



Voter Engagement Guide

*Information, Resources, and Tools
to Help Engage Clients To Become Active Voters*



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Introduction: Why voting matters for our clients

Nonvoters are disproportionately lower-income citizens. This is a shame, because decisions being made in Olympia and Washington, D.C. have a big impact on their abilities to buy food and other basic needs. Candidates are more responsive to communities that have the most active voters. Food banks and meal programs have an opportunity to help form a more representative electorate by engaging clients and giving them a voice in the political discussion. Our impact is maximized if the people we serve are being heard by candidates and politicians.

There have been cuts to SNAP benefits in recent years, and other bills often threaten low-income earners' access to food, shelter, and health care. Voting allows clients to be heard on the state and federal level in decisions about food assistance and safety net services. These cuts occur because of higher voter turnout from voters who may not understand the human impact of these harmful decisions or simply support the cuts.

In this toolkit, you will find information, resources, and tools to help engage clients to become active voters. You'll find links to state and local resources so you can be aware of voter registration deadlines and tools to help register and remind clients to vote.

Once you empower a client with the ability to be an informed voter their issues gain significance in the eyes of politicians and decision makers. They become actively engaged in the voting process and politicians will work harder to gain their votes during elections by supporting their issues. Becoming an active voter means electing representatives and candidates that address the most important issues faced by people who need SNAP, summer meals, and food bank services. Voting gives our clients power and the ability to change public policy and discourse for the better.

Harnessing the voting power of your program participants requires organization and outreach in three areas:

Voter Registration

Activities include:

- Voter registration drives
- Register new voters
- Update registration information

Voter Education

Activities include:

- Sharing resources on issues & candidates
- Writing and distributing voter guides
- Organizing/attending candidate forums

Get Out the Vote

Activities include:

- Reminding participants about voting deadlines
- Providing information on completing and returning ballots

We've broken down this toolkit into these three sections, providing you with background information, tools, and resources to help you maximize your effectiveness. But before you can dive in, you need to plan out a timeline and build the volunteer or staff capacity to help you carry out your plan.

Section 1: Making Your Voter Engagement Plan

Before you can jump into activities to help your program participants become active, engaged, and informed voters, you need to make a plan. In this section, we'll go over the kinds of elections in Washington so that you can build your voter engagement calendar and make a plan for scheduling your voter engagement activities around each opportunity that we have to vote and make our voices heard. We'll also talk about some ideas for incorporating voter engagement activities with the resources you have on hand in order to help make it easier to incorporate this kind of advocacy in your existing program services.

Types of Elections in Washington

General elections get the most attention, but it is important to vote in special and primary elections as well. Here is an explanation of the different kinds of elections we have each year, including when they generally occur.

1. Special Elections

Special elections are used to fill positions when candidates leave office mid-term. Ballot initiatives (often at the local level) are also voted on in these elections. Initiatives include issues such as public transportation or education spending.

- Generally occur: whenever called. Be sure to check the online calendar of elections.

2. Primary Elections

Primary elections designate who will be running in the general election and are therefore important to the final outcome, especially in our state where the top two candidates in a primary move forward. We must encourage voting in primaries to ensure that candidates who best represent our concerns make it to the general election.

- Generally occur: early August
- Deadline for voter registration/change of address: July
- Ballots received: mid-late July

3. General Election

The general election determines the final outcome in ballot initiatives and races for local, state, and federal offices. Voter turnout is greatest in years of big contests, i.e., Presidential elections, but off year elections still have important local races and bond measures that affect funding for schools, housing, taxation, and other issues that can either deepen or alleviate poverty and food insecurity.

- Generally occur: first Tuesday of November
- Deadline for voter registration/change of address: October
- Ballots received: mid-late October.

Building Capacity for Volunteer Engagement at Your Program

Engaging your program participants to help them become active and educated voters does not need to take away from your current capacity to perform your core programmatic duties. It does, however, require a good spokesperson, someone who is enthusiastic about voter turnout and can convey that energy and passion to others. Look for that person from your current staff, roster of volunteers, board members, or even someone standing in

TIP:

Please be sure to check the online calendar of dates for Washington elections each year for specific voter registration and voting deadlines: https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/voters/Pages/dates_and_deadlines.aspx and <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/calendar.aspx>

TIP:

Remember that nonprofits can lobby clients to vote in a particular way on ballot initiatives, just not on candidates.

your program line.

