

Better Ballot North Carolina: First Annual Report (FY 2020-2021)

Introduction: *A remarkable first year in North Carolina RCV advocacy*

Better Ballot North Carolina formed as a new nonprofit in the historical election season of 2020 and in the midst of a growing global pandemic and economic crisis. With so much adversity in America and the world, our group was motivated about electoral change and what we could achieve in our state. From a small nonpartisan group of passionate individuals across several party affiliations and independent voters, we became an established organization through hard work and commitment.

We currently have more than 1,000 supporters and more than 100 volunteers. And we've identified more than 100 unique financial supporters, with contributions of over \$6,500 in our first 12 months.

Enterprise History: September 2020 -2021

Our first year as a nonprofit was filled with many activities and milestones. In our first Quarter (fall 2020) We held our Nonprofit launch event online, generating 56 attendees and 28 initial contributors to fund initial activities for the enterprise. We then conducted our first successful end-of-year donation drive. In the winter to follow, we embarked on a campaign to bring awareness of Ranked Choice Voting to North Carolina. We spent our time making sure our core team was strong while growing our overall organization throughout the state.

The most valuable lesson we learned was the importance of making our organization resilient no matter what is going on in the world, pandemics included. We made strides in our recruitment of new leaders and volunteers. In the summer we made great use of the nice weather by canvassing at Shakori Hills music festival, farmers markets, and other public venues. In the fall we celebrated our one-year anniversary and came away with one of our best meetings of the year!

In our first 12 months of operation, we achieved the following objectives:

- 30 public engagement events & activities
- A core outreach team of 7 with over 100 man-hours of public engagement & canvass activity
- A base of 83 contributors (25% recurring sustainers) with over 225 donations in 365 days
- A finalist position in our first grant application with a national funding group
- A successful \$1,000 dollar matching gift online funding campaign for our 1st birthday



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NC Citizen Outreach Activities September 2020-2021 Highlights & Metrics

Pandemic notwithstanding, BBNC's Outreach Team quickly moved into high gear, educating the public about RCV and training volunteers to bring our message to ever-widening circles. By offering basic information about RCV on our Statewide Zoom gatherings; meeting and greeting folks with our clipboards at Farmers Markets, music festivals, and other public events; phone-banking; and offering powerpoint presentations both in-person and on Zoom to groups throughout the State, we gained enthusiastic supporters, donors, sustainers... and more volunteers.

Weather and COVID permitting, our volunteers averaged two clipboarding or tabling events per month, and/or two virtual presentations/month. As well, our Team Leads and Speakers averaged two training sessions per month between Election Day (November 2020) and the end of September 2021.

Much of our first year was spent creating training and presentation curricula, power points, and print materials; and preparing informative handouts and other materials to be used by our volunteers. We also held a ranked choice election to select (and then produce) the T-shirts worn by our volunteers as "walking billboards" for RCV. These shirts will also be available to the public to help promote our message.

And, largely due to the efforts of our Outreach Team members in our first year, BBNC grew from 200 to 800 active associates in our database – an increase of 400%!

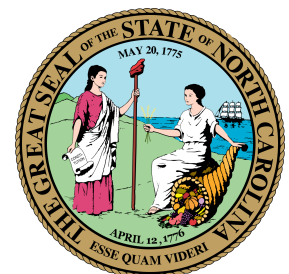
Statewide Meetings, Activities & Outcomes: September 2020-2021

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our team scheduled eight very successful statewide meetings across our first year. Rising to the challenges presented by keeping an engaged remote volunteer base, we refined our advertising and content strategies across the year with consistent improvements. From our summer meetings to winter, we saw a 30% improvement in RSVP follow-through, grew our first-time participant attendance, and onboarded many valuable new volunteers.

Thanks to a huge organic advertisement push, our first-year anniversary meeting finished the year at a peak. Established volunteers turned out en masse to vote in our new executive officers for year two, and we welcomed one of our largest cohorts of new supporters. We implemented a new and very successful strategy of breakout room conversations, allowing us to gather crucial perspectives from those both new and already engaged.. We have used these insights to refine our thoughts on messaging, and galvanize our broader strategies. We also forged bonds with several key leaders in other community organizations at this meeting, allowing us to further our message by leveraging their connections and networks throughout North Carolina.

