

The **ELLA** Coaching Program



**BLACK
SOUTHERN
WOMEN'S
COLLABORATIVE**



***Embolden, Learn,
Lead, & Agitate***
in the Spirit of Ella Baker

The Black Southern Women's Collaborative envisions a South where organizing is second nature. We are building an infrastructure for liberation where our communities have the tools, knowledge, and connections to advocate for themselves and to build lasting power. **We believe in the leadership and power of Black people,** so we are launching a new coaching program in the spirit of Ella Baker: Embolden, Learn, Lead, Agitate.

**EMBOLDEN
LEARN
LEAD
AGITATE**



INVEST IN LASTING LIBERATION AND POWER-BUILDING

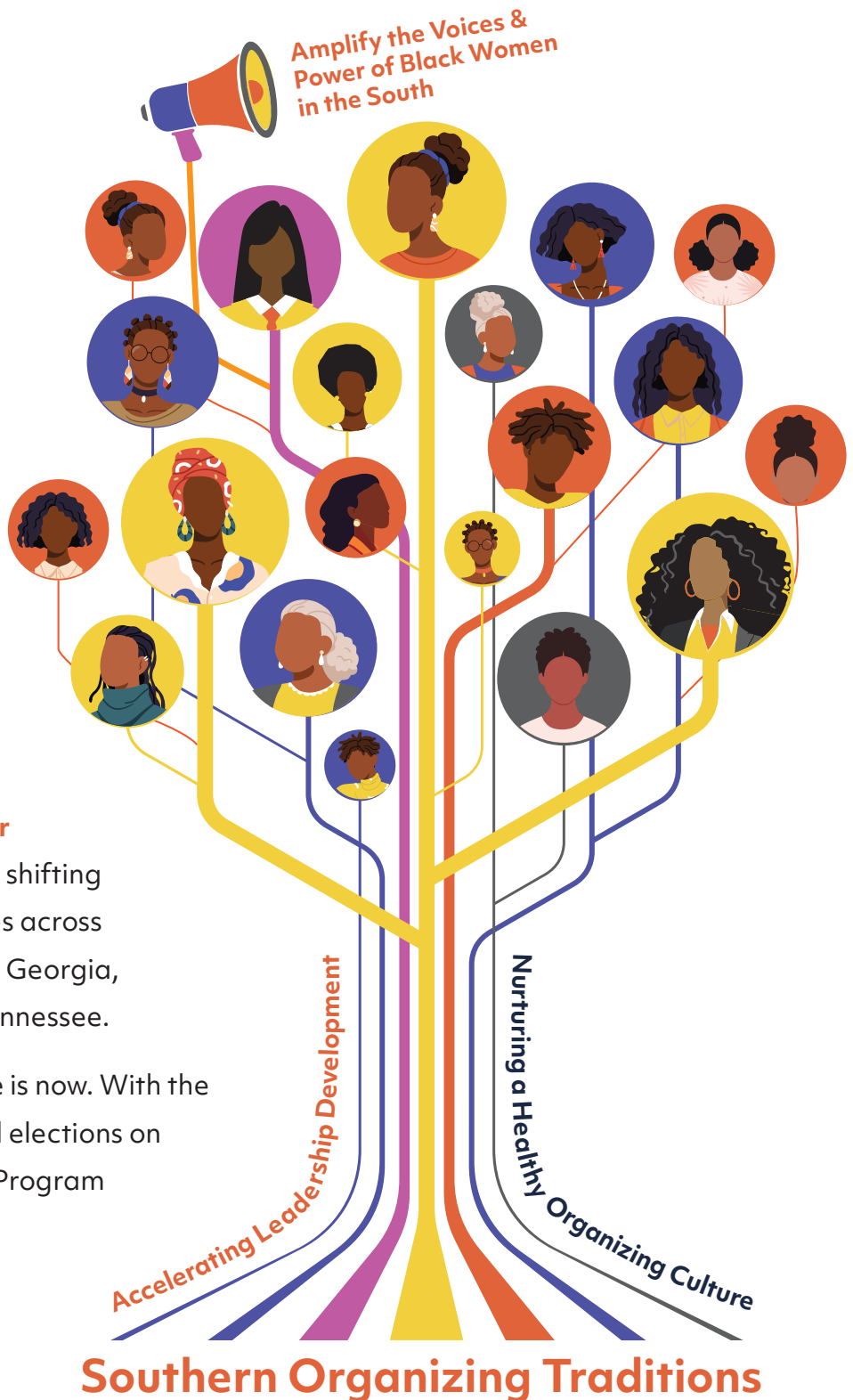
The ELLA Coaching Program is an investment in the future of the South and the power of Black women to lead transformational change. With your support, we can close the organizing skills gap, cultivate a new generation of leaders, and build durable political power that will echo across generations.

