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CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

In communities across the country, campaigns and progressive organizations have innovated and adapted their organizing work to meet the moment. These individuals and teams have tested new tactics, solved operational challenges, and built more effective organizing programs. Too often in our industry, promising tactics that are tested in one state are not shared broadly. This section is an effort to capture some of the recent experimentation happening across the progressive ecosystem so that Democratic campaigns, organizers, and partners can learn from each other and continue to evolve how we do this work.

These case studies are not meant to be prescriptive. Every campaign operates in a unique political and geographic context. Instead, they are meant to offer ideas, lessons, and inspiration that campaigns can consider and adapt to their own local context.

The case studies featured in this section were selected because they illustrate three core themes that align with the organizing re-model outlined in this playbook:

- 1 Building relationships with and listening to diverse groups of voters, through tactics that reflect how people actually communicate and interact with campaigns today.**
- 2 Removing structural barriers to participation, ensuring that more volunteers and voters are able to access and participate in the political process.**
- 3 Investing in our talent pipeline, ensuring that all staff and volunteers are prepared for their roles and to have the most impactful conversations with voters.**

PLAYBOOK CASE STUDIES:

ORGANIZING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDIES

2025 Virginia Campus Organizing Program

2023-2025 Reaching Black Voters in Rural New Hampshire

2025 Tennessee In-Language Postcard Parties

2020 California Bags of Rice Census Outreach

2025 Virginia Building Grassroots Leadership through Civic Education

2024 Grassroots Sovereignty-Based Organizing

2024 Rebuilding Native Political Infrastructure from Scratch

LISTENING TO VOTERS & MAKING INSIGHTS ACTIONABLE

2025 Black & Latino Polling in Virginia & New Jersey

DNC Local Listeners

Ground Truth Pilot Findings [Swing Left]

How to Build a Storybank & MicroInfluencer Program [Porchlight]

DEVELOPING TALENT PIPELINES

2025 Virginia Hiring & Staff Performance Evaluation Systems

Building Pathways to Union Careers with Young Nevadans

DIGITAL TOOLS & TACTICS

Using WhatsApp Channels [Higher Ground Institute]

Instagram Chatbots [Higher Ground Institute]

INNOVATIONS FROM THE FIELD: COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were surfaced in the individual Community Power Cohort Sessions. The work represented here was conducted by cohort participants themselves and are being shared as examples of how to apply many of the above best practices in real campaign environments.

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #1

“CAMPUS DIRECT VOTER CONTACT (DVC) BIG THREE” ORGANIZING PROGRAM (2025)

Work conducted by a participant working for the 2025 VA House Caucus Organizing Team

The 2025 Campus DVC Program was a rapid-response organizing initiative launched across Virginia’s colleges that used authentic, relational organizing to scale high-quality engagement even with time and resource constraints. Moving away from traditional “input” metrics like call volume, the program pioneered the “Big Three” model, which redefined volunteerism among young voters through three tangible outcomes: candidate IDs, voter registrations, and voting plans.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Marketing the program to all students.** Instead of only targeting politically-engaged students through organizations like College Democrats, this program appealed to a broader group of students by branding themselves through a “Progress” frame, giving the group freedom from pre-conceived perceptions students might form about a Democratic-first organization.
 - This strategy relied on organizers first engaging students to learn which issues mattered most to them. They then used these student-identified priorities to connect candidates to the campus community and attract interest through relational organizing, high-traffic events, and issue-specific student groups or clubs (e.g., Hokies for Reproductive Freedom).
- **Outcome-based volunteer definitions.** Instead of defining volunteers by the activity they did (like phonebanking or canvassing), this program defined them by the results they achieved. Volunteers were measured using three simple metrics, called **the Campus DVC Big 3**:
 - Candidate IDs – identifying and recording students who support a candidate
 - Voter Registrations – helping students register to vote
 - Voters Who Make a Plan – encouraging students to commit to voting, including when and how they’ll do it
- **Lowering the barrier to entry on what it means to be a volunteer.** In this program, even talking to people at a Halloween party about the campaign counted as a shift.
 - “If you completed one of the three actions, you were considered a volunteer. And we gave them a list of ways that they can do this. Like, friend banks, tabling, class raps, social media posts, one-on-ones, high traffic canvassing. The point was “if you do this, you’re a volunteer.”
- **Having young people post authentically.** Students were encouraged to “[post] in their own voice” and not just via sharing branded content.
- **Prioritizing tactics that were working.** The program didn’t push door knocking on campuses where they were meeting resistance or not getting a lot of value. “We found our juice with friend banks.” They prioritized tactics that kept students talking to people they knew.

RESULTS:

- Empowered students to organize through their strengths and networks, generating high ownership, faster ramp-up, and stronger volunteer retention throughout the cycle
- Created a culture of creativity and thinking outside of the box — this translated into a highly resilient and adaptable team that corrected issues quickly
- Delivered historic gains in traditionally disengaged campus communities, including a 530% increase in provisional ballots at one university and narrowing an R+7 district to under 250 votes

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #2

REACHING BLACK VOTERS IN RURAL NEW HAMPSHIRE (2023–2025)

Work conducted by participant leading the NHDP Black Caucus

In the Upper Valley and North Country of New Hampshire, some of the most geographically isolated regions in the state, local organizers and the NHDP Black Caucus launched a pioneering outreach initiative for Black and immigrant residents. Operating in areas where these communities are small and often overlooked, the program moved away from mass persuasion in favor of a trust-based model. By utilizing cultural gatherings and local restaurants as organizing infrastructure, the initiative closed the "political education gap" for first-time and infrequent voters, including Haitian and other immigrant groups. This consistent, year-round presence built a durable bridge between marginalized rural residents and the electoral process, turning one-off transactions into long-term civic participation.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Used trusted community spaces as the organizing infrastructure.** Outreach ran through cultural gatherings, community meetings, local restaurants, and equity coalitions — spaces where people already had relationships and political conversation didn't feel forced.
- **Led with political education and "how it works," explainers, not just asks.** Organizers created room for questions and explained the mechanics of local and state elections for community members unfamiliar with the electoral system.
- **Made language access and cultural translation the central tactic.** This program was not just about translating words — it focused on translating process, norms, and the stakes of an election in culturally fluent ways for Haitian and other immigrants. One-on-one conversations and follow-up organizing replaced transactional scripts, creating a pathway from curiosity to participation.
- **Coordinated with party and campaign field teams without losing trust.** Partnerships with the NHDP Black Caucus and campaign field programs helped connect community members to party efforts without straying from their core concerns.
- **Remained rooted in real concerns.** At these gatherings, organizers let participants guide the conversation to focus on topics that were most relevant and top of mind, whether that be housing stability, immigration enforcement, education, or health care access. Allowing participants to inform the topics of discussion, rather than adhering to a pre-set agenda, made the conversation more engaging and impactful.
- **Showed up beyond election season.** In a small, rural state, effective engagement depended on consistent presence and a willingness to listen more than persuade.

RESULTS:

- Increased engagement among Black and immigrant communities in the Upper Valley and North Country.
- Strengthened trust between community leaders and local Democratic organizers beyond a single cycle.
- Identified persistent participation barriers (language gaps, rural infrastructure limits, weak post-election follow-up) and what it would take to fix them.

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #3

IN-LANGUAGE POSTCARD PARTIES (TENNESSEE, 2025)

Work conducted by participant working on 2025 TN Special Congressional Election

An organizing initiative for Aftyn Beyn in Tennessee's 2025 congressional special election pioneered a decentralized, in-language postcard model to engage the state's AANHPI voters. Moving away from traditional, top-down mailers, the initiative empowered community members to host "postcard parties" within trusted spaces like churches, mosques, and community centers. By translating campaign messaging into authentic cultural contexts rather than literal scripts, the program lowered barriers for volunteers who were hesitant to door-knock but eager to organize on their home turf. This volunteer-funded infrastructure not only drastically reduced campaign mail costs but also drove an increase in AANHPI turnout, proving the power of self-sustaining, culturally resonant political engagement.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Let community members create messages in their own voice.** Organizers provided a general message, then community leaders translated and adapted it authentically — not a literal translation.
- **Made participation easy and culturally comfortable.** People could participate in familiar spaces and complete an easy task. Community members who felt uncomfortable canvassing found this approachable: "this is something that I can do."
- **Created toolkits for self-sustaining programs.** Once started, community groups ran their own postcard parties independently — organizers would get calls saying "oh yeah, we sent like 2,500 postcards, just so you know."

