

PLANNING YOUR COMMUNITY'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WORK



Having a clear plan for your community's civic engagement efforts can help ensure your efforts are successful. Use this resource as a guide to start your work off on the right track!



- **Think about capacity and get buy-in:** Mapping out a plan for your civic engagement efforts includes thinking about the people who will help see it through. Who will be the core leaders or point people? Who are the key stakeholders in your community that need to be consulted and invested in this work? How many volunteers will you need and, if need be, how will you recruit them?



- **Set clear goals:** Setting goals will help you stay focused and will guide the creation of your strategy. A goal is the thing(s) you would like to accomplish at the end of your civic engagement efforts. Consider thinking about what your desired outcomes are, and what would be a successful measure of those outcomes. For example, one

goal may be that you increase the number of young people in your community that vote, and a measurement of this could be that 100% of 18-year-olds in your community vote or pledge to vote. Another goal may be that your civic engagement efforts help foster and encourage new leaders to emerge in your community and a measurement of this goal may be that a set number of new people join your social justice committee following the election.

- **Decide on your target audience(s):** Based on your goals, consider your target audience(s). Your audience will impact the types of activities you plan, when and where they occur, the messages you present and the way you communicate. For example, if your goal is to increase the number of young voters in your community, your audience may be your NFTY region, youth group or high-school seniors, and families with college students. Your audience may include people outside your Reform Jewish community. If this is the case, you will also want to think about organizations doing similar work and/or groups that would be



good to partner with, including working across lines of difference (across lines of race, faith and class).

- **Check to see if there is a RAC ballot measure campaign in your state:** The RAC is working in a few states to support or oppose ballot measures. In these states, the RAC will suggest voter engagement actions that help advance the ballot measure campaigns. Check the [RAC's Ballot Initiative website for the latest list of RAC ballot measure campaigns](#).
- **Decide what you will do:** There are many approaches that your community can take to doing civic engagement work. Use the goals you set to help decide what activities you will engage in and choose things that will bring you closer to achieving these goals. For example, if your goal is to educate voters or build relationships with elected officials, you may decide to host a candidate forum. For more information on different types of civic engagement activities you may choose to do, read the RAC's [Voter Engagement website](#) and [Candidate Engagement website](#).
- **Come up with a timeline:** While much of your planning can be done ahead of time and you can start your activities early, it is important to remember that the two months before an election should be the height of when your civic engagement work happens as this is when there is peak citizen interest. When creating a timeline, plan to intensify your efforts starting in September. Know that while your efforts may peak at this period, advance planning will be key for certain activities like candidate events. Also, keep election dates and deadlines in mind when planning voter engagement work such as registration drives.
- **Review the relevant laws:** When making plans, it is important to understand laws surrounding the civic engagement work that your community will be doing:
 - **Laws for non-profits:** As 501(C)(3) organizations, it is required that Reform Jewish communities stay nonpartisan in any civic engagement efforts. Read the RAC's ["Do's and Don'ts of Civic Engagement Work for Non-Profits"](#) for more information.
 - **State laws:** Each state has different laws regarding civic engagement, particularly around voting and voter registration. When planning your efforts, read Appendix A: Voting Laws in your State of the [RAC's Voter Engagement Toolkit](#) for more information.
- **Keep track of who you engage:** It is important that from the start of your civic engagement work, you are keeping track of every person with whom you interact. This will both help you



through the election and in the social justice work you engage in following the election, and even help your group the next time you do civic engagement work. Studies show that what really mobilizes voters is repeated personal contact.¹ For example, if someone attends a candidate forum you host, you will want to make sure they are on the contact list for your "get out the vote" efforts closer to the election. If you registered someone at your local shopping center, you will want to call them to make sure they have a voting plan. And after the election, you may want to call upon someone you engaged when you are mobilizing your community to attend a rally or other action. Consider setting up a spreadsheet with everyone's name and contact information, along with one column for each of the possible ways for them to be contacted or engaged throughout your civic engagement work. A good place to start is with a list of your congregation or community members. Keeping track of your contacts does not have to be fancy or expensive, as long as the information is kept up to date and is easy to use. [The RAC has created a sample voter contact spreadsheet that you can view here.](#)

- **Let the RAC know what you are planning:** We are more powerful when we are working together, and with the full force of the Reform Movement behind this Civic Engagement Campaign, our impact grows exponentially! We want to celebrate your community's work and make sure it is counted as part of our Movement's overall efforts. Let us know about your civic engagement efforts by [submitting this short form](#).
- **Evaluate your progress:** Throughout and at the completion of your civic engagement efforts, make sure to assess your progress based on the goals you set. What successes have you had so far? What challenges are you facing and what can you learn from them to change moving forward?

Developed with the help of resources from [Nonprofit Vote](#) and [Advocacy and Communication Solutions](#).

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/07/15/how-to-mobilize-reluctant-voters/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7961c4c6208c



Resources used:

- http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/tools_and_resources_2016/Get_Out_the_Vote_GOTV.pdf
- http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/tools_and_resources_2016/Building_an_Effective_Electoral_Strategy.pdf
- http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/tools_and_resources_2016/DOs_and_DONTs_of_Electoral_Advocacy.pdf
- <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2018/03/2018-voter-engagement-timeline-nonprofits.pdf/>
- https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2018/02/making-voter-engagement-plan_year-template-pdf.pdf/
- <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/08/a-voter-participation-starter-kit.pdf/>
- <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2016/01/getting-started-voter-engagement.pdf/>
- http://www.advocacyandcommunication.org/wp-content/themes/acs/docs/resources/eadvocacy/ACS_Voter_Registration_Guide3.pdf