Here are some tips to help you launch your voter engagement program:

- **Establish buy-in** from your organization’s staff or volunteers (from Executive Director, senior staff, front desk volunteers, etc.)—have conversations with staff members on how voter engagement connects to their mission, emphasizing that our impact and public policy work is strengthened when the people we serve vote for the public officials who will strengthen the programs, services, and strategies to reduce poverty .
- **Choose a lead:** someone to be the point person for voter engagement work. This person will gather resources and field questions.
- **Staff up and train**—identify staff and volunteers; consider providing this as a volunteer opportunity to an engaging and enthusiastic client. Provide training and support and a rationale of why you’re doing this work. Your voter engagement crew should set a good example by being registered to vote and engaged in the voting and voter education process.
- **Plan ahead**—be thinking about voter registration drives and getting buy-in from your organization months in advance (use our calendar below to help you plan), but ramp up efforts near the registration deadline so information is current.

TIP:

This handout gives seven great reasons to help you make the case: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2012/04/seven-reasons-to-do-voter-registration.pdf> You can also find arguments for why hunger relief organizations should engage participants in voting here: <http://votetoendhunger.org/>

Tool: Planning Calendar

(Please note that this calendar refers to tools, resources, and other information sections that you’ll find later in this toolkit.)

May/June

- Begin thinking about voter engagement activities.
- Designate a lead who will be point person for voter engagement activities.
- Get buy-in from executive director and senior staff, as well as the staff or volunteers that would be conducting the voter registration drives and other get-out-the-vote activities. Provide a rationale to your organization for voter engagement work and how it connects to your mission.
- Help participants sign up for alerts from Northwest Harvest . Send subscriber email addresses to partners@northwestharvest.org.

TIP:

You can also refer clients to sign up for alerts from these other organizations: <http://www.northwestharvest.org/coalitions>

July/August

- Gather materials needed for a voter registration drive and learn the voting rules (in the next section of this toolkit or available at <http://www.dmv.org/wa-washington/voter-registration.php>) You can order voter registration forms in bulk <https://www.sos.wa.gov/electins/register-mail.aspx>.
- Staff up and train volunteers (teach rules, practice conversations, etc.).
- Pilot a voter registration drive to see if the time you picked for your voter registration drive worked well or if you need to change anything for future efforts.

September/Early-October

- Ramp up activities as we near the registration deadline. Conduct voter registration drives.
- National Voter Registration Day is the fourth Tuesday in September, so it is a good day to hold registration drives and celebrate civic engagement.

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- Know the registration deadline (usually very early in October).
 - Set up a table at the end of your grocery line with voter education materials, lists of candidate forums or debates, and other opportunities to learn more about the issues and candidates.

Mid-October/November

- Know when the voting period starts and when ballots have been mailed out (usually mid-October).
- Hang up fliers or use some other method to remind people to vote and that the voting period is open.
- Staff a table asking people to pledge to vote. Take their names, contact information, and give them an “**I Pledge to Vote**” sticker. Call (or contact using their preferred method) and ask if they have any questions about how to submit their ballot. Ballots must be postmarked or turned into a ballot drop box or county elections office by Election Day, so reminders are best in the days leading up to the deadline. Reminder that you can lobby on ballot initiatives, just not candidates, and you can encourage people to vote.

Resources

- Voter Registration Information and Deadlines
https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/voters/Pages/dates_and_deadlines.aspx
<http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/calendar.aspx>
- Voter Registration Rules and Requirements
<http://www.dmv.org/wa-washington/voter-registration.php>
- Voter Engagement Training: Guide for integrating voter engagement into current nonprofit program
<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/08/a-voter-participation-starter-kit.pdf>
- Voter Engagement Checklist
<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/all-resources/>
- Webinar: Plan Ahead—Create a Timeline for Voter Engagement
<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/all-resources/>
- Vote to End Hunger
<http://votetoendhunger.org/>
- Seven Reasons to Do Voter Registration
<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2012/04/seven-reasons-to-do-voter-registration.pdf>

Section 2: Voter Registration

In this section, you'll find information on how we register people to vote in Washington state, the rules regarding who is eligible to vote, and the voting rights for key populations who face barriers to voting. You'll also find tools and resources to help you implement voter registration drives to help register new voters or update registration information for participants at your program.