RESULTS:

- Increased voter turnout among AANHPI communities who received in-language postcards by 12%.
- Self-sustaining model that community groups ran independently
- Significant cost savings on mail budget

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #4

CENSUS OUTREACH (SAN FRANCISCO, 2020)

Work conducted by participant working for API Council of San Francisco

Every decade, the US Census is conducted to count every person living in the country. The results inform how federal funding is allocated and how legislative districts are drawn. In the lead-up to the 2020 Census, the API Council of San Francisco — a coalition of over 50 local community groups — faced a major challenge: how to reach low-income AANHPI residents who were hesitant to interact with strangers during COVID-19. Many of these residents often also faced language barriers when completing the census. To address this, this coalition paired mutual aid with census assistance by distributing bags of rice — a culturally resonant staple food — while providing translation support and helping residents complete their forms in real time. By meeting immediate needs and offering culturally competent assistance, this program significantly increased census participation among this key constituency.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Paired tangible value (food giveaway) with civic engagement (census completion).** Rice was a basic necessity that drove people to show up and complete their census participation.
- **Provided language access alongside the incentive.** Translation services and in-language support were available when people came for rice, making census completion easy and safe.
- **Partnered with community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver services.** Multiple CBOs worked together to provide translation and pairing services with census outreach.
- **Created word-of-mouth momentum.** Once word got out about free rice, participation shifted dramatically — lines formed and people engaged.
- **Made it replicable.** The organization now uses bags of rice (or gift cards to Asian bakeries) for any voter engagement or turnout effort.

RESULTS:

- Created a repeatable model for civic engagement with AANHPI communities.
- Demonstrated that simple, culturally appropriate incentives work better than complex persuasion.
- According to organizers, census completion rates changed "night and day".

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #5

BUILDING GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION (VIRGINIA, 2025)

Work conducted by participant working for CASA

CASA (formerly CASA de Maryland), a prominent membership-based immigrant rights organization, launched the “Know Your Rights, Elect Your Power” initiative during Virginia’s 2025 elections. The program tackled a unique challenge: building political power in working-class Latino communities where some members cannot vote due to their immigration status. By moving away from traditional voter-only outreach, CASA pioneered a model that fused legal rights education with volunteer leadership development, ultimately building a grassroots infrastructure of over 150 trained volunteers. Providing valuable services to the Latino community resulted in greater engagement and collective action, proving that long-term political power is built by investing in communities, not just turn-out numbers.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Connected rights awareness directly to civic participation.** The program emphasized the importance of knowing your rights, regardless of immigration status. This framing made political engagement feel relevant and urgent.
- **Set clear outcome-based objectives beyond turnout.** Rather than focusing solely on voter contact metrics, the program aimed to develop 150 trained community leaders who would actively support organizing efforts and recruit 8 teams to participate in Virginia General Assembly Lobby Day.
- **Targeted strategically diverse communities.** Focused on first-time voters, historically low-turnout districts, and even lean-Republican/moderate areas where traditional campaigns often don’t invest.
- **Built through one-on-ones and relationship development.** The program was community membership-led, built on trust and long-term relationships. Organizers took time to listen to member experiences and showed up as partners.
- **Created pathways for members to become leaders.** By providing accessible information, practical tools, and consistent support, members felt comfortable engaging in civic and leadership opportunities, then recruiting others and becoming leaders within their communities.

RESULTS:

- Developed 150+ community leader volunteers who actively organized
- Successfully mobilized 8 teams to participate in state legislative advocacy
- Built sustainable infrastructure through relationship-based organizing

COMMUNITY POWER CASE STUDY #6

SOVEREIGNTY-BASED ORGANIZING (TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION, ARIZONA)

Work conducted by participant leading Indivisible Tohono

Indivisible Tohono is a grassroots, community-based organization on the Tohono O'odham Nation — the second-largest reservation in the United States. Founded by volunteers with full-time jobs, it monitors federal and state legislation affecting all 22 Arizona tribes. Operating with minimal funding, the organization pioneered constituent roundtables — a format new to Native communities in this state where ordinary tribal members, not just the tribal council, could engage directly with elected officials and candidates. In the lead-up to the CD-07 special congressional election in Arizona, Indivisible Tohono created culturally resonant political events and built infrastructure that meaningfully contributed to Democratic turnout on the reservation.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Created the roundtable model for tribal communities.** Set up direct constituent-to-candidate conversations in three villages, that allowed the conversation to go where the community needed.
- **Built culturally resonant events that drew hundreds.** Mosh the Vote (rez heavy metal bands + working-class issues) is an example of a partnership event that drew over 300 people.
- **Connected issues to policy in a tri-fold format.** Every event presented what the state is doing, what the federal government is doing, and what the community sees is actually happening — centering the most vulnerable populations.
- **Built election infrastructure from within.** The Pima County Recorder, an O'odham co-founder of Indivisible Tohono, launched the first mobile voting unit on the Nation.
- **Centered wins to combat cynicism.** Constantly highlighted tangible victories to counter the overwhelming negative information environment.

RESULTS:

- In the 2025 special election, approximately 23.2% of voters cast a ballot in the primary — a notably high percentage for a special election in September.
- First mobile voting unit deployed on reservation land in Arizona.
- Pioneered the roundtable format for direct constituent-candidate engagement in tribal communities.
- Built sustainable volunteer infrastructure run entirely by community members with full-time jobs.

Case Study

2025 Virginia Small Business Organizing Program

Context

In traditional field programs, voter contact has been primarily focused on targeted doors and phones, rather than high-traffic canvassing or engagement of everyday community spaces such as small businesses. Outreach to business owners has typically been assigned to the Political/Coalitions teams and treated as a “political” function, rather than an organizing opportunity.

In 2025, the Virginia Coordinated Campaign set out to challenge that model by integrating small business engagement directly into their organizing program to expand the campaign’s reach. This initiative was led by Abby O’Keefe, the Organizing Director, and her Deputy Organizing Director, Walsh Powe. The Virginia campaign did this by making small business canvassing qualify as a volunteer shift for organizers, along with traditional tactics like canvassing and phonebanking. This provided organizers with an additional tactic to reach voters in their turf and expand the menu of opportunities for volunteers to engage with the campaign.

The overarching goals of this new program were to:

- Interact with voters at small businesses that the campaign may not reach successfully via traditional tactics.
- Ensure that the campaign and candidates have a public presence by having visibility in friendly businesses.
- Expand the campaign’s network of storytellers, stakeholders, and validators; ensure they are equipped with the latest messaging guidance; and highlight the impact of key policy areas on diverse constituents.
- Train and empower volunteers to have engaging, persuasive conversations with local business leaders to earn and amplify their support locally.

Tactics to Activate Small Business Owners

The campaign activated small business owners identified through this program over the course of the cycle through:

- **Direct-to-Camera Testimonials:** Produce and share compelling video stories highlighting individual experiences with policy impacts, optimized for social media.
- **Business Partner Training:** Organize workshops to equip leaders with the skills needed to effectively communicate the candidate’s message in their business. This included training on digital video creation as well as messaging training on having persuasive conversations about the candidates.

To assess the effectiveness of these efforts, the organizing team tracked two core metrics for the small business program:

- Videos Collected: These were testimonials collected and submitted by business leaders
- Businesses Engaged: The cumulative total number of businesses the campaign had visibility at

Cross-Departmental Coordination

Collaboration with the Spanberger Digital, Political, and Communications teams was essential to launch this program. These external departments supported the program by:

- Identifying community targets and validators
- Providing resources for business owners to share
- Supporting digital training and content creation
- Providing weekly messaging guidance

Systems

- Friendly Business Tracker: This was the centralized system used to track all the friendly businesses, follow up, and ask all in one place.
- Resource Hub: This was a public-facing document with resources for businesses to share.

Key Takeaways & Future Recommendations

Salient Successes

- Businesses as Staging Locations – This program was effective at increasing visibility of the campaign in community spaces, especially because the campaign was able to use these spaces as a part of their Direct Voter Contact structure. Many businesses became staging locations, debate watch party locations, and places where the campaign held events for entry-level volunteers.
- Capacity Building – By expanding the campaign's reach outside of traditional spaces, organizers were able to identify and activate supporters who otherwise likely would not have engaged with the campaign. This built not only volunteer capacity but also provided a new channel to reach voters.

Changes for the Future

- Increase Structure & Requirements – This program required a lot of structure to hold organizers accountable for doing business canvasses frequently and effectively. Originally, business canvasses were a choice on an event matrix that organizers could choose from, rather than a universal requirement. As a result, some organizers used it and made lots of connections, while others didn't. One of the VA team's biggest takeaways was that this should be a requirement for all organizers.
- Increase Use of Digital Tools – The VA team felt that the program's impact could have been amplified more on digital and social channels, as well as business owners' own social pages.

Case Study

2025 Black & Latino Polling in New Jersey & Virginia

Context

In 2024, Democratic campaigns experienced declining support and turnout among some Black and Hispanic voters. To better understand these dynamics ahead of the 2025 gubernatorial races in New Jersey and Virginia, the DNC Office of Strategy + Innovation focused on understanding Black and Hispanic voters.

The goal of this effort was to better understand:

- The issues most important to these voters
- The emotional and economic triggers shaping their political views
- How campaigns could most effectively communicate with and mobilize these communities

Research was conducted between September and November 2025 through a combination of polling and focus groups. Key research partners included:

- Bendixen & Amadi International (Hispanic benchmark and post-election polling)
- Brilliant Corners Research (Black benchmark polling)
- Anthony Williams Consulting (Black focus groups and post-election polling)

Research Approach

The effort combined benchmark polling, focus groups, and post-election polling to capture both quantitative trends and deeper voter sentiment.

