

The Dos and Don'ts with Partner Organizations

Overview

To be successful in your organizing work, you cannot go it alone. We can't make the change we want all by ourselves. We need to partner up with other organizations that have complementary strengths, political relationships, and experiences to accomplish a shared goal. By building strong and effective coalitions, you can leverage your capacity to move the needle on the issues you care about.

While we often do come together to accomplish a shared goal, we also need to know when working with a potential partner organization might not be beneficial for all groups involved. Let's look at some guidelines and different scenarios below.

When we can work with partner organizations

We can work with issue-focused groups, particularly when their goals align with ours. These could be climate groups, gun violence prevention groups, health care advocacy groups, immigration groups, etc. We can coordinate with them on events and issue campaigns, so long as (a) they are not promoting a political party, (b) bolstering a candidate's campaign, and (c) their message and goals don't conflict with our own.

When we cannot work with partner organizations

There are specific groups—like political parties or candidates for office—with which we legally cannot coordinate. We also should avoid partnering with organizations with which we are not aligned on the outcomes we hope to achieve or the strategy for success.

We cannot coordinate with or support any organizations that are electoral or partisan in nature, whether they be student groups, nonprofits, or businesses. This is a hard line. This includes the Democratic National Committee, state parties, student or local (capital "D") Democratic or Republican clubs.

Below are a few examples that may be helpful:

- Recently, OFA partnered with Indivisible on events to defend Obamacare. We will continue to work with groups like Indivisible when our goals and messaging are aligned on an issue, such as Obamacare. That said, there are many groups associated with Indivisible that are holding "anti-Trump" events directed at the President. That does not fall under OFA's goal or messaging—we are squarely focused on holding our lawmakers accountable because they are the ones who create the policies that affect the issues we care about.
- An OFA campus organizer is a member of several college student groups, including the school's the "College Democrats." Just being a member of that group does not mean they can't be a part of the Campus Organizing Academy, but they will need to focus on an issue-based project throughout their time mentoring under the academy—it cannot be for a project that coordinates with the "College Democrats."
- An OFA chapter wants to host a climate rally, and they have invited their member of Congress, who supports action on climate change, to be a speaker. This is fine—OFA can work with elected officials in their official capacities as representatives of their districts to discuss the issues that our chapters organize. **However, OFA cannot work with any elected officials or candidates who are currently running for an elected office**—including elected officials who are running for re-election to their current office.

Working with partner organizations is a great way to show our strength, share resources, and pool expertise for a particular event or campaign. Follow the basic dos and don'ts of working with partner organizations outlined above to get a solid start—and when in doubt, don't hesitate to reach out to your OFA point of contact or send an email to organizing@ofa.us.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.