



# How to Build Your Planned Parenthood Votes Volunteer Team

**Recruit your people. Build leaders. Go win.**

Building and managing a volunteer team is arguably the most important skill in organizing. In our fight to elect candidates who respect our autonomy over our bodies, our health, and our lives, building relationships with our team members is how we build *power*. And it's also one of the most vital, enjoyable, and life-affirming work any activist can undertake.

Team-building means forging relationships and maintaining them over the course of months or years, which more often than not leads to long-lasting friendships. Through these relationships, we nourish each other, bolster each other through losses, and celebrate our wins with a deep sense of our shared power.

Building and leading a team takes work. But the skills you need are ones you probably already know -- like talking to people and caring about them! So this toolkit is about something bigger than just hosting a meetup, calling a voter, or gathering petition signatures. It's about a long-term commitment to each other and the movement. Let's dive in!

## **What you'll find inside:**

- [Intro to Volunteer Teams](#)
- [Starting your team](#)
- [Why are teams important?](#)
- [What makes a good team?](#)
- [Volunteer team structure](#)

# I. Intro to Volunteer Teams

## What's a Planned Parenthood Votes Volunteer Team?

Planned Parenthood Votes Volunteer Teams are the volunteer communities responsible for making all of the action on the ground happen. They're local volunteer teams made up of anywhere from 3 to 20 Planned Parenthood Votes supporters. From Maine to Alaska, they are working tirelessly to help elect champions of reproductive health--and boot their opponents out of office.

### Why now?

More than three-fourths of voters say abortion should remain safe and legal. There is no state in which banning abortion is popular.

But anti-abortion politicians continue to try to undermine our rights and our access to reproductive health care, putting the ability of many people to obtain birth control, safe and legal abortion, and accurate sexual education in question — yet again.

This moment of crisis presents an opportunity. In the past few years, people have mobilized in a way we haven't seen in decades. The 2020 elections present a critical opportunity to start to take power back for our communities -- and to start building a world where marginalized communities are valued and treated equitably, and where attacks on reproductive rights are a thing of the past.

That's where you come in. Volunteer Teams are the engine of our resistance, and the stakes couldn't be higher. But the good news is, our movement has *you* -- and it's people like you who give our movement power. So let's dig into how we'll win in our communities at the ballot box this year.

# II. Starting your team

**It's as easy as:**

- 1) Getting 5 friends together
- 2) Picking your leaders
- 3) Registering your team with Planned Parenthood Votes

Let's go!

## 1) Getting 5 friends together

You already have friends, neighbors, family, coworkers, community members -- and chances are, you know who stands with you for reproductive justice. Now it's time to get them to be part of your team. Volunteer teams can be anywhere from 3 people on up, but we suggest starting with 5.

The first step is inviting them to join you for a virtual meeting. Pick a date and time, along with a central location like a library or community center that's free and accessible by public transit. Then it's time for some phone calls and text messages to invite your folks -- and you can make a Facebook event, too! We recommend inviting more people than you want to show up. A good rule of thumb is that 30%-50% of invitees will flake on you, so invite that many more people to your event. This is especially true with people you don't have a strong relationship with.

If you've already got a group that meets regularly, you won't need to start a new one! Brunch groups, local advocacy groups, or other groups or teams you're already working with can also be a volunteer team, if you all decide you want to take on Planned Parenthood Votes work.

Here's a sample agenda for your very first meeting:

- Welcome and attendance (make sure to get names, pronouns, cell numbers, and emails for everyone there!)
- Icebreaker: Why are you here?
- Set community agreements and norms of how you'll work together.
- Discuss how you'll take action to win in 2020.
- Pick your leader and assign team roles (see below).
- Plan your first campaign action. This could be a text-bank to get people registered to vote, a phone bank, or more.
- Set your next time to meet (we recommend meeting at least once/month, maybe more depending on what you're working on). Using an online meeting tool such as [whenisgood](#) can make this process easier for everyone!

