

DEMOCRACY UNIVERSITY

TRAINING PROPOSAL

PILOT

SEPTEMBER 2026
- MAY 2027

TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO POWER THE WORK OF DEMOCRACY.

Building the people, relationships, knowledge, and professional pipeline democracy needs now.

AMY PRITCHARD & WILL ROBINSON

CO-FOUNDERS

SUBMITTED AUGUST 2026

FISCALLY SPONSORED AT GLOBAL GAIN, 501(C)(3) · DEMOCRACY.UNIVERSITY

THE ASK, IN ONE PAGE

REQUEST \$500,000 · NINE MONTHS September 2026 – May 2027, through Global GAIN's 501(c)(3).	WHAT IT FUNDS HUMAN CAPACITY Two-thirds goes to community leadership, engagement, knowledge stewardship, and practitioner compensation.
STATUS LIVE, PUBLIC, IN BETA Soft-launched August 21, 2026 with \$0 in paid promotion. Everything in this proposal is linked and verifiable.	THE PROPOSITION If we invest in the people and systems that steward the community, Democracy University can turn expertise, goodwill, and institutional memory into durable professional infrastructure.

95,606 LAUNCH EMAIL RECIPIENTS	111 MANUAL DOWNLOADS, 72 HOURS	87 COMMUNITY MEMBERS, DAY 3	\$0 SPENT ON PAID PROMOTION
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SECTION 01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are living through a consequential moment for democracy. Disinformation, political intimidation, attacks on civic institutions, declining trust, and efforts to concentrate power are changing the environment in which organizers, advocates, election professionals, and civic organizations work. Meeting that moment requires more than good candidates and good organizations. It requires people — organizers, managers, communicators, fundraisers, technologists, researchers, trainers, lawyers, data professionals, and thousands of others who know how to turn democratic values into effective action.

WHAT DEMOCRACY UNIVERSITY IS

Year-round community and knowledge infrastructure for the people who make democracy work.

A place to find one another, develop professionally, preserve hard-earned lessons, find mentors and collaborators, teach, learn, and pass knowledge forward. There will be classes, and there are already twelve new training manuals — in active, working draft, and intentionally so — plus a growing archive. But community is more important than classes.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

WE QUIETLY SOFT-LAUNCHED

No paid campaign. No boosted posts. Much of the work still in draft.

The response has been extraordinary. People are signing up, downloading the draft manuals, volunteering to teach, offering decades-old training archives, identifying sections they originally wrote, and asking how they can help.

As of early August 24, the platform had **87 non-admin community users** and **94 recorded manual-download events**, and four supporters had contributed **\$1,100** before any serious fundraising effort.

Yet we consistently underinvest in the people behind the work. We assemble teams under enormous time pressure, train people only when we urgently need them, let talented staff disperse when campaigns end, capture too little of what they learned — and then start rebuilding when the next campaign or crisis arrives.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS CLEAR. SO IS THE BOTTLENECK.

We need the human capacity to properly engage the people already stepping forward. We are seeking **\$500,000 for a nine-month Community & Professional Infrastructure Pilot** to turn this early momentum into something durable.

THE REQUEST

\$500K

THE PERIOD

9 mos.

THE WINDOW

Sep-May

ONE NOTE BEFORE WE GO FURTHER

EVERYTHING DESCRIBED IN THIS PROPOSAL IS LIVE, PUBLIC, AND LINKED THROUGHOUT.

You can [visit the platform](#), [read the draft manuals](#), [read the launch posts](#), and see the community response for yourself. We would rather you click through and see it than take our word for it.



THE CASE FOR PEOPLE

We have built candidate pipelines, funded late, and rebuilt the same capacity every cycle. The Right built institutions and let them compound. Six sections on why community, knowledge, and professional continuity are democracy infrastructure — and why the moment to invest in them is before we urgently need them.

