

# Voterization

The right to vote is not expressly guaranteed by the *U.S. Constitution*. Rather, voting rights have been handled at the state level with amendments to the *U.S. Constitution* seeking to prevent discrimination. The struggle for these amendments and universal suffrage informs a significant part of our civil rights history.

African American men were only granted the right to vote by the 15th Amendment in 1870 and women didn't get the right to vote until the 19th Amendment in 1920. Even then, many African Americans weren't actually able to exercise their voting rights until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Because of property ownership requirements, tenants didn't even gain the right to vote in most states until well into the 19th Century.

Unfortunately, the struggle for voting rights isn't just an historical issue. Today, certain people's ability to vote is being challenged across the country. In June of 2013, a core provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was struck down by the Supreme Court. The removal of this provision will make it more difficult to prevent discriminatory changes to state and local voting laws. To counteract this, advocates should support the Voting Rights Amendments Act of 2014.

There are also concerted efforts to suppress voting at the state and local levels. The most well-known of these efforts are photo ID laws enacted under the pretense of preventing voter fraud, a problem that is virtually non-existent. Essentially, photo ID laws serve as a *de facto* poll tax. However, voter suppression can take many other forms including:

- Targeting specific communities with misinformation (e.g., leafleting with incorrect dates for elections).
- Attempting to curtail opportunities for early or absentee voting.
- Reducing the number of or relocating poll places to make it more difficult for certain communities to vote.
- Challenging the registration status of voters at the polls (i.e., "voter caging").

Voter suppression directly and disproportionately impacts renters. Many renters are low income, members of racial or ethnic minorities, students, senior citizens, or persons with disabilities. Voter suppression efforts have intentionally made it much harder for these groups to cast a ballot. In short, it has become harder for many renters to vote. If the renter vote is suppressed, issues facing renters will not be addressed by elected officials.

For this reason, NLIHC created the *2014 Voterization Plan* to help organizations engage renters in voting. The materials in the following pages will take your organization through the three step process of voterization: registration, education, and mobilization. For more information, please feel free to contact the NLIHC Outreach Team at 202-662-1530 or [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

## OTHER RESOURCES

National Low Income Housing Coalition, [www.nlihc.org/vote](http://www.nlihc.org/vote)

Nonprofit VOTE, [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org)

American Civil Liberties Union, [www.aclu.org/voting-rights](http://www.aclu.org/voting-rights)



NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION

# 2014 VOTERIZATION Narrative Guide

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This narrative accompanies the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *2014 Voterization Plan*, and is designed to help you through the steps of planning your agency's Voterization project. NLIHC's 2014 Voterization materials offer resources for organizations seeking to engage traditionally underrepresented people in the civic process.

Our *Voterization Plan* takes you through all of the steps you need to implement a campaign to integrate registration, education, mobilization, and voter protection without overtaxing your staff or resources, while staying within legal guidelines for nonprofits. Start by printing out the plan template, and then use other resources described in the plan to determine your next steps.

Our plan presents a menu of activities for your group to consider. Your organization may or may not be able to undertake all of the suggested activities; plan according to available resources. If this is your first voter engagement project, remember to think long-term. It is usually best to start small and build your project over several election cycles.

Please let us know you are conducting a Voterization effort! Call NLIHC's Outreach Team at 202-662-1530, or email us at [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org). With so many states recently changing their process and requirements for voting and registration, you will very likely have questions about legal changes in your state. Remember that we are here to be a resource when you have questions.

Thank you for doing your part!

## WHY BECOME VOTERIZED?

Raising housing on the national agenda will happen only when candidates for elected office understand that the issue of affordable housing is important to voters. At the same time, it is vital that low income voters to: understand how the decisions made by federal elected officials directly affect their lives; know how to register to vote; and, know how to get to the polls on Election Day.

However, census data confirm that low income voters are registered and vote at lower rates than higher income citizens. While 80% of people with incomes over \$100,000 were registered to vote in 2008 and 73% voted, just 64% of people with incomes below \$20,000 were registered, and only 52% actually voted. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008*. May 2010.)

