



2023 Vermont Democratic Party

PARTY LEADER HANDBOOK

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Why?

When the Democratic Party wins elections, we make life better for people. Our job is to win those elections.

We do a lot more than that, because the ways we do it are varied, but at its core, the Party is a mechanism for people to approve or disapprove of the way things are going in our town, state, and country, and course-correct accordingly.

And while the ways we do it are varied, there's one truth that has never changed since the first village decided to let everyone there express how they felt about an issue: personal relationships are the foundation of all collective opinions. If you know someone personally, you're far more likely to listen to them than you are some random volunteer from Rutland City on the phone.

This is why our town and county committees are so crucially important. They're the foundation of all of the work we do, the people closest to the ground who can identify superstars early and who can help introduce our team to the people we're trying to help. They build the relationships that let us undermine the Right's massive message machine. And they can be, if we do it right, the hubs that provide a sense of community and belonging to people who desperately need that.

This document is meant as guidance for Vermont Democratic leaders current and future, but it is by no means law etched in stone (except for the parts that are actually law — file your campaign reports, people!). We have an idea of what we want to see out of our town and county committees, but how you accomplish that, or how you modify those goals to fit your community, are really in your hands and we'll work with you to get that done.

And we want to thank you for your commitment and your help — we all do this because we care about where we live and we are incredibly grateful that you're willing to step up.

Jim Dandeneau
Executive Director
Vermont Democratic Party

| Responsibilities Of Party Officers

| Town Chair Responsibilities at a Glance

Town committees are the foundation of our party organization. They do the organizing that allows the party to connect with voters and activists across the state, and build social infrastructure in our towns and counties that enables people with similar values but different policy priorities to work together in good faith to build a better, more welcoming, stronger Vermont. Because they are so critical, it is important that town chairs understand what their responsibilities are and how to carry them out effectively.

Some of the responsibilities below are required by statute, and we've indicated that on the relevant lines with yellow highlighting. The other duties are suggested: doing them will make your committee and the Democratic Party stronger and more effective, but they may also be out of reach for some small committees.

| **REQUIRED: Party Reorganization (Odd-Numbered Years)**

Party reorganization is the mechanism by which party leadership is elected, every two years. It's done at the town, county, and state levels of the party every odd year. It's often referred to as "reorg." It's a great opportunity for local Democrats to learn about the party, meet leadership, and get involved.

It's also governed by state statute: Read the relevant sections in [this short guide](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/election-info-resources/parties/#partyorg) (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/election-info-resources/parties/#partyorg> > "Party Organization Guide") by the VT Secretary of State.

For a complete step-by-step guide to reorganization, see the section later in this guide. This section is meant as an overview & quick guide.

Next Reorganization: Beginning September 10, 2023.

- Set date and location.
 - Must take place between September 10th and September 30th.

- Must be held in an ADA-accessible public location.
- This information must be reported to the state party before the caucuses are held. You can use [this online form](https://form.jotform.com/231813458508055) (https://form.jotform.com/231813458508055) to report your 2023 Reorg date & location.
- Post public notice - 5 days notice is required by law, but in order to be inclusive and accessible, you should be advertising as many as 14 or 21 days ahead.
 - Must include the date, time, place, and purpose of the caucus.
 - Must be posted in three public places including the town clerk's office.
 - We strongly recommend using all your communications channels to engage the public in the process including email, social media, Front Porch Forum, local listservs, and your local newspapers.
- Under statute, in towns with populations over 5000, notice must also be posted in a newspaper (either paper or online), or in a nonpartisan online forum such as Front Porch Forum.
- Preside at caucus and convene the first meeting of the town committee immediately following the reorganization.
- Submit a copy of the certification listing all town committee officers, delegates and members, and a copy of the notice calling the caucus to the state party within 72 hours. You can submit your 2023 Reorganization certification using [this online form](https://form.jotform.com/231794075715058) (https://form.jotform.com/231794075715058).
- The only two requirements to be a member of a Democratic town committee are as follows:
 - Must be a registered voter of the town where the committee is organizing.
 - Cannot organize with any other political party's committee.

| REQUIRED: Justice of the Peace Nominations (Even-Numbered Years)

Justices of the Peace are the first and most basic partisan elected office in the state of Vermont. They officiate marriages, help supervise elections, and participate in tax

abatement and assessment hearings. You can [learn more about Justices of the Peace](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/town-clerks) at the Secretary of State's website (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/town-clerks> > "Guide to Vermont's Justices of the Peace").

Next Justice of the Peace Caucuses: July 2024

- Set date and location.
 - Must take place on or before the August primary.
 - Must be held in an ADA-accessible public location.
 - This information must be reported to the state party before the caucus is held.
- Post public notice (at least 5 days in advance).
 - Must include the date, time, place, and purpose of the caucus.
 - Must be posted in three public places including the town clerk's office
 - In towns with populations over 3000, notice must also be posted in a newspaper (either paper or online), or in a nonpartisan online forum such as Front Porch Forum.
- For more about JP Caucuses, see the section later in this guide.

| REQUIRED: State Convention Delegate Elections (Presidential Years)

The Vermont Democratic Party's state convention is an important part of coming together as a party. At the convention, the party platform is presented and discussed, and delegates are elected to go on to the Democratic National Convention and cast their ballots for a Democratic presidential candidate. Each town committee elects delegates to represent them at the convention.

Next state convention town caucuses: April 2024

- Arrange and hold a town caucus approximately one month after the Vermont Democratic Presidential Primary in March.

- Publicize the time and location of the caucus with a least 72 hours prior notice posted in at least 3 public locations around your town.
- After the caucus, contact the state party with:
 - The names and contact information of all attendees to the VDP.
 - Convey the names, contact information and Presidential preference of all those elected delegates to the VDP.

| Party Building

Party building means building the community and the bench for Democrats in Vermont. It means always working to grow the number of active participants in your committee. This work is essential to winning elections because great democrats need great volunteers, donors, and cheerleaders to succeed at making impactful policy for our state. There are *lots* of ways to be a supportive Democrat. Party building should open the door to those possibilities for the public.

- Engage with local activists to expand party outreach.
- Hold low barrier social events to build relationships with neighbors, and conduct regular outreach to welcome new people to the party.
- Recruit and support Democratic candidates for House, Senate, and municipal races.
- Raise money to support the work of the town and county committee.
- Represent the Democratic Party in the local community with dignity and integrity.
 - You will need to be comfortable being easily and clearly identified as THE Democratic Party in your town.
 - In more recent years, Vermont has not had a strong party identification at the local level; it may be uncomfortable for you at first to embody this identity, but be clear, straightforward, and committed.
- Continuously develop and build your town committee.

- You should always be adding people to your roster, inviting new people to come to meetings, and checking in on folks you haven't seen in a while.
- Take responsibility for your town committee's access to Votebuilder. Votebuilder is the party's voter database. You can get free training from VDP on how to use it.
 - Learn how to use Votebuilder as a tool.
 - Practice good data hygiene — make sure that what you're entering is accurate and timely — so that the Democratic Party's data is constantly improving.

| Election Responsibilities

Town and County chairs are essential to helping Democrats at all levels win seats. Your help is invaluable during election seasons.

