ANNUAL
REPORT
2023

Prepared by : **CLAIRE BARNETT**	Phone : **210.660.8390**	**BLUE HORIZON TEXAS** **BLUE HORIZON ACTION**

www.bluehorizontexas.org

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About

At Blue Horizon, we recruit, prepare, and support Democratic and progressive candidates running for state and local office in red, rural, and exurban districts.

How

By improving the recruitment and support infrastructure, knowledge base, and resources available for non-traditional candidates in underinvested races across the state.

Why

To grow an ever bigger blue horizon in Texas with prepared and supported Democratic candidates in every district across the state.

PARTNERS

- Texas Democratic Party
- Rural Democracy Initiative
- Run for Something
- Bluebonnet Data
- Mothers Against Greg Abbott
- The 134 PAC
- Contest Every Race
- Rideshare2Vote

BLUE HORIZON ACTION FUND

Candidate Pipeline & Training

Blue Horizon Action Fund is a 501c(4) nonprofit with a focus on Civic Education and Engagement. The mission of Blue Horizon Action Fund is to inspire, engage, and prepare local leaders ready to make the next step to run for office in red and rural areas of Texas.

BLUE HORIZON TEXAS

Online Community & Volunteer Network

Blue Horizon Texas is a 527 non-profit that provides an online community for Democratic and progressive candidates, volunteers, county party chairs, and other coalition members to connect and access relevant and vetted campaign resources.

BLUE HORIZON TEXAS PAC

Direct Campaign Support

Blue Horizon Texas PAC is a Texas General Purpose Political Action Committee (GPAC) that provides endorsements and direct support of Blue Horizon candidates, with a focus on campaign strategy, data and field, and GOTV programs.

Co-Founders' Message

Stephanie & Claire
Co-Founders/Executive Directors

2023 was a busy year here at Blue Horizon Texas. From crisscrossing the state—more than 6000 miles in all—to launching a filing fee fund to put Democrats on the ballot, we put in the work to make sure that voters would have a meaningful choice at the polls this November.

We're already hard at work helping candidates and engaging voters in advance of election day—mark November 5 on your calendar! But we did want to reflect on a few of the things we achieved last year.

1. It's expensive just to file to run for office in Texas, so we launched our **filing fee grant program**. Our filing fee grants paved the way for Democratic candidates to qualify for the 2024 election all across Texas.

2. We hit the road to **recruit and educate potential candidates** and encourage them to run for office. With more than 1500 state and county races on the November 2024 ballot, we had a lot of ground to cover.
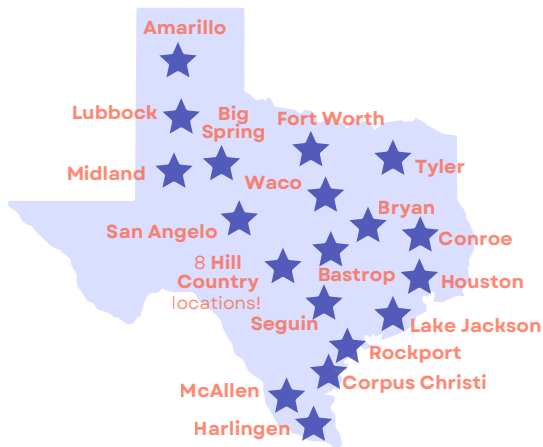
3. We launched the **second season of our groundbreaking podcast** with Tonya Lyles, who has introduced our listeners to some amazing current and former candidates.

4. We established a **collaborative research and recruiting database** for potential candidates. We're now taking our data project to the next level to build a searchable database of all ballot opportunities in the state to make candidate recruitment and pipeline building even easier in the future.

5. We **partnered with great organizations** to support Democratic candidates. Texas is a huge state, so turning Texas blue requires a huge effort. They say you're judged by the company you keep, and we're proud to be in such good company—and for all of the hard work we did together.