How voter registration works in Washington state

In Washington, eligible voters may register to vote three ways:

- **Online:** <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/olvr.html>.
To register online, you will need either a current Washington state driver license or a current Washington state ID card.
- **By mail:** Complete a voter registration form and mail it. The eligible voter will need a Washington driver license, permit, ID, or the last four digits of his or her Social Security number to register. Organizations can order or print out voter registration forms for eligible voters to complete and then mail the forms to complete the registration process. Order registration forms here: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/register-mail.aspx>
- **In person:** Complete the voter registration form in person at the local county elections department. (See Resources in this section for a list of county elections department locations.)

Who is eligible to vote?

To register to vote, you must be:

- A citizen of the United States;
- A legal resident of Washington state;
*To be eligible to vote, the voting residency address must be established at least **30 days** before Election Day. A voter may only be registered to vote at **one location**.*
- At least 18 years old by Election Day;
- Not disqualified from voting due to a court order; and
- Not under Department of Corrections supervision for a Washington felony conviction.

TIP:

You can facilitate the voter registration process with referrals or running/hosting a voter registration drive for your program participants. Be sure to pay attention to the different deadlines for online, by mail, or in person voter registration.

Know Your Rights: Common Barriers to Voting for Food Bank Participants

We see all kinds of people with different life experiences waiting in lines at food banks. Many of our participants are experiencing social barriers that limit opportunities for work and education. They may assume that these same barriers will keep them from exercising their right to vote. Here is information to help people understand their rights and help ensure that everyone who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do just that.

Homelessness and Transitional Housing

For those experiencing homelessness, or living at a nontraditional address such as a motor home or in transitional housing, the voting residence is the person's physical location at the time when they register to vote. The voting residence address may be a shelter, a street corner, or the address of a park. The mailing address can be a PO Box, the address of a shelter or person who will accept mail deliveries, or general delivery with a nearby post office.

Prior Felony Convictions

A person with a prior felony conviction is still eligible to vote as long as she or he is not currently in prison or on community custody. If the person is uncertain about his or her status, you can call (800) 430-9674 to check with the Department of Corrections (DOC). The DOC and the state court system cross reference the list of registered voters to look for anyone who might be registered to vote who is ineligible to vote. Those individuals will receive a letter explaining that their registration will be cancelled in 30 days and provides information on how to dispute the cancellation.

People with prior convictions who are eligible to vote must re-register to receive a ballot.

A person does not lose the right to vote for a misdemeanor conviction or a conviction in juvenile court.

A prosecutor may request a court to revoke one's voting rights if he or she has failed to make three Legal Finance Obligation payments in an a 12 month period; however, the person may have their rights restored if she or he can show that they have made a good-faith effort to pay.

Mental Competency

Only a Superior Court can declare a person ineligible to vote due to mental incompetency. A guardian may not vote on behalf of the person under guardianship, and power of attorney does not extend to voting.

Foreign Language Speakers

In Washington state, only four counties and state officials must provide ballots in Spanish when requested. The Secretary of State provides voter registration forms in many other languages, including Vietnamese, Cambodian, Somali, and Ukrainian (<http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/Print-Voter-Registration-Forms.aspx>) and will also provide foreign language translations of voter guides.

Voter Registration Drive Tools

Voter Registration Checklist

- **Prepare/train your volunteers.** Make sure that they understand all the forms and their specific responsibilities during the drive. Nonprofit vote has a short video that you can show your registration crew that walks them through the voter registration process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j705U3JNxzc&feature=youtu.be>.
- **Advertise your voter registration drive.**
 - Post flyers with the date and time.
 - Remind participants about the drive when they come to pick up their food.
 - On the day of the event, have greeters at check-in remind people about the voter registration drive.
- **Have the right materials and tools for your registration drive.** At your event, make sure you have the following items:
 - Voter registration forms—You can order up to 1,000 voter registration forms from <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/register-mail.aspx>
 - Collection envelopes
 - Volunteer name tags
 - Pencils and pens
 - Flyers/posters (available at http://www.sos.wa.gov/_assets/elections/VoterRegPoster_EN.pdf)
 - Clipboards/cardboard with large paper clips for writing
 - Table, chairs, tablecloth, any decorations
 - **I Pledge to Vote** sheet and stickers (see *Get Out the Vote Tools* in Section 3 of this toolkit)
 - Sheet outlining for volunteers the steps for voter registration and answers to common responses when asked to register to vote.
 - **Frequently Asked Questions** sheet and state/county information including:
 - election dates
 - registration rules
 - contact information for local elections offices
 - Decorations and freebies to attract attention.
- **Return the completed registration forms.** You must return completed forms to your county elections department by mail or in person within **five days** from when you receive them or before the voter registration deadline (whichever comes first).
 - Additional tips and information for your voter registration drive can be found here: http://www.sos.wa.gov/_assets/elections/Voter-Reg-Tips.pdf.