- Use Votebuilder in a responsible way to contact Democrats and get out the vote in all election cycles.
 - Votebuilder is a necessary tool for campaigns to reach voters so it's essential that we update it as we learn about our changing electorate.
 - Help ensure that town-level data is incorporated into Votebuilder: within 30 days of any municipal election (Town Meeting Day, special elections), ask the town clerk for a voter roll for that election and share it with the VDP Data Director.
- In your capacity as chair, please stay neutral in primaries between Democrats of good standing. Provide the same level of access and support to all candidates running.
 - Committee members and local elected officials may endorse a particular candidate in the primary cycle, but it is strongly discouraged for party officers (in any capacity) to do so.
- Recruit volunteers and work with the VDP's coordinated campaign to provide grassroots resources.
 - Volunteer tasks will include knocking on doors, making calls, data entry, relational organizing, social media/digital organizing, and more.
- Support Democratic statewide candidates in your community.

- Reach out to candidates, campaigns, & VDP staff about local events they should be aware of such as festivals, parades, and other opportunities to meet voters.
- Provide local logistical support as needed for candidate visits: recommended locations, quiet places for regrouping and work, business references, and more.
- Communicate about candidate appearances in your community to your local committee and to the broader community.
- Make local connections to VIPs in your community as needed.
- Maintain awareness of key figures in the local community who could make potential candidates at a future date.
 - Stay in contact with those individuals and be an available resource as they consider their opportunities.
 - Connect those individuals to the Vermont Democratic Party when the need arises.
- Stay in contact with local candidates for House and Senate to be available for organizing in your community per their needs.
 - Consider forming a local coordinated campaign to align the work of the party committee with the candidate's own campaign plan so that community activities complement each other.
 - Ask candidates what they need and provide paths to get that — whether it's postcarding parties, fundraising, meals at their door, car rides for canvassing, etc.
- Continue to support candidates after they are elected (or not).
 - Campaigns are never really over!
 - Your new elected representatives will need support while in office and organizing in the lead-up to another campaign cycle.
 - If your candidate didn't win, make sure they're supported both emotionally and logistically — campaigns usually do not end on Election Day, and logistical support post-election is key to helping losing candidates eventually become winners.

| Strategic Planning

- Together with other members of the executive committee and ultimately with the entire committee, plan and execute community-specific goals for your Democratic committee.
 - Goals can be centered around fundraising, elections, outreach, issues, and more.
- As needed, develop and modify By-Laws and Town Platforms.
 - Neither of these documents is required at the town level, but they can be good organizing tools and provide a good foundation for future action.

| Other

- Campaign finance reports.
 - Must be filed if you raise or spend more than \$1000 within one election cycle.
 - This task can be delegated to the treasurer.
- Utilize effective communication tools.
 - Keep committee members up to date via email and Front Porch Forum.
 - Maintain social media presence.
 - These tasks can be designated to the secretary.

| Town Vice Chair Responsibilities at a Glance

- Provide advice and support to the Chair.
- Stand in for the Chair as needed at meetings and in other capacities.
- Take on additional duties as designated by the Chair or the committee; these could include fundraising, outreach, event planning, and more.
- Serve as a member of the executive committee, providing overall guidance to the direction of the committee.

| Some Notes on the Vice Chair

- Many see the role of Vice Chair as an afterthought, but it can be a crucial part of the success of your local committee.
- A good Vice Chair works directly alongside the Chair to set direction, carry out organizing work, and more.
- Vice Chairs also need to be prepared to step in for the Chair in all capacities, and should be regular working partners in that sense.
 - Vice Chairs are often an anticipated future Chair or a past Chair still providing support; both models work well depending on your committee's needs.

| Town Treasurer Responsibilities at a Glance

- Maintain the committee's records and compile finance reports for the Secretary of State. This includes tracking donations and expenditures.
- Maintain the committee's ActBlue page if you have one.
- Submit copies of those reports to VDP state treasurer for accurate cross-compliance.
 - Town parties are an entity of the state party, so funds raised by town parties apply to contribution limits under state and federal law.
- Report funds received and spent at each committee meeting.
- Provide guidance around projected expenses and committee balances to keep the committee's work on budget.
- Communicate regularly with the Chair and other members of the executive committee around financial issues and questions.
- Fundraise. The treasurer should play an active role in organizing fundraisers and ensuring the committee has the funding necessary to organize. Contact your VDP

Finance Director for help with fundraising initiatives.

- See below for more details on town and county finances.

| Finances

Raising money is vital to support town and county organizing efforts. Once you raise or spend more than \$1000 you will need to report your town or county committee's income and expenditure to the State of Vermont.

| Setting up a bank account

- Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN).
 - This is fairly simple and [can be done on the IRS website](https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/political-organizations/filing-requirements-for-political-organizations) (<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/political-organizations/filing-requirements-for-political-organizations>).
 - Contact your VDP Treasurer or Finance Director with any questions.
 - Deb Berryere, dberryere@vtdemocrats.org.
 - Shelden Goodwin, sgoodwin@vtdemocrats.org.
- Go to your local bank and set up a bank account.
 - Let them know you are a political organization.
 - Make sure you have an address to list on the account (a PO Box is fine).

To file finance reports with the Secretary of State you will need to register as a committee of a political party.

- You can do this through the VT Secretary of State's [Campaign Finance System online portal](https://campaignfinance.vermont.gov) (<https://campaignfinance.vermont.gov>).
- Under register, click "Register Political Party Committee."
- You will need information on your committee, your treasurer and your bank to register.
 - Political party information:

- Name of the party committee
- Email
- Election cycle
- Committee level (town, county, state)
- Phone
- Party affiliation
- Mailing address
- Treasurer information:
 - Name
 - Phone
 - Email
 - Address (unless same as party committee)
- Bank designation:
 - Name of financial institution
 - Address
- After you enter the relevant information you will be asked to review and confirm.
- Questions? [Contact the Elections Division](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections) (https://sos.vermont.gov/elections) at the Secretary of State's office.

| Campaign Finance Law

- Donations to the VDP's non-federal account are aggregated (i.e. added up all together) and capped at \$10,400 per two-year cycle. The VDP's non-federal account can accept contributions from individual and corporate donors. The VDP's federal account can accept donations from only individuals up to \$10,000 per year.
 - Donations to town and county committees count towards the non-federal limits towards the VDP's non-federal account, per Vermont campaign finance law.
 - That means that any donations made to any Democratic committee in Vermont are capped all together at \$10,400.

- Contributions to county and town committees are ideally made by check or electronically (e.g., through ActBlue).
- If contributions are made by cash, committees must obtain the name and town of the donors.
 - One easy way to do this is to have pre-printed envelopes ready for people at events. The VDP has these envelopes available and can share designs.

| Campaign Finance Reporting

State law requires that campaign finance disclosure statements be filed by all political organizations and candidates.

- All town and county committees that raise or spend more than \$1000 in one filing period must file campaign finance reports.
- You can find more information and upcoming filing dates on the [VT Secretary of State's website](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/campaign-finance) (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/campaign-finance>).

| Online donation options

- **ActBlue** - secure.actblue.com - ActBlue is an easy-to-use online fundraising tool. It allows you to create contribution pages for events, merchandise, and specific fundraising initiatives, and to easily track your contribution history.

| How to fundraise

Fundraising is a complicated and neverending topic, and one the VDP will train on regularly. It's also crucial to political work. If you have questions on best practices, please reach out to the VDP.

- Events
 - House parties enable you to fundraise while bringing community members together.