Legislative Working Group activities: September 2020-2021

Adopting ranked choice voting at any level of government in North Carolina will require action from the state legislature. In our first year, the legislative strategy team held one-on-one conversations with legislators whom we identified as known or likely supporters, to ask for their insight and recommendations for the best first-step to attempt. We determined the reform



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most likely to receive positive response from the needed number of legislators would be a limited, local authorization bill, to allow select municipalities to use RCV for local elections.

Accordingly, current efforts are now focused on identifying five to ten cities or towns to target to pass trigger ordinances. These would specify that RCV would be implemented, once allowed by the state.

Strategies for getting such ordinances passed include: general outreach and education to build grassroots support in a given locality; and focused 1-on-1 outreach to key stakeholders. Stakeholders include city/town/county clerks who serve as election administrators, plus councilors & local influencers of constituency groups. We aim to include in that group of municipalities a variety in terms of size, geography and demographics.

Once a number of trigger ordinances are passed, work will then turn to specific strategies for the needed state legislation to authorize RCV for those localities.

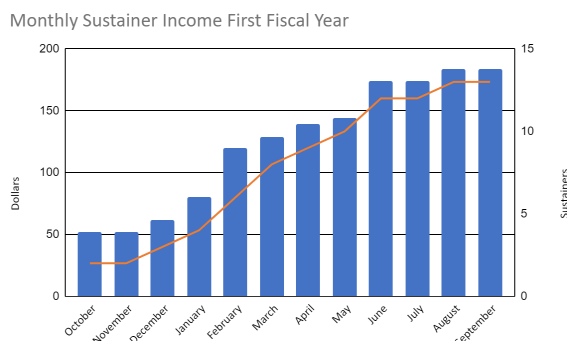
Long term, we would then seek to expand use of RCV to additional municipalities, eventually working toward statewide authorization for local options, as well as use of RCV for federal offices and eventually state offices.

Fundraising Group Activities. Milestones & Achievements: Fiscal year 2020-2021

In BBNC's first year of operation, it set ambitious goals for fundraising despite the considerable restrictions of the global coronavirus pandemic, and achieved excellent results. Starting from a core group of less than 12 founding organizers, our first three launch & meeting appeals successfully achieved half of our target goal to fund ops through December 2020, from dozens of new supporters & founders!

The second half of the target goal was met by a winning holiday/EOY digital campaign that identified a further two dozen first-time contributors (half of them brand new visitors!) - and secured a quarter of these as regular monthly donors for the year (2021) ahead.

These 'sustainers' provided 58% of monthly ops costs, a need that was fully covered by a Q1 2021 internal drive to sign up 75% of BBNC leadership (including 100% of fundraising and executive teams) as recurring monthly donors.



This success was followed by being shortlisted for the final round of the 2021 national RepresentUS Grant, the first applied for by the organization, with a team that had no prior grant expertise. While not being a funded finalist, very favorable feedback was communicated by the grantors, informing our process to compete for further grants in year 2.

In the final two quarters of its first year of operations (Q2 & Q3 2021) focus on support from statewide meeting attendees + a 1st anniversary matching donation 'birthday' campaign allowed BBNC to double its revenues from the first half year, and hit 75% of its annual (2021) income target simultaneously, with September being the peak donation month to date, to end/celebrate our first year at our Annual General meeting!

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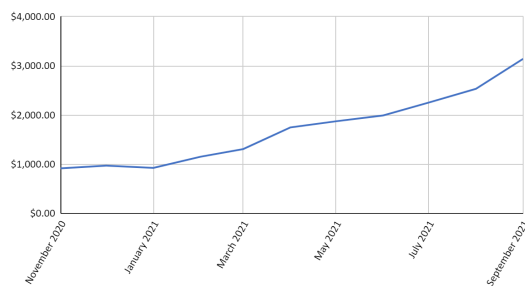
All in all, BBNC had a truly breakout funding season in its first year in operation, having met nine out of its ten key fundraising objectives (and 90% of the tenth goal) - growing our financial supporter pool by 100% on average each quarter. In addition, E-digital push fundraising messaging to our CRM supporter database consistently realized > 30% audience action / engagement, double the industry expected outcome! BBNC ended the year having funded every planned financial operational objective with income streams from grassroots organizing, groundswell citizen support, and individual volunteer effort. We're excited for a breakout second year, adding more streams of income and approaching foundations & grantors for their support.