TIP:

Be sure to reinforce at every training opportunity and talking points sheet that as a representative of a 501(c)(3), your voter registration crew must remain nonpartisan about the candidates. This means no political discussions or endorsements/condemnations of candidates.

TIP:

Take down names and contact information of your newly registered voters or those who claim to already be registered, asking them to pledge to vote. You can then follow-up with them with reminders when they should have received a ballot in the mail and deadlines/options for returning their ballots.

TIP:

If you give out freebies, be sure to make this available to anyone who asks. It's an IRS rule for 501c3s that gifts cannot be given in exchange for someone's vote or registration to vote.

TIP:

*These organizations can help register voters for you:
Statewide Poverty Action: <http://povertyaction.org/campaigns/>
Washington State Driver Licensing Offices: <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/dsdoffices/>*

Frequently Asked Questions Sheet for Volunteers

Important Dates

(update the following before each voter registration drive with election dates and registration deadlines found here: https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/voters/Pages/dates_and_deadlines.aspx and <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/calendar.aspx>)

- Special Election Date: _____
Registration Deadlines: _____
Issues on Ballot: _____
- Primary Election Date: _____
Registration Deadlines: _____
Positions and Issues on Ballot: _____
- General Election Date: _____
Registration Deadlines: _____
Positions and Issues on Ballot: _____

Location of Your County Elections Office

(found at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx>)

FAQs

I don't know if I'm registered to vote. How can I check?

Look up your voter registration status online with MyVote (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/>). If you're listed as "inactive," update your address. If you can't find your voter records, register.

When is the registration deadline?

Applications and updates must be postmarked or submitted no later than 29 days before Election Day. If you are not already a Washington voter, you may register in person at your county elections department until eight days before an election. Applications and updates submitted after the deadline will take effect after the next election.

How will I know if my registration was accepted?

You should receive a card in the mail from your local elections office. You can also check online at MyVote (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/>).

Do I need to update my address every time I move?

Yes. You need to update your mailing address when you move to ensure you receive your ballot.

Can I register using my school address?

Yes. You may register using either your home or school address. If you live on campus, you may list your dorm room or campus apartment as your residential address. PO boxes may not be used as residential but can be used as mailing addresses.

What's the difference between my residential and mailing addresses?

Your mailing address is where your ballot will be sent. Your residential address must be a Washington address. This address determines which candidates and measures will be on your ballot.

Can I register in Washington if I'm an out-of-state student?

Yes. You may register to vote if you have lived in Washington at least 30 days. You must use your Washington address as your residential address. Remember, you may vote in only one state. It's a felony to vote more than once in the same election.

Can I register to vote if I have a prior felony conviction?

As long as you are not currently in prison or on community custody, you can register to vote. If you are not sure of your current status, call (800) 430-9674.

How do people experiencing homelessness register to vote?

We recommend using the address of a shelter, a park, or even a cross street for the voter registration address. A PO box, the address of someone who will accept mail, or even general delivery will suffice for the mailing address requirement. Just make sure to check those locations when ballots are scheduled to arrive.

Can a survivor of domestic violence or other crimes keep their current address private if they register?

Washington state offers an Address Confidentiality Program. Contact your local elections office for more information: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/acp/>



Steps for Completing Voter Registration

Step 1: Proper Opening

- “Good Morning /Afternoon /Evening /Hello and May I assist you in registering to vote today?”
- “May I assist you with updating your voting records such as: Have you moved?/Have you changed your voting address?”

Step 2: Filling Out the Form

Fill out entire voter registration form; pay close attention to:

- Box #1: Applicant **must** enter all their personal information. (Please remember that if the mailing address is different than the physical address that they must list both addresses.)
- Box #2: Qualifications—they must check US Citizen to fill out the rest of this form. (Please see page 8, *Know Your Rights: Common Barriers to Voting for Food Bank Participants*, regarding homeless populations and proof of address and for questions about felonies and voting.)
- Box #3: Have them fill this out if they live overseas or active in military service.
- Box #4: Identification—you do not need a Washington state driver's license to register to vote, and if they do not have a license number, please use the last 4 digits of the person's social security number.
- Box #5: Change of Name or Address is only valid if the voter has moved or changed their voting address.
- Box #6: Applicant **must** sign and date the application for the form to be valid.