To capture more authentic responses, the focus groups incorporated:

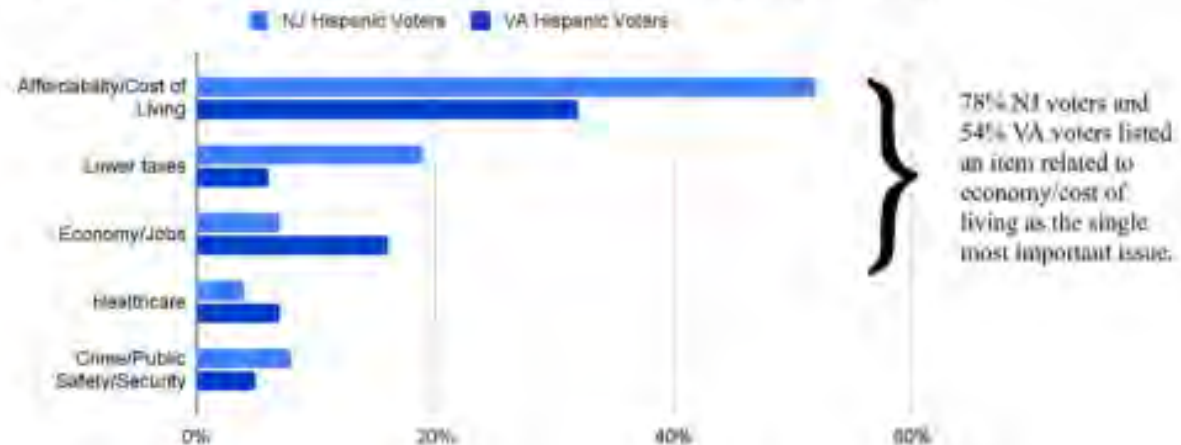
- Real-time polling during sessions
- Open-ended written responses from participants
- Structured group discussions designed to reduce peer pressure and “groupthink”

Key Takeaways

Affordability Was the Dominant Issue

- Across every poll and focus group, the rising cost of living emerged as the top concern for voters.
- Pocketbook issues consistently drove voter attitudes and vote choice, including:
 - Groceries, housing and rent, health care costs, utility bills, insurance, and wages
- For many voters, affordability became the primary lens through which they judged politics and candidates. Messaging that did not connect directly to cost-of-living concerns often felt disconnected from their daily realities.

Hispanic Voters in Benchmark Poll: Top Open-Ended Responses to the Question "What is the single most important thing that the next Governor of New Jersey/VA should focus on to make life better for you and your family?"



Voters Want Plainspoken Leadership and Real Solutions

- Participants expressed frustration with political rhetoric and broad policy promises. Instead, voters responded most positively to leaders who:
 - Acknowledged economic hardship directly
 - Spoke in clear, straightforward terms
 - Offered concrete plans that could lower monthly costs
- Voters were particularly interested in policies that would deliver visible and near-term economic relief, such as:
 - Rent protections, lower prescription drug costs, utility bill relief, and affordable child care

Impact of Campaign Outreach

- Post-election polling showed that the Spanberger campaign in VA and the Sherrill campaign in NJ were effective in reaching and mobilizing Black and Hispanic voters.
- Support levels increased from benchmark polling to post-election polling, indicating late persuasion and voter mobilization efforts played a vital role.
- Direct voter contact influenced voting decisions among:
 - 8% of Hispanic voters in New Jersey
 - 13% of Black voters in New Jersey
 - 9% of Hispanic voters in Virginia
 - 14% of Black voters in Virginia
- Hispanic voters also largely appreciated Spanish-language communication.
- Voters understood what the campaigns were about and believed the new governors would succeed in addressing affordability.

- Voters were excited to support their candidate, and turnout results show both higher turnout and among those who did not traditionally vote in an off-year election.

Which of the following best describes how you felt about your vote for Governor?				
	NJ Hispanic	NJ Af Am	VA Hispanic	VA Af Am
Excited to vote FOR my candidate	60%	59%	64%	70%
Excited to vote AGAINST the opponent	10%	16%	13%	10%
Neither excited nor unexcited	19%	18%	12%	14%
Unexcited to vote for my candidate	2%	2%	3%	3%
Didn't like any of the candidates but chose the best of bad options	9%	6%	8%	3%

- A word of caution: Democratic support is not automatic or locked in going forward. Voters want concrete results they can see in their bank accounts and feel in their quality of life. If Democrats fail to act or cannot prove that the government can be used to improve people's lives, there likely will be backlash, erasing the gains earned in 2025.

Key Takeaways & Future Recommendations

Salient Successes

- **Affordability-Centered Messaging Resonated** – Campaign messaging that focused on lowering costs and addressing economic pressures aligned closely with voter priorities.
- **Direct Voter Contact Made a Difference** – Door-to-door outreach, media engagement, and targeted communication played a measurable role in influencing voter participation and support.
- **Candidate Visibility Built Trust** – Voters responded positively to candidates who were visible in their communities and engaged directly with voters.

Changes for the Future

- **Lead with Affordability** – Campaign messaging should place affordability at the center of the narrative, connecting other policy issues back to cost-of-living concerns whenever possible.

- **Maintain Message Discipline** – Campaigns should avoid diluting their message by emphasizing too many secondary issues. Keeping the focus on economic solutions helps maintain clarity and relevance.
- **Adopt an Economic Protector Frame** – Candidates should position themselves as advocates for working families, clearly explaining how they will protect voters from rising costs and economic pressure.
- **Emphasize Tangible Policy Outcomes** – Voters respond best to specific, concrete proposals that show how policies will reduce everyday expenses.
- **Connect Republican Policies to Economic Frustration** – While opposition to Donald Trump remains strong among these voters, campaigns should link that opposition to how policies impact the cost of living.
- **Improve the Quality of Campaign Contact** – Campaign communication should prioritize trusted messengers, culturally relevant outreach channels, and messaging that reflects everyday economic realities. For Hispanic voters, both English and Spanish-language communication are critical.
- **Maintain Engagement After the Election** – Voters believe leaders can improve their lives, but expect to see real progress on affordability. Elected officials must continue highlighting cost-of-living wins and demonstrating accountability after taking office.

Case Study

Using Union Career Events to Rebuild Trust with Young Voters in Nevada

Context

The Young Democrats of Nevada centers its work around uplifting young people in the political process through three core values: engage, educate, and empower. Programming is intentionally designed to help young people better understand the systems that impact their lives while giving them tangible opportunities to participate in civic life.

In 2024, organizers observed growing frustration among some young voters, particularly young working-class men and young Latino voters, who felt disconnected from traditional political outreach and unsure whether their concerns were being heard. At the same time, tensions had emerged between labor organizations and Democratic institutions around policy disagreements during the Nevada legislative session.

Recognizing both the economic moment and the need for renewed dialogue, the Young Democrats of Nevada developed a series of in-person community events aimed at reconnecting young people with organized labor. The flagship event was titled “*How to Build a Career in a Union*,” a large-scale informational event connecting young Nevadans directly with labor unions across multiple industries. This case study outlines how this event succeeded in rebuilding trust between voters, unions, and the Democratic Party.

Key Objectives of the Event

1. Provide practical resources for young people by giving them direct access to unions and information about career pathways in the labor movement. Major unions from the construction trades and service sector participated in the event.
2. Reach young, non-political audiences who may not attend traditional political events but are interested in job opportunities. The speakers discussed career pathways within their industries, apprenticeship programs, union benefits, and the process to join a union.
3. Demonstrate the real-world impact of Democratic policies that help and protect workers.
4. Strengthen relationships between Democratic organizations and labor partners during a moment of friction surrounding legislative priorities.
5. Create a welcoming space for working-class Nevadans, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to learn about opportunities in the trades and service unions.

Event Branding & Recruitment

Rather than positioning the event as political organizing, the Young Democrats of Nevada framed the gathering as a career and economic opportunity resource event. This approach significantly broadened the appeal of the program and attracted participants who were otherwise disengaged from politics.

Promotion for the event relied heavily on social media. Three videos posted by the president of the Young Democrats of Nevada on TikTok served as the primary driver of attendance.

- <https://www.tiktok.com/@aayosierra/video/7558188368387919135>
- <https://www.tiktok.com/@aayosierra/video/7559032553512996126>
- <https://www.tiktok.com/@aayosierra/video/7558185871430651167>

Collectively, the videos generated:

- 120,000+ views
- Over 800 event signups
- 419+ attendees

Approximately 90% of attendees reported learning about the event through these TikTok videos, demonstrating the power of platform-native messaging when reaching younger audiences. The videos framed the event around economic opportunity and career development, rather than traditional political messaging, which helped reach audiences who typically do not engage with political content.

Event Environment and Audience

The event took place during a politically sensitive moment in Nevada. It occurred shortly after the end of a legislative session and just before a special legislative session, during which a major labor-backed bill failed to pass. The issue had become a point of tension between unions and Democratic lawmakers and shaped conversations in the days leading up to the event.

