2015 Organizer Toolkit
National Voter Registration Day: September 22nd, 2015

10 Steps To Getting Started

1. **Read through resources.** You’re already reading this, so good work! Make sure to download any field or communications tools you might need. You can find them here: [www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org/resources](http://www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org/resources).

2. **Get connected.** Get acquainted with [www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org](http://www.NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org). This is where you can download any materials you need, and submit questions to be answered by our staff. Also make sure to like National Voter Registration Day on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), and follow the event on [Twitter](https://twitter.com), using the handle @celebrateNVRD.

3. **Start early.** It’s never too soon to start planning. Figure out the stuff you can knock off your list early and get it out of the way. Where will you register people? Will there be a lot of people there during midday on a Tuesday? Who will you recruit as volunteers?

4. **Convene your planning crew.** Meet somewhere fun. Go over the basic plan for the event, answer people’s questions, and get your team excited.

5. **Set your goals.** Check out our Goals and Objectives on the following page, and then think about your own goals. How many volunteers do you want to recruit? How many voters do you want to register?

6. **Write and follow your field plan.** Figure out what it’s going to take to recruit enough volunteers for your event and then follow the plan to a T.

7. **Set your schedule.** Timelines help you stuff get done. Start by setting your date (probably September 22nd), and then plan backwards from that date. Schedule deadlines for things like venue confirmation, press contact, and volunteer recruitment, and team training.

8. **Ask for help.** Contact us if you need something and we’ll do our best to make your organizing life easier. That’s what we’re here for! You can contact us at nvrd@busfedcivic.org.

9. **Participate in any trainings you need.** Worried that you don’t have knowledge about voter registration laws in your state? Looking for tips on how to have the best event ever? Email nvrd@busfedcivic.org to request a training. Some of our fancy lawyer friends have volunteered to put together an online training for any state that needs it. It’s never a bad thing to have too MUCH knowledge!

10. **Get to work.** This is where it gets fun! Things might get crazy as September 22nd approaches. Trust in the work you’ve done.
Planning an event like National Voter Registration Day can be challenging. Here are some things to keep in mind as you start planning your event.

- **Training**: It takes forethought to make sure volunteers are trained on state and national laws regarding voter registration collection. Many organizations participating have never done work like this before.

- **One day only**: Your event will only last a day, probably September 22nd. This is nice because you don’t have to run a whole voter registration campaign, but it does mean you’ll only be doing it for one day - so registering as many people as possible is important.

- **You may feel like everyone is already registered**: It’s never a bad thing that lots of people are registered. If you feel like your community is already well engaged, you can have your volunteers help register other communities that might not have as much access as yours, such as low-income communities or places where people are transient, like college campuses. Not to mention, people have to re-register every time they move — and many aren’t sure if their records are up to date.

- **It’s not a presidential election year**: Elections happening this year have a direct effect on the lives of voters. State legislatures, school boards, governors, mayors, and members of Congress are all going to be elected this year. These elections are important, and so is your voice.

Luckily, we’ve done this before. And we’re here to help.
Building Your Team

Your National Voter Registration Day event has lots of potential. This is a great opportunity to bring new people into your organization and empower a significant number of citizens to be more engaged in their communities. To make your event as influential as possible, you're going to need help. The first thing you'll need is a dedicated crew to help you plan your event. When recruiting your team, here are a few qualities to look for:

★ Diligent and Committed. There’s nothing worse than counting on someone’s help, only to have them flake out. Be clear up front with your volunteers about your expectations and needs. Look for people you can count on. One super-committed planner is better than 25 people who don’t know up. Much better.

★ Cool and Creative. Look for people who will contribute creative energy. Our resource page includes some suggestions for ways to make your event cool and innovative, but the best ideas will come from your planning team. You’ll know your audience a whole lot better than we will.

★ Connected and Networked. That girl you work with who has 7,000,000 Facebook friends? Sounds like an asset. That guy that seems to organize every other event on your campus? Definitely good to have around.