Portfolio

2023 was a pivotal year for Blue Horizon. In just our second year of operation, we launched new programs, invested in existing ones, and laid the groundwork for an important presidential election year.

Amarillo
Lubbock · Big Spring · Fort Worth
Midland · Waco · Tyler
San Angelo · Bryan · Conroe
8 Hill Country locations! · Bastrop · Houston
Seguin · Lake Jackson
Rockport
McAllen · Corpus Christi
Harlingen

1 Recruit

Blue Horizon oriented our main activities in 2023 around candidate pipeline building and recruitment.

We toured the state with our partners to identify and encourage potential candidates for 2024 and beyond. We also launched season 2 of the Blue Horizon Podcast to further educate and inspire the next generation of progressives in rural Texas. Additionally, we established the first open-source, open-access recruitment database to identify ballot opportunities across the state.

2 Prepare

In 2023, Blue Horizon continued providing our field tested community network of current and experienced candidates and grew our library of campaign information, training, and third party-resources.

We served 15 candidates in May and November elections and built out additional resources for the 2024 election cycle.

3 Support

Blue Horizon supported progressive candidates in local municipal and school board races in May and November 2023 elections, with endorsements, promptional support, and GOTV programs. .

Finally, we launched our Filing Fee Grant Program to get Democrats on the 2024 ballot.

How We Work

STORYTELLING

In 2023, we released **3 episodes of the second season of the Blue Horizon Podcast**, featuring Bently Paiz, Kristen Washington, and Josh Tutt, with **2 additional episodes** coming in early 2024.

PIPELINE BUILDING

We criss-crossed the state of Texas, visiting **25 counties across the state** to talk about running for state and local office, beginning the long-term work necessary to build a bench of **local leaders ready and prepared to run for office.**

BALLOT OPPORTUNITY DATABASE

To address the lack of clear information on what offices will be on the ballot, when and where, we established the **Collaborative Research & Recruiting Database,** which has since become the Blue Ballot Data Project.

ONLINE COMMUNITY & TRAINING

Between major election seasons, we built **additional campaign information and training resources** for the Blue Horizon Candidate Community, including a **Candidate Orientation Curriculum** for potential and new candidates, with plans to restart our Campaign Nuts & Bolts Webinar series in 2024.

ENDORSEMENTS, GOTV & FILING FEES

In 2023, we endorsed and provided GOTV support for 5 candidates, with 2 of our endorsed candidates and 1 community member riding to electoral victory. Additionally, we launched our **filing fee grant program** to provide direct assistance to eliminate the first financial barrier candidates face in running for office.

@BlueHorizonTX / @BlueHorizonTexas

BLUE HORIZON PODCAST

Tonya Lyles

bluehorizontexas.org/latest

Episode 7: Josh Tutt, 2022 Texas Senate 18 Dem Nominee

Listen Now

"In a world where most would rather you 'figure it out on your own,' Blue Horizon Texas keeps providing much needed information to candidates like me."

-Kristen Washington, Texas House District 2 candidate

Endorsed!

Our 2023 Team

The Blue Horizon team consists of three primary staff members, a growing cadre of dedicated volunteers, governed and advised by our experienced Board and Advisory Board Members.

Stephanie Phillips
Co-Executive Director

Claire Barnett
Co-Executive Director

Tonya Lyles
Program Director, Podcaster

Core Volunteer Team	Bluebonnet Data Fellows	Professional Consulting
Martha Spinks		Campaignly Group
David Kruse	Carl Mason	Cates Legal Group
Shannon McNamara	Maggie Lalor	
Charlotte Harris	Alison Keenan	

Blue Horizon Action Fund Board of Directors: Bruce Carpenter (President), Coda Rayo-Garza (Secretary), Steve Kling (Treasurer)

Blue Horizon Texas Board of Directors: Coda Rayo-Garza (President), Kathy Cheng (Secretary), Jennifer Cantu, Madi Eden, Samantha Fields, FJ Jones, Clayton Tucker, Josh Tutt, Mary Wilson