Despite this, the event succeeded in bringing together:

- Major labor organizations
- Local elected officials from East Las Vegas
- Hundreds of community members seeking career information

The audience was largely composed of young working-class attendees, with a significant number of young Hispanic men, alongside older workers and women who were also interested in union careers. Importantly, most, if not all, attendees were not politically active. Many were everyday workers primarily interested in learning how to improve their economic prospects rather than engaging in partisan politics.



Key Takeaways & Future Recommendations

Salient Successes

1. **Resource-Based Organizing Reaches New Audiences**
Framing the event around economic opportunity rather than politics allowed organizers to reach a broad audience of working community members who are typically disengaged from political events.
2. **Short-Form Video Is a Powerful Mobilization Tool**
TikTok proved to be the most effective promotional channel. Three videos generated over 120,000 views and drove roughly 90% of event awareness, demonstrating the importance of meeting young audiences on platforms they already use.
3. **Labor Engagement Can Rebuild Trust**
Despite ongoing policy disagreements, the event demonstrated that direct engagement between unions, elected officials, and community members can help rebuild relationships and open productive dialogue.
4. **Strong Demand for Union Career Information**
The large turnout confirmed that young workers are actively seeking pathways into union jobs, particularly during times of economic uncertainty.
5. **Low-Cost, High-Impact Event Model**
The event demonstrated that impactful community engagement can be achieved with minimal financial resources. The total cost of the program was approximately

\$700, which included event logistics and a \$150 gift card giveaway used as an incentive for attendees. Local elected officials who partnered with the Young Democrats of Nevada contributed financially to cover the event costs, recognizing the value of the program and its community impact. As a result, the event ultimately did not require any direct financial expenditure from the organization itself. This model highlighted how strong partnerships with aligned elected leaders can allow youth-led organizations to host large-scale, high-impact events while minimizing financial barriers.

Changes for the Future

1. Increase Volunteer Capacity
More volunteers will allow organizers to expand programming beyond logistics and focus on engagement activities such as voter registration and follow-up conversations.
2. Secure a Larger Venue
Attendance exceeded expectations, suggesting that future events will require larger venues to comfortably accommodate participants.
3. Expand Worker Education
Future programming could include additional information about:
 - a. Workers' rights
 - b. Anti-labor practices
 - c. Collective bargaining protections
4. Strengthen Civic Integration
While voter registration was initially planned, volunteers were largely occupied with event operations. Future events should incorporate a more structured voter registration and civic engagement component.
5. Extend Event Programming
Longer event hours or multiple sessions may allow more attendees to connect with unions and ask questions.

Case Study

Virginia 2025 Staff Hiring & Management Best Practices

Context

After the 2024 election, [Trestle Collaborative](#) interviewed hundreds of field organizers about their experience on the presidential campaign (***you can view their whole report [here](#)***). One of the biggest pain points that came up across states and programs was a holistic lack of training – with 60 % of organizing rating their onboarding and training as ‘non-existent’ to average’ – and organizers not feeling prepared for their jobs – which fundamentally inhibited their ability to succeed and ruined many of their first experiences in politics.

Junior staff who feel unsupported from the get-go are more likely to burn-out and leave after one cycle, even if they had promising potential. Campaigns therefore must improve and invest in the comprehensive training and onboarding of their staff. In this section, we outline two case studies of best practices from the Virginia Coordinated Campaign in 2025 and provide resources to improve campaign hiring processes, staff management, and performance evaluation.

The infographic is set against a dark teal background. At the top, there are four light blue rounded rectangular boxes, each containing a quote preceded by a large double quote icon. Below these boxes, the text 'PAIN POINT 1' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font. Underneath that, the main title 'Organizers told us they felt unprepared and undertrained' is written in a large, white, serif font. In the bottom right corner, the text 'TRESTLE COLLABORATIVE • 29' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font.

Quote 1: “We didn’t receive any training on the program that we use, which was very surprising to me because how are you going to have a training without including the most important tool?”

Quote 2: “It was a good week to 10 days [after onboarding] before I was like, ‘OK, can I get that training again?’ because now it would be meaningful.”

Quote 3: “There really was just not very much onboarding, honestly...”

Quote 4: “It was easier for my colleague who was familiar with VAN pull lists for me than for her to teach me. And so it created a bottleneck – if I had just gone in with that bit of knowledge, it would have been helpful.”

PAIN POINT 1

Organizers told us they felt unprepared and undertrained

TRESTLE COLLABORATIVE • 29

Case Study 1: Staff Performance Evaluation

Given the short timelines of campaigns, many teams have no formal staff performance evaluation system. Feedback is usually only shared informally or in moments of crisis, when something has already gone wrong. The result is that many staff finish a campaign with no

documentation or clear understanding of if they adequately met expectations, what they specifically excelled at, or where they fell short.

To solve this problem, the 2025 Virginia Coordinated Campaign utilized a formal staff evaluation system and integrated core competencies into 1:1s as an agenda item. In this system, managers provided feedback and a score on the six competencies, and organizers had an opportunity to reflect and evaluate themselves.

“This process helped us to normalize both positive and constructive feedback. It helped us coach managers to give consistent feedback and be comfortable coaching all of the time and it helped our entire organization think more critically about their role and performance in a way where constructive feedback was welcome and sought out... In the future, I'd change the core competencies every phase to more closely match our objectives.”

–Abby O’Keefe, 2025 Virginia Coordinated Campaign Organizing Director

The Standard Organizer Core Competencies included:

- Relationship-Building
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Volunteer Training
- Volunteer Retention
- Talking to Voters
- Storytelling

Link to [Staff Evaluation System](#)

Link to [Core Competency Rubric](#)

Core Competency	Does not meet expectations	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations	Sets a new standard
	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship-Building	Struggles to build personal connections with volunteers; lacks empathy or authenticity, resulting in a weak foundation for volunteer engagement.	Occasionally builds relationships but struggles with authenticity or leading with empathy, resulting in inconsistent volunteer engagement.	Builds strong, genuine relationships with volunteers, demonstrating empathy and authenticity, and creating a foundation of trust and partnership.	Actively fosters a culture of mutual respect and partnership, building deep, meaningful relationships with volunteers and leading with a high degree of empathy.	Masterfully builds personal, impactful relationships with volunteers, setting the tone for the entire team and creating an atmosphere where volunteers feel deeply connected and valued.
Volunteer Recruitment	Fails to apply recruitment principles effectively; struggles with tone, urgency, or personalization, leading to poor volunteer engagement.	Applies some recruitment principles but inconsistently or ineffectively; often struggles with key elements like urgency or personalization in their pitches.	Effectively applies all six recruitment principles, crafting pitches that are clear, urgent, and personalized, and responding well to objections.	Consistently excels in applying all six recruitment principles, tailoring messages to volunteers and creating a sense of urgency and personal connection that increases recruitment success.	Demonstrates exceptional recruitment skills by seamlessly integrating the six principles into highly effective, customized, and persuasive pitches that inspire immediate volunteer commitment.
Volunteer Retention	Struggles with keeping volunteers engaged, failing to implement effective confirmation processes or share the impact of volunteer work.	Demonstrates some effort to retain volunteers but lacks a structured approach to volunteer maintenance or escalation, leading to inconsistent follow-through.	Effectively retains volunteers by applying strong confirmation processes, maintaining engagement, and communicating the impact of their work.	Proactively manages volunteer retention by implementing robust engagement strategies, addressing issues early, and regularly reinforcing the value of volunteers' contributions.	Exemplifies exceptional volunteer retention strategies, consistently maintaining high volunteer satisfaction and engagement by thoughtfully nurturing relationships and keeping volunteers highly motivated.
Talking to Voters	Struggles to engage voters or lacks clarity and impact in conversations, failing to address key phases like petitioning, registration, or mobilization.	Occasionally engages voters but lacks confidence, clarity, or adaptability across different conversation phases; struggles to make conversations impactful.	Engages voters effectively across all phases—petitioning, registration, persuasion, and mobilization—delivering clear and impactful conversations.	Consistently delivers compelling, persuasive conversations across all voter interaction phases, connecting with voters in a meaningful and impactful way.	Leads with empathy when engaging with voters, tailors conversations to each phase and leaving a lasting impact that motivates action, with exceptional communication skills that inspire voter commitment and enthusiasm.
Training Volunteers	Fails to provide effective training; lacks focus on developing specialized skills and does not prioritize quality conversations with voters.	Provides basic training but lacks a clear focus on developing specialized volunteer skills or quality conversations with voters, leading to inconsistent results.	Effectively trains volunteers with a focus on building quality skills, particularly in engaging voters through meaningful conversations.	Delivers highly effective, specialized training that equips volunteers with advanced skills for quality voter engagement and equips them to excel in conversations.	Develops and leads exceptional training programs that elevate volunteers' skills, ensuring they can have meaningful, impactful conversations with voters, and sets the standard for volunteer development.
Storytelling	Struggles to tell a compelling story or connect personal, campaign, or state narratives to voters, missing opportunities to engage and inspire.	Occasionally tells stories but lacks depth, clarity, or effectiveness in connecting personal or campaign narratives to voters in a meaningful way.	Effectively shares personal, Abigail's, and Virginia's stories with voters, making connections that resonate and inspire action.	Uses storytelling as a powerful tool to engage voters, seamlessly weaving personal, campaign, and state narratives into impactful, relatable conversations.	Incorporates storytelling into every voter interaction, making powerful emotional connections that inspire voters, and sets the bar for how stories can move people to act.

