



Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) Initiative

Supporting Citizen-Led Redistricting

Building on Success, Creating Lasting Change

In 2018, voters passed an amendment to Michigan’s Constitution, establishing the state’s first Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission (ICRC).

Thanks in part to targeted work by Michigan’s nonprofits during the 2020 Census count, helping to ensure that historically uncounted and undercounted populations were counted, MNA and Michigan nonprofits are able to seamlessly build on those same efforts to support the 2021 work of the ICRC.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) and the Council of Michigan Foundations, with the financial support of more than 40 foundations, launched an ambitious campaign to mobilize nonprofits to help Michigan get a complete and accurate count in the 2020 Census. It was a unique, nonpartisan, multi-racial coalition of hundreds of nonprofits partnering with for-profit organizations as well as government entities, all supported by private and public funding.

MNA got involved because historically, the Census has missed disproportionate numbers of certain populations such as **people of color, immigrant communities, and low-income populations**. This has led to inequality in political power, government funding and private-sector investment for these communities.

ICRC INITIATIVE

MNA is now mobilizing nonprofits again using this same model to transparently achieve fair and impartial district maps for Michigan, specifically to promote racial equity so that communities of color have a voice and are not locked out of the important decision-making that occurs at the local, state, and federal levels.

The establishment of the ICRC represents a wholesale change in the way Michigan’s legislative district maps are drawn. Two of the most important changes are: 1) the introduction of transparency to what before was a largely political, behind-closed-doors process; and 2) the prominent importance of Communities of Interest, or COI.

The definitions of COI are vast and subjective, but they generally unite around populations who share economic interests or cultural or historical characteristics. While it is common to think COI means race or ethnicity, that is not the only meaning. For example, neighborhoods that have historical communities, school districts, economic opportunity zones, tourism areas or communities that have natural resources could all be considered a COI.

With equity and inclusivity at the forefront, the main goal of this initiative is to reach populations that have been historically underrepresented and provide the necessary resources and tools so that everyone participates in the redistricting process. This will be achieved through a strategic outreach from MNA to a selected cohort of nonprofit organizations, as well as other nonprofit partners, to subsequently reach the local communities they serve. Ensuring participation is critical because COI are the building blocks of legislative districts. Equal participation will lead to more fair, accurate and effective representation.

MNA will provide training, a communications strategy, and a variety of resources to our nonprofit cohort so that they in turn can help their communities understand how the new ICRC works, what is at stake, why community members should get involved, and notably how to participate in the process.

The campaign infrastructure will be led by Michigan Nonprofit Association, with support from philanthropy, and implemented by local nonprofit grantees.