

YOUR 2008 VOTERIZATION PLAN



Completing a Voterization plan for your agency will help you assess how best to incorporate voter registration, education, and mobilization into your agency's work. This plan template presents a menu of activities that your group may want to consider. If you have questions while planning your project, please see the companion Voterization Plan Narrative or contact the outreach team at 202-662-1530 or outreach@nlihc.org (include 'Voterization' in the subject line).

WHY BECOME VOTERIZED?

Below are some reasons that organizations have undertaken voterization projects.

Check those that apply to your organization, and add any others that apply.

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

LEGALLY SPEAKING

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

- Review the guide *Nonprofits, Voting & Elections*, at www.nonprofitvote.org/services/materials/
- Participate in an online training seminar (Election Rules for Nonprofits; www.afj.org/events)

REGISTERING VOTERS

I. Setting Goals for Registering Voters

- A. How many residents/clients does your agency have? _____
- B. What percentage of your clients will you register? What number? _____ / _____
- C. Will your agency also register other low income members of the community, beyond your clients? If so, how many? _____
- D. What is your agency's total goal for new registrants (B+C)? _____
- E. How many weeks do you have until registration closes? _____
- F. How many people must you register on average per week to meet your goal? _____

Preparing to Register Voters

Your local board of elections can be a wealth of information as you plan to register clients to vote. You'll want to check in with them to:

- Learn the registration deadline for the general election in your state
- Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state, or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements
- Request the voter rolls for your locality (There may be a small charge for this, but it's important; you'll use this list to determine which of your residents are already registered.)
- Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals

Are there special requirements someone must meet before registering voters?

Who will obtain the county voter list and pick up the voter registration forms?

2. Registering Voters

What staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting registration goals?

What resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting registration goals?

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

A. Fitting Voter Registration into your Agency's Regular Contact with Residents	Staff	Timeframe
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- Add voter registration to the client intake process. Specifically ask people to register; don't just provide the form
- Register clients when they come in to receive your services
- Add a voter registration component to all job training, computer, or other classes offered by your agency
- Other: _____

B. Planning Specific Voter Registration Activities

- Hold a social or other event at which the admission 'fee' is registration
- Host an event for National Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week (September 21-27, 2008)
- Other: _____

C. Organizing a Door-to-Door Campaign

- Train residents, staff and other volunteers who are already registered to go door-to-door and register those residents. Use the county voter list to determine who needs to be registered
- Appoint residents as building captains, floor captains, etc. and have them be responsible for registration (and turnout) there
- Consider offering a prize or other incentives to the person who registers the most new voters or the highest percentage of their area

D. Reaching out to the Community

- Have your registrars reach out into the community to register other low income, homeless, or underrepresented people
- Make sure everyone on the staff and board is registered!

Keeping Records

Keeping records of the people you register to vote helps both with determining whether you have met your registration goals and with planning Get Out The Vote activities. Suggestions for a database that you can use for recordkeeping, at www.nlihc.org/VOTE.

One easy way to gather the information for your list is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms before mailing them in. You can also have new registrants fill out a two-part pledge card, also at www.nlihc.org/VOTE. They'll keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote; you'll keep the half with their contact information.

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

EDUCATING CLIENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

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

What resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting education goals?

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

1. Educating Clients on Voting and Their Rights as Voters	Staff	Timeframe
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- Obtain sample ballots from your county board of elections and distribute to residents
- Arrange for someone from your county's board of elections to come to your agency and provide a demonstration of your county's voting machines and explain people's rights as voters
- Host a discussion on the importance of voting and what can be gained by increasing the percentage of voters from the agency
- Encourage residents to sign up with the board of elections as poll watchers
- Other: _____

2. Educating Clients on the Issues

- Obtain materials on current affordable housing issues from NLIHC, including at www.housing2008.org
- Host a discussion on who clients' elected officials are, and the connection between what those officials do and your clients' lives
- Arrange for clients to attend or watch a candidate debate
- Ask all candidates to complete a candidate questionnaire (at www.nlihc.org/VOTE), and distribute their answers
- Other: _____

3. Educating Candidates

- Include information on your agency when sending candidates your questionnaire
- Encourage clients to write letters to the editor explaining why affordable housing is an important issue for them
- Arrange for each candidate for a particular office to take a tour of your agency and speak with clients
- Other: _____

Protecting the Right to Vote

Some low income people, including people experiencing homelessness and ex-felons, are at a greater risk of being turned away from the polls on Election Day, or otherwise disenfranchised. NLIHC will have information on protecting people's rights to vote, at www.nlihc.org/VOTE.