Low income people face several challenges to voting: less-flexible jobs that may not allow time off to vote; more difficulty obtaining legal identification; transportation impediments that may make getting to the polls more

difficult; and, a greater likelihood of misinformation about their rights as voters that may make people shy away from voting. People experiencing homelessness, ex-felons, and survivors of a natural disaster may face especially tough barriers to voting.

Nonprofit organizations, which benefit from close ties with their clients, are a natural fit in helping people overcome these challenges. Nonprofits that have implemented Voterization projects have identified several benefits of doing so:

- Residents engage in civic life and learn how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Elected officials become educated on low income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Power is built with elected officials.
- Residents develop leadership skills.
- Residents are assisted in meeting community service requirements, if applicable.
- Positive press is earned for the program or project.

## LEGALLY SPEAKING

Nonprofit organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization. The basic rule is that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot in any way support or oppose particular candidates. For detailed legal guidance, you may want to consult:

### **Nonprofit VOTE, [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org)**

Specifically, read their comprehensive legal guide on what nonprofits can and cannot do, Nonprofits, Voting & Elections.

### **Alliance for Justice, [www.afj.org](http://www.afj.org)**

Through their Bolder Advocacy campaign, AFJ works to make sure nonprofit groups are up to date on rules governing campaign involvement. Review their materials and sign up for upcoming webinars at: [www.bolderadvocacy.org](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org)

### **League of Women Voters, [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)**

The League offers Vote411.org, an online resource providing nonpartisan information to the public, with both general and state specific information on all aspects of the election process. An important component of Vote411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their address and retrieve the poll location for the voting precinct in which that address is located.

### **Internal Revenue Service, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)**

The IRS offers guidance on what activities are not permissible for various types of foundations, organizations, and private charities. Find more information at: <http://1.usa.gov/1ev87z2>

### **HUD, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)**

Public housing agencies are often under the impression that they are not able to register residents to vote. That is not the case; in fact, HUD issued a Notice (FR-3968-N-01) in 1996 that encouraged housing agencies, including Indian housing authorities, and resident management companies, to become involved in voter registration activities.

Organizations with specific legal questions related to their Voterization projects after consulting the above resources are encouraged to contact an attorney who specializes in election law. It is important to remember that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot consult with campaign staff or political parties, even on simple technical questions.

## REGISTERING VOTERS: BEFORE YOU START

Before your organization begins to register voters, you will want to prepare in several ways:

### **Set Goals**

Setting goals for both registration and mobilization can be an important part of your plan. The staff and volunteers involved in the project will have something to work towards, and you will have a way to evaluate your project after the election. The plan provides a framework for setting these goals.

### **Get to Know Your Local Board of Elections**

Your local Board of Elections can be a wealth of information as you plan to register clients to vote. You will want to check in with them to learn the registration deadline for the general election in your state. Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state, or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements. Request the voter rolls for your community, so you will know who in your target audience is already registered. Learn about identification requirements for registration and voting. Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals. In many places, the role of the Board of Elections will be conducted out of the office of the County or City Clerk. Please contact NLIHC if you need help determining who the best local authority is for your organization.

### **Offer Registration Trainings**

Residents and staff who plan to register voters will often benefit from receiving training on the process. You may want to bring in someone from the local Board of Elections who can explain the state's registration requirements and how voter registration forms must be filled out. It can also help to spend a bit of time role playing so that people who are registering voters are not discouraged when confronted with apathy. It is also helpful to practice voter registration updates for clients who have recently moved.

### **Consider Resources**

Whether simple or more involved, all voter engagement projects will involve some investment of resources. Once you know what you would like to accomplish, you should consider potential funding sources for your project, and how you might work with other organizations to maximize resources.

Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access. Student groups may be interested in registering voters as part of a community service project, or a civic group may already be providing rides to the polls and could include your clients in its plans. Remember to partner only with nonpartisan organizations.

## REGISTERING VOTERS

Once you know the voting guidelines for your state and have set registration goals for your agency, you are ready to begin registering voters. As described in the sample plan, there are four ways to approach voter registration.

