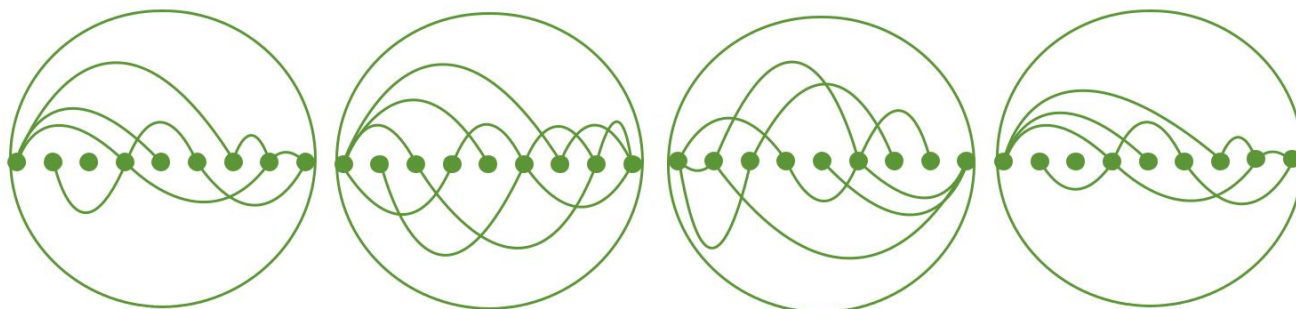


## Job Profile of an Organizer\*



## community learning partnership

*Pathways into Community Change Careers*

\*Excerpted from “LISTENING—BUILDING—  
MAKING CHANGE: JOB PROFILE OF A  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER”

## JOB PROFILE OF A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

This job profile, which continues through page 8, consolidates what we learned in our job analysis. It defines terms and describes what an organizer does. It breaks down the tasks, skills and occupational characteristics of an organizer. It summarizes the knowledge an organizer needs to have in order to be effective.

**Definition of a Community Organizer.** A community organizer builds a group of people or institutions to address the social and political problems they experience directly and have in common. Core tasks include base building and sustaining powerful organizations that can run successful campaigns and win change.

An organizer finds, trains, supports and educates community-based leaders to make their own decisions on their own behalf, and to build their own institutions and power. This includes stimulating their curiosity about what they are experiencing in ways that help people to understand their own assets as well as their need for power. It also includes building relationships among community leaders and between community leaders and power holders.

An organizer moves the base to action to address the systems and public policies they collectively want to change. This includes engaging leaders in research in order shape effective, strategic campaigns. Organizing campaigns are the vehicles through which the base understands, identifies and wins concrete solutions to the problems they identify.

*“If you as a human being cannot see that humanity in people and understand what is justice, what is social justice, you cannot do community organizing.”*

## A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER’S FIVE PRIMARY DUTIES WITH DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Duties are the general areas of competence that successful workers in an occupation must demonstrate or perform on an ongoing basis.*

The following are the primary duties of an organizer:

### 1) FIND AND BUILD A BASE

A **base** is a group of community members who demonstrate a commitment to a project or organization, as defined by that organization. Those in the base directly experience the social and political problems the organization addresses or they identify as being part of the affected community. A base can include individuals or institutions, or both. Members of the base engage in the decision making and work of the organization and participate in events and actions. In some organizations, they are dues-paying members or otherwise defined as ‘members’ according to their level of involvement. Organizers continually build the base.

### 2) TRAIN, SUPPORT AND EDUCATE LEADERS

A community organizing **leader** makes decisions, represents the organization, helps build the base and exercises leadership in the broader community. Developing leaders to fulfill their roles is one of an organizer’s primary duties.

### 3) IDENTIFY ISSUES

An **issue** is the solution to a problem. It is what community members and organization leaders decide will resolve the economic, social or political problem they experience. An issue directly affects and motivates the base, and is something the base can successfully take on and win. Organizers listen, guide and skillfully agitate members and leaders to identify their own issues.

### 4) MOVE THE BASE TO ACTION THROUGH STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS

A **campaign** is a series of steps aimed at achieving a goal, usually a change in social policy or administrative practice. Campaigns provide the opportunity for leaders to have hands-on engagement and public roles. Action in the context of a campaign focuses on strategically and systematically achieving a series of clearly established objectives in order to attain a goal. Organizers move the base to action to achieve campaign goals and to build leadership skills.