SECTION 02

WHO WE ARE

We write this proposal together because our own careers are the case study for its thesis. We met in 1988 on the Dukakis campaign, when Will trained Amy through Project 500 — a program that launched not just one career but hundreds. Will went on to become one of the most renowned trainers our field has ever produced, teaching generations of organizers through the DNC, the Ron Brown–Paul Tully Institute, and campaigns and democracy programs around the world. Amy went on to build Democratic GAIN and lead the 2004 rebuild of the campaign training manuals that grew out of the earlier DNC and EMILY's List materials — the same manuals practitioners are now pulling off their shelves and offering back to us — and has spent the decades since building professional community for democracy workers through **GAIN Power**, which incubated Democracy University and whose channels carried its launch to nearly 100,000 people.

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS AFTER THAT FIRST TRAINING ROOM

The trainer and the trainee are co-founding Democracy University and co-authoring the manuals at its core.

That is not a sentimental detail. It is precisely the kind of professional relationship — formed in a training room, sustained across decades, and now producing new infrastructure — that this pilot is designed to create at scale. The manuals will trigger memories for people who used them, but what was printed in them was never as special as the relationships they helped form.

**THE BOOKS WERE THE EXCUSE TO GET IN THE ROOM.
THE PEOPLE WERE THE POINT.**

SECTION 03

TIME, PEOPLE, AND MONEY

One of the first truisms many of us learned in campaign training is that our three most valuable resources are people, time, and money. The original Democratic GAIN manuals taught this explicitly: the Volunteers & Activists manual opened by naming the three "most limited and valuable resources" as **"PEOPLE, TIME and MONEY,"** and the Campaign Strategy manual taught that planning depends on realistically assessing all three together.

MONEY We can raise more of it.	PEOPLE We can recruit, train, and develop more of them.	TIME We cannot raise more time.
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And yet, over and over, we wait. We wait until the current election is over before planning for the next one. We wait until a campaign desperately needs an organizing director before developing organizers. We wait until experienced people leave the work before realizing how much knowledge left with them. Then another election approaches, the clock accelerates, money pours in, and we buy what can still be bought with the time remaining.

That is an expensive way to build capacity, and a strategic mistake.

SAY IT PLAINLY

The long game cannot begin after the next election – it has to begin now.

we cannot raise more time!

SECTION 04

WHAT THE RIGHT DOES RIGHT

We should be willing to learn from political opponents when they have built something strategically effective. Whatever our disagreements with the goals of conservative institutions, the Right has understood something important about power: people are a long-term investment. Conservative infrastructure has been built over decades through interconnected nonprofits, training institutions, campus networks, policy organizations, legal networks, media institutions, and professional communities. People are identified early, trained repeatedly, introduced to networks, and supported through increasingly influential stages of their careers. That investment has time to compound.

Amy made this argument in her 2025 essay *What the Right Does Right*: conservative institutions invest early and consistently in leadership and long-term talent, while too much progressive funding arrives late and disappears when the cycle ends.



HER SHORTHAND

"They build power like investors. We spend money like firefighters."

FIREFIGHTERS

**RESPOND WHEN SOMETHING IS
ALREADY BURNING**

Too often we spend enormous amounts in the closing months of an election — awash in "fourth-quarter money" while starving the first and second quarters.

INVESTORS

**PUT RESOURCES TO WORK EARLY
ENOUGH TO COMPOUND**

And we spend dramatically less on the people, institutions, and relationships that could have been compounding for years.

Democracy University is an effort to make a different kind of investment.

SECTION 05

WE HAVE BUILT CANDIDATE PIPELINES. WE NEED A PROFESSIONAL PIPELINE.

Over the last several decades, significant resources have gone into finding, preparing, and supporting people who want to run for office. That work matters and should continue. But candidates are only the visible tip of the infrastructure democracy requires. Every strong candidate depends on the team around them — managers, organizers, finance and communications professionals, researchers, data teams, lawyers, schedulers, and volunteers. And democracy requires many more people who will never work for candidates at all: advocates, nonprofit leaders, civic educators, union and community leaders, and people working inside public institutions.

We have become increasingly good at asking *who should run*. We are far less systematic about asking who will build the team around them.