Step 3: Review the Form

Review the form to ensure that all of the boxes have been completed and that the form is signed and dated.

Step 4: Congratulations!

Congratulate the applicant on registering to vote!

Inform the applicant that they will receive a voter confirmation card in the mail in 2-3 weeks.

Talking Points: Responses to Common Refusals to Register to Vote

Reason	Possible Response
My vote doesn't make a difference	Your vote could be the very one that makes a difference, especially in low turnout elections. Politicians pay attention to people and communities that vote.
I've never gotten around to it.	Voting is easy in Washington state since we vote by mail. The form is simple; I also have it right here, and I can help you fill it out.
I don't know how or where to register.	You can register right here; I have a form and will help you fill it out and will mail it in for you.
I don't want to be called for jury duty.	They use other lists like driver's license lists for jury duty, and that doesn't stop people from getting a driver's license.
I am disgusted with politics/politicians.	Then change it! You have the power to change the situation. If you don't vote, it will never change. - or - Politicians make decisions every day that affect your life. Wouldn't you like to have some control over those decisions?
I do not know if I can vote.	If you are a US citizen, over age 18 on Election Day, and are not now incarcerated, you can vote.
I don't pay attention to politics; it has nothing to do with me.	The decisions politicians make—the quality of schools, your health care, jobs and the economy—affect you and your family every day.
My spouse takes care of that.	That is wonderful, but you should have a voice in the process as well, and your vote is important.

Adapted from Voter Registration Toolkit from Stand 4 Food, a voter registration project of the Food Bank for New York City: http://help.foodbanknyc.org/site/DocServer/Merged_Voter_Registration_Drive_Toolkit_2014_1_.pdf?docID=582

Voter Registration Resources

- Voter Registration Online:
<http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/olvr.html>
- Voter Eligibility Requirements:
https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/voters/Pages/voter_eligibility.aspx
- MyVote:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/>
- Nonprofit Vote's Training Video on Voter Registration Process:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j705U3JNxzc&feature=youtu.be>
- Voter Registration Drive Materials:
 - Registration Forms:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/register-mail.aspx>
 - Registration Forms in foreign languages:
<http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/Print-Voter-Registration-Forms.aspx>
 - Flyers and Posters:
http://www.sos.wa.gov/_assets/elections/VoterRegPoster_EN.pdf
- Find your local elections office:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx>

Section 3: Voter Education

Registering voters is an important first step, but to make sure we see the changes we want to see in public policy, we need to make sure that voters are educated on the issues. Your organization can be a valuable resource to all voters in your community by educating them about hunger and poverty so that they choose the candidates they think will best support the public policies and strategic investments that will help low-income people meet their basic needs.

We can educate voters by helping them read and understand their voting guides, providing regular information on the issues, and helping voters get to know the candidates and their positions. In this section, you'll find information on what registered 501(c)(3) organizations can and cannot do during campaign seasons, ideas for voter education opportunities at your program, and resources for voter education materials to make available to your program participants.

Campaign Activity Rules for Nonprofits

- A 501(c)(3) organization or staff member while working for or representing the nonprofit **may not**:
 - Endorse a candidate.
 - Make a campaign contribution to or expenditure for a candidate.
 - Rate candidates on who is most favorable to their issue(s).
 - Let candidates use the organization's facilities or resources, unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value.
- 501(c)(3) organizations can conduct voter engagement and connect with candidates on a nonpartisan basis. This includes voter registration, voter education, candidate engagement, and organizing get-out-the-vote activities.
- 501(c)(3) organizations can also lobby on ballot initiatives. You can make an endorsement on ballot measures by taking a position for or against the initiative and encourage clients to vote one way or the other.
- Freebies, including stickers or food, and registration forms must be given to anyone who asks, regardless of their eligibility or intention to register or vote. You may not pay or bribe people to register.

TIP:

When in doubt, ask an expert! Bolder Advocacy, a project of Alliance for Justice, can answer your questions to help you figure out whether something is permissible 501c3 activity. Call 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229) or visit <http://bolderadvocacy.org/> and click on the Ask an Expert link under the how AFJ Can Help menu.