### **Fit Voter Registration Into Your Agency's Regular Contact with Residents**

The first option is to incorporate registration into day-to-day activities that already take place at your agency. Registration can usually be incorporated with few resources and little hassle into the intake process, training sessions, resident association meetings, and any other meetings of clients.

### **Plan Specific Voter Registration Activities**

A second way to think about registration at your agency is to plan special registration activities or campaigns. Many organizations have had success holding social or other events at which residents are encouraged to register to vote. Consider hosting an event for National Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week (Sept. 27- Oct. 3, 2014).

### **Organize a Door-To-Door Campaign**

The third, and most effective, way for larger organizations to systematically register clients is through a door-to-door campaign. If yours is a residential agency, such a campaign can be especially effective. In particular, resident leaders can volunteer to receive training and serve as ‘building captains’ or ‘floor captains.’ Captains can take on responsibility for registering, keeping registration records, and then turning out, all of the people in their building, on their floor, etc. Such a system can be a great way to get residents or clients involved while ensuring that staff does not become overwhelmed with additional responsibilities. The key is to have personal and organized contact with potential voters by people they know or trust. Especially in this type of campaign, you will want to use the voter list from your county to see who in your buildings is already registered or whose registration needs updating. Voter lists may cost a small fee, but they are essential for tracking who is already registered.

### **Go Into the Community**

Finally, especially if you have a smaller client base, you may also want to think about having your volunteers reach out into the community to register other low income, homeless or underrepresented people. Consider staffing voter registration and information tables at community events. Also, make sure to promote your voter registration efforts through your website and other social media platforms. And do not forget to make sure everyone on the staff and board is registered!

## **KEEPING RECORDS**

It is crucial to have a plan for how you will keep a record of who you have registered to vote—as well as who is already registered—so that you will be able to contact these people as part of your mobilization activities. You will be able to compile a list of which of your residents are already registered from the voter rolls you picked up at your local Board of Elections.

### **Collect Information**

For new registrants, there are two ways to collect this information. One easy way, if allowed by the laws in your state, is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms before mailing them in. (Note: Some states have a specific number of days after the form was filled out by which it must be turned in to the elections office.) This also allows you to review and catch mistakes before a form is submitted. You may also ask registrants to fill out two-part pledge cards. They will keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote; you will keep the half with their contact information.

### **Enter the Information Into a Database**

Once you have collected voters’ information, it is important to enter it into a database so the data can be easily accessed for mobilization purposes. Details and a sample database are at: [www.nlihc.org/VOTE](http://www.nlihc.org/VOTE)

## **EDUCATING CLIENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS**

There can be as many as three components to the education piece of your plan.

### **Educate Clients on Voting and Their Rights As Voters**

Clients should be informed of where their polling place is, what documentation they will need with them to vote, and their rights if election officials attempt to restrict them from voting. Arranging for local election officials to demonstrate how voting machines work can be helpful in easing fears about voting for the first time.

The National Coalition for the Homeless “You Don’t Need A Home to Vote” Voting Rights Campaign seeks to protect and promote the right of homeless people to vote. It offers materials on all aspects of a voter engagement campaign, including specific, state-by-state information on the legal issues affecting the rights of people experiencing homelessness to vote. Find the campaign at: [www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting)



Many states have new requirements for showing identification during the registration process or at the voting booth. The League of Women Voters has updated information about the rules in each state at [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org).

### **Educate Clients on the Issues**

Nonprofits can best assist clients in becoming familiar with the issues by providing opportunities for people to hear the direct views of candidates. Distribution of candidate questionnaires, hosting debate watch parties, or holding candidate forums are examples of such opportunities. It can often be very powerful when candidates are asked about housing issues or homelessness in public forums or town hall meetings. Please contact NLIHC if you would like help putting together a candidate questionnaire that includes federal policy.

This is an area in which you must be especially vigilant about ensuring that your agency follows IRS requirements. Please refer to the guide *Nonprofits, Voting & Elections* before you send questionnaires to your candidates or invite candidates to speak to clients.

### **Educate Candidates**

Asking candidates to fill out a questionnaire or inviting them to your agency can be a way to learn more about them while making them aware of your organization and the issues that are important to residents. You may also want to report the number of new voters your organization has been able to register. Candidates also learn what issues are important to voters by reading the letters to the editor page of the newspaper. Consider having clients write letters about issues that are important to them.