Case Study 2: Candidate Hiring & Evaluation Best Practices

To standardize their hiring process, the Virginia team, led by Abby O'Keefe, utilized Candidate Rubrics and Daily Hiring Check-In Meetings during peak hiring waves of the campaign. These best practice templates can be utilized and modified for any size campaign.

Candidate Rubric

The team utilized a written rubric system to ensure all candidates were evaluated daily on the same criteria and that managers were thinking about the most important criteria when assessing someone's readiness for a role.

[Sample: HERE](#)

Hiring Daily Check-in Meeting

During peak hiring waves, the team held a daily 30 minute meeting with managers to sync on hiring. They used this space to talk through how they are diversifying their pipeline, assess progress to their benchmarks, and talk through applicants together. It also allowed managers to get experience having to prepare for meetings and present their thoughts and recommendations to leadership. And, it gave the Organizing Director visibility into the process and an opportunity to give feedback and ensure managers were bringing the best people onto the team. Note that the duration and frequency of these hiring syncs may differ based on the stage of the campaign.

For the meetings, all tabs of the hiring tracker needed to be filled out completely and ready to be reviewed, and managers needed to be ready to report out on the following:

Quantitative

- Pipeline
- # of applicants in your pool
- # of 1st round interviews scheduled
- # of 2nd round interviews scheduled
- # of applicants in final stages (vet, references, approval)
- # of offers you are ready to make
- Any flags

Qualitative

- How are you working to diversify the pipeline?
- Do you feel like you are getting the information you need to make informed decisions with how your interviews are currently structured?
- Do you need any support?

Best Practices: Scoping Campaign Job Descriptions & Organizational Design

Hiring is one of the biggest determinants of a campaign's success. Without a talented and diverse workforce, even the best-funded and most well positioned campaigns can struggle to execute. That's because staffing decisions impact every dimension of the campaign: program quality, staff morale, ability to pivot, capacity to scale, and electoral impact. Yet for too long, establishing strong hiring processes and investing in staff recruitment on political campaigns has been deprioritized and rushed, resulting in haphazard hiring experiences and teams with unprepared leaders and staffing gaps when it matters most.

The first step is defining what roles your campaign needs to hire for and ensuring you have a clear sense of where that position fits into the broader organizational structure. Too often, campaign job descriptions are copy-and-pasted from previous iterations, without deliberate reflection on how the role may be different for this election and unique role responsibilities the position may entail.

As you're writing the job description, here are some high-level questions to ask yourself:

- What will this role actually own on a day-to-day basis, and how might that change at different phases of the campaign?
- What skills/experiences are truly essential up-front (e.g., does the candidate necessarily *need* previous campaign experience to be successful)?
- Realistically, what travel and hours will be demanded of this position?
- Who will this position report to, and how does that fit into the broader organizational structure?
- If applicable, review previous exit interviews and memos. What recommendations or suggestions have former employees made in regards to the job scope, or what issues did they encounter in the role that could be avoided?

Organizational design questions to consider, in terms of where this role fits in the team's structure:

- Are this position's responsibilities clearly defined, or is there overlap with other teams or individuals? If there's overlap, how will potential confusion or duplicative work be prevented?
- To what extent will this position work with other departments on the campaign? Which specific staffers will this role interact with laterally?
- Are all the responsibilities realistic for one person? Campaigns often need generalists in the early days, and it's not uncommon for early hires to take on more as the campaign is getting set up. What responsibilities will this staffer maintain versus what will be offloaded to additional staffers in later phases?
- At the peak of the campaign, how many layers of staff will this individual oversee and what will their maximum number of direct reports be? Is that span of direct reports realistic, or too large that another manager may be required?

Best Practices: Budgeting for Staff Recruitment

You know you need to hire, now what? To attract the best candidates and ensure no position goes unfilled, campaigns must approach talent recruitment the same way they approach their communications or fundraising: with clear tactics, measurable benchmarks, and the resources to be successful.

In the private sector, talent acquisition is treated as a core function because companies recognize that above all, people drive an organization's performance. To be competitive, campaigns need to adopt the same mindset. Valuing your talent means investing in their recruitment and development, and that requires a budget line item.

When budgeting for talent recruitment, consider:

- Flex budget to post the job on progressive job boards and partner with organizations specializing in campaign staff placements.
 - *Pricing estimate: \$100-500 per JD.*
- Applicant tracking software to post your job description.
 - *Pricing estimate: low cost options like TypeForm cost <\$50/month, and high cost options for more sophisticated software like Greenhouse can start at \$1,000/month. Campaigns can also use Google Forms for no additional cost, but there are real limitations on the back-end to manage candidates at scale.*

From the get-go, as soon as the campaign or Coordinated is launched, every team should have a talent bank link ready on their website. This ensures you don't miss a single interested candidate, no matter their level. Even if you aren't hiring yet, this gives you a sense of the initial interest in your campaign and leads for candidates to have early exploratory conversations with.

Best Practices: Professionalize Your Hiring Process

Campaigns should establish written, clear processes outlining their hiring operations, start to finish, utilized consistently across the organization. Some departments may modify this slightly (such as a data department adding in technical assessments), but this guarantees that there is a consistent and fair process for anyone interacting with a campaign's hiring managers.

Checklist to Professionalize Your Campaign Hiring Process:

- ☐ Hiring Steps:
 - ☐ In writing, enumerate the hiring steps, such as: screener > interview > decision. Will your team conduct screeners? How many interviews will be conducted? How will these interviews take place (screener on phone, interview on Meets, etc.)?

- ☐ Core Interview Questions:
 - ☐ At the department level, standardize core questions that should be asked in the screener and interview phases. Interviewers should feel empowered to ask additional questions, but at a minimum you can ensure all candidates are being asked the same core set of questions.
- ☐ Assessments:
 - ☐ Standardize any assessments or simulations, and at what stage in the process applicants should receive the simulation and how they will be graded.
- ☐ Outreach:
 - ☐ Standardize the language hiring managers should use when reaching out to new candidates to ensure consistency in communication and establish a formal hiring process.
- ☐ Evaluation Criteria:
 - ☐ Establish screener and interview assessment criteria to ensure consistency in how candidates are being evaluated, and so that there is a standardized and written record of the interview. This creates structure to avoid hiring judgement being based solely on “vibes.”.
- ☐ Timelines:
 - ☐ Set clear timelines for the hiring process and benchmarks to adhere to (interviews complete by X date, references complete by X date) and communicate these with candidates in the process. Tell candidates when they should expect to receive a decision or information on next steps. If these timelines change for any reason, be proactive in communicating these updates to candidates.
- ☐ Training:
 - ☐ Ensure that all hiring managers have been properly trained on all of the processes.
- ☐ Rejections:
 - ☐ Standardize rejection notification language across the organization, as well as guidelines ensuring all candidates are notified of an outcome of the hiring process.

Best Practices: Leadership Development & Staff Coaching

There are few other industries in which a staffer can amass so much responsibility, especially in terms of staff management, so quickly. Campaigns often promote staffers into management positions because they were excellent independent contributors, but effective management requires an entirely different set of skills. Even the most senior, experienced managers can benefit from supplemental and sustained training and coaching. The question for campaigns in 2026, therefore, is not *if* but *how* they will prepare their people managers

for their positions — and continue to invest in their development throughout the cycle, because the success of the campaign depends on it.

To do so, campaigns have numerous options:

- Staff training in-house, through a Training & Leadership Development Director and department who can own curriculum development and facilitation.
- Hiring external support to develop a management and coaching curriculum that is then facilitated by the team.
- Hiring an external leadership and coaching firm to facilitate management training and coaching for staff.

