

Organizing in the Time of Physical Distancing

Now What: We grow to meet the moment

In the last days the COVID19 crisis has massively transformed our lives and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

For practitioners of community organizing, in-person interaction in various forms is at the very heart of our day to day work. Core team meetings, staff meetings, direct action, canvassing, trainings, leadership summits, house parties and 1:1s are things we generally do in person. As we shift into a period of physical distancing in person interactions will be limited or off the table.

Our work is more important than ever. The **good news** is organizing does not have to stop. As our ancestors in this practice before us have, we will adjust to the moment and organize differently.

Millions of activists, leaders, and organizers will have to transform how they organize communities. This includes but is not limited to planning for voter contact. Relational organizing aided by tools and technology can be extremely valuable to continue to build a sense of community and solidarity, mobilize new people and continue our organizing work. It is critical that organizers shift now to integrate more heavily new technological tools to aid their organizing work. We are experts at our craft and can continue to lead in this moment of transformative organizing practices but need to act quickly.

Recommendations for organizing in a period of physical distancing:

- **Be Prepared to Scale Exponentially:** Plan to build a robust schedule of onboarding training opportunities as well as provide an ongoing stream of actions for leaders to take action on.
 - Canvassing and field based voter registration operations are suspended or will likely be suspended. Folks will be looking for alternative activity. Peer to peer texting (cold texting) will continue to be an ineffective alternative to canvass conversations. Friend to friend (warm) texting is highly effective.
 - People are looking for a way to make a difference and be in solidarity with each other. We can provide an opportunity to take action in a moment of crisis and develop cradle to grave campaigns. .
 - Use push notifications and direct messages from OutVote to let your leaders know there is a new action and encouragement. Ask your leaders how it is going and adjust accordingly.
- **Tools for your Leaders to Download and Use** to keep up an ongoing cycle of recruiting, training and action.

- Every organizing interaction (no matter the type) should involve making sure leaders are having organizing conversations with friends & family members. **Step One: Leaders should download Outvote, Zoom (or other video conference apps) and use Soapboxx.** In addition to phone and email these will become indispensable forms of connection and communication.
- You can use video and phone conference meetings with leaders who already have the tools to debrief, build community and celebrate your work.
- **Tips for running video conference calls.**
- [Soapboxx](#) is a tool that lets your leaders upload a video from their phones to share their own personal experience and voice. We have prompts asking people “why do you love your community?”. The simplicity of this tool, is that once you upload a video it gives you a link with captions on it - English and Spanish! Imagine, using this link as a daily video diary that people share from their reflections of staying connection in these times, what type of impact would that have?
- Always invite leaders to share the tools with their friends and family. The more quickly we build our network the better we will be able to continue to function.
- Each time a leader activates these tools they are connected to a valuable organizing lifeline. Shifting to these types of physical distancing organizing practices limits their exposure to other people and *will literally save lives*.
- Remember the cycle: Recruiting leads to training and building your network. Each training leads to action and fighting for our community. Each action leads to recruiting. And so on.

Sample Content regarding Zoom and Outvote tools developed by NJOP

- **1. Please download [Zoom](#) and [Outvote](#) – either on your phone or your desktop. These apps will let us communicate with each other and still take action even if we can't meet in person!**
- *We're going to need to stay in touch. First – the problems we're currently working to address – clawbacks, flooding, overdose – they're not going away. We need to move forward. Second – we could face some challenges as we respond to COVID-19/coronavirus. We know we have to take on these challenges together. **We are STRONGLY encouraging people to download two apps, either on your phone or desktop – so we can do the work we need to remotely.***
- **Zoom** can be used on your smartphone, computer or both. To get Zoom on your phone just go to your App/Google Store on your phone, search Zoom and download. From there you can sign up using your email address or Facebook, up to you. To use Zoom on your computer, [follow this link and then you can sign up there](#). Zoom can be used as just a “call” where you use your phone and no video but using the video makes the meetings feel a bit more in person so we want to encourage you to use the video option if and when you can.
- **OutVote** can also be used from a computer, smartphone or both. The computer version allows you to email your contacts about action and share

stories and information back to us. The phone app lets you get push alerts from us about action, send stories and videos straight from your phone to us, and pass on alerts to people in your contacts. To use OutVote on your phone you can get set up with this link. The app will get sent to your phone and you can sign up via email or Facebook. To use OutVote on the computer use this link to sign up. If you need support setting up your account email us at info@newjerseyop.org. It takes a couple steps to do it, we think it will be worth it.

- **Grounding Organizing Relationships in Self-Interest:** This is one of the most volatile moments in our lifetime. **We don't know what the next weeks or months are going to bring.** We are in unknown waters as a country and as a movement. But regardless of what happens in the next hours or days--**regardless of where we come from or what we look like--we all have a choice in how we respond in defining moments like this one.**

You might be nervous to start organizing conversations with your friends and family. But remember **our fates are linked, especially in this public health crisis, and we must not allow that truth to be overshadowed by fear or silenced by hate.** No exceptions. Ground your actions, your training and conversations in a shared vision of what it means for all of us to thrive.