Voter Education Tools

Candidate Questionnaires and Voting Guides

A great tool for educating voters about candidate positions on the issues of hunger and poverty is to ask them to complete a questionnaire and then disseminate their answers for informational purposes in a voter guide. Nonprofits can do this kind of voter education, but the process must be nonpartisan: questionnaires cannot be used to advance or disparage the electoral interests of some candidates or political parties. In other words, your questionnaire cannot be distributed to help or hurt a candidate or the political party of that candidate.

Bolder Advocacy, a project of Alliance for Justice, offers these guidelines to ensure that your questionnaire distribution process is nonpartisan.

Guidelines for Candidate Questionnaires

- Distribute the questions to all candidates
- Do not include questions that hint at the "correct" answer
- Do not ask a candidate to pledge their support (for example, "if elected I agree to support all civil rights issues")
- Do not compare the candidate responses to the organization's views on the issues (e.g., do not put a plus/minus sign indicating if your organization agrees or disagrees with the position on an issue)
- Use open-ended questions: avoid yes/no, support/oppose, or multiple choice formats unless you allow the candidate to explain their answer
- Include questions on a broad range of issues (e.g., questions on the impacts of poverty, including the issues of housing, education, healthcare, employment, and welfare reform, reflect a broad range of issues.)

Guidelines for Voter Guides

- Publish all responses and print the answers that the candidate provides—no editing/paraphrasing, although a reasonable word limit may be imposed
- Publish all responses in the same font, the same print size, and in an impartial way
- Make the questionnaires available to the general public
- Do not coordinate with a candidate about questionnaire content (e.g., do not change a question at the request of a candidate.)

If a candidate does not respond to the questionnaire, note that in the voter guide and provide a statement about the candidate's position on the issues based on neutral, unbiased, and publicly available sources. There should be a clear statement that the answer was not given by the candidate and all citations should be included, or list where citations can be found. If you cannot make a clear determination of the candidate's position, then their description may be described as "unknown" or "unclear." If only one or two candidates answer the questionnaire, then you may wish to consider whether or not to publish the voter guide because doing so may give the appearance that you support the candidate(s) who responded.

For more information, visit: http://bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Candidate_Questionnaires_and_Voter_Guides.pdf.

Find templates and sample invitation letters, questionnaires, and voter guides from the League of Women Voters: http://lwvdc.org/files/tool_kit.pdf.

Organizing a Candidate Forum

A candidate forum brings together candidates in either local, state, or federal races, giving each candidate an opportunity to answer questions on a topic so that the audience may hear about their positions. Candidate forums give you an opportunity to educate candidates and the voting public about hunger and poverty, elevating concern for these issues to make resolving them a priority. It also gives you a chance to build relationships with your future elected officials before they take office.

Find tools including sample invitation letters, timelines, and checklists for organizing a candidates forum in *Northwest Harvest's Advocacy Toolkit, Volume III, Effortless but Effective Advocacy: Building Relationships with Your Elected Officials*, pg. 22.

http://www.northwestharvest.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/0/0b9ee4b8993bfd5987cd8684d9129993/files/toolkit_vol3_final_sm.pdf

Materials for Voter Education Table

Another way to educate your program participants on the issues and candidate positions is to provide a table with voter guides, issue fact sheets, and other materials. Make sure the table is staffed with a volunteer who can answer questions and remind people about voter registration deadlines and deadlines for mailing or returning ballots. Here are some resources for stocking your table.

- The state General Election Voters' Pamphlet is mailed to every household in Washington. If you need the General Election Voters' Pamphlet in accessible formats or alternate languages, call (800) 448-4881 or email voterspamphlet@sos.wa.gov.
- For personalized ballot measure and candidate information online, go to **MyVote** at: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote>.
- For all ballot measures and candidates, visit: <https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/Pages/OnlineVotersGuide.aspx>.
- For local races, visit the county elections department website: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/auditors.aspx>.
- Find issue area fact sheets (e.g., bills we are tracking in the Legislature, current efforts to support and strengthen SNAP and child nutrition programs, etc.) in the Advocacy section on the Partners Portal.
- Print out copies of Northwest Harvest's Advocacy Updates: <http://www.northwestharvest.org/legislative-updates>.