- Events done through Zoom, Google Hangouts, or other virtual tools allow your committee members to get together wherever they are and raise money for your committee.
- Communicate clearly around your goals for the event and how you'll use the funds in your community.
- Calls
 - Calls are the most effective way to fundraise. Look through past donors or check the Secretary of State's website to see who has supported Democrats in your area in the past.
- Snail mail
 - Fundraising letters are a good way to reach a lot of people, but they are much less effective than direct asks. Expect them to have a much lower return rate.
- Digital Fundraising
 - Using your communications channels, you can connect directly to your most committed supporters.
 - Develop a specific ask and share it via your email list & social media channels.

Reach out to your VDP Finance Director for help planning a house party or other fundraising initiatives.

| Creating a Budget

To create a budget, you will need to balance your committee's goals with realistic consideration of what you can spend and raise.

- How much money will you need to support candidates?
 - How much did you spend on campaign organizing efforts last cycle?
 - How much do you expect candidates to raise on their own?
- What are your operational costs?

- Potential operational costs include event space, Post Office box, and postage and other mailing materials.
- What are realistic fundraising goals?
 - How much time can you devote to fundraising? What kind of events do you have the capacity to organize? How many potential donors can you identify?

Sample Budget

Writing down and keeping track of your budget is critical. Once you have a good idea of what you want to raise and spend you can use a sample budget like the one below to organize and track your committee's finances:

Expenses		Income	
Planned	\$600	Planned	\$650
Actual	\$580	Actual	\$650

Expenses				Income			
	Planned	Actual	Diff.		Planned	Actual	Diff.
Totals	\$0	\$0	\$0	Totals	\$0	\$0	\$0
Space	\$100	\$0	\$0	Donations	\$350	\$0	\$0
Stamps	\$30	\$0	\$0	Fundraiser	\$300	\$0	\$0
Advertising	\$50	\$0	\$0				
Speaker	\$150	\$0	\$0				
Email	\$180	\$0	\$0				
Website	\$20	\$0	\$0				
Food	\$50	\$0	\$0				
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0				

You should also keep track of your expenses and income as you go. Below is an example:

Expenses			Income		
Date	Amount	Description	Date	Amount	Description
12/8/2000	\$50.00	Facebook Ads	12/8/2000	\$25	Donor Name
10/23/2019	\$50.00	Space	10/23/2019	\$30	Donor Name
10/23/2019	\$50.00	Food	12/2/2019	\$50.00	Donor Name
11/19/2019	\$15.00	MailChimp	12/2/2019	\$10.00	Donor Name
11/19/2019	\$50.00	Space			

If you have questions, contact Finance Director Sheldon Goodwin (sgoodwin@vtdemocrats.org).

| Town Secretary Responsibilities at a Glance

- Record minutes of every meeting at each meeting and report them at the next meeting.
- Depending on committee arrangements, carry out communications work both in the community and to local Democrats.
- Serve as a member of the executive committee.

| Executive Committee Responsibilities at a Glance

- In addition to the above responsibilities, executive committees work with the chair to complete any tasks or responsibilities needed. The executive committee can also make decisions on behalf of the committee when something needs to be decided quickly.
- The executive committee should be in regular communication outside of committee meetings to continually steer the committee.
 - Set agendas and priorities.
 - Follow up on event planning.
 - Authorize unexpected or unplanned expenditures.

| County Chair Responsibilities at a Glance

County Chairs play a crucial role in coordinating between town committees and the state committee. They have a broader perspective and area of responsibility than town committee chairs, and can and should help support local organizing across their entire county. County chairs are also voting members of the state committee.

| REQUIRED: Reorganization Caucus (Every Odd Year)

- Set caucus date and location and notify the state party, beginning October 12, 2023.
- Notify all delegates to the county committee at least ten days in advance.
- All newly elected county committee delegates should attend.
- Within 72 hours the county chair submits to the state chair a copy of the notice that called the meeting and certified list of the names, and mailing addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails of the officers of the county committee and of the members elected by the county committee to the State committee.

Next reorganization: October 2023.

| REQUIRED: Platform Convention Delegate Elections (Every Even Year)

- Hold a caucus to elect four delegates to the Platform Convention.
- Submit names of delegates to the state chair at least 30 days in advance of the convention.

Next platform convention: Summer 2024.

| Party Building

- Call and chair county meetings on a regular basis — ideally at least monthly.
 - Communicate regularly with county committee members about meetings; send agendas at least a week in advance and solicit ideas for future meetings.

- Set and clearly communicate a time and location that are as accessible as possible to your membership.
- Seek what works best for your committee and facilitate that, whether in-person, Zoom, or hybrid.
- Include focused work on themes and with selected speakers at meetings for thoughtful conversation.
- Also include a social component. Not all meetings need to be work meetings — casual, low-barrier socialization is the glue that will hold this party together.
- Work with town committees to develop goals for new member and volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and candidate recruitment; coordinate and supervise all town committees.
- Appear at regional events such as fairs, parades, and other gatherings; invite Democratic electeds and VDP staffers as appropriate, and facilitating town committee participation.
- Host countywide events such as legislative breakfasts, candidate forums, issue forums that focus on broader offices or themes.
- Coordinate with allied organizations who share Democratic values, whether for events, issue forums, meetings, or other opportunities.
- Inform party staff of concerns and opportunities in your county.
- Maintain channels of communication with town chairs and party staff; serve as a conduit of information.
- Serve on the State Committee of the party, attending regular meetings.

| Fundraising

- Ensure adequate ongoing funds in the county accounts to conduct business.
- Promote VDP fundraising whether events (Curtis-Hoff, Autumn Harvest, etc.) or ongoing fundraising programs (DEM club).
- Contribute to statewide efforts, such as Curtis-Hoff auction items.
- Set an example for other Democrats by being a regular donor — even in small amounts — to the party.

| Election Responsibilities

- Work throughout the year to recruit volunteers at the county level.
- Provide grassroots support to the VDP's coordinated campaign and support Democratic candidates for office.
- Show up for candidate and election events such as meet & greets and honk & waves.
- Take the lead on organizing countywide candidate events.
- Support statewide candidates when they visit your county.
- Get to know candidates personally; build relationships and be available in case are they need party or personal support in your area.
- Support candidates financially as the county committee is able.
- If able, host a campaign office in your region — especially in presidential election years.
 - Offices can be locations for phone-banking, sign-sharing, events, fundraising, food, comfortable spaces of community.

- They can also form part of a downtown community and make the Democratic Party more visible and accessible.

| County Executive Committee Responsibilities at a Glance

| County Officers

- Much of the work of additional county officers (Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) follows the same guidelines as at the town level, with attention to the county as a whole rather than just an individual town.
- County officers should be said to have an additional level of commitment and responsibility, especially to party building.

| Running Your Town/County Organization

| Town and County Committee Meetings

Ideally, town and county committees will meet monthly and on a regular schedule. Tips for running an effective meeting include:

- Make the objective clear:
 - Understand what needs to be accomplished.
 - Create an agenda for the meeting.
- Think about people:
 - Committees are made up of people with different responsibilities and commitments. Make sure to schedule meetings at a time that works for as many people as possible.
 - Additionally, hold meetings in a format that works for as many members of your committee as possible.