SAMPLE ACTIONS & TOOLKITS

1. [Action Sample Quarantine Day #1 3.14 Check on your friends](#)
2. Get out the Count from your couch
3. [Obamacare Anniversary](#)

- **Things to take into account while building your actions with the tools:**

- **Build Community & Keep our Humanity.** Living in isolation for extended periods while spending a lot of time with shiny screens will take a toll everyone. Above all else we are going to have to build practices that remind us of our humanity. This is something we have to incorporate into our trainings, meetings, Outvote actions, and so on.
 - Example: We need to let people know that they are on our minds. Some version of “How are you doing?” should be a regular part of actions in Outvote
 - Example: Bring people together to do “Outvote parties” while on Zoom. It will help people feel less isolated, share learnings in real time, and celebrate victories.
 - Example: Instead of relying entirely on sms, call people and have conversations, when possible. Folks will be missing that.

- **Plan for Rapid Response.** New developments will come at us quickly. Some will be moments for political action while others will require a mix of political demands and resources for vulnerable people struggling through the crisis.
- **Leaders have to Lead.** Staff organizers who have a base is good but not enough. We have to get out of the way and empower leaders. Volunteer leaders in our organizations need to take on big meaningful work and that means building and organizing *their own* base. In turn, these leaders must recruit activists who become other leaders. How this works:
 - Build recruitment deep into your work. Each conversation has to be more than just a commitment to vote or answer a survey. Each conversation is an opportunity to recruit a new leader who downloads Outvote, starts using it, and goes on to recruit others.
 - Leaders need clear goals about the teams they are building. Example: each volunteer captain is responsible for building a team of ten volunteers who are each responsible for reaching 15 friends and family. Eventually, the volunteers become captains and the captains become super-captains.
 - We have to constantly celebrate people's work, especially now, when it is happening from home and can easily become invisible. We can lift up our leaders' work in Facebook posts, push notifications to our entire user list, [Soapboxx](#) videos, 1:1 calls and texts to show our appreciation, shout out in Zoom meetings, and so on. The opportunities are plenty.
 - In particular, we should encourage folks to lead, rather than simply reach out to family and friends. In this context, it means recruiting friends and family to become RO volunteers, training them, building and activating teams.
 - When people are ready, ask them to take on more. If a friend or family member just responded to your action, invite them to download the app. Follow up with them. If they downloaded the app *and then* enthusiastically messaged 20 friends, they may be ready to start recruiting others. Ask if they would like to recruit others, and give them a clear go. If needed, set up a Zoom session to coach and support them.
- **ASK & THEN LISTEN** - Get a Feedback loop going to understand what your leadership base needs. Integrate issues / the election with getting people the resources they need.
 - Example: [NJOP landing page](#)
- Is your organization/team ready to respond to the needs of your network? What if a family does not have childcare for kids without school, or enough food for the week? Are you ready to redirect your network to stand in solidarity with that family?
 - Example: [Mothering Justice survey](#)
- **Structure your week to anticipate major traffic:**
 - Preschedule leader onboarding calls weeks into the future.
 - Use each call to train on the concept of organizing at a time of physical distance and the tools at our disposal, get commitments to contact voters, take action on the spot, and recruit the next wave of leaders.
 - Anticipate users will need help with troubleshooting:

- Either have a recurring call, or a point-person ready to troubleshoot. Especially now it is essential that our leaders feel supported.

- **Mix Tactics**

- We have a big variety of tactics available to us via Outvote alone, but beyond that we can integrate social media.
 - Example: IDing potential supporters and recruiting Outvote leaders via Facebook.
 - Example: integrate push notifications, texts and calls with actions so that leaders know that new actions are available in the app.
 - Example: Ask members to create their own content--videos, pictures, memes--for sharing on social media and on OutVote
 - Use [Soapboxx](#) to quickly record selfie-style videos with automatic captions (captions in both English & Spanish)

- **Keep Hope Alive**

- In a very practical sense things are uncertain, but people will look to our organizations for hope in what feels like a hopeless time. The energy and message we put out will have a ripple effect.

Community Change Power Relational Organizing Toolkit

[Community Change Power Relational Organizing Toolkit](#): Tools, materials and videos to support building your relational organizing program.

Community Change Power Weekly Calls

- **State Partner Onboarding Calls** (*Call purpose: provide background on our theory of relational organizing and onboarding to relational organizing tools*)
 - New Partner Relational Onboarding #1 **Onboarding Call 1: Fridays 08:30 AM MT, 10:30 AM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/482224199> Meeting ID: 482 224 199
 - New Partner Relational Onboarding #2 **Onboarding Call 2: Fridays 2:00 PM MT, 4:00 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/265330747> Meeting ID: 265 330 747
- **Organizer Strategizing & Sharing Call:** (*Call purpose: calls for organizers to celebrate our relational organizing, receive critical updates and learn from each other*)
 - **Fridays 10:00 AM MT, 12 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/534775865> Meeting ID: 534 775 865

- **State Partner Onboarding Call Part 2- Admin & Actions:** *(Call purpose: this is onboarding part 2 giving reviewing the admin side of the tool and creating actions)*
 - **Monday 2:00 MT, 4 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/557094516> Meeting ID: 557 094 516
 - **Thursday 10:00 MT, 12 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/564259450> Meeting ID: 564 259 450

