

Progressive Mass Chapter Policies

We are excited that you are joining Progressive Massachusetts as a chapter! Our movement is strongest when we have wide geographical reach across the commonwealth, with committed activists everywhere ready to organize for change.

From over a decade of organizing, we've accumulated many ideas about best practices, but we have other documents for that. This document exists to outline formal policies about the role of chapters as part of a statewide organization

For general best practices and guidelines, please see [Progressive Mass Chapter Management Guidelines](#).

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Why Chapters

Chapters play a critical role in Progressive Mass' mission to push for bold progressive policy at the state level by educating, organizing, and mobilizing their members to take action and apply pressure on Beacon Hill.

Chapters are uniquely positioned to address the needs and concerns of their communities and to build the base of activists working for progressive policy (and candidates) at the local, state, and federal level and highlight the interconnectedness

of all three. With chapters across the state mobilizing activists on the same issues, we can amplify all of our efforts and build pressure on the legislature, increase broad public awareness of the issues, and create a statewide grassroots movement.

Key Functions of Progressive Mass Chapters

Chapters have a lot of independence in Progressive Mass because we know that you know best how to organize in your community. However, to help us all meet our shared goals, we ask that all chapters engage in the following activities:

State Policy Advocacy

- **Take different types of action around a few priority bills* from Progressive Mass's legislative agenda and endorsed ballot questions**
 - Inviting an advocate to speak to your chapter about a bill
 - Hosting a community forum about a bill/issue
 - Scheduling and recruiting for a constituent meeting with your legislators (or organizing a group to attend Lobby Day)
 - Canvassing in support of a bill
 - Friend-banking (relational organizing) in support of a bill
 - Writing testimony or organizing a community event to write testimony in support of a bill
 - Writing a letter to the editor or organizing a community event to write letters to the editor in support of a bill
 - Collecting pledge cards & post cards to legislators
 - Leafleting in support of a bill by high-traffic areas (e.g., train station)

*Priority legislation will be determined by factors such as strength of the leading coalition, timeliness and urgency of the issue, expectations of movement of the bill in the upcoming or present legislative session, broad support and impact for the bill or, conversely, the need to create greater awareness of and political will on an issue. Chapters should feel free to also organize on endorsed bills that are very important to them but have not been chosen as a shared priority based on the above criteria.

Community Building/Organizing

- **Publish a newsletter at least monthly** to regularly communicate with their members and interested community members
- **Conduct one-on-ones with prospective volunteers**
- **Encourage Progressive Mass membership and renewal** including, but not exclusively through, the annual awards night
- **Recruit attendees for Progressive Mass annual meeting**

- **Host a community-building social event at least once a year**
- **Host at least four open member meetings (including social events) per year** to engage your constituency. Such meetings could entail:
 - Chapter annual member meeting
 - Discussing the legislative agenda
 - Listening to speakers on particular issues / bills
 - Q&A with elected officials
 - Skill-building / training workshops
 - Working group updates

Second Tier Functions

Chapters with the capacity can have a greater impact through the following actions, which also serve as something for smaller chapters to build toward.

- Attend/host one or more phone banks in the year
- Organize a rapid response team to mobilize people to take actions during key opportunities during the legislative cycle
- Host candidate forums for local races
- Set an endorsement process for local candidates with questionnaires, etc.
- Organize and/or drive attendance to rallies
- Organize voter registration drives
- Host book clubs and movie nights
- Write blog posts for the Progressive Mass website

Leadership within State Organization

Chapter leaders are asked to be members in good standing with Progressive Mass, defined as anyone who has paid dues of \$5 or more within the past year. As members, chapter leaders are eligible to help inform the legislative agenda, participate in candidate endorsement votes, serve on committees such as the Elections and Issues Committee, and serve on and vote for members of the board.

Chapter leaders bring invaluable perspectives and are highly encouraged to serve on the board and committees of Progressive Mass.