- In person meetings should be ADA-accessible, near a clean bathroom option, and be straightforward to find.
 - Online meetings should be well-moderated, with an eye to supporting members who may not be as technologically knowledgeable.
 - Hybrid meetings are extremely difficult to pull off well; if you choose that route, make sure that those in the room and those on videoconference are seen, recognized, and have the ability to contribute equally.
- Stick to your agenda:
 - Keeping people focused on the matter at hand ensures that the meeting is productive.
 - Moving people along during a tricky conversational point is a learned skill but very much the role of the moderator. Don't be afraid to gently enforce time limits and cut off debate when necessary.
 - Start and end on time:
 - It is important to recognize the value of people's time and the limits of their attention spans.
 - Follow up:
 - Send out meeting notes to everyone on your mailing list.
 - Check in with everyone who volunteered for or was assigned a task to ensure they are clear on their next action steps.

| Event Planning

A critical aspect of successfully organizing a town or county committee is planning, hosting, and evaluating events. You can use the form below to plan and evaluate events, as well as keep track of what works and what does not from year to year in order to improve future events.

| Event Planning And Review Form

- Event:

- Date:
- Time:
- Location:
- Suggested Donation
- Number Expected:
- Number in Attendance
- Objective:
- Planning Start Date:
- Cost:
 - Venue:
 - Food:
 - Alcohol:
 - Publicity and Marketing:
 - Printing:
 - Decoration/Other Materials:
 - Total:
- Amount Raised:
- Profit:
- Companies Used:
- Brief Overview of Events:
 - Positive Aspects:
 - Negative Aspects:
 - Things to Improve:

| Working with Local Media

As a member of party leadership, maintaining information about the local press is important. Make sure to maintain records of journalists' contact information and their beats in a format that is easy to share. This makes it easy to pass this information to campaigns, so they don't have to build press contact lists from scratch.

Note: Town and county officials should not talk to the media about political matters without coordinating with the state party. If you are contacted by the media, please contact VDP Executive Director Jim Dandeneau (jdandeneau@vtdemocrats.org).

There are several instances in which you will need to interact with the press:

| Official notices

When you are required to issue an official notice you may need to place that notice in a local newspaper or in Front Porch Forum.

| Event promotion

Local newspapers are a useful tool to promote events. You can do this by placing advertisements or sending press releases to local outlets. Which approach you take will depend on your budget and the type of event you are promoting.

| Letters to the editor or commentary

Writing letters to the editor is an easy way for folks to get involved and make their voice heard. It is also a good way to start conversations, shape local narratives, and get more people involved in your town or county committee.

For support working with local media and drafting letters to the editor, reach out to your VDP Communications Director.

| Press Lists

- It can be a good idea to develop and maintain your own press contacts list, so that you have a sense of who to contact for particular stories or needs.

| VoteBuilder & Data Management

Town and county chairs (or a designee) are eligible for VoteBuilder access free of charge. To set up an account, contact VDP Executive Director Jim Dandeneau (jdandeneau@vtdemocrats.org).

VoteBuilder is the most valuable resource that the party has. To make sure it stays that way, we count on towns and counties to maintain and update records.

| Getting Started

Because this is such a valuable tool that contains private and sensitive information, every individual who is granted access to VoteBuilder will be required to sign a user agreement.

Once this agreement is signed a user account can be set up in your name. This account grants you access to all the data we have for your town or county. From here you will be able to pull lists, input data, and update information. The more accurate information we have, the better we will be able to use that data. Always enter all the data you gather into VAN.

| Vocabulary

- **Lists** - User-created groups of voters based on selected criteria such as geographic location or voting status. Lists are typically assigned to a phone bank or door canvassing, and can be saved, shared, and exported.
- **Scripts** - Combinations of text, Survey Questions, Activist Codes, or Event invitations, created by users to be displayed on walking/calling lists or on Virtual Phone Bank/MiniVAN pages.
- **Vital Stats** - Each individual record has a set of vital stats. These include age, gender, ethnicity, and likely religious affiliation.
- **Activist codes** - These are tags created by users to track constituency groups. For example, you can search for people who volunteered in 2018 or who have indicated strong support for gun control legislation.
- **VAN ID** - A unique number assigned to each profile in VAN.

| Navigating VAN

When you open your dashboard on VAN you'll see two tabs. My Voters includes the voter file for Vermont and contains information on all registered voters in the state.

This is where you can create lists for phone banking, canvassing, and mailers. My Campaign is where you can manage volunteers. By default, it's empty and is populated as you build relationships and add profiles of volunteers and activists. It has the same basic functions as My Voters.

| Creating lists

Creating a list of voters is the first step for a canvass, phone bank, or mailer. VAN allows you to target these lists based on a range of criteria which can make your outreach efforts much more efficient. To create a list select *Create a New List* > then select your desired criteria > select *Run Search* > select one of the icons at the top of the page (Print, Labels, Calls, etc).

| Survey Questions and Activist Codes

Both survey questions and activist codes are important tools for storing and using data. To create one, select *Survey Questions* or *Activist Codes* from the codes / questions / scripts drop-down in the bottom left of your dashboard > select *Create New* at the top right of the screen > enter the question or code text and name details > if you're creating a survey question enter responses.

| Building Scripts

Select *Scripts* under codes-questions-scripts > *Add New Script* > type text elements > choose canvass result options.

| Data Entry

Data entry is critical — it allows us to get the most accurate picture of who our voters are. All data entry options are under Load Data (at the top right of your dashboard).

- Quick Mark allows you to add data to individual profiles.

- Grid View lets you enter data based on an existing list. Use your list number to locate it, mark results (except for “Not Home”) on the grid, then use the “Mark Remaining Not Home” option to fill in the rest of the list.

Contact your VDP Executive Director for more information on how to use VAN:

- Jim Dandeneau, jdandeneau@vtdemocrats.org

| Party Reorganization

| Process

Party reorganization is a critical opportunity to organize and bring new energy into party leadership. The party is required to reorganize every two years (in odd numbered years).

- Reorganization starts in September of odd numbered years (September 10 this year) with town reorganization caucuses. Town chairs are required to set and give public notice of their caucus at least 5 days in advance.
 - Caucuses must be held in public, ADA accessible locations.
 - Town caucus dates must be between September 10th and September 30th.
 - Notice must be placed in the town clerk’s office and two other public spaces. In towns with populations over 5000, notice must also be placed in a local newspaper or on Front Porch Forum.
 - Notice must also be given to the Vermont Democratic Party. You can use [this form](https://form.jotform.com/231813458508055) (<https://form.jotform.com/231813458508055>) to share the notice of your 2023 Reorganization meeting.
- At the caucus, attendees first vote to elect members of the town committee (typically everyone present). The caucus then adjourns and immediately convenes the first meeting of the town committee.
- The town committee elects officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary) and delegates (number determined based on democratic turnout in the previous year’s midterm or general election).

- Town chairs are not automatically delegates to the county committee.
- Only registered voters may participate in the caucus (but you can register attendees at the caucus).
- Within 72 hours of the meeting the newly elected town chair must submit a copy of the public notice of the caucus, and a certified list of the names, phone numbers, mailing addresses, and emails of officers, delegates, and members of the town committee. Use [this online form](https://form.jotform.com/231794075715058) (https://form.jotform.com/231794075715058) to report the results of your 2023 Reorganization. There is also a PDF form at the end of this guide that you can use if you prefer.
- County committee reorganization takes place in October (beginning October 12 this year). County chairs are required to notify all delegates to the county committee of the date and location of the caucus at least 10 days prior.
- At the caucus, county committee officers are elected. The county chair is automatically a delegate to the state committee, along with two others. Three alternate delegates are also elected.
- Within 72 hours of the meeting the newly elected county chair must submit a copy of the notice that called the caucus and a certified list of the names, phone numbers, mailing addresses and emails of county committee officers, delegates, and committee members. State committee reorganization takes place in November. Public notice will be given at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Officers are elected for the next two years.

| Suggested Meeting Agenda

This agenda can be adapted for most county/town committee meetings. The items that are relevant only to reorganization are marked as such.