THE QUESTIONS NOBODY OWNS	
Who develops the organizer into an organizing director, or prepares the finance assistant to become a finance director?	Who teaches the first-time manager to manage people well, or helps a communications professional keep pace with AI?
Who connects people to the next opportunity when a campaign disappears on Election Day?	Who makes sure someone with twenty-five years of experience is still connected to the profession five years from now — and who captures what all of these people have learned so the next generation does not start over?

Great candidates require great teams, and strong democratic institutions require an even larger professional ecosystem. Democracy University is being built for that ecosystem. It is not a partisan staff-placement operation: as a Global GAIN 501(c)(3) project, it is intentionally nonpartisan, strengthening broadly applicable skills, professional pathways, relationships, and institutional memory for people engaged in democracy and public-interest work.

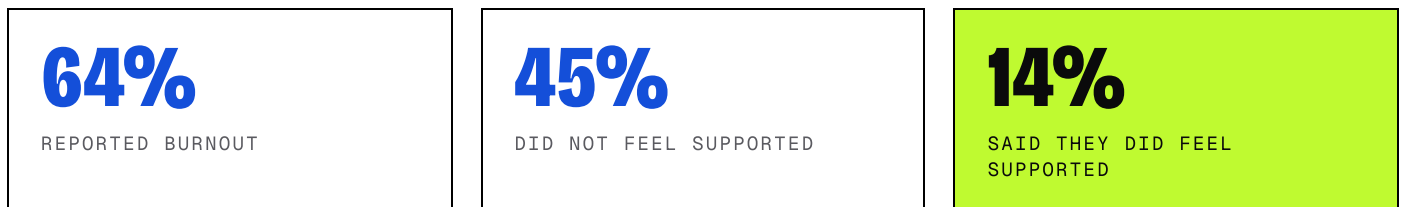
SECTION 06

THIS PROBLEM IS NOT NEW

There is striking continuity between the challenge we saw more than twenty years ago and the one practitioners describe today. In 2004, Democratic GAIN — where we did this work the first time — was created to promote campaign work as a profession through recruiting, training, career advancement, benefits, and network opportunities. Its manuals named the problem plainly: campaign work offered minimal job security, and the field lost experienced professionals every election season. Its objectives included professional networking, training, post-cycle employment support, recruiting new organizers, and mentoring relationships between senior professionals and newcomers.

Twenty-two years later, the language and technology have changed and the democracy ecosystem is much larger, but too many of the underlying problems remain. A 2026 GAIN Power survey of 144 people working across nonprofit, advocacy, electoral, organizing, labor, government, and consulting fields found that **58% had more than eight years of experience**, with 43% describing themselves as senior and another 35% as experienced.

TABLE 06.1 · GAIN POWER SURVEY, 2026 · N = 144



Respondents identified unstable employment, lack of growth, low pay, isolation, and burnout among their biggest challenges — and when asked what would help them stay, they named stable employment and better pay, but also career paths, professional development, and community.

NOT A WORKFORCE PROBLEM

Every time an experienced person burns out or loses connection to the field, we lose more than a worker — we lose judgment, relationships, lessons, and institutional memory.

SECTION 07

COMMUNITY IS INFRASTRUCTURE

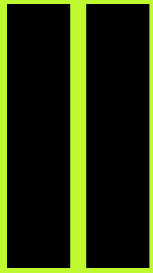
The same survey reinforces the central idea behind Democracy University. Respondents rated the importance of community **8 out of 10**, and "Networking & Community" received a **4.1 out of 5** — higher than "Trainings & Courses" at 3.9 and alongside "Tools & Resources" at 4.0.

WHAT PRACTITIONERS VALUE	RATING, OUT OF 5
Networking & community	4.1
Tools & resources	4.0
Trainings & courses	3.9

That matters because Democracy University is not primarily an online course platform. Community is the platform, and learning is one thing the community does. People need knowledge, but they also need relationships: someone to call, someone who has done the job before, someone who can make the right introduction or say that the mistake they just made has been made before.