## 2) Pick your leaders

Who will lead your team? If you're reading this toolkit on how to build a team, chances are, it's *you!* We recommend you have at least one person at the center of your team who is responsible for coordinating and empowering others to do their work. This person is the Team Chair. Don't worry, this doesn't mean there's one person who does *everything*. (We'll talk more about team structure in the [volunteer team structure](#) section.)

You can agree at your first meeting -- either by talking informally with your folks or by a vote -- on who your Chair will be. We generally recommend the position lasts a year, but you can agree to a different time commitment as a group if you choose to.

### 3) Register your team with Planned Parenthood

The last step is quick but critical: make sure your team is registered with us online so we can connect with you and provide support for your team in the weeks, months, and even years ahead. We'll be communicating with you via our online tools, which will help you track and run your people and events. To register your group, start here:

<https://act.plannedparenthoodaction.org/>.

After you register, you will hear from a local or national staff person to let you know how you can plug into current election efforts.

## III. Why are teams important?

### Why do teams matter?

The most effective leaders have always created teams to work and lead with them. Take for example Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi in the fight for Black Lives, or Andrea Pino and Annie Clark in the fight to end sexual violence on college campuses. Teams give us the structure for organizing that's smart, goal-oriented, and that we can carry out for the long haul without drifting apart or burning out.

In the teams we'll help you create, individuals can work toward goals together, with each person taking on real, meaningful responsibility that helps the team move forward toward our campaign goal and our vision. At their best, these leadership teams make good use of the unique talents of the folks who make up the team.

Finally, teams are important because they give us something that keeps us in the movement for a lifetime — fun, rewarding work, and meaningful friendships. Working with people who care about you, and who want to work together to make our vision of a better world real, is a source of joy.

### What great teams can accomplish:

One example of highly effective teams were the volunteer teams run by Obama For America (OFA). OFA made waves in 2007 and 2008 for a volunteer structure that *worked* -- and, of course, for winning the landmark victory of the United States' first Black president. In OFA, many volunteers stepped up and hosted phone banks in their homes with their neighbors. Barack Obama could not have spread his message of hope by himself; he needed organized groups to carry out effective tactics to turn out voters. In 2017, Planned Parenthood local advocacy organizations and volunteers created our own teams using the same structure as

OFA to fight back against the efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Similarly, Planned Parenthood Votes will serve as your guide to help identify and define targets, strategies, tactics, resources, tools, and trainings to use these methods to win elections for pro-reproductive health champions!

## IV. What makes a good team?

### Qualities of good teams

When we think about teams, lots of models probably come to mind: your team at work, sports teams, even your friend groups. You can probably think of examples of teams you've been on that have worked well — and maybe a few that haven't worked so well, too. We want to make sure you build a good team that's set up for success! For accomplishing the work we want to do, and in order to build the world we want to see, good teams have a few key components:

- Diverse people
- Common purpose
- Clear expectations
- Defined roles
- Explicit norms

We'll explore each of these in turn.

### Diverse people

We are so much stronger when we have different perspectives contributing to the ideas and momentum of a team. And types of diversity range broadly: we're talking about differences in age, race, sex, experience, ideologies, jobs, education, and so much more. The issues Planned Parenthood organizations mobilize around impact people of all identities, and it's important to be aware of how oppression and discrimination manifest in different forms and to varying degrees depending on the identities a person holds. There are lots of ways you can make sure your group is open to and aware of diverse identities and experiences, including:

- Holding meetings at central locations accessible to public transit.
- Making sure to give full context for what you're working on at every meeting.
- Avoiding acronyms, which can feel alienating to people newer to the work.
- Providing childcare as needed to make sure the space is family friendly.
- Hold meetings at places where people don't feel pressured to order or buy something to participate.
- Consider accessibility needs in your location and make sure your meeting location is easily accessible.

