

VOTER REGISTRATION ★★★★★

TIPS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION |

Voter turnout begins with nonpartisan voter registration. In order to cast a vote, a citizen must provide proof of residence and age prior to a given state's voter registration deadline. Low registration rates amongst low-income renters is a consistent barrier to better federal housing policy. Census data confirm that low-income voters are registered and vote at lower rates than higher income citizens. While 85% of people with incomes over \$100,000 were registered to vote in 2016 and 74% voted, just 60% of people with incomes below \$20,000 were registered, and only 38% actually voted (U.S. Census Bureau. [Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016](#), May 2017).

This lack of representation at the polls has been [demonstrated](#) to affect public policy. Studies find that increased turnout among the rich leads to policies that reduce taxation on the wealthy, while increased turnout among the poor increases support for safety net programs.

Here are some tips for effective voter registration efforts:

1. Set Goals

Define who you want to register, and how many. Will it be increasing registration in a certain set of subsidized buildings? Increasing registration in a particular neighborhood? Targeting young voters? These are all examples of important considerations for structuring your efforts. Having clear goals will provide clarity for staff and volunteers working on the project.

2. Get to Know Your Local Board of Elections

Your local Board of Elections or County Clerk can be a wealth of information as you plan to register low income renters to vote. You will want to check in with them to learn the registration deadline for the general election in your state. Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state, or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements. Request the voter rolls for your community, so you will know who in your target audience is already registered. Learn about identification requirements for registration and voting. Explore whether online voter registration is an option – this might allow your voter registration drive to be done on tablets or smartphones. Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals. In many places, the role of the Board of Elections will be conducted out of the office of the County or City Clerk. Please contact NLIHC if you need help determining who the best local authority is for your organization.

3. Offer Registration Trainings

Residents and staff who plan to register voters will often benefit from receiving training on the process. You may want to bring in someone from the local Board of Elections or County Clerk's office who can explain the state's registration requirements and how voter registration forms must be filled out, whether online or in paper. It can also help to spend a bit of time role-playing so that people who are registering voters are not discouraged when confronted with apathy. It is also helpful to practice voter registration updates for renters who have recently moved.

4. Fit Voter Registration into Your Agency's Regular Contact with Residents

A key best practice is to incorporate registration into day-to-day activities that already take place at your agency. Registration can usually be incorporated with few resources and little hassle into the intake process, training sessions, resident association meetings, and any other meetings of clients.

5. Plan Specific Voter Registration Activities

Another way to think about registration at your organization is to plan special registration activities or campaigns. Many organizations have had success holding social or other events at which residents are encouraged to register to vote. Consider hosting an event for [National Voter Registration Day](#) which is September 24, 2019.

6. Organize a Door-To-Door Campaign

The most effective way for larger organizations to systematically register clients is through a door-to-door campaign. If your agency is a housing provider or a resident council, such a campaign can be especially effective. In particular, resident leaders can volunteer to receive training and serve as 'building captains' or 'floor captains.' Captains can take on responsibility for registering, keeping registration records, and then turning out, all of the people in their building or on their floor. Such a system can be a great way to get residents or clients involved while ensuring that staff does not become overwhelmed with additional responsibilities. The key is to have personal and organized contact with potential voters by people they know or trust. Especially in this type of campaign, you will want to use the voter list from your county to see who in your buildings is already registered or whose registration needs updating. Voter lists may cost a small fee, but they are essential for tracking who is already registered.

7. Go Into the Community

Finally, especially if you have a smaller membership or client base, you may also want to think about having your volunteers reach out into the community to register other low income, homeless or underrepresented people. Consider staffing voter registration and information tables at community events. Also, make sure to promote your voter registration efforts through your website and other social media platforms. Let people know they can come to your location or events to register to vote.

8. Full Participation from Your Team

Do not forget to make sure everyone on your staff, in your membership, and on your board is registered!