Name of Committee	Date and Location
Caucus	● I. Call to order/Roll call The meeting was called to order by Name of Chair at TIME. A quorum was met/not met with (number) attendees.

	Members Present: List Committee Members present here Non-members Present: List Guests present here
	• II. Election of town committee [Reorganization only] First Meeting of Town Committee (convenes immediately after caucus) • I. Call town committee meeting to order • II. Approval of Minutes • III. Chair's Report • IV. Treasurer's Report • V. Election of officers [Reorganization only]
	• VI. Election of delegates to the county committee [Reorganization only] • VII. Additional Agenda Item 1 • IX. Additional Agenda Item 2 • X. Additional Agenda Item 3
	• XI. Old Business • XII. New Business • XIII. Announcements • XIV. Adjournment
NAME moved and NAME seconded a motion to adjourn at TIME. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at TIME. Minutes submitted by NAME, Committee Secretary.	

| Town Caucuses & State Convention

After the Presidential Primary, every four years, towns throughout the state will hold town caucuses about a month after the primary to elect delegates to the state convention. The delegates to the state convention will meet to elect Vermont's two members to the DNC for a four-year term and district delegates to the national convention. The next town caucuses and state convention will occur in 2024.

Town Committees are responsible for:

- Arranging a town Caucus location.
 - Must be held in an ADA-accessible site open to all members of the Public
 - Communicate the details of your caucus location to the Vermont Democratic Party. (This is necessary so we can share the caucus locations with all Presidential campaigns and via the media).
- Publicizing their caucus.

- Legally, towns must have a minimum 72 hours prior notice posted in at least 3 public locations around your town.
- In addition to posted public notices, spread the word by:
 - Emailing all the contacts you have of Democrats in the town.
 - Putting announcements in Front Porch Forum and other media in your town.
 - Word of mouth among Democrats in your town.
 - Making sure the State Party has all your details so they can assist in publicity.
- Hold your caucus.
 - The town chair will convene your caucus.
 - Get the checklist indicating who took a Democratic ballot in the March primary — only they can officially take part in caucus or be elected as State Convention delegates (others can observe, attending as interested guests).
 - Record the names and contact details of everyone who attends.
 - Explain the rules to everyone.
 - Oversee breaking up into individual candidate caucuses to elect their delegates based on numbers the party will provide.
 - Record the names, contact information and Presidential preferences of everyone who is elected as a delegate.
 - You may also hold a Town Committee meeting following the caucus — provided you legally warn it. If consistent with your rules, you can vote to add new people to your Town Committee membership.
- Within 48 hours:
 - Convey the names, contact information of all attendees to the VDP (so they can update our information in the Voter File).
 - Convey the names, contact information and Presidential preference of all those elected delegates to the VDP. (This is essential – we will need to begin immediately sending State Convention delegates official notices, and to share delegate information with Presidential campaigns).
 - It is **STRONGLY** preferred that this information be transmitted electronically via forms provided by the party. This enables faster assembly of our delegate list, and helps ensure greater accuracy by preventing transcription errors.

| Platform Convention (Every Even Year)

The Vermont Democratic Party's Platform Convention is a critical opportunity for Democrats across the state to come together and ensure the party's values reflect those of its membership while setting up the party to boldly take on the next two years. Below is an outline of the process with suggested dates.

- **June 1 – July 3:** County Committees, party activists, elected officials, and advocacy groups are invited to submit platform suggestions.
- **July 5 – August 10:** Platform Drafting Committee meets to write proposed platform document.
- **August 13:** Deadline for draft platform to be sent to County Chairs (and to other county delegates); deadline for County Committees and Town Chairs to name their designated representatives to the Platform Convention.
- **September 12:** State Party Platform Convention to adopt a platform and nominate Presidential electors. (To be determined whether convention will be conducted in person, virtually, or as a hybrid.)

| Justice of the Peace Nominations

Under Vermont law, JP nominations may be made by either calling a nominating caucus (open to any registered voter) OR holding a meeting of the Town Democratic Committee. Town chairs are encouraged to reach out to town committee members, elected officials, and other known Democrats in town prior to the nominating caucus/meeting to identify potential JP candidates.

| Important Dates

The deadline for completing the process and filing nominations with the town or city clerk is 5:00 pm on Friday of the second week in August, three days after the primary.

| Public Notice (Caucus)

If holding a caucus (in person or remote), it must be publicized by posting notices in at least 3 public places (including the Town Clerk office) in the town. In towns with more than 3,000 voters notice must also be published in a newspaper or online news forum such as Front Porch Forum. These notices must be posted at least 5 days ahead of the caucus.

| Public Notice (Town Committee Meeting)

If nominating through a Democratic Town Committee meeting, must comply with public posting rules and emailing all town committee members with at least 3 days' notice.

| Holding the Caucus or Committee Meeting

- Caucuses or town committee meetings may be conducted either in person, remotely or as a hybrid of the two. You can hold a caucus or meeting via conference call, Zoom, etc. Given the uncertainties of the public health situation for the summer, the VDP strongly recommends considering remote means to conduct these nominating meetings. If holding in-person nominating meetings, to carefully adhere to all guidelines for physical distancing and preventative measures in effect at the time. This may necessitate hosting meetings in larger venues than usual, requiring masks, using disposable gloves for handling papers, providing hand sanitizer, etc.
- Paper or secret ballots are no longer required for party run elections under Vermont law (change enacted in 2019). Contested nominations for JP may be voted on by verbal roll call, by electronic ballot, or by paper ballots.

| Forms

Justice of the Peace Nominating forms can be found on the [Secretary of State's website](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/election-info-resources/candidates) (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/election-info-resources/candidates>) under "Elections."

| Bylaws

| Why have bylaws?

Bylaws enable your committee to navigate difficult and unexpected situations by laying out clear and consistent guidelines. This can save time and prevent conflict, enabling you to focus your energy on electing Democrats.

| How can you develop bylaws?

Start by appointing or electing a subcommittee to draft and present bylaws to the whole town or county committee. They can start with the basic bylaws included after this and change them to suit your needs. Before the committee drafts bylaws, certain decisions must be made.

1. Who is the main decision making group?
2. How often should the committee meet?
3. Do you need any officers other than those required bylaw?
4. How will officers be removed from office if necessary?
5. (for county committees) What functions do you want your town committees and officers to perform.

Send a copy of your bylaws to the Vermont Democratic Party.

| Sample bylaws

View a copy of the state party bylaws at vtdemocrats.org/bylaws.