There are several coaching and leadership firms that the DNC, campaigns, and state parties have had the opportunity to partner with in past cycles:

- Volunteer Coaching Program (VCP)
- Women's Brain Trust
- Kinship Methods
- Redtree Strategies

Additional Resources

The DNC now has a website built exclusively for coordinated and state party staff and leadership to view and contribute training materials and resources called the [Dem Training Hub](#). The Dem Training Hub is home to hundreds of recorded training videos and slide decks from data and tooling and voter protection, to hiring and managing staff. Campaigns can utilize these materials to build out their own training programs and repurpose the material. In addition, the DNC offers live in-person and virtual training and development opportunities for staff and leadership to build their soft and hard skills throughout every cycle. [Request access to the Dem Training Hub here.](#)

Further resources:

- [Arena: Hiring Guide](#)
 - [Arena: Applicant and Interview Tracker](#)
- [Arena: Managing for Inclusive and Affirming Campaigns](#)
 - Includes best practices for day-to-day team building, advocating for your team, equity and inclusion on campaigns, and how to support your staff following an election.
 - [Arena: Embracing Equity and Inclusion on Campaigns](#)
- [GAIN Hiring/Interviewing Tips for Hiring Manager](#)

Case Study

When We Count: A Solution to Democrats' Voter Registration Crisis

Democrats are facing a voter registration crisis: From 2020 to 2024, Democrats lost 2.1M voters while Republicans gained 2.4M. Furthermore, the share of voters registering as Democrats has declined. More than 60% of new male registered voters were Republican, while only 55% of new female registered voters were Democrats. This is particularly concerning when reflecting back on 2018 data, where nearly ~66% of newly registered partisan voters under 45 years old were Democrats. The map below illustrates the stark contrast between Republican and Democratic registered voters from 2020-2024.¹



A key driver of this challenge is sustained Republican investment in partisan voter registration. The Republican Party has treated registration as a core electoral strategy, funding and executing programs through the party, C4s, and PACs, not relying solely on C3 nonprofits. Meanwhile, Democratic hard-side campaigns have largely deprioritized registration over the past decade — and the consequences are severe:

- **Non-Partisan Messaging** – 501(c)(3)s are an important non-partisan force that expands the universe of voters, especially voters of color. However, their legal limits restrict them from explicitly engaging on behalf of the party, missing the chance to persuade and invite new registrants to become Democrats.
- **Registration-Turnout Disconnect** – over the past decade, voters have been registered on the soft side, and then turned out on the hard side. This has the potential to create a fragmented pipeline, because the people registering supporters are not the same ones building a relationship with that voter and turning them out to vote.
- **Skill Atrophy for Staff** – five cycles of hard-side Democratic campaign staff have never registered a voter, a fundamental organizing skill.

That's why the DNC is making partisan voter registration a core strategic priority for the party in 2026. Moving forward, every Democratic campaign and state party should assess

¹ [The Democratic Party Faces a Voter Registration Crisis](#), New York Times. August 20, 2025.

voter registration opportunities and how registration fits into their path to victory. This will require hard-side campaigns to treat registration as a core organizing function. This will vary by state and district, based on the electorate, unique race, and state laws. In some districts, a large-scale partisan registration effort may be necessary; in others, a hypertargeted strategy focused on specific constituencies or geographies might be more effective. In 2026, every campaign should be able to answer the question of if, how, and where they will be registering more Democrats.

On January 13th, the DNC announced its flagship voter registration initiative: [When We Count](#), a National Youth Fellowship designed to rebuild Democratic registration capacity on the hard side at scale. The program will train the next generation of organizers to register thousands of Democrats in battleground House districts. This will directly close registration gaps between Democrats and Republicans and build Democratic margins in the districts that are essential to winning back the House in 2026.

When We Count is a paid, part-time national fellowship that recruits 18-29-year-old Democrats for comprehensive training in partisan voter registration best practices. Fellows will be held accountable to weekly voter registration goals, with an initial focus on non-college youth voters. In its first six months, the program is expected to train 300 fellows and register over 100,000 new voters.

The program will launch in Arizona and Nevada in Spring 2026, with planned expansion across the Sun Belt in Summer 2026. There are six battleground congressional districts across these two states, as well as critical Gubernatorial, Secretary of State, and Attorney General races. Fellows will use Reach, a relational organizing tool with high-impact voter registration functionality proven effective in 2024. Reach enables personalized registration outreach, automated follow-ups between registration and Election Day, real-time registration tracking, and local leaderboards to drive accountability, thereby ensuring new registrations convert into votes for Democrats.

Case Study

Digital Strategy for Democratic Campaigns

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 58% of Americans get news from digital — more than TV, radio, and print combined
- Use DNC resources: FactPost for clips, @TheDemocrats for memes (no attribution needed)
- Be authentic — don't force trends, caption all videos, show your human side
- Reserve handles you can't maintain; only launch accounts you'll actively use

KEY ACTIONS

- Download clips from FactPost daily for rapid response content
- Make volunteer sign-ups the clearest action prompt on your website
- Caption every video (75% watch on mute)
- Register social handles early — even if you won't use them yet

PRO TIPS

- Creators are constituents, not press — build real relationships
- Include non-political niches in creator outreach (sports, beauty, lifestyle)
- Search Engine Optimization gives you control, algorithms don't — invest in keywords and metadata
- Test everything: subject lines, graphics, ask amounts, button colors

WATCH OUT

- Right-wing creator ecosystem is massive and well-funded — be strategic, not reactive
- Don't force candidates into trends that don't fit — authenticity matters
- Avoid fake urgency, fake matches, and scammy fundraising tactics

CONTACTS & RESOURCES

- Creator partnerships: Matt Rein — reinm@dnc.org
- Creator resources: [Democrats.org/Creator-Signal](https://democrats.org/creator-signal) & [Democrats.org/Creator-Clips](https://democrats.org/creator-clips)
- Political email archive: politicalemails.org | Facebook Ads Library: facebook.com/ads/library

Why Digital Matters

The internet is Democrats' number one battleground heading into 2026 and 2028.

58% of Americans get their news from digital devices — that's more than TV, radio, and print combined. And when you look at political news specifically, more Americans stay informed via digital outlets than via linear television.

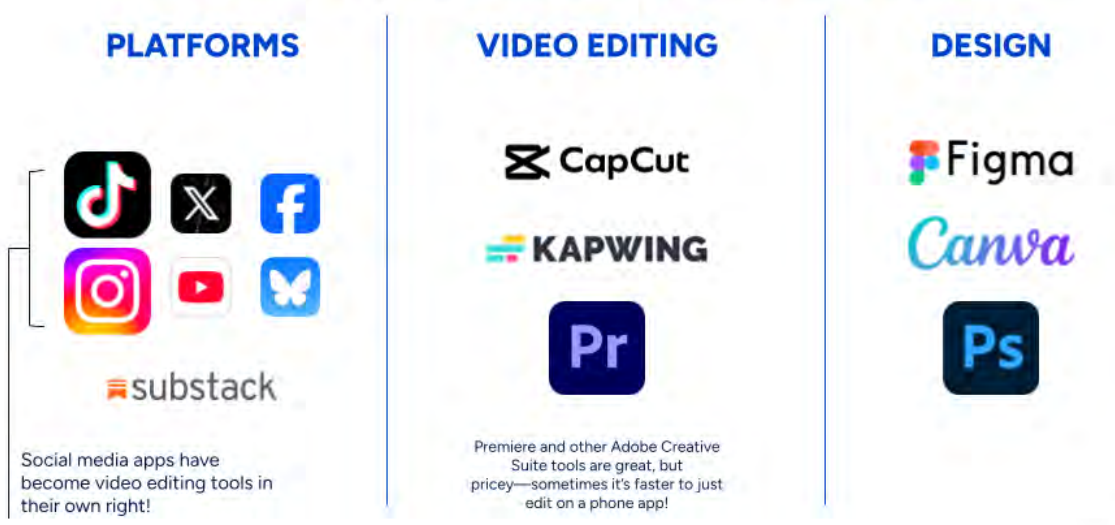
The solution seems simple: Democrats should post more and "flood the zone."

But we face significant headwinds. Over a quarter of Americans get their political news from right-wing outlets, and right-wing billionaires are buying up major social media platforms and news outlets to dominate the digital airwaves with Republican propaganda. On top of that, the right-leaning content creator ecosystem (see Turning Point USA) is massive and well-funded.

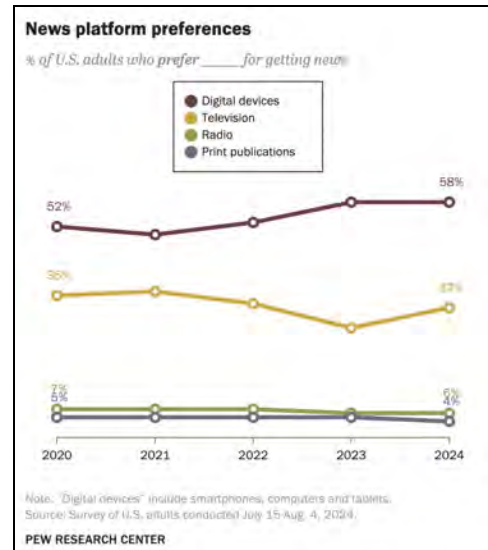
In an environment this challenging, it's important that Democratic campaigns don't just "do digital" for the sake of doing digital. We need to become more effective content creators.

Recommended Tools for Content Creation

Every campaign has different content priorities that require different toolkits. Here are our recommended tools for content creation.



Best Practices for Content



Do What Works

- Pay attention to metrics and performance.
- Campaigns should avoid launching social media platform accounts just for the sake of having them. If you aren't actively posting native content on an active social platform, don't feel obligated to launch it.
- Note: You should still register and reserve the social media handles for your candidate/campaign so that you have them on hand should you ever need them, and so that bad actors can't take them.

