



Organization Narrative

GCC organizes across Cuyahoga County, which – with 1.26 million residents – is the second largest county in Ohio. We put a particular focus on organizing and effecting change within the city of Cleveland itself and the immediate inner-ring suburbs.

The Greater Cleveland metropolitan area is one of the single most racially segregated regions in the country. This divide plays a significant role in exacerbating the deep-rooted problems affecting Cleveland. GCC has received widespread recognition for building and maintaining the largest, most diverse grassroots base of citizens in Cleveland's history, in particular uniting residents of the city its suburbs and across lines of race, income and religion.

It is in this context that our mission is to be a powerful force for change, creating justice and opportunity in Greater Cleveland by uniting our faith communities and civic partners across lines of race, class, and religion. Founded in 2011, we are a nonpartisan, broad-based organization of 37 faith communities and civic partners. We have decades of experience winning tough battles across Cleveland. GCC acts as a catalyst for systemic change by challenging Greater Clevelanders to imagine what we can accomplish. We connect individuals and organizations to multiply our power, and we mobilize our members by the thousands with the proven power of person-to-person organizing.

We have fought for and alongside our community in Greater Cleveland, specifically about the issues that matter the most to all of us. We are fighting for criminal justice reforms by pushing the needle forward in Cleveland to decriminalize mental health and addiction, eliminate bindover of children to the adult justice system, and reform our bail system, with pretrial services that will shrink the number of individuals going to jail. We are fighting for non-partisan voter engagement by training youth and adults and organizing them to engage their friends, families, and neighbors in our electoral system. We have been fighting for health equity, specifically providing greater access to Covid testing and vaccines, and now pivoting to plan and implement a Healthy Blocks initiative in Cleveland's Lee-Harvard neighborhood that will provide access to primary care within that neighborhood. We have fought for equitable education, including working closely with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO to pass levies so our kids have all the advantages a good education can bring. We have fought to reduce gun violence by getting the city of Cleveland to join with other major Ohio cities in a national gun safety initiative. We continue to work in these focus areas.

Here is a sampling of GCC's recent activities:

- Our Dollars for Doses program in 2022 exceeded our expectations. Between February and the end of September, we – working with clinicians from the Centers for Families and Children, put nearly 3,800 vaccine shots in arms at GCC member churches on Cleveland's predominantly African American East Side. Our Health Equity work is now pivoting to working with residents of the Lee-Harvard neighborhood on a neighborhood organizing strategy that focuses on accessing primary care in their neighborhood.



- Last December, over 900 GCC leaders gathered in person and online at a GCC criminal justice action to learn more about juvenile bindover from both experts and those directly impacted by juvenile bindover in Cuyahoga County. This past April, all six Cuyahoga County juvenile court judges cleared their dockets to meet with our Bindover Issue team. The meeting initiated a dialog that included a standing invitation from the judges for GCC leaders to sit in their courts and observe their proceedings. Our Pretrial Justice team recently presented its case to the Cuyahoga County Council for building a new *system* of criminal justice -- instead of a new, larger jail – specifically a system that provides pretrial services that keep people out of jail who have been arrested, but not convicted of a crime, and are not a danger to public safety.
- Our Battle for Democracy program’s 2022 campaign on August 25th recruited 64 neighborhood captains who canvassed in low-propensity-voting neighborhoods. In 2022, we also hired a senior organizer to lead our youth-training program, which is teaching young people the basics of organizing and getting them involved in our democracy work. In 2022, we engaged 400 youth in voter engagement work in some capacity – including fifteen youth in specialized trainings and on-the-ground canvassing. Sixteen of our youth organizers participated in two canvassing events in the neighborhoods where they live. Our partner, the Union of Concerned Scientists, has shared data that shows the effectiveness of our neighborhood captain model in building relationships that result in a greater number of people voting.
- We are leveraging our congregations’ spending power to negotiate better prices for waste hauling, electricity, and natural gas, which disproportionately affect economically and socially vulnerable populations in Cleveland. We are also adding other nonprofit organizations to our alliance. The program has signed 50 gas and electric supply contracts, generating savings for our institutions of nearly \$100,000.

GCC is rooted in listening to the needs in of our communities, strategizing, and then training the people impacted most by the decisions, policies, and systems that we are working to change the power of organizing. Accordingly, we educate and train these individuals how they can unite, organize, and raise their voices to create the change they envision for a fairer and more just world. We have thousands of people in our communities involved in our efforts; most of these are people directly impacted by all kinds of injustices, including our families, friends, and allies. We have had a tested and true model, one which organizes people, activities, and partners to work toward shared goals.