You can also view samples of town & county bylaws in the Field & Grassroots Subcommittee's Resource Bank.

| Town & County Organizing

| Why We Organize and Engage

- To pursue justice and democratic values in our communities.
- To leverage the strength of our numbers toward real change.
- To have an influence on political and public decision making.
- To bring more people into our party.

| Central Goals and How We Accomplish Them

| To grow and strengthen the party:

- Membership recruitment.
- Leadership development.
- Fundraising.
- Elect officers.
- Run engaging and productive meetings.
- Create, execute and evaluate an action plan.

| Issue-based organizing:

- Choose relevant issues - What does your community care about? What directly impacts you? What gets people fired up?
- Research the issue. How will it benefit your community?
- Figure out how to get people engaged.
- What issues motivated you to get involved with the VDP?
 - Be conscious of the breadth of passions of your committee and try to be attentive to them. You may be passionate about child care, while other members of your committee may be passionate about the environment. Try and collaborate to make sure everyone is able to express their passions.

| Hybrid Organizing in a Post-COVID-19 World

Thank you to our friends at the Vermont Democratic Party, the Management Institute, Tuesday Company, the M&R Lab, Power Labs, Progressphiles listserv, epolitics.com, other Democratic state parties and committees, and others for providing some of the content that we repurposed for this guide.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Vermont Democratic Party and our state's candidates and elected officials, community leaders, allied organizations, advocates, activists, donors, and volunteers were forced to innovate at an unprecedented level to continue campaign and party building activities. While in-person events and door canvassing activities were extremely limited in 2020 and 2021 due to safety precautions, the pandemic and the resulting shift to digital it necessitated provided many new organizing patterns and customs that have made the VDP and our meetings and events more accessible for all, and these tools must be utilized moving forward. A mix of in-person and digital events, through digital tools like Zoom, Google Hangouts, Slack, and others not only kept Vermont Democrats safe at the height of COVID's spread and deadliness, but opened doors to participation for people with young children, limited travel capacity, high health risk factors, or just many demands on their time.

With that said, there is no replacement for seeing our friends and neighbors in-person. Since our return to a mix of in-person events, the joy at people gathering again has been palpable, and that face-to-face contact is a critical component of our successful organizing. As we all navigate a transition to a post-pandemic future, there will be aspects of our new, strengthened digital world that we must keep in place to protect the greater accessibility the pandemic forced us to adopt. We should be working towards a hybrid future in our engagement — one where digital options are available, and in person options are made as easy to participate in as possible. That means being attentive to your committees, recommending masking to protect people who may need that, incorporating digital events as is practicable, spending as much time outdoors as we can, and being flexible on times if necessary.

As we are encouraging a mix of in-person and digital events, we are also sharing what we've learned.

| Fundraising

| Fundraising tactics

Fundraising can be digital, too! While the early Covid-19 pandemic transition to digital-only practices saw many engagement and logistical challenges for fundraising, as the pandemic continued through 2020 and communities adjusted to new digital platforms, organizers noted a decreased event cost and, in many cases, an increase in donations through holding online fundraising events, in those communities that remained open to and engaged with online activities. Some found success with Zoom fundraisers to replace in person fundraisers. As we continue to navigate both new in-person and virtual fundraisers, make time to connect with your top funders and ensure their 2022 commitment.

Think through the whole process of reformatting and planning events. You have an opportunity now to integrate new digital best practices from our months of forced innovation and pair them with traditional fundraising practices.

In addition to in-person fundraisers, you and your committee can also:

- Hold virtual fundraisers utilizing video conferencing, like Zoom.
- Send a fundraising letter. We advise candidates to send a fundraising letter every year to the same list of people who receive their holiday cards. This should be common practice for executive committees, as well.
- Call time. It's a lot harder to say no to someone on the phone than it is to ignore email or an envelope.
- Supplemental email and other tactics, such as text fundraising and digital email appeals. Be forewarned, though: good digital fundraising occurs typically when there

is a high volume of recipients involved. Don't waste a ton of time trying to raise thousands of dollars via text when you only have 30 people on your committee.

- 1:1 donor meetings or small group gatherings via Zoom.

| **General planning and processes**

- Think long-term and continue to take advantage of warmer months for outdoor gatherings.
- Insist on having “act of God” contingency clauses in all your event related contracts to provide a safeguard against later cancellation.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate, especially when canceling an event, including talking points regarding factors considered in the decision to cancel.

| **Democratic digital fundraising resources**

- **ActBlue** - secure.actblue.com - The premier online fundraising portal. Every town and county committee should have access to an ActBlue page for their fundraising and the VDP has trainings available on how to best utilize it.

| **Organizing**

| **Ideas for digital organizing through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond**

- **Online conferences:** Online gatherings are a low-cost, accessible way to excite and train your supporters. You might consider including speakers, trainings, and relationship building activities.
- **Virtual volunteer meetings & house parties:** Invite people to a virtual phone bank, text bank, letter writing party, or general organizing meeting by using Google Hangouts, Zoom, or other webinar technology to run them. Give them a quick campaign update and then do some useful volunteering. The best meetings will start with an emotional campaign update from an organizer, staffer, or the candidate. After introductions, train attendees with the skill they'll be using and then have them do it

right there on the call or webinar, bring everyone back together for a debrief, and then have them commit to the next step. Take a page out of the remote work playbook and gather everyone at the same day and time for a video conference to organize together. Zoom “breakout rooms” are a great way for volunteers to meet each other, or use Facebook Live for an easy, low-lift solution.

- **Talk to your people:** Ask organizers to build relationships and give guidance through online chat and texts. Personal outreach continues to matter as folks begin to re-enter social situations with varying degrees of accessibility and comfort. An advocacy organization in the Midwest communicated daily with supporters via chat messages to keep them motivated and trained to volunteer. Their supporters did a remarkable job communicating their unique stories as they shared content on their personal social media accounts. The content was compelling precisely because it was a mix of personal accounts and fact-based education on the issues.
- **Tele town halls:** Use Facebook Live or a real-time AMA (“Ask Me Anything”) as the venue for your next town hall. You can use your phone camera or your computer keyboard to respond to questions from the comfort of your home, while you’re cooking (Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) or riding in a car (Senator Cory Booker).
- **Online content:** Lean into user-generated content! We know it does extremely well online and on social media, and folks can DIY from their living room. We’ve seen a statewide labor union create their own volunteer recruitment video by cutting together selfie videos made by members of the union talking about organizing online.
- **Relational organizing:** Relational contact (a voter contact by someone they know rather than a stranger) has been shown to be one of the most effective methods of increasing voter turnout and volunteer engagement. Look at using digital tools like Reach, Team by Tuesday, Hustle, ThruText, OutVote, Outreach Circle, and others to allow for digital direct voter contact. We know that supporters talking to their friends is 20x more impactful than cold outreach. (Yes, 20x!) Whether your strategy calls for friend-to-friend, friend-to-peer, or even peer-to-peer outreach, it is now easier than

ever to meet people where they are: online. Have organizers use peer-to-peer text and phone banking to activate your list in their area and recruit relational organizing volunteers. Each volunteer is then responsible for reaching out to 10-20 of their friends/families about your campaign every 1-2 months. Their ask to their friends could be to support your candidacy or cause, volunteer, donate, vote, or something else.

This is the most effective organizing tool we know of — friends validating candidates and causes to their friends breaks through messaging bubbles and makes real shifts in opinion.

If you do one thing through the entire process to help spread Democratic values, this must be it.

- **Grow your team's social following:** Train organizers to focus on growing their own social media audiences on social channels with people living in key areas. Start with follow/followback blitzes, posting tons of content (5-10x per day), commenting on dozens of relevant posts, and DMing new followers with your petition or voter registration form. Have organizers identify 10-20 key influencers originally from target areas, and encourage them to speak out for your campaign or issue. Then, organizers can grow their partnerships with local chapters of key allied orgs via social media interaction and planned joint activities such as Clubhouse chats. Organizations can sometimes be uncomfortable with this ceding of control, but it's worked out better than most organizations' local social media channels every time we've done it. Also consider pitching social media share squads among your supporters. (We can't stress the value of this enough!)
- **Curate a digital speaker series:** Organize an "exclusive" (or not exclusive!) speaker series where, once or every so often (however often you want) volunteers can call in/join a webinar. Consider pairing experts with speakers from impacted communities. Give super-volunteers a role introducing or asking questions. Invite reporters who might be interested in doing a profile. Or do it publicly as a series of Facebook Live events or even pre-recorded videos, released once a day for a week or

two.