Treasurer's Report: Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Better Ballot fiscal operations span from September 2020 to the present (Jan 2022 as of this report). Our fiscal year starts on September 30.

Income - In the first fiscal year, Better Ballot saw steady growth. The chart below shows our running balance from November of 2020 to September of 2021.

Running Balance Nov 2020 to Sept 2021

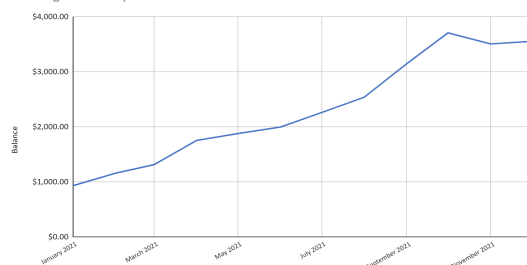


September and October of 2020 are omitted from this report, because there were large swings in income and expenses caused by high initial donations and startup costs. Those costs and donations are available for inspection as needed.

For the entire period from September 2020 to September 2021, average monthly income was \$474.62. Average monthly expenses, primarily costs for database management, Zoom meetings and our Basecamp communication subscription, were \$216.69. Average post expense income was \$257.94. Our net assets at the end of the first fiscal year were \$3,143.91

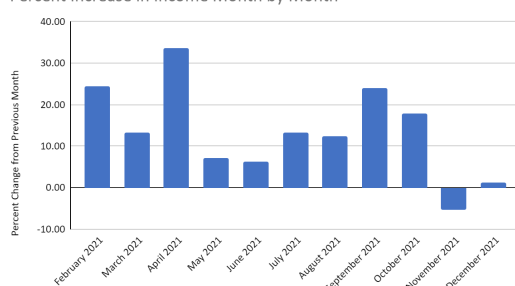
Once startup costs and expenses settled down, the picture from January of 2021 to December of 2021 indicates our continued growth. This growth was aided by the beginning of our sustainers program. The next figure shows our running balance for the 2021 calendar year.

Running Balance by for Calendar 2021



Net assets at the end of December 2021 were \$3,548.49. Starting 2022, income trends are generally positive, and expenses are stable. Throughout 2021, as shown in Figure 3, BBNC increased monthly income from sustaining donors. With the exception of November 2021, each month saw a percent growth increase over the previous month, based on the end balance of that month.

Percent Increase in Income Month by Month



The downward turn in November was due to the purchase of T-shirts for canvassers, which was included in our operating budget for the year.

Even allowing for November's expenses, the average % increase per month is 13.5. If BBNC can continue to add supporters at the same pace as in 2021, we can expect to quadruple our income by end of 2022.

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Conclusion

Looking back, Better Ballot North Carolina defied the odds for a nonprofit launching into a historically unprecedented moment in US (and world) history, overcoming considerable challenges to not only survive, but grow in the midst of adversity for electoral reform nonprofit advocacy. Its determined group of early volunteers mushroomed into an assemblage of dedicated participants (and a support base of citizens from the coast to the mountains) – that became an order of magnitude in size from its launch date – by year’s end.

Along the way, an exceptional amount of engagement was realized despite all limitations and barriers arising on the journey, and BBNC celebrated many first wins in community support, citizen participation, fundraising, and collaboration along the way. At the close, Better Ballot NC had achieved something quite special, and was well positioned to have an even greater second year of growth for forging the path to RCV realization for North Carolina.

“Our present system does not serve the electorate of NC. We need to return power to the voters, and Better Ballot North Carolina is the best engine to make that happen.”

– A. Storm Browne, BBNC Sustainer, Political Commentator & Author (*Cosmic Careers: Exploring the Universe of Opportunities in the Space Industries*)