## Common Purpose

Strong teams have a common purpose, which they have thought through and decided together. Your work for your volunteer team may look different from what another volunteer teams are working on, but within your team, you should have a shared understanding of what you're working toward -- both for your specific campaign goals, and for the world you want to build together. When teams don't have a common purpose, folks move in different directions, sometimes leading to conflict, and no real progress is made. Some guiding questions for sparking discussion surrounding common purpose are "what is your why?" and "what are you working for?"

## Clear expectations

Another key feature of teams that get things done is that they have clear expectations of how they will work together. In your volunteer team, you'll want to know where your work ends and the next person's starts. That also means your group is stable, with distinct boundaries. You should be able to name the people in your group, and you should meet regularly. It's not a different, random group of people every time. Highly effective teams often have 4-8 members. Membership of the team remains constant long enough that the team learns to work together better and better; each member is fully committed to be on the team and commits consistent time and effort to it.

## Defined roles

Structure, structure, structure! A strong team has well-defined roles within a consistent group of members (we have some examples of these group roles below). Each person is familiar with the expectations on themselves and on others, and people know who holds what area of expertise. Within these roles, everyone should have a roughly equal share of the work based on the unique skills and resources they bring to the team, understanding that each part is necessary to adequately reach the ultimate goal. Because of this, the success or failure of one person will have an effect on everyone -- and on whether we succeed in winning the victories for our bodies and our rights that we all care deeply about.

## Explicit norms

An effective team has processes and practices in place to help us make decisions, and to be at our best when we talk to each other. When you first get your group together, discuss and get agreement on clear, shared rules (or "norms"). Some things you should think about: how you communicate (what channels for what purposes), how meetings are run, and how decisions are made. That way, you can get down to the real work. Some examples of group norms include things like:

- "One mic:" Only the person who is speaking at a given time should speak; other people will wait until they're done to contribute.
- "Move up / move back": People who've been speaking up a lot are encouraged to move back and listen. This creates an environment where people who are usually quieter or are saying less can step up and feel comfortable contributing.
- "Oops, Ouch": When someone mistakenly says something they feel could have been

harmful or offensive, they can say “oops” and reiterate what they were attempting to say in better terms. When someone feels that another person said something potentially offensive or harmful, they can interject with “ouch” and explain their objection.

- **Email or Meeting?:** This rule ensures that teams communicate in the most efficient manner. If what needs to be discussed or planned can occur via a few emails instead of a scheduled meeting, do not allocate time to meet in person. The same applies vice versa - if there needs to be a deep dive discussion surrounding something, make sure to set aside a formal meeting time instead of sending countless emails and losing details in the mix. Effective communication ensures a sustainable team structure, and creates boundaries and accountability in the process.

## V. Volunteer Team Structure

### What is interdependent leadership?

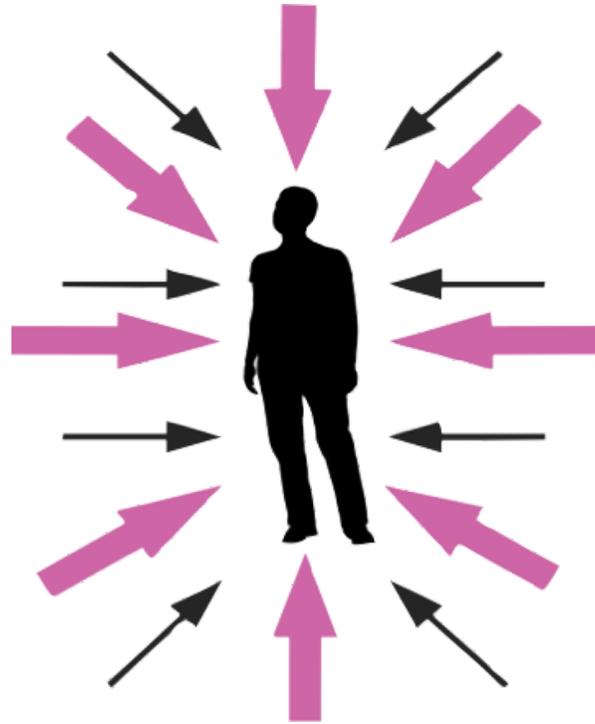
Planned Parenthood Votes volunteer teams follow a structure called interdependent leadership. While it may be a long name, its meaning is simple: we rely on each other to get things done, and each person on the team has ownership over something.

