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Disability Organizing

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TOOL KIT

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Introduction: About the DOnetwork

The *Disability Organizing Network* (DOnetwork) is a statewide collaborative of Systems Change Advocates from California's 28 Independent Living Centers and over 1800 volunteer advocates. Together we engage community organizing tactics to create systems change and increase access in all aspects of community living for people with disabilities. The motto of the DOnetwork is *we organize for accessible communities wherever people with disabilities live, work, learn, shop, play and vote!*

The DOnetwork is a program of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC), a statewide disability rights and service delivery non-profit organization in California. Membership to CFILC is open to all 28 Independent Living Centers in California. The mission of CFILC *is increasing access and equal opportunity for people with disabilities by building the capacity of Independent Living Centers*.

The DOnetwork is made possible by support from the Administration for Community Living and prioritized by the California State Independent Living Council, through a competitive grant administered by the California Department of Rehabilitation.

The network began as *Empowerment Teams* in 1997 when CFILC was awarded a federal grant to build a statewide network to educate and organize California's Disability Community. Until 2002 CFILC employed 29 *Empowerment Team Leaders (ETLs)* that worked within the Independent Living Centers (ILCs).

Then in 2003 we changed the name of the network to the *Systems Change Network* and embraced a new model, one that moved the funding and employment of *ETLs* to their local ILC. At this time their job titles also changed to Systems Change Advocate (SCA), which remains to this day. This was an important move because it recognized the need for organizers to work within locally based organizations to grow ground-level grassroots capacity; while also acknowledging the need for a statewide network for training, mentorship and strategic planning and direction.

Finally, in 2012, after several years of success the network was expanded to include and to support everyday Disability Community members and volunteers into leadership roles along with the SCAs. The community voted to change the name to the Disability Organizing Network, also known as our common branding name the *DOnetwork.*

In all three of its stages the network has had many successful community organizing accomplishments that increased access to community living for people with disabilities. Some examples of advocacy victories include:

Transportation
- Accessible airport shuttle access in California
- Accessible redesign of the Bay Area Rapid Transit's *Fleet of the Future* train cars
- Paratransit funding

Education
- Disability History curriculum in California public schools through the implementation of the F.A.I.R. Education Act

Healthcare
- Protecting access to MediCal
- Expanding In-Home Supportive Services
- Access to Durable Medical Equipment

Voting
- Working with the CA Department of Justice to increase polling place accessibility
- Accessible Online Voter Registration in California
- Increased access to voter education materials in accessible alternate formats
- Increasing disability civic engagement through get-out-the-vote campaigns

The DOnetwork provides several programming opportunities including community organizing training, policy education, technical assistance, strategic planning, collaboration and communication support, and digital

resources and tools. CFILC provides the network with a Statewide Organizer who supports the SCAs and community partners to lead grassroots volunteers on disability related community organizing campaigns. Additionally, the network and its members are supported by CFILC's administrative and logistics staff for events like conferences and summits.

Training is an essential part of any community organizing effort. The goal is to grow capacity by empowering new leaders through transferring skills and knowledge to them and measuring their progress. To achieve this goal the DOnetwork offers multiple opportunities for members to learn tactics for success and about important issues during regular webinars and at quarterly to bi-annual in-person gatherings. We host two webinar series open to SCAs and the public called *Dialogues in Disability Pride and Culture* and *Conversations in Civic Courage.* Members can receive in-person training through our *Access Now* regional summits or annual statewide conferences. Additionally, the network offers opportunities for specialized community organizing training for ILCs and community and coalition partners (fee for service may apply).

Summits and conferences are the hallmark of the DOnetwork. Regional *Access Now* summits serve four purposes:

- Bring ILC Local Action Team members together to share resources and develop synergy;
- Engage individuals not currently associated with an ILC or Local Action Team;
- Engage disability and multi-cultural organizers to explore common agendas;
- Develop statewide campaign strategies and tactics that lead to an increase in access and independence for people with disabilities.

Occasionally, we host statewide conferences fashioned around specific milestones or regular civic events like the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act or get-out-the-vote during a presidential election year. The conferences host speakers and presenters from around the nation to educate people on a variety of diverse topics that relate to disability

focused community integration through the lens of the subject that initiates the conference.

Technical assistance and collaboration support are essential components for continuing the community organizing skills development of our members. We offer all members the chance to schedule one-on-one technical assistance phone calls, and can arrange in-person meetings depending on the availability of the Statewide Organizer's schedule. The DOnetwork supports Systems Change Advocates with teleconference lines to meet on a weekly basis for collaboration and developing strategies. We also offer the same support for community members to participate in statewide and regional advocacy campaign calls.

The network hosts two listservs for members to connect, network, share resources, track advocacy campaign progress and post community updates:

- The *Systems Change Advocates Listserv* is open to ILC staff who have been assigned to participate in the network per their grant funding;
- The *Access Now Campaign Listserv* is open to all Disability Community members who participate in DOnetwork campaigns.

CFILC also provides and maintains the DOnetwork website at www.DisabilityOrganizing.net. This website hosts information and updates on breaking disability news alerts, upcoming events, a profile page for each ILC, training and event registration, a webinar recording training library, advocacy and community organizing resources, and sign up forms to join the network, become a volunteer or join the listserv.

What is Community Organizing and Why Do It?

Community Organizing is a framework for operating campaigns that maintains a process of constantly recruiting new members, training them, lifting up new leaders and tracking results to achieve a common goal. It builds power from the ground up, developing new leadership where none existed previously and giving direction to a movement. It is a proactive values-based process that brings people together to act in their common interest for a mutually beneficial outcome.

In a democracy that makes important decisions about policy and community rules based on the majority, organizing large groups of people into a common voice is the most effective way to create and sustain change. Simply put, more people equals more power. Thus, community organizing is a key advocacy technique for empowering a persuasive message and getting decision-makers to act in our favor.

Community organizing relies on measurable goals for participant recruitment, training, leader promotion, messaging targets and decision-makers visits and their responding actions. Organizers should plan to measure each of these campaign aspects in numbers and compare them

There are three main resources for community organizing: people, money and time. Good organizers will always be thinking how they can raise more of each resource. Recruiting more people or raising more money may be time consuming but are easily manageable with planning. The trick for community organizing then becomes how to raise more time, and the answer is through beginning early and establishing a good time management process.

But, the most important factor for successful community organizing or advocacy is planning backwards. Having a view from the goal point will allow the organizers to process through the people, resources and support needed to be successful. The golden rule of all kinds of successful organizing is *the decision you make early on will most affect the outcome in*

the end – planning backwards allows you to make decisions that anticipate obstacles and opportunities.

Often in the Disability Community we gravitate to reactive protest measures in opposition to proposed policies or to protect our programs and services. Reactive protest is valuable in the context of the moment, increasing attention to an issue. However, the attention from protest can also be fleeting and soon forgotten without an organizing base to maintain the pressure needed for successful outcome based advocacy. Community organizing is proactive and builds a foundation to springboard long-term attention to an issue or maintain a structure so it will not soon be forgotten.

Change takes time and requires consistent pressure, and once it occurs an organized check and balance is needed to ensure sustainability for the new policy. This is the greatest case for using a community organizing method for your systems change advocacy because it relies on a constant refresh of new people who will carry the banner forward.

Organizing Within an IL Network / ILC Framework

All organizers and advocates must plan for working within the parameters of their support system or community resources. As discussed in the previous subsection, the three main resources for community organizing are people, money and time.

Many community groups or organizations in the public sector who engage in community organizing campaigns have unrestricted funding, allowing them the ability to explore more means to expand their resources. Disability organizers in the DOnetwork will work alongside community partners with these opportunities, but experience different restrictions applied to the capacity of their resources.

Because of state and federal government generated funding streams, disability organizers who work for ILCs or organizations in the IL Network have restrictions and additional protocols to follow. Looking at each of the main community organizing resources discussed in this tool kit, there are some things you should take into consideration:

- People: your ILC may have established rules for how you recruit and engage volunteers.
- Money: most ILC SCA's or organizers are not funded to raise money to support their community organizing budgets. This is at the discretion of your director.
- Time: it is common that ILC staff must perform their duties within a set number of hours per week without going into overtime.