Your investment will:

- ▶ **Equip 20 organizers** with the skills and strategic insight needed to transform their communities and organize voters for immediate and long-term political impact.
- ▶ **Establish a coaching model rooted** in southern organizing traditions, accelerating leadership development while nurturing a healthy organizing culture.
- ▶ **Amplify the voices and power of Black women in the South**, shifting power dynamics in 70 counties across six states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

The stakes are high, and the time is now. With the 2026 midterm and gubernatorial elections on the horizon, the ELLA Coaching Program is poised to catalyze political transformation in the South.

But we cannot do it alone.



NEED

In the darkness of this age, we wrestle against principalities and powers that disorganize and divide us. The threats to our communities and democracy are severe, and our communities face an organizing crisis.

Compounding this broader trend, the South contends with a legacy of disinvestment in organizing infrastructure and the ongoing structures of racism and misogyny. If we continue to focus solely on the short-term payoffs of transactional tactics, we will never invest in the long-term project of organizing that builds durable political power.

The results are predictable: organizers lack key skills and practical experience to implement a transformational, power-building approach to organizing. ***Without skilled and experienced organizers, groups in the South face an upper limit on the scale and power we can build.***

To solve the organizing crisis, we must accelerate the development of organizers who can engage in the transformational change they, their communities, and the country require.

Mass mobilizations and last-minute efforts to get out the vote have replaced the relationship-based practice of community organizing. Forces like the COVID-19 pandemic and the splintered media ecosystem have isolated us and eroded our sense of shared fate.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [a]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” –Ephesians 6:12

STRATEGIC & SURGICAL INTERVENTION

On the path toward equity and justice, the Black Southern Women’s Collaborative is unapologetically committed to building the power of Black women to lead transformational change. As part of our broader strategy, **we developed the ELLA Coaching Program as a surgical intervention to build the pipeline of organizing talent.** The nine-month program—named to honor Ella Baker’s organizing legacy and leadership—will connect seven coaches who have extensive coaching, training, and campaign experience with 20 organizers from six BSWC member organizations. Coaches will:

Pass on the fundamentals of recruiting and cultivating leaders, building a base of community members and leaders, and engaging that base through 1:1s, public meetings, research actions, and other organizing tools.

Guide and mentor organizers to construct an organizing plan rooted in a power-building strategy where tactical achievements are indicators of progress toward long-term goals.

"Our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy."

–Combahee River Collective Statement, 1977

IMPACT

The ELLA Coaching Program will anchor BSWC's strategy to contest for power through deep organizing that nurtures ongoing, meaningful connections throughout the

community. Black people make up a higher percentage of the voting block in the South than anywhere else in the country, and building Black political power in Southern states has seismic consequences for the national political map.

The midterm and gubernatorial elections in 2026 represent an urgent test of our power. With the first cohort of organizers moving through the ELLA Coaching Program, we aim to mobilize voters for immediate political impact and establish sustainable, community-led power to reshape the South in the coming years.

The South has much to teach the rest of the country. By organizing for collective liberation here, we can prove the power of organizing to transform even the places and principalities that seek to divide and disorganize us.

**–Phyllis M. Hill, Founder
Black Southern Women's Collaborative**

BUDGET

The ELLA Coaching Program is a strategic investment delivering an impact far beyond its \$300,000 annual budget. We leverage the in-kind support of social justice organizations that make their leadership available to serve as coaches and cover the cost of their travel. By housing the initiative within Ignite the South, we gain access to their operational capacity and administrative infrastructure at a much lower cost than establishing these functions within the BSWC. The remaining program expenses include in-person training costs, travel for organizers, and coaches' stipends.

CONTACT

For more information and to support the program, **please contact Phyllis M. Hill**, Founder of the Black Southern Women's Collaborative, at **phill@powercoalition.org**