In order to build power, we need to create team structures that can get the work done. That means building real, authentic relationships with each other and including those impacted by the policies we seek to change *within* our structures. It means developing leaders on our volunteer teams. When we achieve real buy-in, and give real responsibility and ownership to the members of your team, we can build more leaders and do more collectively.

To learn more about why the balance of handing off responsibility and holding volunteers accountable is so important, let's look at a couple examples of models that *don't* work.

### Scenario 1. Too much power with too few leaders

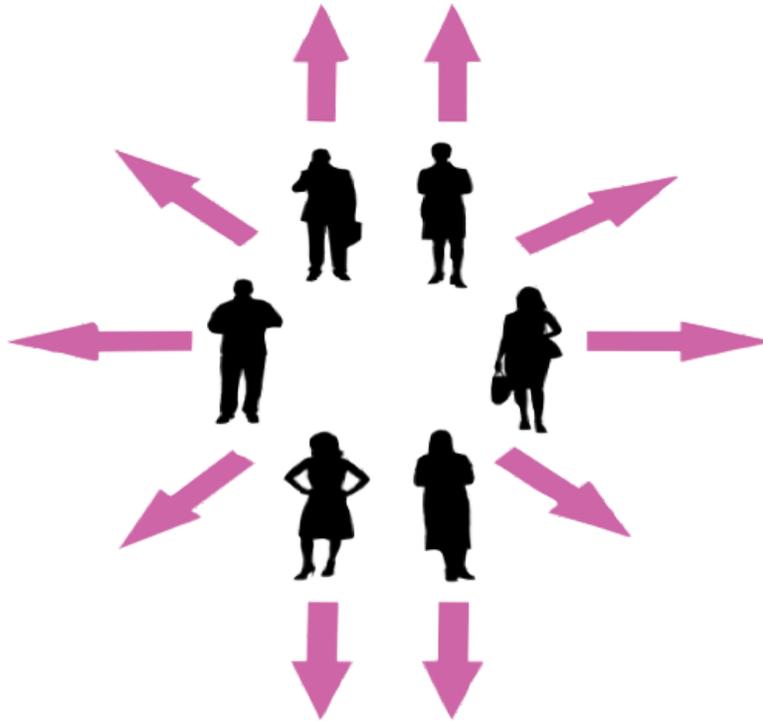
Have you ever been in a situation where a group leader takes on *everything* and can't possibly finish it all, so the team's work doesn't get done?



We know that we can't build power in the way we need with just a few leaders. If the work of this movement only falls on you, it won't all get done, no matter how committed you are. Because of this, we need to invite others to practice leadership with us.

## Scenario 2. Too many people with no clear power or delegation

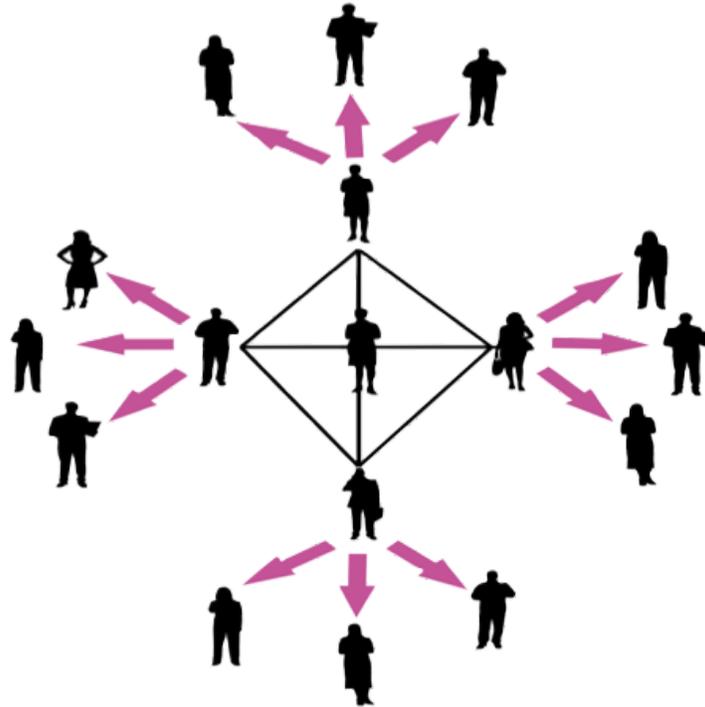
Have you ever been in a group where something needs to get done, but no one takes the lead on it? If it's everyone's job to make a decision or do the work, chances are it becomes *no one's* job, and the work doesn't get done. Alternately, everyone does their own work by themselves, and we don't get to harness the collective power of the team.