This does not mean that we don't have the ability to organize mass movement for change in the IL Network. It means that we have an opportunity to set an example for our community and coalition partners on how to efficiently prepare and plan in advance for excellence. Disability organizers and advocates in California working within this structure should follow six key points for sustaining their organizing efforts:

1. **Communicate regularly with your Executive Director or supervisor.** Make sure to articulate your proposed organizing plan's

goals, objectives, resources and expected timelines and seek their approval before beginning. Your supervisor will let you know how much of these resources are available to you and will help you refine your plan.

2. **Plan for long-term goals and objectives achievable within your grant period.** Working in periodic funding framework means that you will need to develop realistic goals that can be achieved within the timeline of your funding cycle. When planning the objectives work backwards from the end of the grant cycle to the beginning. Then assign the capacity of work depending on the money (budget), people (volunteers) and time (your work hours) that have been approved by your supervisor.

3. **Meet with your volunteers regularly.** A team that meets together stays together. Always remember that you cannot do this work alone, you must have volunteers. By holding a regularly scheduled meeting with your volunteer team to plan goals or prepare for upcoming objectives in your community organizing plan, volunteers will trust your reliability and become a consistent source of free staffing.

4. **Empower volunteers with responsibility.** Again, we cannot do this work alone. Your main goal as a community organizer is to train volunteers to do what you can do, then you have the free time to recruit more volunteers. Consult and follow your supervisor's instructions for your organization's policies for promoting volunteers to leadership roles and giving them responsibility.

5. **Develop clear and reciprocal relationships with your coalition partners.** When working in coalitions with partners that may not have the same work restrictions, be clear about your capacity. Often coalition partners share workloads, make sure that all partners are contributing equally and that you aren't being asked to do more than others.

6. **Ask for help.** Always remember that the DOnetwork is funded to help organize the disability community for systems change advocacy. Never hesitate to ask for help from the Statewide Organizer or your colleagues in the network.

Finally, remember that many of our goals and objectives for systems change advocacy and community organizing are already established. Community organizing relies on a proactive reaction to the goals that the community we seek to serve and empower have voiced. Prior to

conducting our own community needs assessments, whether statewide through the DOnetwork or locally by your organization, plans and principles have already been developed to guide your work.

Every three years the California State Independent Living Council (SILC) creates a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), which informs the grant-making from the California Department of Rehabilitation funding both the DOnetwork and local systems change advocacy activities. Additionally, each ILC or organization has a Board of Directors and senior management that sets work plan priorities. At each level of this structure there are opportunities for community input and feedback, so the needs and voices of the disability community are still present in this framework.

When developing your community organizing plan seek the advice and counsel of your supervisor, consulting the Systems Change Advocacy Local Plan your ILC or organization submitted to receive funding. The DOnetwork's Statewide Organizer may also be helpful with developing strategies that fit within the SPIL goals.

Developing Advocacy Strategy Plans

Before you get started on a community organizing campaign you need a plan. There's an old organizer's golden rule: *the decisions you make early on will most determine your success in the end.* The first decision you make will be in developing your community organizing or advocacy strategic plan.

Following a plan will allow you to maintain a constant course of direction, evaluate your resources and measure your progress toward success. Developing a strategy plan should be done in three phases: 1) identifying the goal(s) and objectives; 2) inventory of resources 3) writing the plan.

Identifying the Goals and Objectives

In disability community advocacy the goal is usually breaking a barrier, expanding accessibility or planning an event or training, all of which should meet the needs of the community. Begin by identifying your process paradigm, this is the framework that will inform who or what should be consulted, how you will take input and the order of your process for deciding on the goals and objectives.

The table below demonstrates the stages for three possible process paradigms: Directive Driven, Network Hub Driven and Community Driven.

Directive Driven	Network Hub Driven	Community Driven
SPIL	SPIL	Community Leadership Recruitment
Grant Local Plan	Grant Plan	Community Needs Survey
Board & Senior Management	Needs Assessment Survey	Survey Outcomes
Systems Change Advocate	Summit Outcomes	SPIL & Grant Matching
Goals & Objectives	Goals & Objectives	Goals & Objectives

Each of these paradigms above have value, although their execution process can be very different, they guide the organizer to the same goal of

developing a plan. They also share a community input factor, from less to more: Directive Driven allows for input in the SPIL development and a board of directors made up of local people with disabilities; Network Hub Driven also includes the SPIL method, but engages a survey process and then active planning session at a summit; and Community Driven is instigated by community response followed up by opportunities for further input and leadership.

After figuring out which paradigm you are working within, follow the stages as a path toward deciding on your goal. It is never good to develop a goal in a vacuum, multiple stakeholders that represent the diversity of people affected by the issue should be involved.

The Directive Driven paradigm is often engaged for local long-term civic advocacy by your ILC. In this method the organizer, supervisory, executive director and other key staff or board members are the community. Next consult the resources, the organization's local plan for systems change, the SPIL goals for systems change advocacy and community organizing and grassroots feedback communication from consumers. The goal is determined in a community representation style by the already filtered source materials. This paradigm tends to be the quickest and easiest to complete of the three examples in the table above.

In a Network Hub (DOnetwork in this case) Driven paradigm there are multiple stakeholders including the Hub (CFILC), SCAs and DOnetwork members from the public. It is the method you will most likely use when participating on DOnetwork campaigns. Based on the SPIL goals and instructions from the Systems Change Grant narrative, the Statewide Organizer and SCAs can develop a needs assessment survey for community-wide distribution. After the survey results are articulated they will plan a summit agenda. The summit becomes an opportunity for disability community members to meet and develop their goals for implementation by the DOnetwork.

The third paradigm is one that the community organizer or SCA will most likely use to support their advocacy team or consumers with resources or facilitation, but not interfere with the community choice in goal

development. This paradigm originates with community members identifying a problem or access barrier. Community members themselves seek and articulate the feedback or input for concern then decide on their own leadership. With support from the organizer or SCA, the community leadership will conduct a needs assessment, then match them to the SPIL or grants goals to develop its goals for advocacy. *Usually, the SPIL or funder's grant narrative will have goals that pertain to process, so they are more likely to inform the objectives. However, occasionally they will identify a barrier and affect the goal.*

Once you have identified your process paradigm and you have completed the input process, including culling through the responses and directives, you will be ready to articulate your goals and objectives. Here are some helpful tips for writing the goals and objectives:

Goals: A goal should be a direct and simple statement expressing what you seek to accomplish. It is your end game, if you are successful it is what you will have achieved.

- **Remember "KISS,"** *Keep It Short and Simple***:** The goal should be written out in a 7 to 14-word statement without using major mid-sentence punctuation. If you need to break the statement into two parts consider if it is actually two separate goals. This means that you will probably need a thesaurus and a team of different thinkers to develop a sentence that uses less words which communicate more.
- **Work "S.M.A.R.T.,"** *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results, Timely***:** Goals should be simple and clearly define what you want to achieve; the goal should be measurable so that you can reference tangible evidence of your success, and estimate your resources for completion. Although good organizers always want to stretch themselves for growth, goals should be achievable and within reach with work. Goals should produce results, measure outcomes not activities; goals should communicate enough time to complete the task, but on a timeline that provokes urgency and moves people to action.
- **Be a "Matchmaker":** Make sure that the final product (goal) matches the paradigm directives or feedback from the

community input process. It is always good to use the same language and words from these sources.

Objectives: The objectives allow you to expand beyond the restrictions for goals. Instead of describing *what* you want to do (Goals), the object describes *how* you will do it. They are like directions on a route or map that lead you to the end of a journey.

Also, different from the parameters around goals, objectives can be compound sentences or multiple sentences, they should include more information about specifics for completing the action or campaign. One of the best all time tips to writing **How** you will accomplish something, is to answer the **5 W's:**

- **Who** is acting, will be affected, who is responsible for tasks, who has the power to make the change;
- **What** are the action steps or stages to complete the goal;
- **When** will the action(s) / step(s) take place – day, date, time, season, process stage;
- **Where** will the action take place – neighborhood, city, state, organization office;
- **Why** are we acting? (Refer back to your goal and use these "5 W's" as a check and balance to make sure your goal is reflected in your objective)

The goals and objectives should be clearly written out so that you can use them for the developing your written plan. But they should be simple and direct enough that others will understand the plan, especially if you share the leadership. Remember they are your driving directions on a journey, and just like on a good road trip, trip-goers may take turns driving.