Advisory Board: Akilah Bacy, Mina Davis, Wendy Davis, Becca DeFelice, Hannah Horick, Lana Hansen, Eric Holguin, Carl Jones, Jennifer Longoria, Eliz Markowitz, Cari Marshall, Sherrie Matula, Celina Montoya, Lauren Pully, Lisa Seger, Brittany Soto, Caroline Spears, Joyce Townsend, Brandon Turner, Catherine Wicker, Philippa Wood, Rep. Erin Zweiner
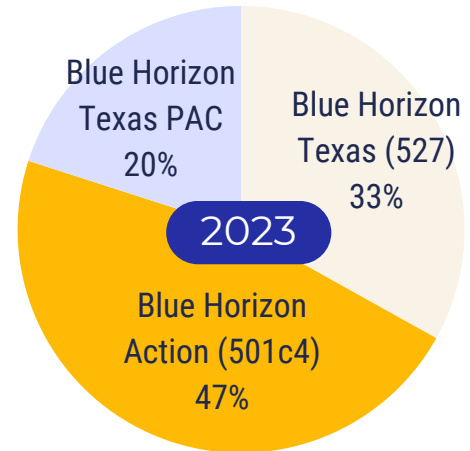
The Year In Numbers

Blue Horizon's financial focus for 2023 was to increase fundraising and budgeting capacity and lay the groundwork to diversify revenue streams. Although overall revenue was down, we strengthened our grassroots fundraising and invested in grant-seeking. Expenditures reflected our off-year focus on candidate recruitment and pipeline building.

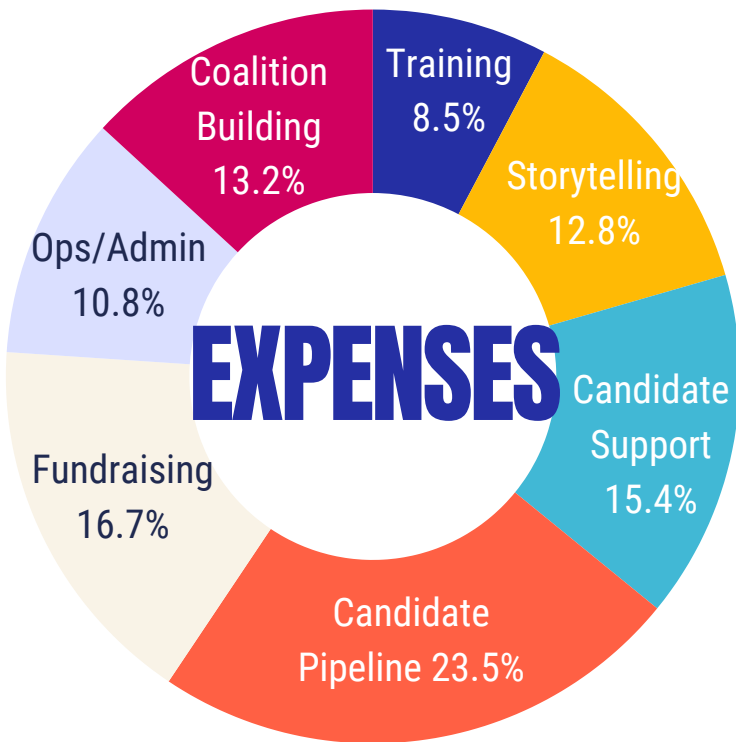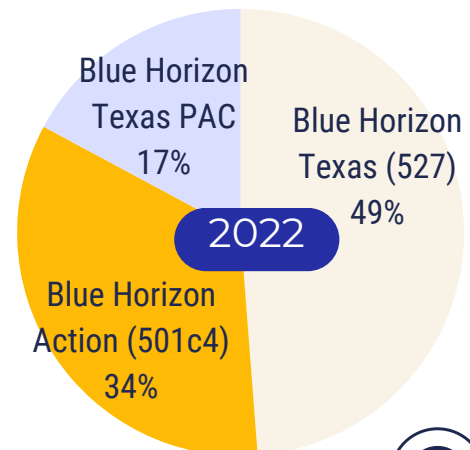|	Blue Horizon Texas (527)	Blue Horizon Action Fund (501c4)	Blue Horizon Texas PAC
Total $ Revenue	$36,906	$52,280	$22,347
Grants or Sponsorships	Local Dem Groups: $600	Rural Democracy Initiative: $50,000	n/a
In-Kind Donations	$38,550	$45,000	$7,300