- **State Partner RO Skillbuilding:** *(Integrating Outvote to VAN, PDI or other database)*
 - **Wednesday 11:00 MT, 1PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting details
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/190997196>

- **New Volunteer Leader Welcome Call:** *(Call purpose: an organizing welcome and virtual onboarding to relational organizing)*
 - **Wednesday 2:00 MT, 4 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/590534708> Meeting ID: 590 534 708
 - **Thursday 5:00 MT, 7 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/357065910> Meeting ID: 357 065 910

Bienvenido Lideres: Llamada para Nuevos Voluntarios de Organizando Relacional

 - **Friday 12:00 MT, 2 PM ET** Join Zoom Meeting
<https://communitychange.zoom.us/j/234517409> Meeting ID: 234 517 409

Getting Started with an OutVote Campaign for Your Organization - Onboarding protocol

How to get OutVote setup for your Organization

1. Reach out to either your Community Change Action organizer or Bartosz Kumor (bkumor@communitychangeaction.org).
 - Provide this information to them:
 - What is the legal name of the organization?
 - What is the tax status?
 - What state is the organization based in?
 - What city is your headquarters based in?
 - Who will be administrators from your organization? name + email
 - What is your website address?

2. Bartosz will request your OutVote campaign

3. You will receive a data sharing agreement from Community Change Action

4. Join a state partner onboarding call part 2 (admin onboarding) taking place 2 times per week at the times scheduled above.

5. Outvote team activates the account once partner has joined the call.

Troubleshooting protocol

When a state partner needs to troubleshoot app, here are the steps:

Step 1: Partner staff try to solve it themselves using the “Training” page at the top of the Outvote admin page or the CCA Outvote operating manual. If this doesn't work:

Step 2: Partner staff reach out to their Community Change Action point person, cc Bartosz (bkumor@communitychangeaction.org). If it is a VAN related question please also add Gilbert (gnunez@communitychangeaction.org). If electoral organizers need support:

Step 3: Pass the troubleshooting request to Bartosz and the Outvote team.

Note to partners: We expect the number of support requests to increase significantly over the next few days. For CCA/Outvote to keep up with requests for support it is extremely important that partner orgs attempt Step 1 before sending a help request to CCA electoral staff.

Resources:

- Organizer Landing Page with toolkits
 - Broken out by issue area, further subdivided by template (coming soon, and we will be updating these in response to new developments)
 - COVID19
 - Action creation template with screenshots
 - Push notification template with screenshots
 - Sample types of actions and messaging
 - Rapid response templates on a rolling basis
 - Best practice templates from other partners
 - Census
 - DACA Decision response
 - ACA Anniversary
 - [Current RO toolkit](#)
- Frontline activist landing page (coming soon)
 - Download Outvote
 - Basic instruction on RO
- [Open Source Digital Content Library \(Updated regularly with new content\)](#)

- Suggested Messaging Framework around coronavirus

Most of us do what we can to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe and healthy. Now, as we see an outbreak of novel coronavirus spreading across the globe we are worried about our families and our communities. We are scared, but **the only way to fight this virus is to come together to confront this crisis head-on as one, united, global community.**

This virus is revealing to us the interconnectedness of our world in a very personal way. It is showing, conclusively, that the health and well being of one is intimately bound to the health and well being of all. Novel coronavirus has given us an opportunity to rise to the occasion and care for each other and support one another. We can take action to protect our loved ones and the most vulnerable in our communities who will be hit hardest by this virus, such as those whose health is already compromised, those who cannot or are denied access to medical care, those who bear great risk in asking for help, and those on the frontlines of poverty and pollution. **It is our responsibility to come together protect the lives of those around us by limiting the spread of this disease as much as possible.**

There will be those who will try to seize such a crisis to further entrench their own interests and divide us against each other based on where we come from, what we have, and based on our perceived health and worthiness. They will try to harness panic to crack down on borders, scapegoat Asian Americans, grant huge tax breaks to corporations rather than invest in public health, and limit our rights to vote and dissent. They will not keep us healthy and they want us to operate from a place of fear. But, our fates are tied. Only by working together will we defeat this outbreak.

We are greater than fear. Now is the time for action. As individuals, we can wash your hands and check in on our neighbors. **As a collective, we can demand our government do everything it possibly can to protect our public health:** provide paid sick leave for people to stay home with their families, compensate those who must be quarantined, guarantee quality health care and a warm bed for all, protect the rights of workers who care for the ill in our homes and our hospitals, and ensure a vaccine, when available, is free and readily accessible to everyone.

This moment is really scary and seems daunting, but we've been here before like when Act Up and LGBTQ activists united to confront the HIV/AIDS crisis in spite of corrupt CEOs and irresponsible politicians. **We are all better off when each and every one of us is treated with dignity and respect.** The things that will help us fight novel coronavirus are also good for our long term common well being and will model the cooperation we need to address other global challenges like climate change. **Now is the time for us to come together, to unite across our differences, and to protect one another in pursuit of a better brighter tomorrow.**