Inventory Resources

All the best community engagement in the world can be thwarted if your organizing campaign doesn't have the resources to complete its goals. Using the three campaign resources, the team that has come together for goal-setting will now engage in completing a resource inventory worksheet.

Make sure that your ILC or organization's director and your supervisor or financial officer are involved in this process. They will most likely be the decider for the first column on funding and the third column on time and will own these pieces of your campaign. During the plan writing process, you will do a much more detailed exercise to determine your actual needed resources. For this stage resist the temptation of getting too far ahead and concentrate only on what your organization or community has available to commit at this point in time. If the need for the campaign is great enough, your supervisor or director may make more resources available.

Below is a sample worksheet with examples of available resources in italics.

FUNDING	PEOPLE	TIME
Restricted Program Funding: *$300 Budget* *Unrestricted Program Funding:* *$200 Budget*	**Assigned ILC Staff:** *3 People* *ILC Advocacy Team:* *15 people* *ILC Volunteer List:* *300 people* *Coalitions Partners:* *ACLU* *CICA* *DRC* *CARA* *ETC…*	**Important Timeframes and Dates:** *24 months* *Time Until DCAD:* *6 months* *Staff Hours per week:* *20 hours* *Volunteer Hours per week:* *3 hours (weekly meeting)*

Just like the outputs or products from the previous sections (Goal and Objective Statements, 5 W's) you want to hold onto this worksheet for the final stage of writing the plan.

Writing the Plan
The final stage for developing an Advocacy Strategy Plan is to bring the components together and refine them into a written document. This subsection will include an Advocacy Strategy Plan Outline to be used in developing your plan in a narrative format memorandum. Many of your supervisors will require a memorandum, very similar to the grant local plan narrative.

A good plan narrative or memorandum introduction begins by discussing:

- Your organization and its mission
- The need or barrier (s) to be addressed
- The process paradigm used to create the goals and objectives, and who was involved in the process (people or organizations)
- Any outcomes of the community survey (if applicable)
- Any guiding documents like the SPIL or grants
- The resources available to you or your organization.

If possible keep the introduction to a two-paragraph limit. Now you are ready to write the body of the plan by including the written goals and objectives and transferring your resources into words and sentences, explaining how you will use them. In an addendum you may want to list your resources or a budget and a timeline or quick referral throughout the campaign. This will help with tracking.

Finally, you want to conclude your plan by telling the reader how you will measure success. Success should be measured by tangible markers that can be tracked. For example, the number of votes received, passing a law, the number of new commission appointments or the numbers of access violations, etc. Include how and who will track these measurements and report them. Lastly, it is good to finish with a picture what these measurable results look like, for example: *"every parking lot in America has three accessible parking spaces."*

Advocacy Strategy Plan Outline

Introduction:	Two Paragraphs (Mission, Process, Guidance)
Goals and Objectives:	One Paragraph for Goal(s) One Paragraph per Objective
Resources:	One Paragraph for People (Staff, Volunteers) One Paragraph for Funding Resources One Paragraph for Timeframe / Timeline
Conclusion:	Two Paragraphs (Measurable Outcomes)
Addendum:	Budget or Resource List Timeline

In closing out this section of this tool kit, this author will model the structure of a good plan by returning to its beginning. Remember that *the decisions you make early on will most determine your outcome in the end.* Be sure to invest quality thought, time and priority into developing your organizing or advocacy strategic plan – it may be the most important thing you do to win your campaign.

Building Your Volunteer Team

Volunteers are the sustainable life-force for any community organizing enterprise. Staff simply cannot do all the work on an organizing campaign alone. This section will give examples of techniques and materials used to recruit new volunteers, develop volunteer leaders who take on responsibility and managing your volunteer team.

You will want to make sure your team is sustainable, meaning that volunteers want to keep volunteering. In order to attract long-term relationships with volunteers make sure you are fulfilling their needs through proper training, tasks that are appropriate to their skills and showing appreciation for their efforts.

You may also consider how you promote them into positions of leadership. When you give a volunteer a title and responsibility, it makes them feel like they are an important part of your team. As a team stakeholder, the volunteer(s) will want to increase their capacity to participate. But also, volunteer leaders will have the satisfaction of sharing in your victories and want to work harder.

Each ILC has a different policy for volunteer participation in the organization's work and advocacy organizing. Make sure you are working within the framework for volunteer management set by your Executive Director, supervisor or Board of Directors. The DOnetwork can be helpful with developing your volunteer plans and policies, but your center's policy is the priority.

Recruiting New Volunteers

When getting started on building a volunteer team, like any other organizing activity you should begin with a plan. Mapping out your recruitment efforts will keep you on track with measuring progress towards hitting your volunteer recruitment goal(s). Here some volunteer recruitment planning tips:

- **Set Goals Based on Your Needs:** Like all plans you want to begin with a goal. Evaluate the workload, how many hours and people it will

take to get done. Spread these factors into shifts so you know how many people to recruit.

- **Develop Schedules for Three Hour Shifts:** Most people will volunteer for about three hours easily. It is a long enough period of time to make them feel like they have contributed to the mission, but not too long that they become over-worked or uninterested in the task. This also gives them enough time to do other things with their day and include travel time to and from their volunteer shift without being a burden on their daily schedule.
- **Work Inside-Out:** Strategize to begin recruiting inside your organization or community and then move outward through referrals and outreach in like-minded communities. Eventually you will want to recruit people who care about your issues but are outside your community.

Volunteer Recruitment Plan Strategy Wheel

1: Your Organization's List and Intake

2: Referrals to Friends And Coalition Partners

3: Outreach to Other Communities Who Share Your Values

Start with your own organization's volunteer resources. People who are already associated with your organization will share its values and mission. If you do not have a volunteer list to begin with, start by calling donors, board members, newsletter distribution lists and the people you serve.

Consumer intake is a great place to start, especially if you are advocating or organizing for issues that will affect their lives. They will be invested in your campaign's success because it will benefit their needs. In a non-profit organization like an ILC you can set up a policy or protocol with the staff that does intake to include an ask to volunteer.

Work with your colleagues to develop a Volunteer Sign Up Card for the intake packet. Then retrieve these cards at regular staff meetings and follow up with a phone call to the new volunteer. These cards should also provide the prospective volunteer an opportunity to identify their priority issues. These can be catalogued in a database by the staff for alerts when actions arise that match their priorities. Here is an example of a volunteer intake card you can use at your center:

Sign Up to Volunteer - Make a Difference!

www.DOnetwork.org

Please check any of the following topics that you would be interested in getting information or action alerts on:

☐ **Housing**   ☐ **Transportation**   ☐ **Voting**

☐ **Health Care**   ☐ **Public Benefits**   ☐ **Other**

Your Name _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Now that you have recruited a base of volunteers from inside your organization, it's time to start moving outward. Begin by asking people from coalition and community partner organizations to volunteer. Develop a 2-minute *elevator speech* to pitch partners on volunteering. An elevator speech should include:

- **Issue Statement:** a quick statement that expresses your advocacy or organizing campaign's goal. You can use the goal statement from the strategy section earlier in this tool kit. Or your organization's mission statement might be useful for recruiting general volunteers.
- **Objective Statement:** talk about what you plan to do to achieve your goal, including timelines. This could be your next action or activity on your advocacy or organizing campaign.
- **Outcome Statement:** let people know what a successful outcome looks like to you and your organization. You want to draw a verbal picture for folks so they can get a picture of how your goals will benefit them. This will help with engaging them to be invested personally in your goals.
- **A Specific Ask:** end the conversation/speech with a specific ask of what you want them to do, including tasks, dates, times or shifts.

Keep all of these statements to about 14 words so people will remember them. You want to make sure every interaction with a possible volunteer is memorable. This is especially important because if they can remember the conversation they will repeat it to others and might refer new volunteers to you.

Additionally, ask if you can have a table at their events to ask their community members to volunteer. You should also begin to develop an outreach calendar of tabling opportunities. You and your inside volunteer team can comb through local newspapers and online event calendars to schedule dates and times to go to community events to recruit volunteers.