★ Smart and passionate. Smart people who are passionate about voter engagement are always good to have around.

Goal Setting

Check out our goals on the previous page, then think about your own goals. Here are some of the big questions to think about:

★ What kinds of people do you want to talk to? Students? Transit riders?
★ How many volunteers do you want to engage? 5? 50? 500?
★ How many registrations do you want to collect? The average volunteer will get about 1 registration an hour. There are a few places we’ve found lots of success in registering voters: college campuses in the middle of the day are at the top of the list.
Volunteer Recruitment

How does your organization ensure a successful event?
“LOTS of planning! We plan for National Voter Registration Day months in advance and cover every small detail: we provide pens, even, for our volunteers. I think that talking through the event weeks and even months in advance helps you be ready for anything and anticipate what will vibe best with your target audience.”
-Hannah Beck, MOVE San Antonio

Figuring Out How Many Volunteers You Need

You read about our goals for National Voter Registration Day, and have hopefully thought a little bit about your own organization’s goals. In order to make sure everyone reaches their goals nationally and locally, we’ve developed these resources as a guide.

It takes lots of time to find volunteers. Not everybody who says they are going to volunteer will show up. The reliability of your volunteers depends on how loyal your volunteers are, how close they are to you, and how often you’ve asked them to volunteer. Every organization is different, but you normally want to start volunteer outreach at least 2 weeks before an event. That way you have plenty of time to make initial outreach calls, and then make follow-up reminder calls to each person who said they’d attend.

Our experience gives us the following assumptions:
• For most organizations, about half of the volunteers who say they will show up actually do. It’s a good idea to recruit twice as many volunteers as your goal. It will never hurt to have extra volunteers on the day of your event!
• A typical caller can make around 25 calls per hour.
• Most non-profits we’ve worked with (who have asked a lot from their volunteers) get 1 or 2 people to say “yes” per hour.
• Most volunteers can make an effective 2 hours of recruitment calls and not much more.

Based on the points above, here is an example of how much time and how many people you’d need to reach your volunteer goals:
Again, all of this information is relative to the size and quality of your volunteer list.

**Best practices for Volunteer Recruitment Calls**

**★ Overall:**
- Smile. Every time you’re on the phone. It sounds silly, but it helps, we promise.
- Always know what you want to ask: have specific times, dates, and places.
- If possible, have a caller who knows the prospective volunteer call them.
- Call through active volunteers first.
- Make sure people who are calling to recruit volunteers are having fun, and are enthusiastic about what they’re asking people to do.
- Feed your callers! Try to get a volunteer or a local store to donate food.
- Try to find a place that won’t echo so your callers don’t get distracted.

**★ When to call:**
- Best time to call is 5:30pm-9:00pm on a weekday.
- Always schedule time for training before calls actually start.
- Make time in your agenda for the night to give folks a break and maybe eat dinner or a snack.

**★ How to call:**
- Give your callers a script, then ask them to practice it and make it their own.
- Have a stated expectation for number of calls made per person. Give folks a list with a specific number of calls, and encourage them to finish the list.
- Don’t set down the phone. It can be surprisingly hard to pick it back up.
- Have volunteers record the responses somewhere so you can call back through unanswered numbers and you can save time not calling people who have already been talked to again.

**★ When someone says “no”:**
- Try to get them to volunteer for a different event with your organization. Don’t waste the phone call!
- Note the tone of their voice. If someone sounds annoyed, staying on the phone with them can do more harm than good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Objective</th>
<th>How many volunteers do you need to say “yes?”</th>
<th>How many 2-hour calling shifts should you plan for calling potential volunteers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
★ Have a way of rewarding people who finish their list or get positive results, even if it's just a high five. Many organizations find it helpful to have a way to celebrate each new volunteer commitment.
★ When you find someone who seems like they're excited about the cause, try to get them to bring friends! If they were somebody who said “no,” ask them to tell their friends about the event.

