

Introduction: 2024 Endorsements Guide

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide>

The original [Indivisible Guide](#) focused on how to act locally to influence your elected officials. This guide focuses on how to act locally to hold them accountable at the ballot box -- and in some cases, how to replace them.

Since our National Endorsements program began in 2018, our movement has issued over 125 Congressional and Gubernatorial endorsements, building progressive power by helping to elect the next generation of bold leaders. And local Indivisible groups have endorsed hundreds more candidates up and down the ballot, fighting to make their leaders more accountable and win local power.

Both upstart candidates and longtime elected officials recognize that local Indivisible groups are a real source of political power and that earning your support is extremely valuable. They've seen the incredible hard work from Indivisibles across the country fighting against MAGA extremism and right-wing, reactionary currents.

You've pushed candidates on the issues that matter. You've knocked doors, phonebanked, and held candidate forums. And you've made sure that the people who power our multiracial, grassroots coalition came out to vote. Indivisibles have real people power that's impossible to ignore, and candidates want to tap into that.

But we all know our work is not done. Each year that we elect more Indivisible champions the more powerful our movement becomes and the better we're able to build lasting majorities that can enact progressive priorities. In the House of Representatives, this torch is carried by members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, who organize and fight to ensure that we pass the most ambitious and progressive legislation possible.

Beating the GOP, a party that is no longer committed to maintaining basic tenets of democracy, is a hugely important general election goal. It's absolutely necessary that we continue to repel far-right forces. We also need leaders that are not just pro-democracy, but who will staunchly defend progressive values and stand indivisible with us. That means we have to care about who wins Democratic primaries.

We know elections -- especially primaries! -- can be intimidating. We also know that an endorsement, done correctly, is one of our most powerful tools for change. This guide demystifies the process, with advice on how best to engage in both primary and general elections.

Who is the document by and for?

We: Are former political campaign hacks who have worked on local, state, and federal elections.

You: Are an Indivisible group leader or member looking to build your power.

What: This guide aims to demystify the candidate endorsement process, including for (gasp!) primaries.

Why: Done right, endorsements are a critical tool for applying and growing your Indivisible group's political power.

Summary

Prologue: Endorsement Success Stories

Chapter 1: Why Candidates Care about your Indivisible Group

What the campaign needs to win: people, media, money. Campaigns are focused on one thing: winning. They win by getting votes. They get votes by acquiring and deploying three resources: people, media, and money. Understanding this should help your Indivisible group productively engage with campaigns.

Why campaigns covet Indivisible group support: Indivisible groups are unique because you are real, locally-based, engaged constituents. That is rare, and it can mean political power for your Indivisible group. Candidates seek out Indivisible group support because they recognize it will bring people, media and/or money. Your support is valuable, and Indivisible groups should treat it as such.

Chapter 2: What Makes Your Group's Endorsement Powerful?

Indivisible group endorsements are about mobilizing people, media, or money. Indivisible groups only have power with political campaigns if they mobilize key resources to help those campaigns win. We talk about what an endorsement IS and why the process of endorsement is important for determining how you engage in a campaign.

- **What your Indivisible group offers a campaign.** Defining which key resources the group will mobilize in support of an election outcome.

- **What your Indivisible group achieves.** Wielding and growing political power beyond elections.

Chapter 3: Why Your Indivisible Group Should Consider Endorsing in Primaries

We've heard from some groups worried about possible pitfalls of engaging in primaries. This section walks through some of the benefits of the primary system, and some best practices for ensuring primary endorsements don't cause ill will.

Chapter 4: Factors to Consider when Endorsing a Candidate

What do you care about? Who is the candidate? And, how strong of a candidate are they? These are the kinds of questions your group will have to answer to endorse. We walk you through how to answer them.

Chapter 5: How to Make an Endorsement

Step-by-step advice on how to endorse and when. We take you from initial candidate conversations, all the way through the decision-making process and finally, the endorsement itself. And we walk through common pitfalls organizations run into when making these important statements of position and value.

- 1) How to interact with Candidates and Gather Information
- 2) How to Endorse / How NOT to make an endorsement

Chapter 6: Post-Endorsement Planning

Once you've endorsed a candidate locally, it's time to start engaging voters! There are a number of ways to get involved, and this Chapter will help get you started on building an effective plan to make an impact in the election.