When engaging in-person outreach to recruit volunteers use the elevator speech from above. Here are some more key tips to recruiting volunteers in-person through tabling and outreach events:

- **Get Up-Get Out:** move out in front of your table to speak with people and bring them over to the table. Being behind a table is a passive stance, people are responsive to an active posture when being asked.
- **Explain the Volunteer Task:** manage expectations by clearly explaining the volunteer task. You want to present an activity the volunteer wants to do to ensure their participation.
- **Give the Big Picture:** let prospective volunteers know *why* your issue or campaign is important to them or their community. Explain how this volunteer activity connects to achieving your goal(s).
- **Sign People Up for a Specific Shift:** people are more likely to put the shift in their calendar and show up if you sign them up for a specific shift.
- **Get Complete Contact Information:** make sure you have the best phone number to reach them to confirm their volunteer shift. You should get an email to keep them informed, but voice to voice contact will increase the likelihood that they will show up for their shift. You should also get their mailing address, you may have activities in the future that require a geographic relationship to an issue like voting or constituency response.
- **Review the Information:** at the end of the pitch conversation review the information you have collected to make sure it is correct. It is important that you have the right phone number for confirmation calls, and reviewing the shift information will help them remember their commitment to volunteer.

Having standard materials can also be helpful for engaging new volunteers. You should bring your organization's palm card or brochure along with a one-pager or simple talking points about the campaign or action for which you are recruiting new volunteers. Create a standard volunteer sign up form, if your organization uses iPad's or devices with web access you can use an online form like this one: http://disabilityorganizing.net/join-donetwork/#regsitration. But if you will use a paper form, here is a sample outreach form that can be downloaded and printed out: http://disabilityorganizing.net/join-donetwork/docs/donet-join-us-form-rev-i-060514.pdf.

Finally, be sure to create a volunteer database and update it regularly. In fact, data entering new volunteers from intake or outreach is a perfect job for a regularly scheduled volunteer leader. Making sure you have volunteer information easily accessible will help when priority activities or actions emerge with little warning or time to prepare. Here are some important fields to consider for your volunteer database:

- Name (First and Last as separate fields, you will need this in the future if you do any matching to data sources like the voter file for GOTV)
- Mailing Address, including City, State and Zip (as separate fields)
- Best Phone Number to reach them
- Email Address
- Priority Issues
- Schedule Availability

In community organizing data on people is one of your most important assets. Remember the power equation: organized people + organized time = power. Your data base is how you will keep information on people organized, leaving your time freer to organize other parts of your campaign.

Developing Volunteer Leaders
As your volunteer team grows, so will the responsibility. The team will need to make more volunteer confirmation calls, train more new volunteers, prepare more materials and plan for feeding more volunteers. As a staff person you won't be able to do everything within the hour limits of your job, so promoting trustworthy volunteers into positions of leadership is a necessity.

Before beginning to identify possible leaders consult your ILC or organization's policy on giving volunteers responsibility over tasks or projects. Seek approval from your Executive Director or supervisor to begin this enterprise, they may want to have the final approval on giving a non-employee responsibility, and be prepared to give them regular progress reports.

Promoting volunteers might also be a new thing for your organization, so don't be surprised if management wants to work with you first to develop program parameters first before offering a volunteer a new position with increased responsibility. Don't be surprised if this takes time, be patient with the process. There are issues of liability for your organization that come with giving someone responsibility or allowing them to be a representative. The management team needs to vet all factors before moving forward with promoting non-employees; remember that just as you are answerable to management, they are answerable to the Board of Directors and funders.

Once you have permission, the next stage is to identify possible leaders. Here are some key evaluation questions to consider for prospective volunteer leaders for promotion:

- Do they show up consistently for volunteer shifts?
- Are they on-time or early for their shift?
- Do they stay to the end of their shift?
- Are they willing to be flexible and do whatever task is needed?
- Do they help fellow volunteers without being asked?
- Do they complete their work efficiently?
- Have they asked for more work?

Not all volunteers who would make good leaders will initially meet these criteria, that's OK. Everyone learns at a different pace and through your volunteer leadership program they will get better at leadership skills. Remember that even though a leader accepts greater accountability, they are still a volunteer and will be supported by staff. Through accommodation and support many individuals have the capacity to grow in their organizational roles.

As long as you can answer "yes" to at least four of the seven questions the volunteer can be a candidate for a leadership role. But most importantly you should consider if they can be trusted by your organization to follow through on tasks with increased responsibility.

After identifying someone as a candidate for leadership on your volunteer team, schedule a one-on-one conversation with them. This meeting should be held at your organization's office to communicate the sense of professional responsibility that comes with being a leader.

The one-on-one conversation uses a three-stage method: 1) Discovery; 2) Campaign/Action/Organization Plan Review and 3) the Self Identification Ask. Make sure you plan the conversation in advance to spend one third of your scheduled time on each of these phases of the conversation.

The *discovery stage* uses probing questions to dig deeper and discover the person's personal motivation for being involved with the project. The intention is to establish a transparent and truthful yet professional basis for involvement. The conversation model is quite simple, ask them about themselves, their goals and objectives, their work or volunteer experience and how they like to spend their free time. When the volunteer begins to talk something more in depth, follow up by asking "why?":

Who?
What?
Why? Why? Why?

Here are some guidelines to follow during a one on one conversation:

- **Ask Probing Questions:** the point of the conversation is to get to know the volunteer more. Ask questions that probe a little so you can find out what motivates them to volunteer for your organization.
- **Be Transparent and Truthful:** the conversation will set a tone and foundation for your managerial relationship with the volunteer leader. You want to be transparent that you are asking questions about them to find out if they have an interest in becoming a leader and what motivates them to stay involved.
- **Be Personable and Professional:** you will want to be personally engaging with the volunteer so they will engage with you as well. But remember your boundaries, this is a professional situation and don't cross any lines in the conversation. If you sense that the

volunteer has set a boundary, respect it and change the conversation.

- **Be Reciprocal:** as organizers we can't expect more from our volunteers than what we are willing to give ourselves. Remember this is a conversation, if the volunteer shares about their motivations for the work then share yours as well. This will also help communicate that you will share the workload if they accept the leadership role.

Next, you will want to spend some time giving a *campaign plan review*. Although the volunteer may already be familiar with the campaign, action or organization, reviewing a full overview of your goals and objectives, resources and needs and hopeful outcomes will help them make decisions in the next stage of the conversation. Additionally, both of you are speaking about changing your relationship within the campaign or action structure, so a review is helpful to look at it with a new view.
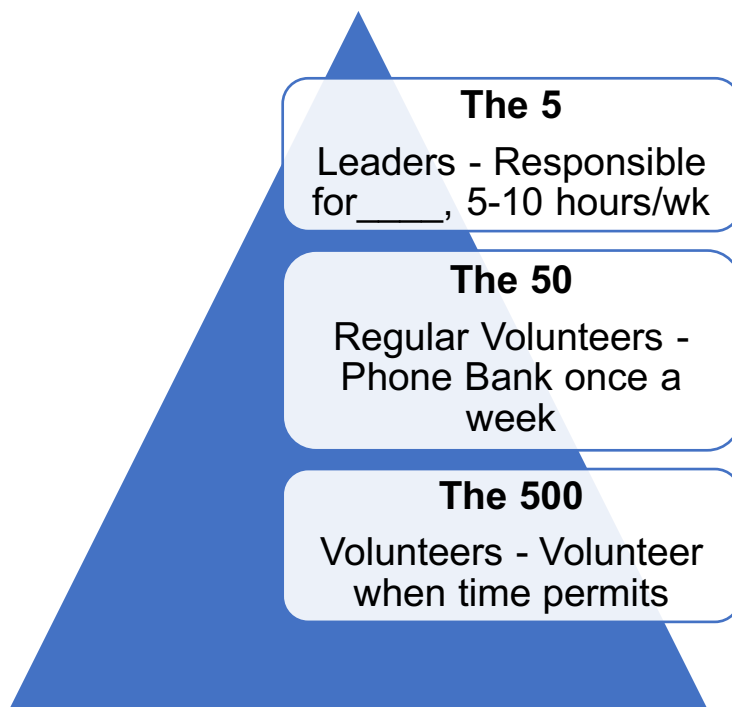
Be sure to include all details of the campaign plan so the volunteer can see how their current role and possible leadership role fits into the overall structure. It will help them make an informed decision with honest expectations.