Partnerships

It’s likely that there are other organizations in your community that have a volunteer base your organization might not have tapped into yet. Talk to them and coordinate! If you’re in a larger city, there might even be other groups working on National Voter Registration Day. You can find events in your area by going to the National Voter Registration Day website, or email nvrd@busfedcivic.org to connect you with other organizers in your area.

How does your organization utilize partnerships?
“ In NYC, we have taken the approach of working with partners and volunteers to host a broad scale of events designed to bring awareness of NVRD as a day of pride. We have accomplished this by co-hosting large and small opportunities for voter registration and engagement. The events have ranged from celebrity hosted student rallies, to workplace and subway drives to new citizen swearing-in ceremonies.”
-Onida Coward Mayers, NYC Votes
Logistics

Before the Event

★ Get whatever trainings you and your team need.
   ★ We’ll provide pre-recorded trainings that will go over the basics of volunteer recruitment, event logistics, best practices, and basic legal guidelines, which can be found in the Resources section of the website.
   ★ You can always request a specific webinar for your state, or ask questions as they come up. Send those requests to nvrd@busfedcivic.org.

★ Pick a location and get approval from the venue, if need be:
   ★ Prioritize places with lots of foot traffic.
   ★ Think about places where unregistered voters will be
   ★ We’ve seen the most success on college campuses and areas around public transit

★ Think about what you may need:
   ★ Plenty of blank registration forms (both state and national forms, just in case you find somebody who needs to register out of state). You can find where to get these in your state’s legal guide available on our website.
   ★ A clipboard and multiple pens for every volunteer
   ★ Sample scripts*
   ★ A volunteer sign in sheet*
   ★ “National Voter Registration Day” posters*
   ★ Stickers to identify volunteers and give away*
   ★ Copies of state laws and regulations*
   ★ A sign up to volunteer sheet*
   ★ A training script for all of your trainers
   ★ Envelopes or boxes for completed registration forms.
   ★ A table
   ★ A source of shade (umbrella or tent)
   ★ A way to play music
   ★ Hand made posters and banners with your organization’s name

Huong Nguyen, VAYLA - New Orleans
Components

★ **Location:**
  ★ Decorate venue with “Register to Vote here” signs that will be included in the organizing kit. It’s always helpful to make some of your own signs, too!
  ★ Pick a spot that is likely high-traffic for people who live in the area. Tourist locations attract lots of people, but many won’t be registering to vote.
  ★ Local college campuses, transit stations, grocery stores, farmers markets, gas stations, sporting events, and places of worship are all great locations

★ **Volunteers:**
  ★ Have volunteers show up well before you actually plan on having the event take place so that they can be trained. Factor in enough time in case volunteers show up a little late.
  ★ Have volunteers sign in so you can keep track of who is helping you out. There is a sample sign in sheet on the Resources page that will make it really easy to track who volunteered and how many voters they registered.

★ **Pre-event training:**
  ★ One person can train approximately 5-10 others. Make sure you have enough trainers for all of your volunteers! Each trainer should be familiar with voter registration rules in your state, as well as tips for talking to prospective voters.

Training should include

★ Who can register to vote in your state?
  ★ What about persons with felony convictions? If I turn 18 by elections, but I’m 17 now?

★ How to fill out a registration form and which fields are required

★ Where to look for common mistakes, such as county being listed as USA

★ Messaging: We’re not here to tell you who to vote for, just to help you register.

★ Myth busting: Discuss common misconceptions, such as jury duty being decided by voter registration forms (It’s often also from your driver’s license.)

★ Who to call if the volunteers have questions when registering someone

★ If a receipt is required for the voter filling out the form.

★ Quick script training.

★ Time for Q & A.
Small group trainers should make sure that everyone has their clipboards and scripts with all their resources and can explain all the tools to them.