Chapter 7: Local Voices, Local Power

Making an impact in elections, especially at the grassroots level, is hard and invaluable work, and is often deeply under-resourced. This chapter is all about our local endorsement support program, **Local Voices, Local Power**, which is empowering select groups to take their local endorsement programs further with funding, swag, technical support from our team of political experts, and a national spotlight on their hard work.

PLEASE NOTE: How you engage in elections depends a lot on your group's organizational status. This guide is intended for local groups that can engage in political activity, including: groups that are currently unincorporated and haven't sought any formal entity status, groups that have formed 501(c)(4) organizations, groups participating in Indivisible's Distributed Fundraising Program (which generally follows 501(c)(4) spending rules), and

groups that have formed political organizations (i.e., 527 organizations or PACs). This guide is not intended for 501(c)(3) organizations as 501(c)(3)s are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity, including endorsing candidates.

Political spending can trigger campaign finance rules and reporting requirements, so if you have questions about specific political spending that your group would like to do, please consult with a campaign finance attorney who can help you plan for compliance.

Chapter 1: Why Candidates Care About Your Indivisible Group

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-why-candidates-care-about-your-indivisible-group>

Campaigns exist to win. To do this, they mobilize all the resources at their disposal to get their supporters out to vote. Whether the candidate is a seasoned campaign professional running for her second term as Governor or a first-timer looking at challenging the incumbent in a local school board race, every campaign relies on the same basic tools and building blocks for success. This Chapter explains what your local candidate's campaign HQ is thinking, and how your Indivisible group factors into their thinking.

What the Campaign Wants

Campaigns win by mobilizing people, media and money. The specific tactics that campaigns use for fundraising, communications, and volunteer coordination will vary depending on the circumstances of the campaign and the campaign manager's personal style. But, when coupled with messaging, these three elements are the foundation of every campaign.

- **People:** When you get right down to it, people are the most important electoral resource. People vote and are crucial to turning out other voters. They phonebank, canvass, staff campaign offices, recruit volunteers, build word-of-mouth excitement, orchestrate people- and media-attracting events, and donate. Pretty much anyone who's worked a campaign will tell you that at the end of the day, the single most valuable resource is an engaged, supportive constituency.
- **Media:** Media is all about getting a favorable image of the candidate out to voters. The number of voters you're trying to reach will vary depending on your level of the ballot.

The average congressional district has about 760,000 people and many Senators represent millions of constituents, whereas a county commission seat may only cover about 20,000 people and a local school board member may represent less than 300 people. The quickest way to reach the most voters is through media exposure, both “earned media,” and “paid media.” Campaign ads are one of the better-known forms of media. We’ve all seen them. They range from inspiring to corny to downright despicable.

In addition to this “paid media” of advertising, campaigns also seek “earned” media. Earned media is free media coverage of the candidate speaking at events, taking a stand on a policy issue, or giving interviews to the press. Candidates are relentless in seeking out earned media and extremely careful about crafting their image through these opportunities. Local Indivisible groups are well-positioned to generate opportunities for earned media coverage that the candidates wouldn’t otherwise have.

- **Money:** Like it or not (we don’t), money in politics is a reality. The average winning campaign for the House of Representatives costs \$1.8 million. The cost of the average Senate race is \$13.5 million! Candidates (and incumbent elected officials) spend a TON of their time raising money so that they can afford to actually run their campaign.

You can tell a lot about a candidate from where they get their money. Some campaigns are largely fueled by small-dollar donations. Most candidates spend literally hours every day cold-calling rich people and asking for money. Often campaigns rely on Political Action Committees (PACs) that represent corporations or interest groups. For federal election candidates, you can find out who butters their bread at [Open Secrets](#) -- just search for the candidate’s name to find past and current lists of donors.

Different Campaigns, Different Mindsets.

Campaign professionals are used to working across a range of different types of races. Some of these differences will be familiar to many voters: elections can be statewide, like races for Governor or Senator, or confined to a single geographic district. They can be federal, where the winner moves out of state to represent their constituents in Washington, or take place on a state or local level.