Finally, you are ready to advance on to the *self-identification ask* stage. This is possibly the most important part of the one-on-one conversation. The volunteer will self-identify their involvement based on a pyramid example that demonstrate levels of volunteer responsibility.

By allowing the volunteer to identify their own commitment, the staff organizer has a clear and definitive understanding of the volunteer's commitment. Too often organizers can misinterpret a volunteer's excitement for time and talent commitment, this stage helps to make sure there aren't any misunderstandings. It also helps keep the staff to volunteer relationship professional by establishing realistic expectations.

For this step in the conversation, it is recommended that the staff organizer actually draw or verbally describe the pyramid with the expectations for each level of involvement. Separate the pyramid into three sections: 1) top

is the leadership that take on responsibility almost like a part-time job, but un-paid; 2) the middle represents a regular commitment to volunteer but without responsibility; and 3) the bottom is an occasional interaction, volunteering from time to time. You also want to label each level with your recruitment goal numbers and the expected tasks and time commitment. This will help keep you and your leaders on track and easily communicate your organization's or campaign's stakeholder capacity. Here is an example:

The 5

Leaders - Responsible for____, 5-10 hours/wk

The 50

Regular Volunteers - Phone Bank once a week

The 500

Volunteers - Volunteer when time permits

Once you have asked the volunteer to identify their level of involvement, DO NOT SPEAK until they answer. This is key, there may be an awkward pause, but the person is figuring out their time commitment for themselves. This is important for accountability, in order to trust their stated commitment, it must come from the volunteer.

If the prospective leader replies with the bottom or middle category, thank them for their time and schedule them for the next available volunteer shift that fits their schedule.

If they identify themselves into the top category, then move onto scheduling their leadership training and regular volunteer hours. You also want the

new leader to leave your office with a sense of pride in the work, decide on a title for them and introduce them to key staff with whom they interact before they leave.

Promoting volunteer leadership is reflective of the Independent Living goals for the disability community. The IL Movement is committed to supporting individual choice and responsibility that builds skills leading to independent community living. By providing leadership opportunities for volunteers, especially ILC consumers, you are opening doors for people to learn and demonstrates their talents. These efforts could lead to employment opportunities, appointments on boards and commissions and more.

Managing Your Volunteer Team
Managing your volunteer team is something that you as a community organizer should take very seriously. Whether you are working with leaders, regular volunteers or occasional participants, they will look to you for guidance and model your work practices. It is also important for time management. Working within an ILC means that you may have different restrictions for work hours and overtime because of governmental funding streams than organizers who work in the private non-profit sector. Part of managing your volunteers is managing your time.

This subsection will provide guidance on how to involve your leaders and volunteers in the planning and preparation for volunteer activities. This will increase their participation and allow direct interaction for practicum training by modeling good work practices. Volunteer management should be done in seven key stages:

- **Assign Roles and Responsibilities:** clearly define the job each member has on the team. The staff person plans the events or activity, seeks permissions from supervisors and community partners, secures locations and resources; and is responsible for recruiting and confirming the volunteers, developing training and outcomes. The volunteer leader helps the staff achieve these objectives, most likely will share in the work load for recruiting, training and confirming volunteers; and will help lead the activity during the volunteer shift, especially during staff breaks so no

overtime is incurred. Finally, the volunteer participates in the activity for one shift.

- **Plan The Volunteer Activity:** depending on the volunteer activity, develop an outline with your team that explains the activity, location of the event, what resources are needed, what type of volunteer training is needed, a detailed timeline that includes volunteer recruitment and confirmation, collecting the outputs and reporting the outcomes. Include who is specifically responsible for each item and how much time it will take them to accomplish.
- **Evaluate Activity Shift Volunteer Needs:** working with your volunteer leadership team you will determine how many hours and people will be needed to complete the volunteer task. Volunteers should be scheduled in 3-hour blocks that consist of 15 minutes of training, 2.5-hours of work and 15-minutes of debrief. So, evaluate the work in terms of how much an individual can accomplish in two and a half hours. This will let you know how many volunteers you will need and for which shifts.
- **Develop a Volunteer Shift Schedule:** using the information in the previous step develop a volunteer shift schedule. Make sure that you account for everyone's schedule: the staff, the volunteer leaders and the volunteers. Begin by making the staff start, break and end times as a framework for the schedule, this way you can ensure you won't go into overtime or incur break penalties. Next schedule in your volunteer leadership team, including prep time for materials and reviewing the training. Volunteer leaders can be expected to work a longer shift than participant volunteers to account for their increased responsibility, they will also lead while staff is on break. Based on this framework schedule your volunteer three-hour shifts, including time for training (15 minutes), volunteer activity (2.5 hours) and debrief (15 minutes). Account for overlapping time frames and responsibilities by assigning your volunteers leaders. *A sample volunteer shift run schedule is below.*
- **Recruit, Remind and Confirm Volunteers:** using your current volunteer roster, the staff organizer and volunteer leaders should begin calling and scheduling volunteers for specific shifts in three contacts. It is recommended that the first contact, the initial ask call, begin at least a week in advance so the volunteers have time to schedule in advance. Then mid-week in advance they should receive the second contact reminder call, and a third contact confirmation call the day before their shift. Email is fine to send so

they have a record of their commitment for putting on a calendar, but it should never replace the phone call connection (with exceptions for accommodations like texting for Deaf and Hard of Hearing volunteers). *If you are seeking new volunteer resources please review the outreach section of this tool kit. A sample volunteer recruitment sign-up sheet is below*

- **Train, Debrief and Re-Commit The Volunteers:** sustaining a volunteer base requires meeting the needs of the volunteer. People will want to come back if they have been supported, felt like they contributed to something greater than themselves and had the opportunity to give input. A good place to start is to put yourself in the mindset of your volunteers, what would you expect and what would you need? Start each shift with a simple but thorough training of the task, be mindful that the staff and leaders will probably have to assist and spot re-train during the shift. The training should include individual goals, by reaching the goal the volunteer will feel the fulfillment of their contribution to the cause; and if they do not complete the task it will give staff an indication that the goals may need to be adjusted. After each shift make sure to conduct a quick shift debrief with all of the volunteers as a group, asking folks to rate their experience in these terms: *what did you like, what should we do differently, what surprised you?* These three questions will give the team vital information for improving the volunteer experience, making them want to return. The question about "surprises" is intended to let people evaluate their preconceptions, hopefully the task was easier or more rewardable that previously anticipated, and will increase their excitement for future actions or volunteer opportunities. Finally, end the debrief with a *recommitment*, making sure you ask them to sign up for their next shift and referring a friend who can join them.
- **Team Evaluation:** like the debrief for volunteers, the leadership team should evaluate each action by answering the same three questions above. However, the team will want to use a more in-depth method, asking these questions for each phase of the action: 1) planning, 2) volunteer recruitment, and 3) day of the event. Staff should finish the evaluation by asking volunteer leaders if they want to remain in their same responsibility roles or if they would like to try a new one. Movement throughout the team and cross training is a great opportunity to mentor leaders in greater responsibility while keeping their interest in the campaign

or action fresh and committed. Make sure to include the feedback from the evaluation in the event or action staff report to directors and supervisors along with outputs and outcomes. Letting your ILC or organization's management know how your leadership team is progressing can be helpful when they assess new resources for programming.

A lot of work goes into administering a campaign or action and managing events. Through effective and engaging volunteer management organizers can build a team to grow the capacity of an organization's work in the community. Successful community organizers should spend at least half of their work time managing the volunteer team to do the work of the campaign. Volunteers expand the reach that an organization has into its community or with decision-makers. By managing the volunteer team you are organizing people and their time, two key ingredients to building political and community power.

Below are some sample worksheets for volunteer recruitment calls and shift run schedule planning.