The survey's open-ended responses repeatedly asked for mentorship, peer networks, professional development between jobs, and — as one respondent put it — **"consistent relationship building and development across stages of career."**

COMMUNITY IS NOT A HAPPY BYPRODUCT OF PROGRAMMING. COMMUNITY IS THE PROGRAM.



BUILT, AND BUILDING

This is not a proposal to fund an idea. The platform is live, the twelve manuals are published in working draft, and practitioners are already raising their hands. What follows is what exists, what happened when we opened the doors, and exactly what the nine-month pilot will build with \$500,000.

SECTION 08

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING

Democracy University is a year-round professional and knowledge community with five connected functions.

01 COMMUNITY & BELONGING

A place where practitioners, learners, trainers, mentors, and organizations can find one another and build relationships that last beyond a single training or election.

02 PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

Help entering democracy work, moving between roles, building skills, finding mentors and peers, teaching others, and staying connected between campaigns.

03 KNOWLEDGE & MEMORY

Preserving the manuals, tools, stories, case studies, and institutional histories that too often disappear when programs end or people move on.

04 PRACTITIONER ACTIVATION

Meaningful ways for experienced people to teach, mentor, review, advise, contribute, make introductions, and pass knowledge forward.

05 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Manuals, workshops, practitioner conversations, cohorts, office hours, peer learning, templates, and self-paced resources — without assuming everyone learns the same way. The survey supports this: no single learning format dominated, with live virtual, cohort-based, self-paced, and in-person formats all drawing substantial interest, and cost the most frequently identified barrier.

SECTION 09

WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY BUILT

This is not a proposal to fund an idea. [Democracy University is live](#). The site already includes a [twelve-manual core library in working draft](#), training and learning infrastructure, historical resources, a growing resource commons, user accounts and dashboards, manual feedback and contribution systems, trainer applications, professional-profile infrastructure, donations, and the administrative tools to manage the people and knowledge flowing in.

THE TWELVE DRAFT MANUALS COVER

01 CAMPAIGN STRATEGY & PLANNING	02 LEADERSHIP	03 SCHEDULING, ADVANCE & EVENTS
04 FIELD, VOTER CONTACT & TARGETING	05 ORGANIZING, VOLUNTEERS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	06 COMMUNICATIONS, MEDIA & PERSUASION
07 FUNDRAISING & POLITICAL FINANCE	08 DATA & ANALYTICS	09 TECHNOLOGY & CYBERSECURITY
10 CAMPAIGN OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION	11 CAMPAIGN LAW, COMPLIANCE & ETHICS	12 DIGITAL CAMPAIGNING, ONLINE ORGANIZING & AI

A FEATURE OF THE DESIGN, NOT A CAVEAT

The manuals get finished the same way they were originally built: by the community that uses them.

WHAT "DRAFT" MEANS HERE

We want to be direct about what "draft" means here, because it is a feature of the design, not a caveat. These are living documents, published early and openly so practitioners can shape them. We expect them to go through dozens of revisions as veteran trainers review them, contributors add lessons and case studies, and the field tells us what we got right and what to throw out. Practitioner review of all twelve drafts is a core deliverable of this pilot — the manuals get finished the same way they were originally built: by the community that uses them.

The same honesty applies to the platform itself. Everything described here is in pilot/beta: Democracy University launched early and openly, and GAIN Power is in the middle of migrating from its longtime home at gainpower.org to a rebuilt platform at gainpower.app, which is live but not yet fully launched. We opened the doors before everything was polished because the response of real practitioners — not our own assumptions — should shape what gets built. This pilot funds exactly that: turning a working beta and an extraordinary early response into durable infrastructure.

The platform already gives people multiple ways to raise their hands — contribute a lesson, recommend a resource, volunteer as a trainer, nominate someone, share expertise, help preserve history, or support the project financially.