Just as important as whether a race is state or local is what type of election the candidate is running in. There are a few key types of elections:

- **Primary elections with an incumbent** are elections in which a new candidate is challenging a member of their own party who currently holds office. Incumbents often build up large campaign bank accounts and endorsements to scare away primary challengers. But they know that turnout in primaries is much lower than in other elections, and so results are more unpredictable than general elections.
- **Primary elections with an open seat** are primary elections without an incumbent. These primaries happen when an incumbent chooses to resign, leaving a seat open, or in cases where one party will be challenging an incumbent of the other party in the general election. While front-runners often emerge, open primaries are often real free-for-alls, attracting multiple candidates. For this reason, and because turnout is usually low, no race is more unpredictable than an open primary.
- **General elections with an incumbent** are elections in which a candidate challenges a current officeholder from another political party. Typically, this will involve Democrats challenging Republicans or Republicans challenging Democrats, but general elections can also include Independents, as well as Libertarians and Green Party members. Generally, candidates will move to the center politically in the General, but every state and district are different. [Cook Political Report](#) is a great resource to take the political temperature of your state or district.
- **Open general elections are elections** without an incumbent. In these cases, both major parties usually field candidates that they've chosen through a primary election. These candidates then face each other, along with any candidates from other parties, in the general election. General elections are typically, but not always, held in early November.

Why Campaigns Care about Your Indivisible Group

Indivisible groups are a legitimate source of political power. While money flows into campaigns from just about every direction, independent groups of locally-based, engaged constituents are quite rare in American politics. Campaigns ignore individuals or organizations without real people power all the time. Indivisible groups around the country have demonstrated that they have real people power that is impossible to ignore and that they're committed to progressive action.

Your Indivisible group's support is valuable. Campaigns seek an Indivisible group's support -- either informally or through an official endorsement -- because it will help them get money, media, or people.

Because of the value of your group's endorsement, you should think carefully about how to engage with candidates, how to make these decisions, and what type of campaign support you can commit to providing if you decide to support a candidate. Read on -- that's the subject of Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: What Makes Your Group's Endorsement Powerful

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-what-makes-your-groups-endorsement-powerful>

An endorsement is a formal way of signaling and mobilizing your Indivisible group's support for a candidate. Powerful endorsements are not empty statements, but real commitments that promise concrete actions by your group and members.

This Chapter goes deeper on what a candidate endorsement is; *what* the campaign gets from your endorsements; and what your Indivisible group can achieve by using endorsements.

The Three Features of a Powerful Group Endorsement

Candidates receive endorsements from a wide variety of sources—community organizations, celebrities, labor unions, business leaders, and even other candidates. So what exactly does an endorsement mean?

A powerful endorsement is three things:

1. A public, definitive, stated preference. Endorsements are a stated preference for one candidate over any other, despite whatever disagreements your group may have with the candidate. Once you endorse, you must stand behind your candidate. If you endorse a candidate and then break with them later, you'll find your endorsements are less meaningful in the future.
2. A commitment of tangible support. Powerful endorsements come with a commitment from your group and members to actually do something meaningful in support of the candidate. If your endorsement is just words on a page, you'll quickly find that nobody cares about it. Support here doesn't mean money; Indivisible has shown that our foremost power is in our people.

3. A distillation of your group's values. Endorsements aren't just about the candidate -- they're also about what your Indivisible group stands for. A powerful endorsement requires that your group clarify your own values, and evaluate how those values line up with different candidates and campaigns.

Six Big Things Your Group Achieves by Endorsing Candidates

By flexing your political power through endorsements, you're developing and growing a muscle. Affirmatively getting behind candidates has several benefits for your Indivisible group and, well, the basic functioning of our democracy (thanks!). These include:

1. **Creating meaningful pressure for your preferred policies.** By endorsing, you're rewarding candidates who share your values and policies -- and creating incentives for the ones who don't to change their approach. And elections aren't just about the person on the ballot today, they're about everyone who holds elected office. When elected officials know they are going to be challenged electorally, they alter their approach to better respond to that challenge. If you want a non-responsive elected to change her position on an issue or hold a town hall, a great way to achieve that is by very publicly announcing that you'll only support candidates that meet your standards on those fronts.
2. **Building stronger relationships with electeds.** Do you know who electeds are eager to meet with and work with? People who showed up in the last election. If your group endorsed a winning candidate in the last election, they'll view you as a friendship to be nurtured. This is true even if you endorsed someone else in the primary -- if you wound up endorsing them in the general and showed up in support at the end of the day, you'll have a stronger relationship with them when they're in office. And that makes it easier to hold them accountable; they want to make sure you show up for the next election.
3. **Energizing your members and building your group's shared purpose.** Engaging as a group in an election gives your members a collective goal to work towards and interesting new challenges to take on. On the flip side, if you don't get involved in elections, it's possible that a lot of your members will end up doing so on their own anyways -- diverting energy outside of your group.
4. **Contributing to the functioning of democracy.** Look, democracy is all about choices. If 95% of races with incumbents only give voters a single choice, it's not much of a democracy. Give people an actual debate, an actual discussion, an actual say in who their elected officials are, and you'll be strengthening democracy. When you endorse candidates, you help foster that debate.