## **MOBILIZING VOTERS**

Your voter mobilization, or Get Out The Vote (GOTV), plan can be the most important and rewarding piece of your project. Just registering someone is not enough; it has been consistently shown that voters are much more likely to go to the polls if they are contacted on several occasions and reminded to vote by someone they trust. Further, once someone has been mobilized to vote, he or she is more likely to vote in future elections. Considerable attention should be paid to mobilizing the people you have registered.

### **Aim for At Least Three Contacts with Each Registered Resident**

If possible, contact each potential voter three times between the day she registers and Election Day: once a few weeks before the election, once a few days before the election, and at least once on Election Day. On Election Day, you may contact voters until they have affirmed that they have voted. For example, if someone tells you at noon that he has not yet voted, call back at 4pm to see whether he has been able to vote. Make sure to coordinate rides for voters to make sure they get to the polls; offering a ride is not offering an illegal incentive to vote. Use your database of registered residents to make your contacts.

Over the course of your contacts, you should make sure that the voter commits to voting, knows when Election Day is, and knows where her polling place is. Ideally these contacts should be in person (a knock at the door), but phone calls and postcards may also be used. Not everyone will be home when you knock, so you may want to provide volunteers with a pre-printed note they can leave on people's doors on Election Day.

The suggested activities on pages 5-6 of the *Voterization Plan* provide ideas for making these contacts. Recruit volunteers, whether staff, residents, or community members, to assist in making these contacts. If you have had building or floor captains who have been in regular contact with their voters, they should do this mobilization to the extent possible.

Again, it is personal contact from someone residents know or trust that will make an impact. Research shows that door-to-door visits increases voting rates by 10% among those contacted, while phone calls made by volunteers increases turnout by 2.5%. Further, simply providing people with their polling location has been shown to raise turnout rates by nearly 2%. (Source: The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management. *Winning Young Voters*. 2006.)

### **Consider Early Vote and Absentee Ballots**

Early voting (if available in your state) and absentee voting can each facilitate voting by the people your agency serves. Again, your local Board of Elections can provide information on laws in your state. For early voting, consider holding ballot parties where voters gather to go and vote as a group, perhaps after a discussion of affordable housing issues. Where it is allowed, you might also want to send volunteers to gather early voting ballots and submit them to your local clerk's office.

### **Work the Polls**

In addition to recruiting volunteers for your election day GOTV efforts, you may also want to encourage other residents to sign up with the county as poll workers. This provides an additional, and often paid, way for clients to participate in the election process.

### **Host a Polling Location**

Some nonprofits have increased their turnout rates by asking the county to use the nonprofit's location as a polling place. It's much easier to vote when you only need to go to the lobby! This arrangement also offers community members an opportunity to visit your agency.

### **Protecting the Right To Vote**

Nonprofits can play an important role in making sure that people's rights are protected when they get to the polls. You may want to designate leaders in your Voterization effort to be poll watchers who spend their day at the polls to record and report instances of voter harassment or unlawful suppression. He or she can help identify potential issues in your community, and can also be on call on Election Day if anyone experiences problems voting.

### **Capitalizing On Your Project**

Once Election Day is over, take a few days to rest. You deserve it! Then, it's time to do a few things: Celebrate your accomplishments and honor your volunteers. Evaluate your project and your results, and plan what you will do differently next year.

Next, set up appointments with elected officials and residents to discuss housing issues important to your organization; go prepared with statistics showing the increased voting rates in your community. Now that residents and staff have been energized by being involved in the election process, talk to them about who might be interested in running for local office themselves.

Most importantly, consider your Voterization project to be an ongoing project; continue to make registration, education, and mobilization a part of your agency's day-to-day activities.

**[LEARN MORE AT WWW.NLIHC.ORG/VOTE](http://WWW.NLIHC.ORG/VOTE)**



NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION

# 2014 VOTERIZATION Plan

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Completing a Voterization plan for your agency will help you assess how best to incorporate voter registration, education, and mobilization into your agency's work. This plan template presents a menu of activities that your organization may want to consider. The companion *Voterization Narrative* provides additional information. Please let us know you are participating!