VOLUNTEER SHIFT SIGN UP SHEET

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY:

STAFF PERSON:

DATE & TIME:

VOLUNTEER SHIFT LEADER:

LOCATION & DIRECTIONS:

SHIFT TIMES: 1)   **2)**   **3)**

RC= Reminder Call Completed / CC= Confirmation Call Completed / SHOW= Volunteer Attended Shift

NAME	EMAIL & PHONE	SHIFT	RC	CC	SHOW

VOLUNTEER EVENT / ACTIVITY SHIFT RUN SCHEDULE

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY: _____

DATE: _____ **LOCATION:** _____

SHIFT: _____

SCHEDULE	TIMES	WHO: NAMES & CELL PHONES	DUTIES/ACTIVITY
STAFF ARRIVAL			
VOLUNTEER SHIFT LEADER ARRIVAL			
VOLUNTEER ARRIVAL			
STAFF BREAK		*SHIFT LEADER TO COVER:*	*DUTIES/NOTES TO SHIFT LEADER:*
SHIFT END/DEBRIEF		*WHO STAYED THE WHOLE SHIFT:*	*FEEDBACK / NUMBERS:*

Coalition Building and Community Partnerships

People with disabilities are drawn to work in coalition with community partners because they share common issues, goals and objectives with other communities. Issues like education, employment, election access, healthcare, homecare and public safety are priorities for disabled persons as well as students, laborers, women, people of color, people who are limited English proficient, seniors and many more. Connections are also found through intersections with disability and race, gender and gender identity, immigration status, sexual orientation, economic status, education level, geography and more identities. Communities working in coalition are unified with others because they encounter similar barriers and need to advocate with the same decision-makers to break those barriers.

Because the power equation requires growing organized capacity to achieve success, disability community organizers will often need to work with community partners to accomplish their goals. Past successes for the DOnetwork and ILCs in California have been a product of working in coalition with others.

For example, advances in election accessibility were completed in partnership with Latinx and Asian American groups, efforts to halt ADA notification policies involved working with consumer attorneys and In Home Supportive Services, successes were shared with labor unions. Community organizers in the DOnetwork should always be thinking ahead about developing relationships that lead to victory through building coalitions.

This section will include a glossary of familiar terms, a strategy for building coalitions and tips for maintaining collaborative relationships.

Glossary of Terms

Here are some common terms and language used when engaging coalitions and collaborative community partnerships:

- **Alliance:** a union or association for mutual benefit, especially between organizations. A relationship of an affinity in interests, nature or qualities. Alliances are like coalitions but differ in action, the

alliance is an association of more than one group based on common issues or experiences, but the coalition is a relationship for action on a single issue.

- **Bloc:** a combination of people, parties or groups sharing a common purpose. A bloc is often not officially connected through an agreement or membership like an alliance or coalition.
- **Coalition:** an "organization of organizations" united around a common issue and clear goal(s); however, sometimes the term "coalition" is used to refer to groups of diverse individuals or organizations of individuals who are involved in other groups as well.
- **Collaboration:** the action of working with someone or another group to produce or create something mutually beneficial.
- **Conjunction:** the action or instance of two or more events or things occurring at the same time or place.
- **Intentional:** done on or with purpose; deliberate.
- **Intersectionality:**

- **Issue:** communicates what you are fighting for to help solve your problem; an issue is what activist organizations focus on.
- **Organization:** an organized body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, society or association.
- **Partnership:** a state of two or more people as partners with an agreement defining their relationship.
- **Reciprocal:** given, felt or done in return. Actions resulting from an agreement between two or more partners for mutual, common or shared responsibility and resources.
- **Strategy:** a plan of action or policy designated to achieve an outcome.
- **Union:** the action of joining together for a single purpose.

Strategy for Building Coalitions

Like any type of community organizing, it is best to begin with a strategy. Begin by identifying your issue, the desired outcome from your strategic plan (review the strategic planning section of this tool kit) and your reasons for needing additional partners. It is important that organizers and organizations are clear with themselves first on why you need partners. For

example, this could because you don't have enough resources or have decided that the decision-maker needs pressure from multiple communities to push them to your desired outcome.

Develop new coalitions in three stages:

1. Stage One: Identification
    When starting to develop a strategy for new partners, do an inventory of your own universe. Your universe are those people and organizations with common traits, experiences, issues and current working relationships – it is your current associates and associations. Next list all the other individuals, organizations or communities that would also benefit from your desired advocacy outcome. The third step is to identify who are the people or groups that intersect with both your community and their community for an introduction.

<table>
<tr><td align="center">Associates
Your current partners</td><td align="center">New Partners
Your desired partners</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr>
<tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr>
</table>

<div align="center">

Bridge Partners
Partners who can connect

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

</div>

While developing this strategy be sure to include an intentional method for intersectionality and inclusion. Many people with disabilities also identify as LatinX, Native Americans, youth, LGBTQ+, etc and should be represented in your coalition. Coalition partnerships should include stakeholders who identify as both disabled and other identities with equal authority and

responsibility. In fact, in the DOnetwork we are called to collaborate from an intersectional perspective.

The California State Independent Living Council (SILC) prioritizes funding for the Independent Living Network. Every few years the SILC produces a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), a benchmark plan guiding the community organizing and advocacy at ILCs and grantees link the DOnetwork. The SPIL contains a list of *unserved and underserved communities*. These are communities or identities which have been determined to receive less than equal focus or attention in the work of California's IL Network. You should consult this list from the SPIL when filling out the partnership targets worksheet above.

The *unserved and underserved* communities identified in the SPIL are: "*Latinos; Asian Americans; Native Americans; People with disabilities who have aged in rural areas; People with traumatic brain injury; Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in Los Angeles and in rural Northern California; children/youth; young adults; veterans; homeless individuals; and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.*"

Additionally, consider these intersections when listing your bridge individuals and organizations. The first introduction to a new community or association should be authentic and come from someone who shares the values and experience of both partners.

2. Stage Two: First Meeting
- Ask your bridge partners to host a meeting to bring you together for a first meeting with prospective coalition partners. Be transparent about your intentions and the issue you want to work on together, but make no decisions in advance. The first meeting is an exploratory activity meant to discover if the partnership is a good fit, decide on the common goal, learn about each other's work and evaluate the resources each partner can share. Good coalition partners make decisions together with agreement, which will come in the next step.

  After the first meeting evaluate the possible relationship(s). When you are evaluating a coalition partnership with another organization or several groups consider some important questions:

- **What are your unifying issues?** Coalition partners must have common issues that bind them and goals to achieve a mutually desired outcome. If they are brought together by common traits or experience, then the relationship is an "association." But coalitions are action based partnerships working to create or change something that positively affects the members equally.
- **What resources could come from this new coalition?** This question is key as the reason for working through a coalition is to expand the capacity of your campaign or action. By seeking out coalition partners an individual or organization is seeking additional resources to share the work load. Thus, partners must be clear about what resources, including time, talent and treasure, they bring to the partnership.
- **What obstacles might you encounter by working together?** This question can work in two ways. First, it is good to identify the obstacles that both or all organizations will encounter and how to overcome them together. But, second, each organization could find other internal goals or agendas separate from the unifying issue that create conflict. It is important to identify these possible conflicts and make agreements about how each partner will keep them out of the common coalition working space.

3. Stage Three: Agreement
- After deciding to work together, the new coalition partners should develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Working Agreement. This agreement will ensure that each organization is focused on the common goal and will operate with reciprocal relationships. An MOU is a tool to manage expectations and resolve disputes. They are used to define roles and responsibilities of all partners and remove any conflict in the working relationship. They also make sure each partner shares the work and gives resources equally. Here is an example of parts of an MOU or Working Agreement:

  - Introduction which describes the project, including an overview of the advocacy issue, goals and objectives, and identifies participants/partners in the MOU.
  - Purpose of the MOU, discuss the barriers you wish to break the reasons all partners want to work in coalition (expand resources, increase capacity for effectiveness on decision-making, etc..)