- **Build your online community:** Start a Slack for your campaign. Give organizers, volunteers, and supporters a place to socialize online. Encourage non-work-related interaction in these spaces, and model it yourself. It will help connect folks, provide meaningful experiences beyond the transactional ask, and build long-term affinity for your campaigning.
- **Do a local media push:** Timed with a news moment on your issue, encourage volunteers to submit letters to the editor or op-eds to their local paper. Provide a toolkit. Support on social media by encouraging people to tweet at their local media outlet to cover your issue. Call local reporters and set up virtual briefings on your issue with a local organizer and a local expert or influential voice. Pitch an editorial board.
- **Push for online voter registration:** Now's the time for us to begin registering new voters for 2024! Promote online voter registration and voter information via the SOS website; this is more important than ever now that Vermont has Universal Vote By Mail!

| Webinar & conference call technologies to use

- [Zoom](https://zoom.us) - zoom.us - (VDP favorite)
- [Google Hangouts](https://meet.google.com) - meet.google.com (VDP favorite)
- [GoToWebinar](https://www.goto.com/webinar) - www.goto.com/webinar
- [FreeConferenceCall.com](https://www.freeconferencecall.com) - www.freeconferencecall.com
- [MaestroConference](https://maestroconference.com) - maestroconference.com

| Online trainings

- [NDTC Online Academy](https://traindemocrats.org) - traindemocrats.org
- [Best Practices Institute](https://democrats.org/take-action/trainings) - democrats.org/take-action/trainings
- [VDP Mobilize](https://www.mobilize.us/vtdems) - www.mobilize.us/vtdems

| Confidentiality & secure communications

If you're having confidential meetings virtually, we highly recommend that you complete a basic [security checklist](https://democrats.org/security) (<https://democrats.org/security>) and use encrypted communication. Switch to using an app like [Signal](https://signal.org) (<https://signal.org>) for sensitive messaging.

| Ingredients of sustainable organizing

- **A compelling vision, focused mission, and a strategic plan that involves many and guides action.** We take the time to plan actively for what and where we want to organize and utilize an action plan on an ongoing basis to achieve party goals.
- **Effective and focused programs.** We build programming and activities intentionally, and keep long-term goals in mind.
- **Diverse funding efforts.** Our party is stronger and more sustainable when we have financial support coming from as many sources as possible.
- **Effective governance.** We expect our elected and employed leadership to observe best practices in administration, including ethical standards, and to reflect the diversity of our party membership.
- **Mindful volunteer leadership and staff development.** We recognize that people are the key ingredient to any organization and so actively promote opportunities for training, development of leadership, and ways to recognize and reward their contributions.
- **Community networking and visibility.** As appropriate in context, we build visibility for the party by collaboration with other community groups and by utilizing a wide variety of media and communication tools to distribute information broadly.
- **Clear communication within a learning environment.** We create opportunities and practices that enable frequent feedback and formal evaluation of our progress. Town, county and state leaders create a culture where honest efforts that failed are a

learning experience rather than something to be reprimanded for.

- **Ability to celebrate success and enjoy the work.** We strive to recognize people's contributions, acknowledge victories small and large, and make our meetings enjoyable and creative — food and recognition are great motivators!

| One-on-One Meetings

One-on-ones are great opportunities to build relationships, better understand the strengths and skills people bring with them, and get someone further engaged in organizing.

There are a few types of one-on-ones:

- **Introduction.** This is your first meeting. You want to get to know the person you're meeting with and understand their interests and motivations. Connect with personal stories and shared values, then share opportunities to get involved.
- **Maintenance.** Check in with committee members and other volunteers. It's important to acknowledge milestones, debrief events, and reaffirm commitment in order to continue to build a productive relationship.
- **Escalation.** This is your opportunity to ask someone to assume a leadership role. If a committee member has demonstrated commitment and leadership or has begun to take on more responsibility, it's important to have an explicit conversation to offer them a larger role.

A one-on-one:

- Is agreed upon in advance.
- Has clear goals and objectives.

A one-on-one is not:

- A phone call or email.

- A chance encounter.

Setting up a one-on-one:

- Be straightforward and direct. Ask your contact to get coffee or to get to a meeting early so you can talk about something important.
- Make sure to meet at a time and place convenient for them. Take into account things like childcare that may impact their schedule.
- Give yourself an hour. This will give you enough time to have an in depth conversation without overwhelming the person you're meeting with.

| Structure

- **Introduction**

- If this is your first time sitting down, introduce yourself and briefly share your story. Let them know why you do what you do.

- **Listen with purpose**

- Don't just wait for your chance to speak. This is your chance to really understand someone's strengths and passions.

- **Let them know what you need**

- Be clear about what your committee is working on and what you need to achieve these goals. This makes it easy for potential volunteers or party leaders to envision themselves as part of the process.

- **Make the ask**

- Your one-on-one should have a clear purpose from the start but your conversation can inform exactly what your ask is — you may realize that someone has strengths that are better suited to different tasks than you initially envisioned, etc.

- **Follow up**

- Follow up is critical. You should touch base to ensure you're both on the same page and you both know what the next action step is.

| Expectations

In an effort to provide clarity and support to all of our local committees, the VDP is providing a set of baseline expectations for each town and county committee.

| Monthly

- Support VDP with a small monthly donation.
- Maintain a committee website.
- Share out timely information as shared by the VDP, such as legislative & event updates.

| Every Other Month

- **Committee meetings** - if you feel that you have enough business to conduct to justify monthly meetings, then do that, but we want at least every other month on the books.

| Quarterly

- One in-person event.

| Annually

- **One major fundraiser** - "Major" — meaning designed to cover 80-100% of your budget for the year depending on the year. If you can do a house party that clears \$5000 once a summer you're going to have more money than you need (but less than you want, probably).

- **State Party fundraising** - State Committee members are expected to write checks for or raise \$500 for the state party.
- **Town Meeting Day elections** - Recruit candidates for municipal office, support them financially and in the field, connect them with VDP resources.

| Even-Numbered Years

- **Justice of the Peace Caucuses** - recruit members of your committee to serve as JP, conduct caucuses according to prior guidance.
- **State elections** - work to support Dems in the Statehouse as they craft legislation that reflects our values or as they conduct the business of the state in a way that reflects them; recruit candidates to run who will reflect those values; provide access to statewide and federal candidates for your committee members so they can make informed decisions on higher office.
- **Platform convention delegates** - appoint delegates to the VDP platform convention.

| Every Four Years

- **Statewide convention** - appoint delegates to VDP State Convention for purposes of selecting delegates to Dem National convention.
- **Recruit and collaborate** - Recruit delegate candidates and collaborate with colleagues in other local committees to get those people elected.

| Resources

| Vermont Democratic Party Structure

- **Anyone and everyone** - The VDP is made up of anyone and everyone who is interested in moving Vermont forward in a productive and progressive manner.
- **Town Committees**

- **County Committees**
- **State Committee**
- **Executive Committee**
- **Party Staff**

The role of staff is to make day-to-day decisions and carry out the decisions made by the state committee.

| Contact Information

| State Party Staff

Party staff is here to serve town and county committees. Party staff expands and changes based on the party's needs, so this is the part of the manual that is most likely to be a living document. For contact info, visit vtDemocrats.org/vdp-staff.

| Executive Director

- Develop and implement campaign plans to win elections at the local, state and federal level.
- Serve as the chief strategist for the VDP.
- Oversee the coordinated campaign efforts and coordination of consultants' activities during election years.
- Work with field personnel to maintain and expand grassroots efforts and primary base.
- Stay up to date on technology involved with party building and winning elections.
- Manage relationships both in state and across the US.
- Hire additional personnel based on need and decisions made by the Executive Committee.
- Perform staff reviews and encourage staff development.
- Review and restructure staff functions and responsibilities, as necessary.
- Direct fundraising efforts develop strategy and work with finance staff and consultants to implement plans.
- Oversee programming such as volunteer recruitment and retention, including during non-election years.