Contact NLIHC's Outreach Team at 202-662-1530 or [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) with a description of your project.

## WHY BECOME VOTERIZED?

*Below are some reasons that organizations have undertaken Voterization projects. Check those that apply to your organization, and add any others that apply.*

- Engage residents in civic participation and help them become familiar with how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Educate elected officials on low income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Build power with elected officials.
- Help develop residents' leadership skills.
- Assist residents in meeting community service requirements, if applicable.
- Earn positive press for your program or project.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## LEGALLY SPEAKING

501(c)(3) organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization. 501(c)(3)s cannot in any way support or oppose particular candidates. For detailed information on these issues:

- Contact the Office of the Secretary of State or Board of Elections in your state to learn your state's rules for third-party voter registration.
- Take a look at the Permissible Activities Checklist put together by Nonprofit VOTE at: [www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/09/501c3-activities-en.pdf](http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/09/501c3-activities-en.pdf)
- Participate in NLIHC's webinar series on Voterization. Sign up for the sessions at: <http://nlihc.org/VOTE>
- Visit the League of Women Voters at [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org) for the latest information on voting in your state.
- Read and review Nonprofits, *Voting & Elections* produced by Nonprofit VOTE at: <http://bit.ly/1qFLEBk>



difficult; and, a greater likelihood of misinformation about their rights as voters that may make people shy away from voting. People experiencing homelessness, ex-felons, and survivors of a natural disaster may face especially tough barriers to voting.

Nonprofit organizations, which benefit from close ties with their clients, are a natural fit in helping people overcome these challenges. Nonprofits that have implemented Voterization projects have identified several benefits of doing so:

- Residents engage in civic life and learn how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Elected officials become educated on low income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Power is built with elected officials.
- Residents develop leadership skills.
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Organizations with specific legal questions related to their Voterization projects after consulting the above resources are encouraged to contact an attorney who specializes in election law. It is important to remember that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot consult with campaign staff or political parties, even on simple technical questions.

## REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

For each section, check those ways in which your agency will register voters. In the space after the activity, list the staff or resident(s) who will carry out the activity, and the timeframe for carrying it out.

STAFF    TIMEFRAME

### Fitting Voter Registration Into Your Agency's Regular Contact With Residents

- Add voter registration to the client intake process. Specifically, ask people to register and assist them in completing the form; don't just provide the form.
- Register clients when they come in to receive your services.
- Train all staff and volunteers who work directly with clients to be able to answer questions and assist with registration forms.
- Add a voter registration component to all job training, computer, or other classes offered by your agency.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Planning Specific Voter Registration Activities

- Hold a social or other event at which voter registration is an activity.
- Host an event for National Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week (Sept. 27-Oct. 3, 2014), [www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Organizing A Door-To-Door Campaign

- Train residents, staff, and other volunteers who are already registered to go door-to-door to register low income renters. Use the county voter list to determine who needs to be registered and whose registration needs to be updated.
- Appoint residents as building captains, floor captains, etc. Ensure they are trained on the rules in your state, and make them responsible for registration (and turnout) where they live.
- For locked buildings where you have not recruited a resident captain, approach landlords to ask if they will allow door-to-door registration or a registration table in the lobby.
- Consider offering public recognition to those who register the most new voters or the highest percentage of their area.

### Reaching Out To the Community

- Have your registrars reach out into the community to register other low income, homeless or underrepresented people.
- Provide a voter registration and information table at neighborhood events.
- Make sure everyone on the staff and board is registered!

## KEEPING RECORDS

Keeping records of the people you register to vote helps both with determining whether you have met your registration goals and with planning Get Out The Vote activities. NLIHC has a sample database that you can use for recordkeeping at the end of this document.

Where allowable by law, one easy way to gather the information for your list is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms or portions of forms before mailing them in. You can also have new registrants fill out a two-part pledge card. They will keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote; you will keep the half with their contact information.

Who will be responsible for keeping records of who becomes registered to vote?