Voter Education Resources

- Nonprofit Rules for Campaign Activities: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/09/501c3-activities-en.pdf>
- Guidelines for Nonprofit Candidate Questionnaires and Voter Guides: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2010/09/501c3-activities-en.pdf>
- Templates and Sample Materials for Candidate Questionnaires and Voter Guides: http://lwwodc.org/files/tool_kit.pdf
- *Northwest Harvest's Advocacy Toolkit, Volume III, Effortless but Effective Advocacy: Building Relationships with Your Elected Officials*, containing templates and tools for organizing candidate forums: http://www.northwestharvest.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/0/0b9ee4b8993bfd5987cd8684d9129993/files/toolkit_vol3_final_sm.pdf

Section 4: Get Out the Vote

You've registered voters and provided them with opportunities to learn more about the candidates and issues on the ballot. It's time to take this over the finish line: your efforts will be in vain unless people actually vote!

Washington is a vote-by-mail state, meaning we no longer have polling sites, but instead, registered voters receive a ballot in the mail to complete and return on or before Election Day.

To be counted, your ballot must be:

- Postmarked **no later than Election Day**; or
- Returned to a designated ballot drop box **by 8 p.m. on Election Day**; or
- Returned in person to your county elections department **by 8 p.m. on Election Day**.

If you fail to sign the ballot declaration, or the signature on the ballot declaration does not match the signature in your voter registration record, your **county elections department** will contact you. If you are unable to sign the declaration, make a mark in front of two witnesses and have them sign in the designated spaces.

Ideas for Get Out the Vote Efforts for Food Banks

- When ballots arrive before an election, set up a table with a volunteer to ask participants if they received their ballot and have them sign a pledge to vote. Be sure to make the following information available:
 - Deadline reminders for mailing, dropping off, or returning ballots in person.
 - Information on requesting a replacement ballot using My Vote:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/>
 - Addresses of local drop boxes and elections offices:
<https://wei.sos.wa.gov/county/spokane/en/balldroplocations/pages/default.aspx>
 - "I Pledge to Vote" sign-up sheet on which volunteer will collect names and contact information to remind participants to complete and return their ballots on time (see Tools below)
 - "Future voter" stickers (print out on labels from our Tools section below) so participants can encourage others to vote too.
- Make it a condition for membership on your Board of Directors that each member must vote in every local, special, and general election.
- Offer carpools to a nearby ballot box or to your local county elections office for participants who are homebound.
- Have volunteers or staff ask participants if they plan on voting or need help voting when they check-in, sign-up for, or receive services. Offer assistance or provide information about upcoming voter registration drives or referrals to local elections office to register.
- Hang up posters to remind people to vote.

Get Out the Vote Tools

Future Voter Stickers

Print these out on adhesive labels, and give these out when people sign the "I Pledge to Vote" sheet below for reminders about voting deadlines.



I Pledge to Vote

Name

Phone Number (or other contact method)

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____
7.	_____
8.	_____
9.	_____
10.	_____
11.	_____
12.	_____
13.	_____
14.	_____
15.	_____
16.	_____
17.	_____
18.	_____
19.	_____
20.	_____
21.	_____
22.	_____
23.	_____
24.	_____
25.	_____

I Pledge to Vote

Name

Phone Number (or other contact method)

26.	_____
27.	_____
28.	_____
29.	_____
30.	_____
31.	_____
32.	_____
33.	_____
34.	_____
35.	_____
36.	_____
37.	_____
38.	_____
39.	_____
40.	_____
41.	_____
42.	_____
43.	_____
44.	_____
45.	_____
46.	_____
47.	_____
48.	_____
49.	_____
50.	_____

I Pledge to Vote

Name

Phone Number (or other contact method)

51. _____

52. _____

53. _____

54. _____

55. _____

56. _____

57. _____

58. _____

59. _____

60. _____

61. _____

62. _____

63. _____

64. _____

65. _____

66. _____

67. _____

68. _____

69. _____

70. _____

71. _____

72. _____

73. _____

74. _____

75. _____

Get Out the Vote Resources

- Ballot Return Deadlines in Washington:
https://wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/voters/Pages/vote_by_mail.aspx
- Replacement ballot request through My Vote:
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/voters/>
- Ballot Dropbox locations:
<https://wei.sos.wa.gov/county/spokane/en/ballotdroplocations/pages/default.aspx>

For more information, contact:

Northwest Harvest
800.722.6924
info@northwestharvest.org

PO Box 12272 Seattle 98102
22220 W Valley Hwy Kent 98032
3808 N Sullivan Rd #15-K Spokane 99216
911 S 3rd St Yakima 98901
800.722.6924

Discover more at
northwestharvest.org



HUNGER
STOPS HERE.

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