internal policies and practices, including hiring, promotion, staffing, and budgeting.

Leadership Team Roles + Board Members:

Leadership Team

- Gaby Goldstein, Co-Founder & Vice President of Strategic Initiatives (white, female)
- Lyzz Schwegler, Co-Founder & Senior Vice President of Digital (white, female)
- Shawn Werner, Organizing & Political Director (white, male, LGBTQ)
- Debbie Winstead, Operations Director (white, female)
- Lindsay Wolff, Development Director (white, female)
- Lala Wu, Co-Founder & Executive Director (AAPI, female)

Board of Directors

- Gaby Goldstein (white, female)
- Candis Mitchell (Black, female)
- Lyzz Schwegler (white, female)
- Irene Shin (AAPI, female)
- Lala Wu (AAPI, female)

Organizations Structure & Overhead:

Sister District builds enduring progressive power in state legislatures through a combination of PAC/527, 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(3) programs that (1) win urgent elections and (2) build Democratic infrastructure for the long term.

Through our PAC/527, Sister District Project (SDP), we deliver turnkey field, fundraising, and strategic support to priority state legislative races in battleground states. SDP recruits, trains, and activates our volunteers nationwide around high-impact activations, and our expert staff provides Sister District candidates with customized strategic support around voter outreach, campaign messaging, and much more. We also run advanced training for state legislative candidates who lost their bid, but should run again (Future Winners).

Sister District Action Network (SDAN), our 501(c)(4), runs programs in the areas of political research, civic engagement, and state legislator support. SDAN activates our volunteers to fundraise for community-based organizations doing year-round power-building work in our target states (State Bridges); equips frontline legislators with the support and resources to

govern effectively, even when not in the majority (Purple District Network); and conducts academic-quality research around topics like down-ballot roll-off.

Our 501(c)(3), Sister District Education Fund (SDEF), is fiscally sponsored at Tides. This is a vehicle for receiving tax-deductible donations, which are then used by SDAN to execute eligible non-partisan work.

2024 Operating Budget

- Sister District Project - PAC/527 - \$4,000,000
- Sister District Action Network - 501(c)(4) - \$2,200,000
- Sister District Education Fund - 501(c)(3) - \$1,000,000
- Total: \$7,200,000

2023 Operating Budget

- Sister District Project - PAC/527 - \$3,000,00
- Sister District Action Network - 501(c)(4) - \$1,250,000
- Sister District Education Fund - 501(c)(3) - \$250,000
- Total: \$4,500,000

Geography:

AZ, GA, MI, NC, NV, PA, and WI. We plan to expand to MN and NH with additional resources. We are able to limit any donations to specific states as desired.

Impact Reporting:

Sister District releases a detailed impact report every winter to provide our community with detailed insights into our outcomes during the previous calendar and over the lifetime of our organization. We conduct rigorous analysis of our programs each year, and we are committed to being transparent with Sister District volunteers, supporters, and funders about the impact of their investments. We invite you to view our [past impact reports](#).

Barriers/Risks:

Our research has shown that Democrats—especially women, young people, and people of color—often stop voting before they get to the bottom of the ballot. This matters because state legislative races and chambers hinge on razor-thin margins. In prior work, we found that Democrats would have gained control of 14 more chambers in 9 states in 2020 if they had only been able to increase their down-ballot votes by 2% or less. And, those votes could have come from people who were already voting for Democrats at the top of the ticket.

We are investing in [downballot roll-off research](#) to combat this behavior to help us close tiny, decisive margins at the state level through a 5,000+ voter survey in battleground states, and

rigorous message and content testing. We will develop a Downballot Toolkit for dissemination to ecosystem partners for deployment via their voter contact plans. This voter education and outreach will also serve to energize people to turn out for their down-ballot candidates for a positive reverse coattails effect.

Addendum:

We invite you to view our [2023 Impact Report](#) for highlights of our work.