$111,233
2023 Dollar Revenue

REVENUE

Blue Horizon Texas PAC 20%
Blue Horizon Texas (527) 33%
2023
Blue Horizon Action (501c4) 47%

EXPENSES

Coalition Building 13.2%
Training 8.5%
Storytelling 12.8%
Candidate Support 15.4%
Candidate Pipeline 23.5%
Fundraising 16.7%
Ops/Admin 10.8%

$207,673
2023 Operating Expenses (includes in-kind time)

$202,083
Total Monetary + In-Kind Donations

Blue Horizon Texas PAC 17%
Blue Horizon Texas (527) 49%
2022
Blue Horizon Action (501c4) 34%

Financial Performance Summary

In 2023, many organizations struggled financially, yet Blue Horizon hit its financial stride. After a sluggish start, fundraising picked up in the second half and reached a blistering rate in the last two months of the year, seeing the biggest grassroots fundraising numbers since the Blue Horizon launch in November 2021.

We ended the year with total revenue 84% of our 2022 numbers. Heading into 2024, our goals include diversifying revenue streams, particularly into the 501c4, continuing to expand our grassroots fundraising base, and stewarding major donors and grantors.

Legend:
- Blue Horizon Texas (527)
- Blue Horizon Action (501c4)
- Blue Horizon Texas PAC
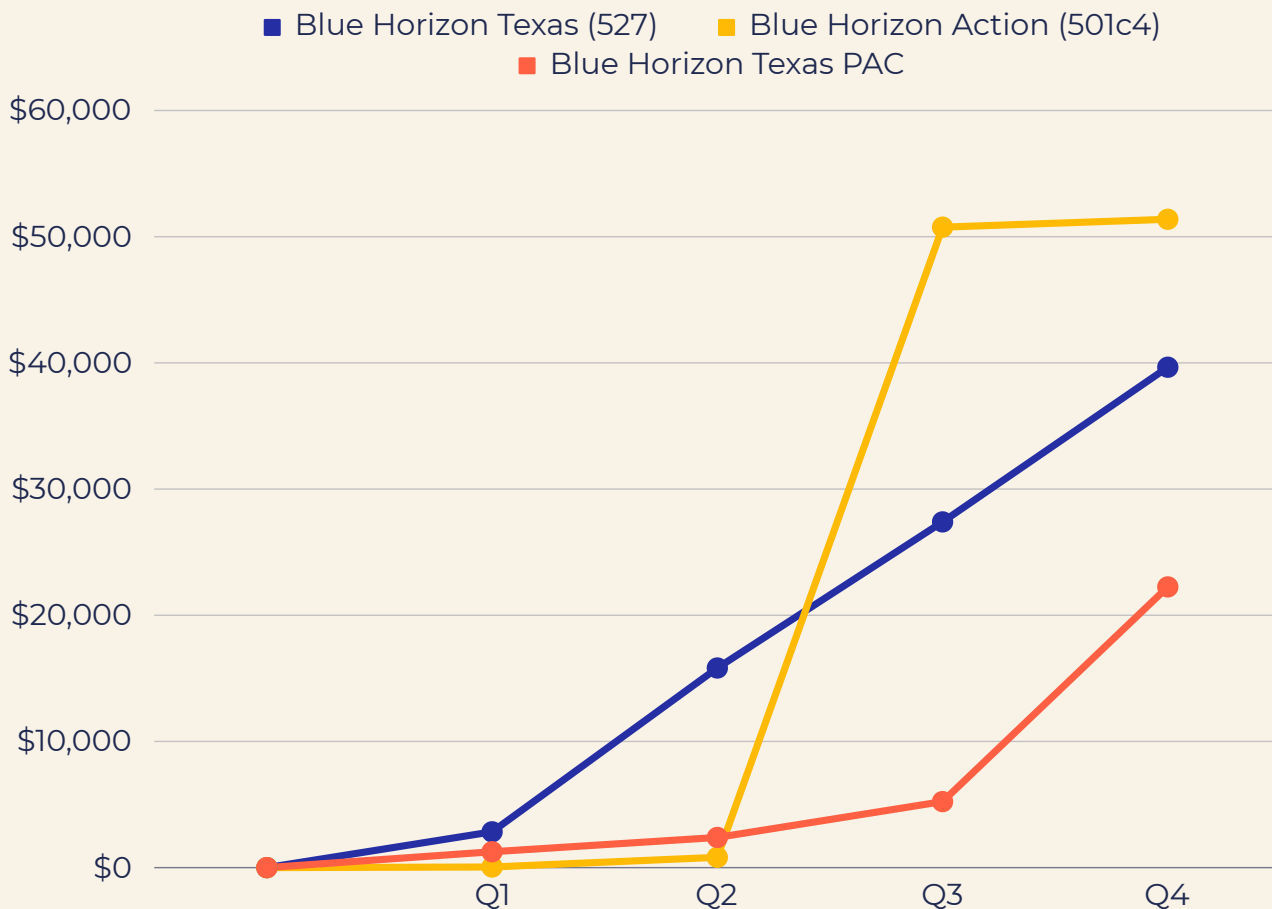
Highlights