## EDUCATING CLIENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

A. What staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting education goals?

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B. What resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting education goals?

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## EDUCATION CHECKLIST

For each following section, check those ways in which your agency will educate voters and candidates. In the space after the activity, list the staff or resident(s) who will carry out the activity, and the timeframe for carrying it out.

**STAFF      TIMEFRAME**

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### Educating Clients on Voting And Their Rights As Voters

- Educate clients on new I.D. requirements for voter registration and voting in your state.
- Obtain sample ballots from your county's Board of Elections and distribute to residents.
- Arrange for someone from your county's Board of Elections or County Clerk's office to come to your agency to provide a demonstration of your county's voting machines and explain people's rights as voters.
- Host a discussion on the importance of voting and what can be gained by increasing the percentage of voters from the agency.
- Encourage residents to sign up with the Board of Elections as poll workers.

### Educating Clients on the Issues

- Obtain materials on current affordable housing issues from NLIHC, <http://nlihc.org/issues>
- Host a discussion on who clients' elected officials are, and the connection between what those officials do and your clients' lives.
- Arrange for clients to attend or watch a candidate debate or public forum.
- Ask all candidates to complete a candidate questionnaire and distribute their answers. Publish the answers on your website, if possible. For information on putting together a questionnaire or hosting a forum, see: <http://bit.ly/1gD2hdR>
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Educating Candidates

- Include information on your agency when sending candidates your questionnaire.
- Encourage clients to write letters to the editor explaining why affordable housing is an important issue for them.
- Prepare clients for asking questions at candidate forums or town hall events.
- Arrange for each candidate for a particular office to take a tour of your agency and speak with clients.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Some low income people, including people experiencing homelessness and ex-felons, are at a greater risk of being turned away from the polls on Election Day, or otherwise being disenfranchised. Find information on protecting people's rights to vote at [www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting). You may also want to contact a local attorney who is experienced in voter protection. He or she can help identify potential issues locally, and can also be on call-on Election Day in case anyone experiences problems voting.

Who will be responsible for ensuring the rights of the people you work with are protected on Election Day?

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Your voter mobilization, or Get Out The Vote (GOTV), plan can be the most important and rewarding piece of your project. Just registering someone is not enough; it has been consistently shown that voters are much more likely to go to the polls if they are contacted on several occasions and reminded to vote by someone they trust. Further, once someone has been mobilized to vote, he or she is more likely to vote in future elections. Considerable attention should be paid to mobilizing the people you have registered.

### **Aim for At Least Three Contacts with Each Registered Resident**

If possible, contact each potential voter three times between the day she registers and Election Day: once a few weeks before the election, once a few days before the election, and at least once on Election Day. On Election Day, you may contact voters until they have affirmed that they have voted. For example, if someone tells you at noon that he has not yet voted, call back at 4pm to see whether he has been able to vote. Make sure to coordinate rides for voters to make sure they get to the polls; offering a ride is not offering an illegal incentive to vote. Use your database of registered residents to make your contacts.

Over the course of your contacts, you should make sure that the voter commits to voting, knows when Election Day is, and knows where her polling place is. Ideally these contacts should be in person (a knock at the door), but phone calls and postcards may also be used. Not everyone will be home when you knock, so you may want to provide volunteers with a pre-printed note they can leave on people's doors on Election Day.

The suggested activities on pages 5-6 of the *Voterization Plan* provide ideas for making these contacts. Recruit volunteers, whether staff, residents, or community members, to assist in making these contacts. If you have had building or floor captains who have been in regular contact with their voters, they should do this mobilization to the extent possible.

Again, it is personal contact from someone residents know or trust that will make an impact. Research shows that door-to-door visits increases voting rates by 10% among those contacted, while phone calls made by volunteers increases turnout by 2.5%. Further, simply providing people with their polling location has been shown to raise turnout rates by nearly 2%. (Source: The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management. *Winning Young Voters*. 2006.)

## MOBILIZATION CHECKLIST

For each following section, check those ways in which your agency will mobilize voters and candidates. In the space after the activity, list the staff or resident(s) who will carry out the activity, and the timeframe for carrying it out.