- Authority for the MOU, name who has the authority within each organization to sign the MOU and speak for each partner.
- Roles and responsibilities of all partners. Like in a contract, this is where the workload and obligations of the coalition partners are detailed. For example:
  - who provides what resources (time, talent, treasure)
  - how the collaborating agencies will use their expertise to support the effort
  - whether compensation is provided
  - project schedule for the tasks the cooperating agencies will take on
  - tracking progress, who will track
- Other provisions (e.g. how to address conflicts of interest, handle confidential information, resolve disputes, etc.)
- Designation of the representatives (and alternates) of each agency or organization
- Administration of MOU (who signs it, how it will be amended or terminated)

Reciprocal

Relationships

Share the Load
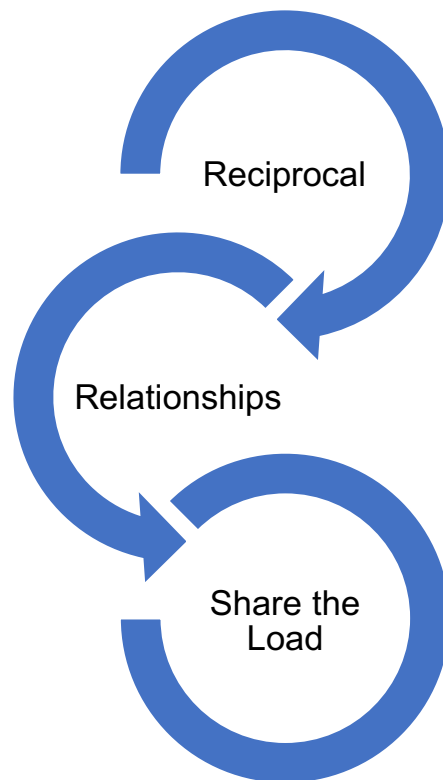
Tips for Maintaining Collaborative Relationships

1. Choose unifying issues. The most effective coalitions come together around a common issue. Make sure the development of

group goals is a joint process, rather than one or two group representatives deciding the goals and then inviting others to join.

2. Understand and respect each group's self-interest. There must be a balance between the goals and needs of the coalition and of the individual organizations. Agree to disagree.

3. Respect each group's internal process. It is important to understand and respect the differences among groups. These differences are often apparent in processes or chains of command for decision-making. Make a commitment to learning about the unique values, history, interests, structure, and agenda of the other groups and organizations.

4. Structure decision-making carefully.

5. Distribute credit fairly. Recognize that contributions vary. Appreciate different contributions. Each organization will have something different to offer. Each one is important, so be sure to acknowledge them all, whether they be volunteers, meeting space, funding, copying, publicity, leafleting, passing resolutions, or other resources.

6. Give and Take. It is important to build on existing relationships and connections with other organizations. Don't just ask for or expect support; be prepared to give it.

7. Develop a Common Strategy. The strength of a coalition is in its unity. Work together with other organizations to develop a strategy that makes sense for everyone. The tactics you choose should be ones that all the organizations can endorse. If not, the tactics should be taken by individual organizations independent of the coalition.

8. Be Strategic. Building coalitions in and of themselves requires a good strategy. Which organizations you ask, who asks them, and what order to ask them are all questions to figure out.

9. To ensure consistency, send the same representative to each coalition meeting. This helps meetings run more smoothly. These individuals should also be decision-making members of the organizations they represent.

10. Formalize Your Coalition. It is best to make explicit agreements. Make sure everyone understands what their responsibilities and rights are to help prevent conflicts.

In today's climate of growing opportunities for people with disabilities the need for advocacy and community organizing to increase accessibility is moving fast. As the work piles up disability organizations will need to form reciprocal and collaborative relationships for impact on decision-makers to create change. Developing and building strong coalitions with a focus on being intentionally intersectional is a high priority to communities who seek to sustain that change. The more other communities are invested in your needs, and you in theirs, the greater your chances for success. Coalition building should be a high priority for any community organizing effort that seeks to grow its capacity for creating long-term change.

Educational Advocacy: Sharing Your Story

Community organizers are often called to mobilize people to advocate with decision-makers to break a barrier, change a policy or create a new policy. Most decision-makers are moved to act by understanding the needs of the community members they serve or represent, amplified by the size of their collective voices advocating for change. For this reason, personal stories from a lot of people are very important for achieving community organizing advocacy goals.

This section of the toolkit will explore ways people can share their stories and amplify the number of people represented in them. More people equates to more power, and when people can demonstrate that something affects not only them but many of the people around them, their story becomes more powerful.

Sharing stories is also important for organizers who work in the DOnetwork because they educate decision-makers without crossing any restrictions on direct lobbying. In many civically engaged circles organizers are free to mobilize people to directly lobby their policy makers or appointed decision-makers. However, advocacy is a little different for many community organizers who work at an ILC or in collaboration with the DOnetwork or the IL Network in California because of restrictions from our funders.

Certainly, ILC consumers and volunteers who are unpaid are free to make any requests for action from their policy makers and officials. But, ILC community organizers and advocates can provide them with logistics, training and resources and education materials on the important issues being considered by California officials. This is a perfect example of the role of the community organizer, to support volunteers and community members to amplify their voices and put pressure on officials to make change.

The story-telling exercise in this section can be used by ILC organizers and advocates working within funding restrictions for advocacy -or- can be used as a tool to teach volunteer advocates how to amplify their voice for more power.

Story Telling Guidelines

Any issue or policy is most impactful as it relates to the lives of the people affected by it. Whether you are a paid organizer or a volunteer it is your obligation to yourself to own your story. The power in your ownership will read as truth to the listener and target of your advocacy. Here are some guidelines for developing your story:

- **Make it Personal:** an issue is a reflection of person's need or desire to have agency or independence. Related the need to break to a barrier or change something directly to your own personal needs. This could be demonstrating how a barrier prevents you from performing daily tasks or meeting your personal goals. It can also be showing how changing something will present a new opportunity for your independence. The decision-maker will understand that there are more people like you, use the personal factor to impact through a sense of humanity.

- **Be a Teacher:** people often give the decision-maker or advocacy target the power in a meeting because they have the power to remove the barrier or create the change. Re-adjust your understanding that this is not their power but their function and your function is to teach them how to make change that will benefit you. Think of yourself as the teacher in a classroom and the decision-maker is the student. Their function is to learn from your lesson, your function is to teach them a lesson about your needs, and their homework is creating the change or creating the policy. This framework allows you to teach about your needs and gives you the power like a teacher in a classroom. Students ask "why" and teachers answer "because": approach each conversation point in the meeting as if the decision-maker has asked you "why" and your story is answering "because..."

- **Make a Lesson Plan:** prepare for your meeting like a teacher prepares a lesson plan. Make sure you write out your story as if you are going to teach someone about your life. Begin with an introduction that includes who you are, and at least four facts about yourself like your age, job, school, where you live. Next, explain your goals, including your needs to accomplish those goals. Then explain the barrier in your way or what you need that is not being provided to achieve your goals. Finally, offer a solution to the problem. Treat your lesson plan like a word problem or equation in a math class with a beginning, middle and end or answer.

Amplifying Your Voice

The power to make change is directly related to the size of the problem. Most decision-makers will react to the needs of the greatest number of people. As discussed earlier in this toolkit, power is organized people, and the more people you have on your team the more powerful you become.

Organizers and volunteers can easily amplify their power by growing the number of people in their personal story. When telling your story also explain how it affects at least five people in your life. For example, yourself, a family member, a friend or neighbor and a colleague, fellow student or caregiver. Use the grid below to write out your personal story from the perspective of five people when you prepare for a meeting with a decision-maker.

If four people attend a meeting in person, each of you can change that to 20 people by the perspective of your storytelling.

	You	Family	Friend	Neighbor	Colleague
Who					
Goals					
Need					
Barrier/ Opportunity					
Answer					

Making Your Campaign Accessible

There are many reasons to make your community organizing efforts accessible for people with disabilities. First and foremost, the DOnetwork and its member organizations are committed to increasing access, independence and community living for disabled persons. We exist for accessibility and it is a matter of living out our values.

Next, the DOnetwork, ILCs and most of our coalition partners are government funded, which makes us Title II entities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and we are required to provide accessible programming.

By providing good access we are also setting an example for our community partners and teaching by example. This section will give guidance on event accessibility including physical access, program access and social interaction with people with disabilities.

Event or Office Space Physical Accessibility

You should seek an event or office space that has at least one entrance without steps and that a wheelchair can roll into, has an accessible ADA restroom and at least two accessible parking spaces. Here are some types of repurposed locations or properties that are usually good:

- Locations in Malls or Strip Malls
- Newly Built Restaurants and Pubs
- Schools and College Campuses
- Libraries
- Car Dealerships
- Any building built after the year 2000

Here are some general guidelines and things to watch for when choosing an accessible location:

- **Accessible Parking Spaces** are important for drivers with disabilities. Many of their vehicles use technology like lift arms that reach a few feet from the car to navigate their exit and entrance of the vehicle. If a location is accessible but does not have an accessible

parking spot, you can use cones to save two spaces as one accessible space.