In more than half of Texas counties and dozens of state legislative races, there were no Democrats on the ballot in 2022. For this reason, Blue Horizon focused our efforts in 2023 in addressing this challenge, visiting dozens of cities across Texas to talk about running for office in red districts. These efforts culminated in a flurry of activity to support candidates filing to run in 2024 races.

In 2023, we traveled the state to talk about the...

1500+ state & county races on the Nov 2024 Ballot

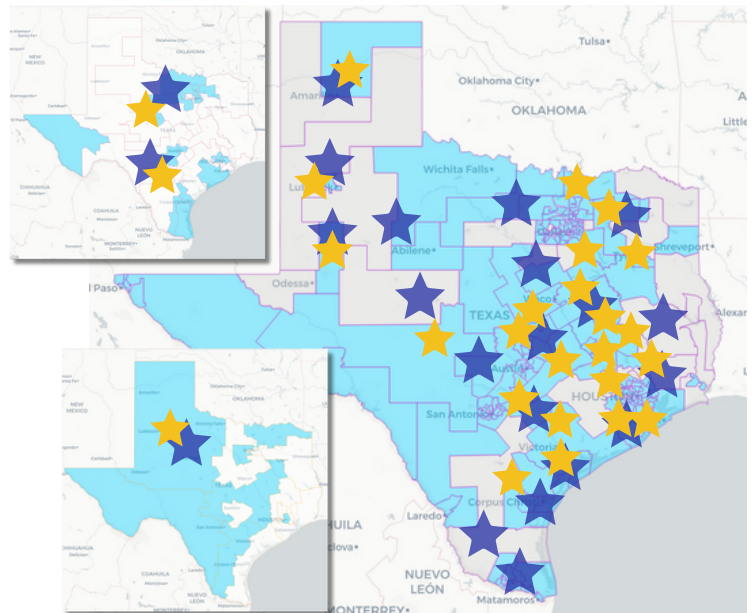**... sending us on...**

8 Flights

6000+ Miles

25 Events

9 Weekends

29 Partners & Hosts

650 Participants

⭐ 25 Recruiting Events   ⭐ 25 Filing Fee Grants

25 Candidates assisted with **Filing Fee Grants** for 2024 state legislature and SBOE races.

2023 Elections

15 Candidate Community Members

5 Endorsed Candidates

3 Electoral Wins

0   5   10   15

While investing in the 2024 candidate pipeline, we continued to deliver campaign information, training, and GOTV resources to candidates in May and November 2023 elections, supporting candidates from Bastrop, Uvalde, Greenville, Harker Heights, and Temple.