Chapter Management

Chapter Geography

Progressive Mass authorizes only one chapter in any given area, whether that be a neighborhood, city, town, or cluster of municipalities.

Please inform the board if you would like to extend your chapter area. If you organize a number of municipalities or city neighborhoods, you may decide to break off into smaller groups once your leadership in each area has grown. Please notify the board if your chapter would like to split into smaller chapters.

Changes or Pauses in Chapter Leadership

Please update staff to changes in your chapter steering committee including additional members and changes in leadership roles or Progressive Mass liaison, even when temporary.

If you need to step away from your chapter leadership role and do not have a steering committee to keep it running, please try to find someone to hold down the fort until you can return. If you are unable to find a replacement, please alert staff.

If a chapter is dormant for a period greater than 6 months and the prior leader is unable to revive it in the near future, the board may decide to transfer leadership or disband the chapter.

Progressive Mass and Chapter Logos

Chapters should use their own logos on materials and presentations, not the Progressive Mass logo. If you don't have a logo, you can have a volunteer design one or you can contact staff, who will connect you with Progressive Mass' graphic designer, who will work with you to design a logo at no cost to your chapter.

What Requires a Membership Vote

Some decisions can be made by the chapter leadership team and some should be put to a vote. The following decisions should be voted on by members:

- Candidate endorsements [view [endorsement guidelines](#)].
- Elections of Officers and new members of the Steering Committee where there is an election process

We strongly recommend that you have members vote on Bylaws and changes to existing bylaws.

Guidelines on how to manage your membership can be found in the [Guidelines folder in the Chapter Toolkit](#).

Membership Lists

Progressive Mass provides new chapters a list of the subscribers and members in their chapter territory ahead of their first launch meeting and after staff have notified their local list that there is a new chapter or new chapter leadership in their area. Chapters also build their own lists independent of Progressive Mass.

Staff will send updated lists of members and subscribers throughout the year, usually ahead of events and endorsement cycles. Chapters can request lists at any time and can request additional information on the contacts such as when they became a member or subscriber and how many actions they have taken in the previous year or other defined period.

Managing Money

We recommend that chapters not have their own bank accounts. If a chapter decides to open an account, they must seek approval from the PM Treasurer before opening one [using this form](#).

- This bank account will be opened by Progressive Mass' Treasurer or will be set up by PM's Treasurer and Chapter leadership. Both the Treasurer and Chapter leaders will have signatory power over the account—this ensures continuity and ability to access funds if the person in charge of the account at the chapter level leaves.
- No approval will be required from PM to pay for expenses out of this bank account.

Engaging with Media

If your chapter is doing good work in the community, the media will want to write about it, and that's a good thing! Progressive Mass strongly encourages chapters to draft a media policy so that there is agreement among steering committee members about how to handle any media inquiries in advance.

Whatever the specifics of your Chapter's media policy, it is good practice to keep in mind that when speaking as a chapter leader, you are representing not only yourself but your whole Chapter and reflect Progressive Mass as a whole. Be passionate, persistent, and evidence-based, and don't say anything you don't want to see printed.

Chapter Candidates Endorsements

For a more thorough discussion of endorsement best practices, please see “[PM Endorsement Guidelines for Chapters](#).”

Municipal Races

PM does not make endorsements in local races, but chapters are free to do so. Local endorsements can be a great way to build up a reputation and an activist base. Chapters can seek support from the Elections Committee or other chapters when designing candidate questionnaires, organizing candidate forums for local races, or setting up an endorsement process.

Legislative or County Races, i.e., State Representative, State Senator, District Attorney, etc.

PM does endorse in select legislative and county races, and this process is run through our Elections & Endorsements Committee (EEC), which crafts and updates the organization’s candidate questionnaires.

If chapters are planning to endorse in local legislative or county races, they should be in touch with the EEC (elections@progressivemass.com) about the timeline of their vote so that their vote can occur prior to the statewide vote. An endorsement has its greatest impact if it is backed by local support, so if a chapter has endorsed a candidate, the EEC is likely to recommend that candidate for endorsement by the full membership. If a chapter conducts an endorsement process that does not end with an endorsement or otherwise advises against endorsing, the EEC would opt not to make any recommendation to endorse to the full membership.