### 5) BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

The organizing concept of **power** means that the base of an organization and the broader communities they identify with can win their campaigns, manage a strong organization, and have the knowledge and skills to fully participate in and shape the social and political processes that affect them. This includes building relationships among organizational leaders, and between leaders and perceived power holders. The concept of community includes the full range of community identification, from the local to the global, including shared interests if not shared geography. Organizers build power.

## TASKS AND SKILLS OF ORGANIZERS

Table 1 and Table 2 consolidate the information from our national survey, focus groups and our own analysis. Table 1 lists the tasks of organizers and shows where they encounter these tasks. Table 2 lists the skills of organizers and shows where they apply these in carrying out their duties. (*Tables on following page*)

**Tasks that Apply to All Duties.** Note that there are three tasks from those listed in Table 1 that we believe organizers encounter in all of their duties. First, they must always practice good listening skills; be able to process; to effectively agitate; and to identify people's needs and potential. Second, they need to always establish and build working relationships with other people. Finally, organizers plan and run meetings in every area of their jobs. They need to be able to set the goal and agenda, facilitate dialogue and keep to the task at hand.

**Skills that Apply to All Duties.** Note that there are several skills listed in Table 2 that we believe organizers apply to all of their duties. They need to be skilled at active listening and in verbal communication. They need to be culturally competent and aware (of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability). Organizers must be able to prioritize and implement a work plan. In all areas of their work, they practice critical thinking, time management, social-emotional intelligent leadership/organizing skills and the ability to prioritize and be organized. Other skills that apply to all of an organizer's duties are: facilitation, agitation, able to multi-task and to delegate tasks and responsibilities. Finally, organizers need to be skilled in using a computer and in phone answering.

**TABLE 1. TASKS OF ORGANIZERS**

<b>TASKS</b>	<b>DUTY ONE:</b>	<b>DUTY TWO:</b>	<b>DUTY THREE:</b>	<b>DUTY FOUR:</b>	<b>DUTY FIVE:</b>
<i>Tasks are work activities that can be defined and observed, consist of two or more definite steps and lead to an outcome. The following are listed from Most Important to Least Important, as ranked on our national survey.</i>	<b>Find and Build a Base</b>	<b>Train, Support and Educate Leaders</b>	<b>Identify Issues</b>	<b>Move the Base to Action through Strategic Campaigns</b>	<b>Build Organizational Power</b>
Practice good listening skills; be able to process; to effectively agitate; and to identify people's needs and potential					
Identify potential leaders					
Establish and build working relationships with other people					
Develop programs					
Debrief/evaluate meetings, actions & campaigns					
Prep leaders for public roles					
Engage in power analysis/power mapping					
Engage in base building tasks such as door knocking, calls, house visits to recruit members into the organization.					
Organize strategic actions					
Develop a campaign plan					
Plan and run meetings: be able to set the goal and agenda, facilitate dialogue and keep to the task at hand					
Develop leadership plans					
Deliver workshops and trainings					
Build alliances					
Build committees and boards that can make decisions					
Engage in strategic planning					
Manage projects					
Research/investigate/analyze history, issues and strategy					
Manage volunteers					
Collect and analyze data/translate it for public use					
Engage in community-based participatory research					
Make presentations					
Plan events					
Engage in grassroots fundraising					
Build social capital, including asset mapping					
Design graphics and web materials (flyers, brochures, website)					
Develop skills training and political education curriculum					
Engage in organizational development and sustainability efforts, including structure, human relations, funding, planning					
Write grant proposals					
Promote solidarity with racial/cultural groups and unity across race and culture					
Engage in publicity and public relations					