STAFF      TIMEFRAME

### The Months and Weeks Before Election Day

\_\_\_ If time allows, request an updated list of registered voters from your Board of Elections to ensure the voters you registered are included.

\_\_\_ Investigate the possibility of adding a polling place at your agency.

\_\_\_ Download and print GOTV materials, including posters, from [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org).

\_\_\_ Host voting-related events on the first Tuesday of the month to get residents used to participating in civic engagement activities on that day.

\_\_\_ Make your first contact with each voter in your database. Call them, thank them for registering, and remind them to vote.

\_\_\_ Plan for Election Day:

- Recruit residents or other volunteers who will spend Election Day doing door-to-door to GOTV. Prepare captains to turn out all registered people on their floor, in their building, etc.
- Once the deadline for registering new voters has passed, obtain an updated voter registration list from your county. Check against your database and prepare a final list of voters to be mobilized.

### One To Two Weeks Before Election Day

\_\_\_ Make your second contact with each voter in your database. Call them, remind them to vote on Election Day, and provide them with their polling place. Ask whether each will need a ride to the polls.

\_\_\_ Continue to plan for Election Day:

- Hold a training session for Election Day volunteers.
- From your database, print lists of all of your registered clients whose doors will be knocked on Election Day. Print in groups of 20-30 people, based on geography and the number of Election Day volunteers.
- Arrange to provide rides to the polls for those who need them.
- Plan to provide lunch for your Election Day volunteers.
- Plan a party for after the polls close!

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Day Before Election Day

\_\_\_ Make your third contact with each voter in your database. Call and ask them to commit to vote the following day. Remind them of the location of their polling place and the times that polls will be open.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Election Day

\_\_\_ Have volunteers with lists of registered residents knock on the doors of everyone on their list, crossing off the names of those who have voted. If a voter is not home, leave a preprinted note on his door. Call or knock again until everyone has voted, or until the polls are closed.

\_\_\_ Provide rides to the polls for residents who need them.

\_\_\_ Celebrate! Host a party for voters and volunteers. Watch the election results.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Post-Election Day

\_\_\_ Thank voters and volunteers, and tell them about your successes.

\_\_\_ Evaluate your program and plan your next project. Continue with registration and education activities.

\_\_\_ Use your new power to meet with newly elected officials.

\_\_\_ Consider if there are staff or residents should be encouraged to run for office.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## CONSIDERING RESOURCES

Now that you have gone through all of the preceding items in this template you will have a better sense of what resources will be required to implement your Voterization project. Whether simple or more involved, all voter engagement projects will involve some level of resources. Now that you know what you would like to accomplish, you should plan what funding sources you might access, and how you might work with other organizations to leverage resources.

Organizations use general funds and funds raised specifically to cover voter work. How much funding do you anticipate needing? (For voter rolls, supplies, transportation, training, events, etc.)

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What sources of funding can you access?

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Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access such as meeting space, printing materials, or access to volunteers. Student groups may be interested in registering voters as part of a community service project. A civic group may already be providing rides to the polls, and could include your clients in their plans. Remember to partner only with nonprofit organizations.

What groups in your area might you partner with, and in what ways?

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## APPENDIX: SAMPLE RECORD KEEPING DATABASE

It has been shown that just registering voters will not ensure an increase in voter turnout. To have a successful mobilization operation, you must contact your newly registered voters in the weeks and days leading up to the election. To do this effectively, you will need to have a record of who is registered to vote.

The easiest way to keep records is in a database format. Your voter database does not have to be complex or have a lot of fields. Many people find Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access to be the easiest platforms to use.

Your database should include the following fields:

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	STREET NUMBER	STREET NAME	CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE	PHONE	EMAIL	POLLING PLACE
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Note that street number and street name are kept as two separate fields. If you plan to knock doors on Election Day, being able to sort by street number will make organizing an Election Day plan easier.

There are a number of ways to compile this data. One way is to enter the data straight from the voter registration card once the new registrant fills it out. Another way is to have the new registrant fill out both sides of a pledge card.

He or she would give you one side and keep the other side. Once you have this information recorded you are well on your way towards a successful Get Out The Vote operation.