2024-2025
OUTLOOK

1 Sustain the Blue Horizon Online Community membership and expand offerings

In 2024, Blue Horizon will grow the Blue Horizon Online Community, relaunching our Campaign Nuts & Bolts Webinar Series, formalizing our Volunteer Network, and continuing to add to our library of campaign resources.

2 Invest in Direct Voter Outreach in rural and exurban districts through our GOTV programs

Blue Horizon will endorse and support Democratic candidates in rural and exurban districts across the state with endorsements and GOTV programs. In 2022, Blue Horizon's GOTV program reached over 45,000 voters in 4 regions. We plan to double our reach in 2024, expanding to 8 regions and contacting over 100,000 rural and exurban voters through our partnership with Rideshare2Vote.

3 Grow the audience for the Blue Horizon Podcast and other storytelling projects

Tonya Lyles has elevated the quality of our storytelling through the Blue Horizon Podcast. In 2024, Blue Horizon will expand the audience of the podcast through better platforming on podcast streaming services. We will also formalize our written storytelling by seeking op-ed placement and documenting the Blue Horizon journey.

I look forward to meeting new people who want to improve local rural communities and the state of Texas. I know it takes courage and trust to do interviews, and I want to honor each voice that agrees to do so.

-**Tonya Lyles**, Program Director and Producer of the Blue Horizon Podcast

4 Democratize access to information on ballot opportunities to support Candidate Pipeline Building

A major hurdle in building a local candidate pipeline in every region of the state is the challenge of identifying ballot opportunities for local, nonpartisan offices. In 2024, Blue Horizon will officially launch our Blue Ballot Data Project, to provide free, transparent access to a database of all ballot opportunities to county parties, grassroots organizers, and potential candidates.

5 Further organizational sustainability through diversifying revenue and investing in operational infrastructure

The Blue Horizon enterprise of varied legal entities allows for flexibility in funding sources. Using a multi-tiered approach, Blue Horizon will further financial sustainability through diversifying revenue and investing in operational infrastructure, allowing to increase paid staff, sustain and expand programs, and scale to a larger operating footprint.

THANK
YOU

We are grateful for the contributions of all those who worked tirelessly to support Blue Horizon Texas throughout the year. Thank you to—

All the 2023 Blue Horizon Candidates for your hard work and sacrifice. Your run matters.

Our Bluebonnet Data fellows Carl Mason, Maggie Lalor, and Allison Keenan who built our maps and are conducting essential district research.

Our program director and podcaster Tonya Lyles for continuing her inspirational storytelling and curriculum development.

Our Boards of Directors & Advisory Board members for their leadership, guidance, and support.

Our colleagues from partner organizations, particularly Ryan Garcia from the Texas Democratic Party, Michelle Butler from Run for Something, Nancy Thompson from Mothers Against Greg Abbott, Carla Schoonover from the 134 PAC, Stephanie Johnson from Rural Democracy Initiative, and Nilofar Ganjaie from the Pipeline Fund.

Our contributors, including Roland Pesch, Margery Loeb, Claire Barnett, Melinda Poss, Bruce Carpenter, Steven Kling, Karen Collins, Virginia Barnett, Vanessa MacDougal, and Mary Wilson.

**Blue Horizon Texas &
Blue Horizon Action Fund**
PO Box 780162
San Antonio, TX 78278
210.660.8390
www.bluehorizontexas.org
info@bluehorizontexas.org

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