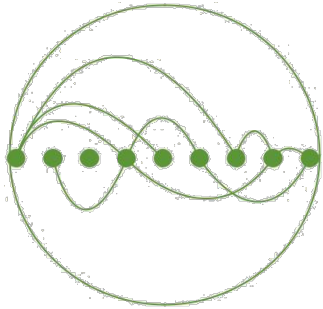
**TABLE 2. SKILLS OF ORGANIZERS**

<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>DUTY ONE:</b>	<b>DUTY TWO:</b>	<b>DUTY THREE:</b>	<b>DUTY FOUR:</b>	<b>DUTY FIVE:</b>
<i>Skills are the ability to perform occupational tasks with a high degree of proficiency. Organizers require a range of skills, from basic to interpersonal to organizational. The following are the skills of organizers, from Most Important to Least Important, as ranked on our national survey.</i>	<b>Find and Build a Base</b>	<b>Train, Support and Educate Leaders</b>	<b>Identify Issues</b>	<b>Move the Base to Action through Strategic Campaigns</b>	<b>Build Organizational Power</b>
Active listening Verbal communication					
Culturally competent and aware (of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability)					
Able to recognize strengths and weaknesses of different people in building a team					
Able to prioritize and implement a work plan					
Critical thinking					
Time management					
Social - emotional intelligent leadership/ organizing skills					
Prioritizing and being organized					
Facilitation					
Agitation					
Able to analyze causes and sources of inequity					
Able to multi-task					
Able to find answers					
Know when to end a campaign, project or to close down your organization					
Delegate tasks and responsibilities					
Writing, such as professional e-mail and basic reports					
Using a computer					
Negotiating/arbitrating					
Multilingual speaking, writing, translating					
Phone answering					
Writing reports, such as policy reports					
Using Basic Office software: Excel/Power Point/ Quick Books					
Using social media/social networking					
Marketing					
Using GIS					
Video/film production					

## OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS: WORKER BEHAVIORS NEEDED FOR ORGANIZERS

A worker behavior is an innate or learned ability or distinguishing quality that allows an individual to complete a job. These cut across all of the duties associated with the job. The following are the worker behaviors of organizers, listed from Most Important to Least Important, as ranked on our national survey.

Integrity > Accountability > Reliable > Open and willing to learn > Able to identify one's own skills > Able to take initiative > People-oriented > Self-reflective and self analytical > Understanding of histories & cultures of communities one is working with > Flexible and able to handle change > Follows through > Able to understand and accept one's own power > Persistent > Committed to social justice > Able to ask for help > Able to work both independently and as part of a team > Strong sense of community building > Goal-oriented > Passionate about working with diverse communities > Able to understand the organization and its culture > Able to meet deadlines > Analytical > Thoughtful > Empathic > Likes being hands-on > Willing to take risks > Practice a healthy/sustainable lifestyle > Sense of humor > Curious > Decisive > Quick thinker > Fair > Militant: Activist fighter with a positive outlook > Fearless.



### FUTURE TRENDS.

The following are some comments from our national survey about directions and priorities in organizing:

**Going Beyond Local Models.** *“There is a strong movement toward innovation and experimentation in traditional community organizing. It’s not happening across the board, but the old model of community organizing has lost its utility. As power has grown and centralized, what is the value of purely local community organizing? Very little.”*

**Getting Local Leaders Involved.** *“How do we involve the populace with whom we work to become part of the solution to the problems we face in our neighborhoods?”*

**Sparkling Community Resistance.** *“The community organizer doesn’t build [anything]. The people who are targeted by the particular oppression must create resistance on their own behalf and build their own movement...the organizer is a sparkplug, most importantly.”*

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE THAT ORGANIZERS NEED TO HAVE

General knowledge is the context for an occupation. It cuts across all of the duties and behaviors associated with a job. The following is the general knowledge organizers need, listed from Most Important to Least Important, as ranked on our national survey.

- Understanding the political system and policymaking process (local, state, national).
- Understanding power, privilege and oppression.
- Understanding local issues, including the politics and the history of specific communities in the area.
- Able to engage in power analysis of personal and interpersonal dynamics, as well as social and structural.
- Understanding interracial and intercultural dynamics.
- Understanding global justice movements for reform and liberation, and what makes a movement a movement.
- Owning one's own history and struggles.
- Understanding different organizational models: theory/practice/structure.
- Knowing different models/theories of social change.
- Basic understanding of social, economic, political concepts such as neo-liberalism, imperialism, democracy, socialism, communism.

*“An educational curriculum can provide important historical knowledge along with a good grounding in democratic movements and the various types of organizing. It can teach decision-making and critical thinking skills. It can teach writing and speaking skills. An educational experience cannot provide a good opportunity to practice and reflect on actual organizing experiences and activities. This needs to be done in the field and under the mentoring of a skilled organizer*