Use Social Media as Intended — Be a Strategic User

- Interact with other creators by replying to them, stitching (adding part of another creator's video to your own with your commentary) their content, and reposting content that resonates.

If You're a Candidate: Be a Normal Human

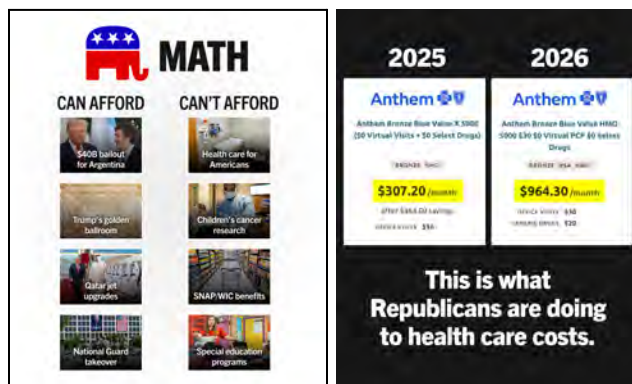
- Show your hobbies and interests outside of politics: Sports, Music, Movies/Television.
- Family and personal content perform well.
- Don't force yourself into trends/memes if it doesn't feel right. People want authenticity.

Caption Your Videos

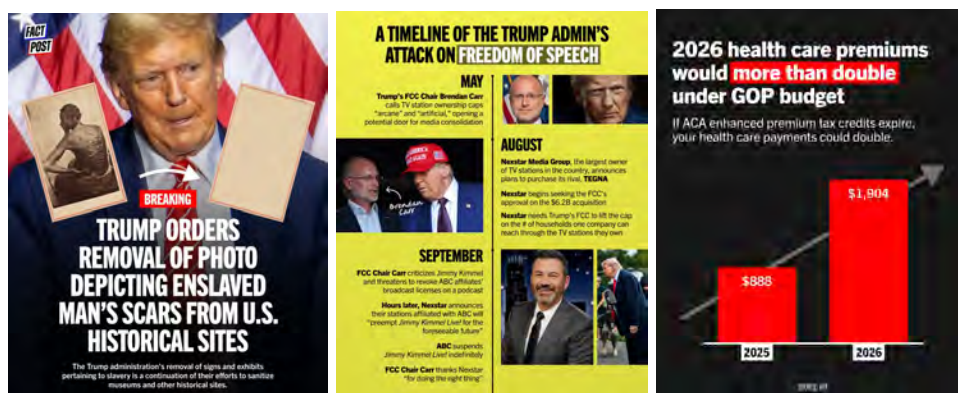
- 75% of people watch mobile videos on mute, so adding captions ensures every viewer is getting the most out of your content.
- Video captioning also makes your content accessible to deaf and hard of hearing users.
- Captions introduce movement to your videos, improving viewer retention.

Graphic inspiration

Simple infographics



News-style updates



Panel graphics and “side-by-sides”



Video Editing

For simple, low-cost video editing, consider investing in a monthly CapCut or Kapwing subscription. Both programs offer social-optimized caption and video templates that make it easy to format news clips, remarks clips, and direct-to-camera selfie videos for social media.

Adobe Premiere, which is part of the Adobe Creative Suite, is widely recognized as the industry standard for video editing, but it can be expensive for smaller campaigns or organizations.

Design

Canva is widely used as a free or low-cost graphic design tool. If you have a bit more budget, consider investing in Figma, which is a web-based design tool that allows for easy, seamless collaboration.

Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator are parts of the Adobe Creative Suite and widely regarded as the industry standard for graphic design. For most simple graphics, you can get away with lower-cost options.

Web Strategy

How can we build strong websites to help us win in 2026 and beyond?

Leverage Your Site to Drive Volunteer Shift Sign Ups

- Make sure that your volunteer asks are the most clear calls to action (CTA) on your website.
- The CTA text should be bold, a contrasting color, underlined, etc. — anything to draw the user's attention quickly to the action you would like them to take.
- Make it as easy as possible for users to sign up to volunteer via the CTA on your website. The link should go directly to the specific event link that you are promoting.
- A good general rule of thumb is that you want to minimize the number of clicks it will take for your user to get from the call to action to actually signing up for the event in question.

Write Clear, Strong Copy

- Don't overcomplicate your copy or use fancy language. Strong copy is often simple and concise.
 - Instead of: Democrats want to reduce the burdens that fall on working families associated with the tariffs of the Trump administration, say: Democrats want to lower costs.
- Another good guideline is for your most important copy to fall "above the fold," meaning that the user should see ALL of the most important context and calls to action before they scroll down at all.

Ensure Website Accessibility

- Strong copy is accessible copy. A good goal is to aim for at or around a fifth-grade reading level so that all users can take in the information you are presenting.
- Ensure that language options are available. There are plugins/extensions (PolyLang is a good one) if you are using WordPress that can automate translation for you.

Use Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- Websites are not susceptible to an algorithm in the same way that Instagram, Twitter or other social media platforms are to uplift content.
- One big factor you can work with in boosting content visibility on the web is Search Engine Optimization, or SEO — using keywords, image descriptions and other forms of metadata (data about the content) to ensure that a website appears as high up on search engines like Google and Safari as possible.
- The cool thing about SEO is that you have a level of detailed control over this space in a way that you simply cannot achieve via platforms that run via an algorithm.

Best Practices for Working With Content Creators

- Be inclusive! Feel free to screen creators, but do not restrict your creator network to only those that are always in alignment with your campaign, or even the Democratic Party broadly.
- (Most) creators are not journalists or communications professionals. Do not make the mistake of treating creators as just press or like they are an arm of the communications team. Creators are just regular constituents, with their own unique needs and thoughts.
- Get to know creators on an individual level, and understand how their content can fit into your messaging.
- Think outside the box. Involve cultural, lifestyle, sports, beauty, and more niches into your creator network.

The DNC Influencer and Creative Partnerships team is focused on building authentic new media partnerships that elevate Democratic values and voices. Our program boasts nearly 400 creators with 50m+ combined followers in our flagship signal, where we send daily messaging guidance and clips. We're working to build long-lasting relationships with creators that will exist beyond any individual campaign or campaign cycle.

We want to be a resource for campaigns, state parties, and elected officials by helping tap into our existing creator network, but ultimately, assist you in building your own creator networks and information channels.

First, if you know creators in your state, send them to [Democrats.org/Creator-Signal](https://democrats.org/Creator-Signal) and [Democrats.org/Creator-Clips](https://democrats.org/Creator-Clips). These are the main touchpoints for our network and a great way to plug in to our existing infrastructure.

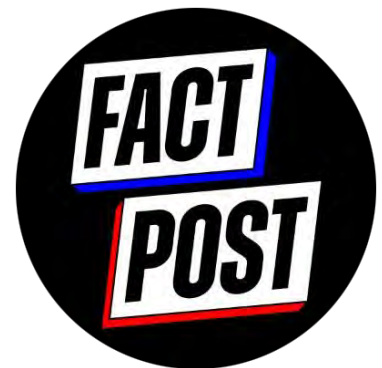
Second, you can contact Director of Influencer and Creative Partnerships, Matt Rein, at reinm@dnc.org for any questions related to the influencer and creator universe.

The DNC as a Content Resource

We want state parties, campaigns, elected officials, and progressive causes to use us as a resource: use our clips, and repost our memes. That's what they're there for!

If you're looking for rapid news clips and stories to download and iterate on, FactPost has you covered. FactPost is the DNC's official rapid response (content created quickly to respond to news or events) account, and it publishes dozens of clips and news stories every day for the Democratic ecosystem to create content with.

- Twitter: twitter.com/factpostnews
- Facebook: facebook.com/factpost
- Instagram: instagram.com/factpostnews



- Bluesky: bsky.app/profile/factpostnews.bsky.social

If you're looking for infographics, memes, and message framing, feel free to rip content from the DNC's social accounts. No attribution is necessary — we want to be a resource!

- Twitter: twitter.com/thedemocrats
- Facebook: facebook.com/democrats
- Instagram: instagram.com/thedemocrats
- Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/democrats.org>
- Threads: threads.com/@thedemocrats
- TikTok: tiktok.com/@democrats

In-House Grassroots Fundraising

Why Grassroots Fundraising Matters:

While many campaigns completely outsource their grassroots fundraising to a firm, we recommend running an in-house program (and if you need extra capacity, a firm can help). Why?

- A Digital or Grassroots Fundraising Director in-house can oversee the program at a fraction of the cost of a firm.
- The team being integrated with the campaign means they have a better sense of messaging, tone, and what's happening on the ground.
- This team would focus solely on your program; strategists at firms are juggling a number of clients and programs at once.

Email and SMS

Getting Started:

- Customer Relationship Management Platforms (CRMs): We recommend ActionKit for email and Scale to Win for texting.
- List building: Ask people to opt into your email and SMS programs as frequently as you can; on your website, via ads, on your donation pages, at events, on social, etc.