- Work with Chair, Treasurer, and staff to develop and adhere to an operating budget.
- Act as a liaison with the staff of the Democratic National Committee and the Association of State Democratic Chairs.
- Attend, DNC, and District and Regional Party Meetings.
- Ensure that all campaign finance reports, tax returns, and other required reports are filed accurately and on time by the compliance officer.
- Work with the Communications Director to issue press releases, speak on behalf of the party where appropriate, and present the VDP in a positive and professional light.
- Oversee and maintain relationships with VDP leaders, elected officials, key constituencies, and donors both in state and nationally.
- Develop training programs for the state party, including town and county leaders and candidate training.
- Oversee development and production of party building and message delivery tools, including newsletters, briefings, website, social media outlets, brochures, etc.
- Attend and assist in running all meetings of the State and Executive Committees as required by party by laws.
- Demonstrate an understanding of all aspects of elections, including state of the art campaign techniques, campaign planning, targeting, polling, election law, GOTV programs, party building, and pre-election planning.
- Other duties as assigned.

| Communications Director

- Develop and execute the Party's communication plan in consultation with the Executive Director and Chair.
- Effectively disseminate the goals, activities, and accomplishments of the VDP with news media and key constituency groups through traditional and social media, as well as digital marketing.
- Manage all media requests and prepare and disseminate communication tools such as press releases, op-eds, public statements from various VDP officials, speeches, talking points, presentations, media advisories, briefings and pitch ideas.
- Cultivate relationships with media professionals throughout Vermont.
- Work with candidates and campaigns to develop messaging frameworks and set deliverable communications goals.

- Facilitate national message output through collaboration with various national party committees.
- Create and provide media trainings for candidates and local party organizations, including key digital skills such as email organizing, social media, and online fundraising.
- Work with VDP staff to manage communications situations they arrive, including crisis management.
- Manage and develop an integrated digital campaign plan for the VDP, including email, social media, and web properties.
- Write, edit, and manage content for the party's email list to raise money, mobilize volunteers, and help elect candidates up and down the ballot.
- Engage Democrats online and expand our base by writing, editing, and curating content for the VDP's social media accounts.
- Manage an email and social media content calendar.
- Manage website, email and social media data and segment our email list to improve our results.
- Other duties as assigned.

| Finance Director

- Manage and execute a strategic fundraising plan which includes events, call time, low dollar solicitations, and direct mail.
- Work with the Party Chair and Executive Director to track income and adjust goals.
- Manage database, execute and manage donor research and expand new donor networks.
- Be a resource for County Committees, elected officials and candidates on fundraising strategy and reporting.
- Manage work of staff, interns and finance consultants.
- Manage follow up on all correspondence and pledges.
- Work closely with compliance staff.
- Responsible for all electoral duties relating to protecting and expanding a Democratic majority in the Vermont House of Representatives and state Senate.
- Recruit, train, and support candidates to run in state house and senate districts.
- Fundraise to provide the resources necessary to do the job effectively.

| Data Director

- Conduct voter targeting and analysis for strategic planning and electoral strategy.
- Coordinate data across different tools utilized by the party to create a holistic view of voter engagement and identify areas of improvement.
- Ensure the voter file is up to date and running smoothly.
- Empower party staff with the tools, processes and training they need to execute their jobs successfully.

| Useful Official Offices

| Vermont Democratic Party

www.vtdemocrats.org

P.O. Box 1220, Montpelier VT, 05602

| Secretary Of State

The Secretary of State's office is a useful resource for finance and organizational information. The SOS office is a good place to start with questions on these subjects.

- **General Questions:** sos.elections@sec.state.vt.us
- **Campaign Finance:** sos.campaignfinance@sec.state.vt.us
- **Voter Registration:** sos.voterreg@sec.state.vt.us

| Vermont Legislature

[The Legislative website](https://legislature.vermont.gov) (<https://legislature.vermont.gov>) is an incredibly valuable resource for understanding what the Legislature is working on at any given time, or any other relevant information about the body or the laws they pass. It will tell you what committees are and who is on them; what the agendas for the various committees are; and link you to the official Youtube streams of each, as well as the chambers as a whole. This is but a taste of what you might want to know to interact with them, but the VDP is planning to share deeper trainings.

| Town Clerks

You can find a list of town clerks on the [“Elections” division of the VT Secretary of State’s website](https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/town-clerks) (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/town-clerks>).

| Statewide Events

- **State Convention:** The VDP’s State Convention is held once every four years after the Democratic Presidential Primary. In addition to electing district level delegates to the national convention and representatives to the DNC, the State Convention is an opportunity for Democrats across the state to come together and organize for the upcoming election.
- **Platform Convention:** The VDP’s Platform Convention took place in September 2022 and occurs once every two years during election years. This is when party members come together to determine party values and goals for the next year. It is an opportunity for all Vermont Democrats to have a voice in the direction of the party.
- **Reorganization Meeting:** State reorganization takes place in November of odd numbered years, and will happen this Fall. The first state committee meeting follows a process of reorganization at the state and county level. The state committee members elected by county caucuses elect the VDP Executive Committee for the next two years.
- **Curtis-Hoff Leadership Awards:** The Curtis-Hoff Leadership Awards honor individuals whose work embodies public service, volunteerism, and activism. It is held annually in the spring in the Burlington area.
- **Southern Vermont Celebration & Obuchowski Awards:** The Southern Vermont Celebration is an opportunity for the state party to celebrate the work and contributions of Southern Vermont Democrats to our success statewide, and the Obuchowski Awards, named for former House Speaker Mike Obuchowski, exist to honor Democrats from Southern Vermont who have embodied Democratic values in

standing up for their communities.

- **Autumn Harvest & Leahy Awards:** The VDP hosts Autumn Harvest every fall in different locations around the state. This event is an opportunity for Democrats across the state to come together, raise money to support the party, and celebrate the hard work that is being done to build a better Vermont for everyone. The Leahy Awards, given out at our Autumn Harvest Celebration, honor up and coming voices in the Vermont Democratic Party.
- **Executive Committee Meetings:** Held every other month by members of the Executive Committee to review and vote on party resolutions and budgets and make decisions governing the party. The Executive Committee consists of four at large members, party leadership, including the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, and DNC Members, and members appointed by the party's federal delegation, House and Senate Caucuses, and party stakeholders.
- **State Committee Meetings:** Held every other month (State Committee and Executive Committee meetings alternate). This is the governing body of the Vermont Democratic Party and consists of two delegates from each county, the chair of each county party, and three alternates from each county who vote when a delegate is not in attendance. Like the Executive Committee, the State Committee meets to review and vote on party resolutions and budgets, but also votes to elect at large members to the Executive Committee.

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