THE LIMIT OF THE TECHNOLOGY

**THE TECHNOLOGY CAN CAPTURE PEOPLE'S INTEREST.
WHAT IT CANNOT DO BY ITSELF IS BUILD A RELATIONSHIP
WITH THEM.**

published early, on purpose →

SECTION 10

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE OPENED THE DOORS

We soft-launched on Friday, August 21, and spent \$0 on paid promotion. Our launch post, [/YKYK: We're Rebuilding these Old Campaign Manuals — And Want Your Help](#), was delivered by email to **95,606 recipients**; by August 25 it had generated **40,230 views, 29,864 opens, a 34.07% open rate, 413 openers clicking at least one link, and 12 new subscribers, including two paid**. The most-clicked links were the manuals library and the contribute page — people went straight to the substance.

TABLE 10.1 · FIRST 72 HOURS · \$0 PAID PROMOTION

CHANNEL	REACH	ENGAGEMENT
Email · launch post	95,606 recipients 40,230 views	29,864 opens · 34.07% open rate · 413 openers clicked a link · 12 new subscribers, two paid
Facebook · entirely organic	5,221+ views	140 reactions · 71 comments · 17 shares — veterans testifying to using the original manuals to train their teams
LinkedIn · Democracy Ikigai	3,762 impressions 1,095 article views	96 reactions · 25 comments · 7 reposts · 56% of impressions from outside our existing network

On LinkedIn the launch article drew meaningful reach among senior professionals, founders, and people working in political organizations. The comment threads show the network effect directly: practitioners tagging colleagues into the conversation and recruiting others to contribute. Four people contributed **\$1,100** without a formal fundraising campaign.

\$1,100

FROM FOUR SUPPORTERS,
UNSOLICITED

56%

LINKEDIN REACH OUTSIDE OUR
NETWORK

34%

EMAIL OPEN RATE

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULT WAS NOT REACH

It has been participation. Public comments, emails, and conversations have repeatedly included some version of: *I still have those manuals. I learned from them. I used them to train my staff. I wrote part of that. I want to teach. Let me help.* You can see the post that sparked it [on our blog](#).

Original manual authors have resurfaced and identified their own work — the volunteer management manual, the vote-by-mail section, the fundraising edition, contributions to the campaign planning manual — and the editor who shepherded the originals through late nights with Heather Booth has offered to help "in any way possible." Experienced practitioners have volunteered to rebuild specific subjects, including scheduling and events, cybersecurity, and rural organizing. People have offered DNC, Democratic GAIN, EMILY's List, Brown-Tully, Wellstone, Democracy for America, NWPC, NCEC, and international training materials — including Iraqi and Egyptian adaptations of the manuals. One trainer who learned from the originals taught the communications curriculum at a packed regional DNC training this year with a Will Robinson quote on his slides. People who taught decades ago want to teach again; people trained decades ago still have the binders.



J. BRIAN O'DAY
IN THE COMMENTS

"I carried those DNC training guides around the world for years. They were a model for writing manuals and conducting trainings."

That is exactly how professional knowledge compounds. Someone creates something useful; someone else carries it into another campaign or another country, adapts it, teaches it, and the people they train improve it — until a lesson created in one room influences people the original authors never met. The manuals traveled because the knowledge was useful. **Democracy University is designed so the relationships, stories, and lessons can travel too.**