You may also want to contact a local attorney who is versed in voting rights. He or she can help identify potential issues locally, and also be on call on Election Day in case anyone experiences problems voting.

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

MOBILIZING VOTERS (GETTING OUT THE VOTE)

I. Setting Goals for Getting Out the Vote

- A. What is the total number of people your agency plans to register to vote (from page 1)? _____
- B. How many additional clients are already registered (from the voter list you obtained from your county's board of elections)? _____
- C. What is your total number of potential voters (A+B)? _____
- D. What percentage of these people would you like to see vote on Election Day? _____
- E. What is the total number of people you would like to see vote on Election Day? _____

Planning for Absentee Ballots and Early Voting

In all states, absentee ballots can be requested by residents who are unable to get to the polls on Election Day. In some states, all voters have the option to vote by absentee ballot (whether or not they would be able to get to the polls) or to vote before Election Day. Providing your clients with absentee ballot request forms or helping them to take advantage of early voting if available is a great way to increase voter turnout.

Voting by absentee ballots generally takes two steps: first, clients fill out forms requesting their ballots. Once they receive their ballots, clients fill them out and return them.

Check with your county's board of elections on each of the following questions:

- What is the deadline in your state for requesting absentee ballots?
- When must ballots be returned to the county by?
- Does your state allow for no-excuse absentee ballots (residents may vote absentee even if they would be able to go to the polls on Election Day)?
- Does your state allow for early voting?

Who will be responsible for coordinating absentee ballots and early voting?

2. Reminding, Goadng, and Cajoling People to Vote

What staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting mobilization goals?

What resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting mobilization goals?

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

A. The Months and Weeks before Election Day

Staff

Timeframe

- ___ Investigate the possibility of adding a polling place at your agency
- ___ Download and print GOTV materials, including posters and doorhangers, from www.nlihc.org/VOTE
- ___ Host voting-related events on the first Tuesday of the month, to get residents used to participating in civic engagement activities on that day
- ___ Make your first contact with each voter in your database. Call them, thank them for registering, and remind them to vote
- ___ Plan for Election Day:
 - Recruit residents or other volunteers who will spend Election Day doing door-to-door GOTV. If you've used captains, prepare them to turn out all registered people on their floor, in their building, etc.
 - Once the deadline for registering new voters has passed, obtain an updated voter registration list from your county. Check against your database and prepare a final list of voters to be mobilized

B. One to Two Weeks before Election Day

Staff

Timeframe

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

___ Continue to plan for Election Day:

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

___ Other: _____

C. The Day before Election Day

___ Make your third contact with each voter in your database. Call and ask them to commit to vote the following day. Remind them of the location of their polling place

___ Other: _____

D. Election Day

___ Have volunteers with lists of registered residents knock on the doors of everyone on their list, crossing off the names of those who have voted. If a voter is not home, leave an NLIHC doorhanger on his door. Call or knock again until everyone has voted, or the polls close

___ Provide rides to the polls for residents who need them

___ Celebrate! Host a party for voters and volunteers. Watch election results

___ Other: _____

E. Post-Election Day

___ Thank voters and volunteers, and tell them about your successes

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

___ Use your new power to meet with newly elected officials

___ Which staff or residents should be encouraged to run for office?

___ Other: _____

Considering Resources

Whether simple or more involved, all voter engagement projects will involve some level of resources. Now that you know what you would like to accomplish, you should plan what funding sources you might access, and how you might work with other organizations to leverage resources.

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

What sources of funding can you access? _____

Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access. Student groups may be interested in registering voters as part of a community service project. Or a civic group may already be providing rides to the polls, and could include your clients in their plans. *Remember to partner only with nonprofit organizations.* What groups in your area might you partner with, in what ways? _____

VOTERIZATION 2008: Participation Form

Yes! Our organization is now VOTERIZED. We have developed a plan detailing our commitment to incorporating voter registration, education, and mobilization into our agency's work.

Organization: _____

Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Additional contact (if available)

Contact Name: _____ Title: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address (if different): _____

Is your organization currently a member of NLIHC? ___ Yes ___ No
To join, contact us or visit www.nlihc.org/join

Please download and print the materials you need for your project at www.nlihc.org/VOTE.

NATIONAL HOMELESS AND LOW INCOME VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK
NLIHC will cosponsor National Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week, September 21-27, 2008.

Will your organization participate by holding an event? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Maybe

Event Description: _____

Please return to:

NLIHC, Attn: Outreach Team
727 15th Street, 6th Floor
Washington DC 20005
OR fax: 202.393.1973
email: outreach@nlihc.org