A Good Email:

- Grabs the reader's attention.
- Keeps their eyes moving.
- Makes a clear ask + does it relatively quickly.
- Is personalized to the recipient, if possible.

Calendaring:

- Email and texting are great ways to communicate with donors about non-fundraising messages as well.

- Make sure you're balancing these sends with your fundraising sends.

What's Working For Others:

- Sign up for a bunch of other programs' emails, political and non-political, and take inspiration from them.
- If a program keeps sending the same email, that's a sign that that email is working for them.
- [You can also check the archive of political emails here.](#)

Things to Avoid:

- Paragraphs of more than a few sentences.
- Getting lost in the details of any given topic.
- Including the ask too late in the email.
- Giving the reader permission to tune out (phrases like "you already know this," "you may have already seen this," etc.)

Ads

CTAs:

- While you're building your email list, you can focus on Acquisition ads to acquire donor information. These ads are designed to collect new supporter info, and they can be a petition, a survey or anything that will get a donor to click and give you their email and phone number.
- Switching to a strategy that prioritizes Direct Donate ads (ads encouraging immediate donations) raised the DNC over ten million dollars in 2025 alone.

Platforms:

- We recommend running ads on Meta and Google Search. These platforms are easy to use, easy to optimize, and cost-effective.

Strategy:

- Direct-to-camera videos: videos where the person speaks straight to the camera, as if they're talking directly to the viewer.
 - An easy way to get a message to donors.
- Graphic ads: using text and images to get your message across.

What's Working For Others:

- [You can check out the Facebook Ads Library here.](#)

Direct Mail

Direct mail is the top-earning channel for the DNC. However, it also requires a large amount of cash up front. If you can afford it, we strongly recommend running a direct mail program.

The majority of political donors are older, and despite the fact that we're living in a digital age, the demographics of our direct mail donors have remained the same. Our direct mail program revenue has not decreased over the last decade plus, and we raised over \$100M for the DNC and presidential campaign in 2024 through mail alone.

Best Practices

- There are many programs that use unethical, scammy tactics. Send your supporters genuine messages that make a compelling argument for why they need to donate. Be clear where the donor's money is going.
- Do NOT utilize: fake/incorrect voter/donor profile matches, urgency when it doesn't exist, or a false sense of panic.
- You should run a test on every piece of content you're putting out.
- Test subject lines, content, graphics, portraits, signers, ask amount, button color, landing page design, anything that could have any impact on your fundraising.
- Send follow-up emails, mail, or calls. Most campaigns and organizations are not thanking donors, and this makes you stand out and increases sustained donor engagement. Donors will often give a second gift when they are being thanked!
- Recurring gifts, or monthly donor contributions, help you plan your budget and maximize incoming revenue. Optimize your program to bring in as many monthly gifts as possible without sacrificing one-time revenue.

Case Study

DNC Local Listeners

Context

In traditional field programs, voter contact has often been transactional, prioritizing volume and rapid data collection over the depth of the conversation. Standard scripts push volunteers to quickly identify support and move on, leaving little room for genuine connection or qualitative feedback. In early 2026, the DNC Distributed Organizing team set out to challenge that model by launching the Local Listeners program.



Goals

The overarching goals of the Local Listeners program represented a shift in campaign philosophy, aiming to:

1. Re-think early cycle voter contact to be a listening-first approach with more thoughtful language. We wanted to move away from rigid, transactional scripts and instead focus on trust building and feedback loops with voters.
2. Scale relational organizing buy-in among supporters. We targeted training 750-1,000 volunteers as effective community listeners and leaders, online and offline. To scale buy-in for these non-traditional voter contact methods, which require a heavier touch, we leveraged these already bought-in local listeners to jump-start our volunteer programming.
3. Rebuild trust with supporters. By demonstrating that the Democratic Party values their lived experiences and concerns, rather than just treating them as a vote to be harvested, we sought to re-engage disillusioned voters and empower them to take action.

Tactics to Activate Local Listeners

The campaign activated and trained volunteers for this program through two primary mechanisms:

- The Local Listeners Bootcamp: A seven-week virtual training series held every Wednesday, designed to prepare volunteers to become trusted, community-rooted organizers. The curriculum covered community mapping, active listening 101, handling hard conversations (both on and offline), and event hosting.
- Specialized Deep-Listening Phone Banks: Trained Listeners made longer-form calls to a targeted universe: voters with a Support Score of 70+ who voted in 2020 but did not vote in 2024. The goal was to log qualitative feedback and build relationships rather than simply IDing the voter.

Calls Programming Overview

To achieve our goal of listening-first voter contact, we completely overhauled our approach to the phone bank script and training. We leveraged the Scale to Win Short Answer question type to collect qualitative feedback on the calls.

Caller training emphasized empathetic listening over persuasion. Success means understanding voter feelings, not securing a 'yes' or vote plan.

When voters are disengaged:

- Don't try to fix it: Understand *why* they feel that way. Conversations can be open-ended.
- Normalize: Acknowledge their feeling is common ("A lot of people I talk to are feeling this way").
- Be Curious, not corrective: Avoid debating. Ask: "What do you wish you were seeing?" or "What made politics start to feel exhausting?"

Note-taking (300 characters/question) must capture:

- Feeling: How they sounded/described themselves.
- Issue/Experience: The root cause of the feeling.
- Meaning: Why it matters to them.

Calls Script Summary:

Hi, [First Name], this is [YOUR NAME], a volunteer with the Democrats. I'm calling because we're having conversations with folks to better understand how people are feeling about the direction of our country right now and I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Question 1: When you think about the country right now, do you feel like things are headed in the right direction or the wrong direction? *[Even if they say they're a Republican, we still want to hear their thoughts.]*

Question 2: *Totally understood, and a lot of people are feeling that way. What's been most concerning or frustrating for you and your family?*

Question 3: *What do you wish politicians knew about you and your community?*

Question 4: *I really appreciate you sharing your thoughts on all of this. Since it's a midterm year, I do have one final question: When you think about the elections coming up in 2026, how likely do you think you are to vote?*

If Voters are Disillusioned about voting: *That makes a lot of sense — a lot of people I talk to feel that way. You don't have to decide anything today. Is there anything else you're hoping to see from politicians that you feel like you haven't yet, or anything else you want the Democratic Party to know?*

Cross-Departmental Coordination

Collaboration across departments was essential to launch this program. These external departments supported the program by:

- Mobilization & Digital Teams: Supported massive recruitment pushes through SMS, targeted emails, Substack, WhatsApp, and social media amplification.
- Comms: Supported on [landing stories](#) on the program to help create natural interest from supporters in what we are doing.
- Coalitions & Partners: Amplified the program to their networks, utilizing a specialized social toolkit.
- Research, Comms, and Legal: Reviewed and approved the listening-first script and provided regular talking points on key issues (like state-level Democratic achievements) so volunteers had factual resources.

Systems

- Qualitative Data Trackers: We utilized Google Gemini to parse through qualitative data, and collect topline in a weekly report. All data was shared directly with the DCCC on a weekly basis, with district-specific breakdowns and quotes from voters.
- Slack / Discord Channel: Used as a community hub for volunteers to share strategies, ask questions, and access training materials.
- Resource Workbooks: Workbooks and one-pagers were provided to attendees after each session to reinforce the curriculum ([access the links here](#)).

Key Takeaways & Future Recommendations

Salient Successes

- Volunteers are hungry for this work, and voters just want to be heard. We received some of the best feedback from voters AND volunteers who are doing this work both from phone banks and from the training. Feedback included:
 - “These calls felt very impactful - keep doing them. I will do more - I will recruit others to do them. People want to be heard.”
 - “I’m actually getting more confident in my ability to talk politics with others, composed rather than insecure”
 - “This was one of the most rewarding things I have done in a year”
- Gathering Highly Actionable, Nuanced Data: The listening-first script successfully captured deep qualitative insights into voter anxieties. The feedback reports provided depth to voter feelings that traditional ID calls might miss, such as specific feelings, anxieties, and concerns rather than a check box of an issue they care about.
- Securing Volunteer Buy-In: The program successfully reframed organizing for many participants. Feedback forms indicated that volunteers highly valued learning how to approach difficult conversations with empathy and how to pivot from conversations

about what people care about, into how that reflects into actions they can take (voting, volunteering, supporting their community). They appreciated the emphasis on listening over talking and found the provided scripts for navigating disillusionment to be empowering.

Changes for the Future

- **Increase CRM and Qualitative Reporting Capacity:** The program highlighted the current gap in political tools for a platform that can support plain language notes as key data points. Local Listeners data and the notes and feedback volunteers were sharing was manually reviewed and synthesized, so as the program scaled, our reporting structure became difficult to manage.
- **Clearer Focus on the Goals of the Training:** While the bootcamp content was in-depth, the focus occasionally lost the plot when it came to the actual output we were seeking from attendees: actually engaging in conversations and reporting back. If we were to do this program again, we would center all curriculum around having attendees both engaging in and recording conversations.

For resources and materials, visit democrats.org/local-listeners.