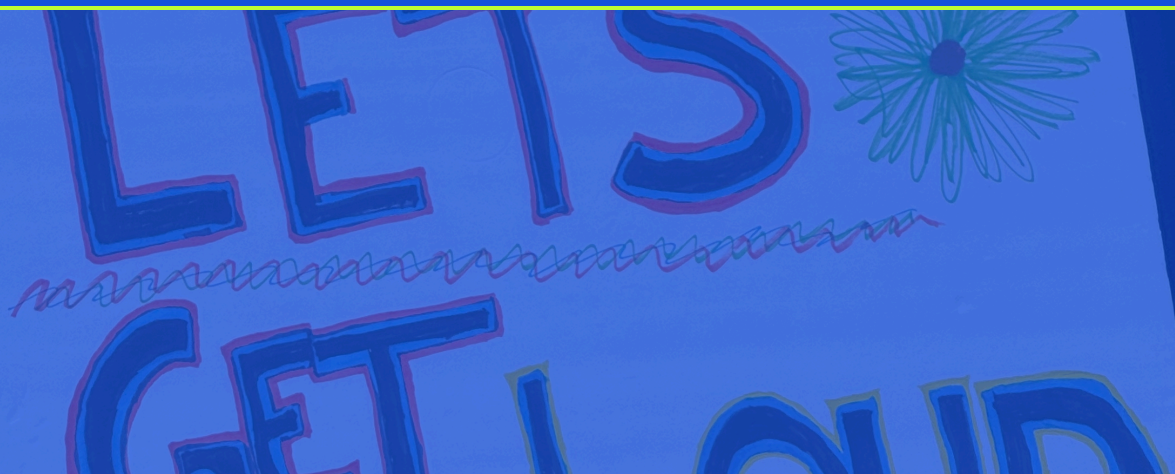


TAKING PEOPLE UP ON IT

This early response creates a problem we are fortunate to have: people are raising their hands faster than we can engage them. A form is not a relationship. If someone says "I want to help," somebody has to respond. If someone says "I wrote that section," somebody has to interview them. If someone offers twenty-five years of old training material, somebody has to follow up, secure permissions, and preserve it. If someone volunteers to teach, somebody has to turn that interest into an actual opportunity — and when someone participates once, somebody should know enough about them to ask what they might want to do next.

THE PILOT TESTS ONE CENTRAL PROPOSITION

**IF WE ADEQUATELY INVEST IN THE PEOPLE AND SYSTEMS
THAT STEWARD THE COMMUNITY, CAN DEMOCRACY
UNIVERSITY TURN EXPERTISE, GOODWILL, RELATIONSHIPS,
AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY INTO DURABLE
PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE?**



SECTION 12

THE NINE-MONTH PILOT

01 BUILD THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM

We will create a common journey across the many ways people enter Democracy University — building the staffing, CRM, workflows, and relationship practices needed to welcome people quickly, understand their interests, match them with opportunities, recognize contributions, and keep them engaged. We will measure far more than registrations: whether people participate, form relationships, contribute something useful, and return.

SIGN UP	WELCOME	UNDERSTAND	MATCH	PARTICIPATE	RECOGNIZE	RECONNECT
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02 BUILD THE PROFESSIONAL PIPELINE

We will turn Democracy Pros and related infrastructure into a genuinely useful professional network rather than a static directory — making it easier to identify trainers, mentors, subject-matter experts, and collaborators, and testing mentoring, peer connections, teaching opportunities, and ways to stay engaged between jobs and cycles. The goal is not a partisan placement service but stronger professional development and continuity across the broader democracy ecosystem.

03 PRESERVE THE KNOWLEDGE

We will begin building a **Democracy Knowledge Archive** to identify and preserve historic manuals, curricula, tools, training materials, stories, and international adaptations — documenting origins and authorship, securing permissions, conducting practitioner interviews, and identifying which lessons remain useful, which need adaptation, and which should be left behind. This is not nostalgia. It is continuity and change.

04

ACTIVATE PRACTITIONERS

Experienced people are not merely an audience; they are teachers, mentors, reviewers, advisors, and connectors. The pilot will create meaningful opportunities for them to contribute, and it includes resources to compensate people when we ask for substantial professional work. Volunteer generosity is valuable — and professional expertise is valuable too.

05

BUILD LEARNING AROUND RELATIONSHIPS

We will continue developing the twelve living draft manuals and test workshops, practitioner conversations, peer learning, cohorts, office hours, case studies, templates, and tools. We will not judge the pilot primarily by how many courses we upload, but by whether someone learned something useful, met someone valuable, contributed, returned, or helped someone else.