Statewide Races

For statewide races (US Senate, Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Attorney General, Auditor, Treasurer, depending on the year), PM’s EEC will organize questionnaires, forums, and endorsement vote processes.

If a chapter does choose to run its own endorsement process on statewide races, they should be in touch with the EEC (elections@progressivemass.com) about their timeline so that their endorsement vote can occur prior to the statewide vote and early in the election cycle. If chapters hold divergent views on a given race, that is a good indication to the organization not to get involved with that race. If chapters

hold an endorsement process after PM's, it should be conducted with the goal of alignment and priority-setting.

Electioneering

PM is a 501(c)4 advocacy organization, which means that we can do unlimited lobbying of elected officials, are able to make and announce endorsements of candidates seeking office, but are constrained in terms of the use of organizational funds for electioneering.

Chapters are autonomous from the statewide organization but still face certain compliance protocols per the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF).

Chapters can communicate about electoral campaigns freely to *opt-in list members*, which means people who've opted into a chapter's email list, opted into a google group, Facebook group, Slack channel, etc.

However, **in public-facing media** (a Facebook page, a Twitter/Bluesky account), chapters can announce endorsements but **cannot announce canvasses, phonebanks, house parties, or other activities with the goal of getting a candidate elected or re-elected to office.**

Keep in mind that direct communications to members, volunteers, and potential volunteers is the best way to get people to turnout for any type of action including actions to support endorsed candidates.

Progressive Mass cannot reimburse chapters for expenses related to electioneering. If there is any confusion on the part of a Chapter, please feel free to reach out to the Outreach and Operations Director for assistance. A good rule of thumb, however, is that intention matters. Does this event or activity have the sole purpose of supporting a candidate's campaign? If yes, we cannot reimburse for it. If that is not the main purpose of the event or activity, but may be part of it, we may be able to reimburse for a portion of the chapter's expenses unrelated to electioneering. Please be in touch with us ahead of time.

The purpose of a chapter is to live beyond any one campaign, and it is important for your chapter's longevity to not be viewed as merely an appendage of any one candidate or elected official's political operation.

When spending money on elections, the main requirement is that money should be reported—either as an “in-kind” contribution from an individual or individuals or through a Political Action Committee. PM has a PAC that can serve as a resource.

Resources for Chapters

Progressive Mass is a grassroots organization funded by you, our members. For this reason, we aim to keep costs down and ask that chapters do as well by using free space and tech, if possible; sharing food costs for small gatherings; and using PM and coalition materials when available.

You can find the current Chapters budget and reimbursement guidelines in the [Chapters Toolkit here](#).

What PM can provide:

- Use of the organization's paid Zoom account for hosting meetings, issue forums, candidate forums, candidate interviews, but not activity on behalf of a candidate
- Access to phone-banking and text-banking platforms
- Palm cards for endorsed ballot questions or literature on endorsed legislation
- PM literature, such as PM's Progressive Platform

PM can reimburse chapters up for:

*[*Click here to view 2025 Chapter Budget Document](#)*

- Handouts for forums on issues related to the PM legislative agenda
- Venues for issue forums
- Costs related to outreach and building PM's and a chapter's name recognition and base, such as paying for a table at an annual community fair
- Costs associated with community and membership building events
- Food for events where a potluck may not be feasible, i.e. chapter annual meeting
- Other things – ask if you're not sure!

PM CANNOT reimburse chapters for:

- Materials or tools used on behalf of a candidate or party (local, state, or federal)

[Please use this form](#) to request reimbursement. Note that reimbursements can take up to 3-4 weeks for checks to be received.

[Please use this form](#) to request pre-approval of an expense over \$100. Please allow 2 weeks for the expense to be reviewed.