**Registering:**
- Smooth deployment from the training to actually registering is critical. Make sure you have transportation figured out beforehand if you'll be driving somewhere.
- Make your event fun. Lots of cheering and music will attract a lot more positive attention than people just sitting at a table.
- Remember, we’re not telling people who or what to vote for, just helping them register so that they can vote!

**Greeting your volunteers:**
- Make sure you have lots of greeters (like the end of a marathon) for when people come back from volunteering. If you’re staying in one spot, just keep your energy high and give your volunteers lots of positive feedback.
- Have snacks and goodies for volunteers.
- Collect each volunteer’s clip board, and any completed voter registration forms.

**Finishing up:**
- Allow your volunteers to chat about how registering went. Always finish the event by asking volunteers about their favorite registration or memory from the day.
- Remind all of your volunteers how big of an impact they’ve made.
- Have someone count all of the registrations to show how each individual, together, made a big impact.

### Running the event

One of the secrets to running a great event is to have a run sheet: a chart or timeline that breaks down what needs to happen minute by minute and identifies who’s in charge. Here’s a sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/23/2013</td>
<td>Leave office to get to venue</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>All staff</td>
<td>Make sure to bring all materials needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23/2013 10:30:00 AM</td>
<td>Set up, prepare tables, snacks, check-in, music</td>
<td>Chapman Square</td>
<td>Shawn, Dani, Caitlin, Amber</td>
<td>iPod and boom box, snacks, tables, check-in materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23/2013 10:45:00 AM</td>
<td>Check-in arriving volunteers</td>
<td>Chapman Square</td>
<td>Shawn, Amber</td>
<td>Welcome! Explain day's process and hand out clipboards/materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make one person the stage manager for the event. This person is in charge of following the run sheet word by word, making sure that everything that needs to happen happens.

Of course, it’s impossible to predict everything that will happen, so be ready to improvise. The key to improvising is to have someone who’s in charge of calling the shots on the fly---in the heat of the moment, it’s tough to seek out everyone’s input when making important decisions. Just make sure everyone knows who this person is.

### Training Your Volunteers

The first thing that has to happen for the event to be successful is the volunteer training. Make sure volunteers have all the materials they need before training starts. To keep this process painless, have all the clipboards assembled in
advance with the script, who to call for questions, blank voter registration cards, pens, and a “Register to Vote” sign taped on the back of the clipboard.

Good trainings are fun, informative, quick and engaging. Have fun people lead the training, keep things short, and leave time for question and answer. Most important, give volunteers a chance to partner up and practice, and make sure that there are enough experienced volunteers wandering around who can help answer questions.

Before you send volunteers out to hit the streets, announce what time they should return, make sure they know to turn their materials in when they get back, and have contact info from each of your volunteers.

Keeping National Voter Registration Day All About Democracy

National Voter Registration Day is about democracy. It’s about doing something, big or small, to help your community and participate in the democracy that allows us to use our voice. We’re helping people find their voice - not telling them what to say. We’re trying to cut through the partisan noise to remind people that voting is a part of being a patriotic citizen.

We have three major ways we keep National Voter Registration Day about patriotism and not partisanship: no advocating for or against something that’s going to be voted on, stay on message about the spirit of the day, and make sure, even if you’re targeting specific groups or communities, you’re not focusing on party affiliation when identifying new voters.

No Candidates or Ballot Measures

No National Voter Registration Day event may be used to advocate on behalf of a candidate or ballot measure. In fact, registering people to vote based on the way they say they intend to vote is illegal. This means National Voter Registration Day volunteers may not advocate for a candidate or ballot measure while registering, nor may they carry literature that advocates for any of these things. By keeping National Voter Registration Day strictly about registering people to vote, we keep it a feel-good democracy event that everyone wants to participate in.