13 · USE THE 2026 ELECTION AS A LEARNING MOMENT

THE TIMING IS INTENTIONAL

SEPTEMBER - ELECTION DAY BUILD WHILE PEOPLE ARE DOING THE WORK Stand up the community-engagement operation, recruit practitioners, activate contribution pathways, begin practitioner review of the manuals, strengthen technology and CRM systems, and launch initial community activity.	NOVEMBER - JANUARY CAPTURE WHAT PEOPLE JUST LEARNED The weeks after an election are an extraordinary but routinely wasted knowledge window. Campaigns are fresh in people's minds — what worked, what failed, what surprised them, what they would never do again — and then they scatter. We will use this period for interviews, practitioner debriefs, case studies, resource collection, and lessons-learned sessions.	FEBRUARY - MAY TEST THE LONG GAME Will people stay connected when an election is no longer imminent? Will mentoring relationships persist and practitioners keep contributing? Can the infrastructure become useful enough that people return between cycles rather than only during them? That is how we begin moving from temporary campaigns toward permanent capacity.
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SECTION 14

PILOT OUTCOMES

TABLE 14.1 · BY MAY 2027, OUR WORKING TARGETS ARE

MEASURE	NINE-MONTH TARGET
Registered community members	1,000+
Substantive participants	300+
Active trainers, mentors, reviewers, advisors & contributors	100+
Stories, tools, resources, manual contributions or archival materials	100+
Curated external resources or collections	50+
Active organizational partners	10+
Facilitated community and learning experiences	12–18
Core manual drafts receiving practitioner review	All 12
Initial Democracy Knowledge Archive / training lineage map	Completed
Community engagement and relationship system	Operating
Pilot evaluation and next-stage plan	Completed

THE DEEPER OUTCOMES

These numbers give us accountability, but the deeper outcomes are whether people become more connected, knowledge is preserved, professionals have stronger pathways, and the community begins generating value for its members.

SECTION 15

\$500,000 FOR A NINE-MONTH PILOT

The primary constraint is now human capacity, and the budget reflects that.

INVESTMENT AREA	AMOUNT
Community & program leadership	\$115,000
Community engagement & member success	\$90,000
Editorial, manuals & knowledge archive	\$70,000
Practitioner, trainer & contributor compensation	\$55,000
Technology, CRM, data, analytics & security	\$40,000
Programming & community convenings	\$35,000
Communications & storytelling	\$30,000
Partnerships & professional pathways	\$25,000
Legal/C3, accessibility & evaluation	\$20,000
Operations & contingency	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$500,000

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

2/3

Approximately two-thirds of the pilot investment goes directly toward community leadership, engagement, knowledge stewardship, and compensating the practitioners whose expertise makes the project valuable. That is intentional. **The technology matters; the people make it work.**

SECTION 16

WHERE DEMOCRACY UNIVERSITY SITS

Democracy University did not appear from nowhere. It is part of an ecosystem that has been serving democracy professionals for years, and understanding the pieces clarifies both what this grant funds and what it does not.

GAIN POWER

The professional network serving the people who do democracy work — careers, community, and connection across the field. Democracy University is a spin-off of, and sister to, GAIN Power, which incubated the project, conducted the 2026 professional survey cited throughout this proposal, and maintains the audience and communications channels that carried the soft launch to more than 95,000 people at zero paid cost. That existing infrastructure is a major reason a brand-new project could generate this response in its first seventy-two hours. GAIN Power is not a partisan organization; none of its work is considered partisan under IRS or FEC standards. But its associations across the political world are adjacent enough that we believe clean structural separation is simply good practice — which is why Democracy University lives at Global GAIN. GAIN Power is itself mid-rebuild, migrating from gainpower.org to a new platform at gainpower.app currently in pilot/beta — part of the same deliberate strategy of building the next generation of this infrastructure in the open.

ROOTSCAMP

A convening — a concentrated opportunity for practitioners to gather, share lessons, and build relationships. Democracy University is the year-round infrastructure that lets those relationships and lessons continue between gatherings: preserving what people learned, connecting practitioners, mentoring, teaching, and supporting professional development. They reinforce one another, but RootsCamp has its own program, budget, fundraising strategy, and outcomes.

GLOBAL GAIN

The 501(c)(3) home for Democracy University, and this proposal's fiscal sponsor. Democracy University operates as its nonpartisan civic education and professional-development project.