- **Accessible Entrances** often determine whether or not a person can enter the building safely and participate in the event. A person should be able to walk in to the space without using steps and a wheel chair user should be able to roll into the building without encountering a bump greater than one inch. The doorway should also be 36 inches (3 feet) wide from inside the door frame.

- **Accessible Restrooms** make life easier for everyone, who doesn't like more room and some helpful bars! But for people with disabilities it is often the difference between being able to go or not. An accessible restroom has: 1) a doorway at least 36 inches wide, 2) at least 42 inches of rotation space, 3) a stall door at least 36 inches wide, 4) grab bars next to the toilet inside the stall and 5) a sink without a cabinet below it so a person can roll their wheelchair under the sink. If the soap and hand towels are not reachable from a seated position in a wheelchair, just add a new bottle of hand soap and paper towels on the side of the sink.

Program Accessibility

Program access is also important for people with disabilities to participate in organizing events like phone banks, canvasses, fundraisers, large rallies and outreach opportunities. In order to know what you will need to provide your disabled participants, you should get an RSVP with a reasonable accommodations request. As an efficient way to collect reasonable accommodation requests, you could add this language to your invite or RSVP:

To request a reasonable accommodation, please call [INSERT OFFICE OR FIELD REP'S PHONE NUMBER] *at least* [# DAYS TBD DEPENDING ON EVENT] *days in advance.*

It is reasonable to give a one-week deadline in advance of the event for requesting most accommodations. Reasonable program modifications need to address the person's need to participate, if you offer a selection of options let the person with the disability choose which one works best.

Program Modifications	
Disability	**Possible Modification**
Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH)	• Live Captions (Reserve in Advance) • American Sign Language Interpreter (Reserve in Advance) • ASL Placement: should be on the same plane as the speaker and clearly visible to the Deaf, must be able to see the interpreter from waist high and the speaker's face in the same field of vision. • Find a volunteer who speaks ASL to volunteer their time to interpret
Blind or Low Vision	• Accessible Materials Emailed in Advance or provided on a thumb drive* • Standard materials in 14pt Arial font • Large Print (Materials in 20+pt font) • Sighted Guide
Chemical Sensitivity: Strong Scents products or Chemicals	• Provide Dust or Painters Masks
Dexterity (Trouble standing, walking)	• Provide seating and assistance with standing • Provide scribe to help them write (or ask them to bring a friend)
General Assistance	Provide a Personal Attendant

Accessible materials for the blind should be the text ONLY (no graphics or pictures etc.) in a word doc or rich text file. Graphics or pictures can be replaced with an image description.

Social Interaction

People with disabilities want to participate independently. Here are some guidelines for interacting with people with disabilities:

- Look at the person not their interpreter or personal attendant.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability not their interpreter or attendant, they can answer for themselves.
- Do not touch or lean on someone's wheelchair or mobility device. Just like your legs get you around, so does someone's mobility device, it's a part of their person.
- Do not treat people with a disability as "special" or "inspirational". People with disabilities are just like anyone else and performing a simple task should not be made into a heroic accomplishment.

And some guidelines for talking about disability:

- Do not refer to a person's disability unless it is relevant. For example, don't ask "What's wrong with you?" or refer to the "girl in the wheelchair".
- Use "disability" rather than "handicap" to refer to a person's disability. The word "handicap" equates a person with a disability to a panhandler.
- Use "disability" instead of "special needs" or "challenged." The needs of people with disabilities are the same as everyone else, they are just provided differently.
- When talking about or referring to an object use the word "accessible", for example, "accessible parking space" .
- Don't portray people with disabilities as overly courageous, brave, special, or superhuman. This makes it sound like it is unusual for people with disabilities to have talents, skills or to live life like everyone else.
- Don't use "normal" to describe people who don't have disabilities. It is better to say "people without disabilities" or "non-disabled" if necessary to make comparisons.
- The more mature generation prefers people first language: *people with disabilities.* While the younger generation prefers disability first language: *disabled person.*

Outdated Language	Respectful Disability Language
Words you should NOT use when describing or talking about a person with a disability	*Words you SHOULD use when describing or talking about a person with a disability*
• Crazy, insane, Hyper sensitive, Spastic, spaz, unfit	• Mental Health disability
• Cripple, crip, gimp, lame, Handicapped, physically challenged, special needs	• Disabled, People with disabilities
• Retarded, slow	• Cognitive or Intellectual disability, learning disability, developmental disability
• Victim, stricken, Poor, unfortunate, Suffers from (an illness or disability)	• Person living with…
• Wheelchair bound	• Wheelchair user
• Brain damaged	• Traumatic Brain Injury
• Dwarf, midget	• Little person, Someone of short stature
• Dumb, deaf mute	• Deaf or hard of hearing
• Visually Impaired	• Blind or Low Vision
• Deformed	• Person with dexterity issues
• Normal	• Non-disabled
• Not disabled, not disabled enough	• Invisible disability, Hidden disability

Using Accessible Social and Digital Media

Many people with disabilities use social media to connect for advocacy, organizing and daily communication with friends, family, caregivers and colleagues. Often disabled folks will use devices as the primary source for information, resources and news. Making sure your digital community organizing efforts are accessible is key to communicating with the disability community on an accessible platform. Here is some information and tips for making social media accessible:

WHO NEEDS ACCESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- People who are blind
- People who are Deaf or HoH (Hard of Hearing)
- People with visual & auditory processing disorders
- People with cognitive disabilities

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA IS A PRIORITY METHOD TO GET CONNECTED

- Social Media platforms are the most universally accessible
- Disability community is all over social media
- Huge way for people to get information and to connect
- Expansive network of disability advocates

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IS GREAT WAY TO SHOW YOU CARE

- Although social media accessibility is only relevant to certain types of disabilities, making your content accessible shows that you care about the disability voting bloc as a whole

Avoid "Inspiration Porn"

- What is inspiration porn: objectifying disabled people to play upon the emotions of nondisabled people, calling people inspirational solely on the basis of their disability.
- How to avoid it: talk and write about disability in a straightforward

way, don't just use disability to capitalize on people's emotions. Talk and write about a person's achievements like anybody else, don't make every day casual actions into momentous milestones.

Basic Guidelines for all social media

- Limit use of acronyms and explain them if you use them

- Use plain language so everyone can understand

- Use camel case for hashtags: #LikeThis *instead of* #likethis

What is an image description?
An image description is read by a screen reader so that a blind person can also comprehend and enjoy the message in a picture
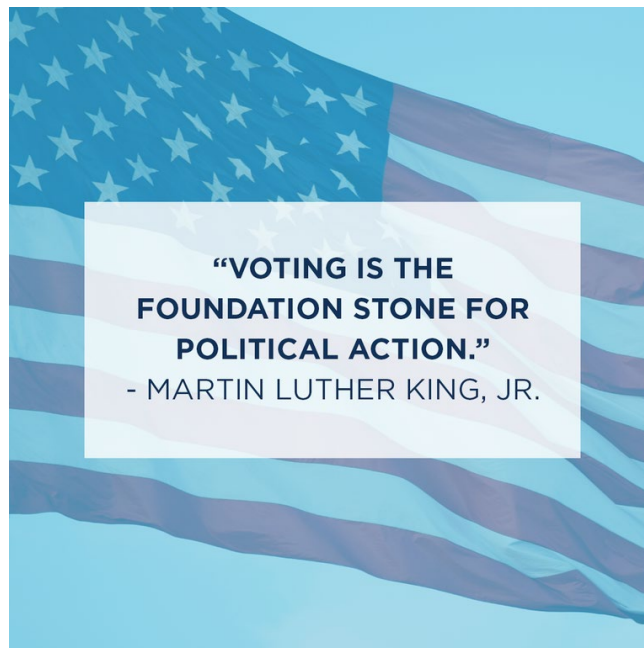
[Image Description: a square picture of the United States Flag with a light blue overlay, in the center a white rectangle with black text saying:
"VOTING IS THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR POLITICAL ACTION."
– MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.]

Use image descriptions on your Facebook posts or in the "Add Description" function for photos when posting on Twitter.

Notes

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