Clearly, we can't just ask *everyone* to be responsible for *everything*. It would lead to confusion, and our work wouldn't move forward in the way we want.

## So, what does work?

Interdependent leadership solves both of these problems. Let's take a look at how the model works:



The Team Chair (or your team's equivalent role) is at the center. This person mentors the next level of leadership and can have responsibilities like directing the group's involvement in mobilizations, campaigns and issues. They also have the responsibility of making sure things get done -- and that involves delegating to the people around the center.

Committee or project leaders sit around the center. These folks get guidance from the Team Chair and can delegate to groups of volunteers who've raised their hands to join their committee or project.

In order to be an effective team, you need to have *at least* 3-5 people who are able to lead work with a solid degree of autonomy, including the Team Chair and the leaders around them.

## V. Sample Volunteer Roles

***The following is an example of team roles that your volunteer team can draw from.***

### Chair

The Chair is responsible for all oversight of the group, mentorship of other chairs and group members, and directing the group's involvement in their area. It is recommended that the

person in the Chair role have two years experience with the women's health movement preferably with a Planned Parenthood advocacy organization, at least one year of active membership on a volunteer team, and fundraising and/or advocacy experience is desired. Other combinations of experience and aptitude for the work may replace direct experience. The Chair prepares and convenes leadership meetings, identifies knowledge gaps of the group and works proactively with national or local staff to obtain or train on information. The Chair delegates responsibility to group leadership as appropriate and defined below.

### **Organizing Chair**

The Organizing Chair is primarily responsible for partnering with the local organization's Field Organizer and the Chair. The Organizing Chair is the point person who helps guide the group in implementing field goals. The Organizing Chair is responsible for delegating and mobilizing the group to meet field organizing goals by keeping the group engaged in organizing activities. The Organizing Chair assumes the lead role in planning for the group to meet organizing goals in partnership with the Chair, Field Organizer, and national or local staff. It is recommended that the individual have 6 months to 1 year organizing experience, or another similar combination of experience and aptitude for the work. This person would assume Chair duties in case of Chair's absence.

### **Fundraising Chair**

The Fundraising Chair is primarily responsible for working as a partner to the Chair for all group fundraising activities. The Fundraising Chair assumes the lead role in planning for the group to meet fundraising goals for the year in partnership with the Chair, Field Organizer, and national or local staff. The Fundraising Chair is responsible for tracking and reporting financial status of fundraising efforts, as well as delegating and mobilizing the group to meet fundraising goals. It is recommended that the individual have 6 months to 1 year fundraising experience, but other combinations of experience and aptitude for the work may replace direct experience.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary functions as the scribe and provides direct support to the Chair and other Chairs as necessary. The Secretary drafts meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and maintains records of minutes and financial reports. The minutes are to be shared with the group within 2 days of group meetings to maintain timely communication and follow-up. The Secretary position is intended for someone very interested in assuming a leadership opportunity with leadership potential. The Chair and group leaders partner with the local Field Organizer to assess viable candidates on an annual basis.

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