FUNDING BOUNDARIES, EXPLICITLY

This **\$500,000 request funds only the Democracy University pilot through Global GAIN's 501(c)(3)**. No GAIN Power or RootsCamp expenses are included; each has its own program, budget, and fundraising. We believe funders deserve that clarity up front.

SECTION 17

A NONPARTISAN, PRO-DEMOCRACY APPROACH

Democracy University is being developed through Global GAIN's 501(c)(3) structure as a nonpartisan civic education and professional-development initiative. Its materials are designed for broad use across candidate campaigns, ballot measures, advocacy efforts, nonprofits, unions, and civic organizations. We can teach strategy, organizing, management, communications, fundraising, technology, data, leadership, and ethics as transferable disciplines — and we can study what institutions across the political spectrum have done effectively without adopting their ideology.

THE DISTINCTION

LEARNING FROM WHAT THE RIGHT BUILT WELL IS NOT THE SAME AS EMBRACING WHAT IT BUILT IT TO DO.

The lesson we carry forward is the long view: invest early, develop people continuously, build relationships that persist, preserve knowledge, and give those investments time to compound.

18 · WHY NOW

WHERE PATIENT CAPITAL HAS OUTSIZED VALUE

Many of the things that make a field stronger do not produce a commercial transaction. There is no market price for preserving an old campaign-training binder, identifying who wrote it, interviewing someone before their experience is lost, connecting an emerging practitioner with the right mentor, or maintaining professional community between election cycles. Yet these activities create institutional memory, stronger leaders, healthier networks, and more resilient democratic capacity. This is exactly where patient philanthropic capital has outsized value.

The timing matters as much as the amount. Money invested now has time to become relationships, mentors, better-trained professionals, preserved lessons, and functioning networks before the next moment of urgency. Money invested only after the next crisis arrives can buy far fewer things.

The response to our first few days has shown what Democracy University could become. People are not merely consuming what we have built — they are offering to help build it, bringing decades of experience, old manuals and new ideas, professional networks, stories, and the accumulated knowledge of generations who have done this work. The opportunity now is to build the capacity to welcome that energy, organize it, and turn it into something lasting.

For too long, we have repeatedly paid the cost of starting over. Time is the one resource we cannot replenish. We are seeking **\$500,000** to use the time we have now — to invest in people before we urgently need them, preserve knowledge before we lose it, build relationships before the next crisis, and strengthen the professional infrastructure democracy will need for whatever comes next.



**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. AND
KNOWLEDGE BECOMES
INFRASTRUCTURE WHEN WE SHARE IT.**

Amy Pritchard & Will Robinson

CO-FOUNDERS, DEMOCRACY UNIVERSITY

DEMOCRACY UNIVERSITY

REQUEST

\$500,000

PILOT PERIOD

SEP 2026 – MAY 2027

501(C)(3) HOME

GLOBAL GAIN

SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

THE PLATFORM

[Democracy.University](#) — manuals, community accounts, trainer applications, resource submissions, and donations

THE TWELVE-MANUAL CORE LIBRARY · WORKING DRAFTS

[democracy.university/manuals](#) — current watermarked drafts, free to download and open for practitioner feedback

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

[democracy.university/contribute](#) — lessons, stories, resources, trainer applications, and support

THE SUBSTACK

[democracyuniversity.substack.com](#) — launch posts, community survey findings, and ongoing updates

THE LAUNCH POST

[IYKYK: We're Rebuilding these Old Campaign Manuals — And Want Your Help](#) — the post that brought original authors, veteran trainers, and new practitioners raising their hands

THE FACEBOOK THREAD

[Amy's post](#) — veterans testifying in public to training their teams with the original manuals

THE ESSAY

[What the Right Does Right](#) — the investment thesis behind this pilot

ROOTSCAMP

[rootscamp.com](#) — the in-person convening that complements this year-round infrastructure

GAIN POWER

[gainpower.app](#) — the professional network for democracy workers that incubated Democracy University; new platform in pilot/beta, migrating from [gainpower.org](#); newsletter at [gainpower.substack.com](#)

GLOBAL GAIN

[globalgain.org](#) — the 501(c)(3) home for Democracy University