Messaging

In addition to not advocating for partisan issues, there’s a lot you can do to help National Voter Registration Day stay all about democracy. Push messaging that focuses on non-partisanship, civic participation, and the importance of turning out the
vote in your community. And keep it positive. There’s enough bad stuff in the news - why make registering to vote about anything other than how important it is?

When more people vote, we all win.

**Targeting**
No targeting may be done on the basis of party. However, you’re encouraged to use other demographic data to target, focusing your efforts on communities with historically low-turnout and registration. These communities include young people, people of color, frequent movers and low income citizens.

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**Voter Contact Best Practices**

**Always look like you’re having fun.**

★ Nobody wants to hang out with somebody who looks like they’re bored, or, even worse, unfriendly. Get out from behind that table and invite people to talk to you.

★ Cheer every time somebody registers to vote, give high fives, and compliment the heck out of them. If you make somebody feel special for participating, you can bet they’ll want to keep doing it.

★ Make a fool out of yourself. Seriously. Wear silly costumes, be singing and dancing while you’re standing around, and have a good time. This can help make the whole process much less intimidating for new voters. Not to mention, people will be curious about what you’re doing. Use that to
reel them in!
★ Make sure you’re an approachable group. Standing or walking in pairs is encouraged, but not at the expense of talking to each other instead of voters.

Be the kind of person you'd want to talk to.
★ Smile lots.
★ Talk like a regular person. Don't be a robot and read directly off of the script.
★ Be up front about what you’re doing in a positive way. Identify yourself as a volunteer immediately when you start talking to them.
★ Take nothing personally and don’t get discouraged. If somebody is rude to you, shake it off and move on.

Have a conversation, rather than talking at people.
★ Ask questions and listen to the answer. Tailor your message to the individual.
★ Find your own pitch. Experiment and figure out what works best for you.
★ Talk to everyone you see. The next person could be amazing!
★ Connect voting to their lives and the issues they care about.
★ Stress the importance of THEIR action. Tell them why they should vote.

Stay on message.
★ You’re not telling them who to vote for, just helping them register!
★ National Voter Registration Day is a positive way to celebrate civic engagement.

Close the deal
★ Always make the ask. If you can, put the clipboard and pen in their hand while you’re talking to them. You’ll be amazed at how many people start filling it out.
★ Don’t backtrack. Once you ask them to register, wait for their response.
★ If you have handouts, give them out at the end of your conversation. They can be distracting if you hand them to voters right away.
After Your Event

Turn in your completed voter registration forms

- All states have rules on when completed forms need to be turned in. Check out those rules (you can always find state by state legal guides on the Resources page), and then make sure you comply with them. It’s always best to turn in forms as soon as possible to avoid any issues.

Report your numbers

- We’ll send you an email a few days before September 22nd (and then a few days after) with a link to report the number of volunteers you engaged and voters you registered. These are important for us to know how big our impact is nationally, as they’re some of the only numbers we are able to track year to year.

Thank your volunteers

- This is a big one. People love to be appreciated. If you want to email them, that’s great. But either make sure that it’s personal to them, and try to follow it up with a phone call. Actively appreciating the people who help you accomplish your goals is the easiest way to make sure they keep helping you.
- When you thank them, make sure to ask them to volunteer again. Remind them how much fun they had, and what a difference they made. Have another event ready to ask them to attend.

Follow up with the voters you registered

- If it’s legal in your state, make a copy of each of the completed voter registration forms for your own records. This isn’t permitted in a number of states, so be sure to check your state laws before doing this. Redacting personal information (date of birth, signature, SSN, license #) is always a good idea. Again, always feel free to reach out to us or check out the Resources page on the National Voter Registration Day website if you have state-specific questions.
- You can use the copies you made of the voter registration forms to follow up with folks to make sure they have all the information they need to actually vote.
- Every time you contact a voter, you increase his or her likelihood of voting. Follow up with them right after the event to thank them for registering and answer any questions they might have, then again during your get-out-the-vote process!