5. **Having fun.** Campaigns are fun! They're a great way to meet new people, take on new challenges, and learn new skills. After months of advocating for your electeds to listen, you get to wield electoral power and make them listen. It's a blast.
6. **Possibly winning.** Well duh, right? Your group's endorsement very well may put your candidate over the top. Especially in local elections and primaries -- and sometimes even in statewide elections -- small groups of people can absolutely alter the outcome of the race. Winning can come with a whole host of additional benefits. You can say you were part of a winning coalition and build your group's leverage. Elected officials, including your endorsed candidate, will take note of your group's people power when hearing your concerns in the future.

But there's a reason winning is at the bottom of the list. Don't count on it. Winning is great! But it's far from the only reason for your Indivisible group to get engaged. Even if you don't win, you might force Republicans to spend time and money defending a seat, turn out voters for other races on the ballot, or set up your candidate for a win next time around. Endorsements make you a player, whether you put somebody in office or not. That's pretty cool.

What Your Group's Endorsement Offers a Campaign

As discussed above, campaigns aren't just being nice when they ask for your endorsement. They want your help getting people, media and money. So when considering an endorsement, it's important to recognize your strengths in these areas. We'll take these in the order of strongest to least strong.

Indivisible Resource #1: People.

Indivisible is a movement of people, so the first and most important thing you can contribute is people power. An endorsement should signal that people in your group are excited to show up and work to support the candidate. This is crucial because campaigns depend on motivated volunteers throughout the campaign cycle -- from the Primary to General Election Day.

People power can come in the form of direct volunteer support for the campaign or as independent volunteer efforts run by your group. These activities may include:

- Voter registration drives
- Knocking on doors, phone banking, and other voter outreach
- Bird-dogging opponents
- Get Out The Vote (GOTV) efforts, like training other volunteers and driving voters to the polls

Coordinating with candidates.

In order to get the most of your people power, candidates and their campaigns may invite your group to work with them directly. But this could be a problem if your group wants to do its own independent spending (also called “independent expenditures” or “IEs”) in that election. Groups that want to do IEs -- such as groups that are incorporated or groups in the Distributed Fundraising Program -- must avoid learning strategic, non-public info about a campaign’s plans, projects, activities, or needs. Plugging into a campaign on a volunteer basis to canvass or phonebank is usually okay, but paying to send postcards to a list of voters provided by the campaign may be considered coordination. Indivisible’s national electoral tools and program are designed to be independent of campaigns, so coordinating with a campaign could also affect your group’s ability to use Indivisible-provided tools. It’s important to think through your plans for electoral activity early on, so you’re all set when campaigns come knocking.

Indivisible resource #2: Media.

Your group’s endorsement absolutely should come with media support. These media activities may include:

- [Press release](#) announcing your group’s endorsement
- [Op-eds](#) or [Letters to the Editor](#) to increase the candidate’s name recognition
- Event hosting for rallies, forums, parties, and other media-friendly events. Read more on how to get the press to cover your event [here](#).
- Building grassroots buzz through social media

Indivisible Resource #3: Money.

Let’s be honest, Indivisible’s competitive advantage is never going to be money. We’re not billionaires and we’re not big money interest groups -- we’re just never going to be able to compete on that level. But there are still ways to contribute productively to campaigns. Good candidates like to trumpet their small-dollar donations. It’s a way not just to raise funds, but also to signal to the outside world that they are legitimate. Campaigns will often report the

number of donors, not just the total amount raised -- that's why campaigns sometimes ask you and other individual Indivisible supporters for just a couple of dollars.

We'll have more guides in upcoming months about getting involved in the ways outlined, but in the meantime, you can reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org to get connected with an Indivisible Organizer.

Note: Raising and spending money around elections can trigger tax and campaign finance rules, as well as reporting requirements. This is especially true if your group is raising or spending money collectively, instead of on an individual basis. Campaign finance laws vary at the local, state, and federal levels, so it's important to check what laws might apply before engaging in political fundraising or spending. Depending on your group's entity status and familiarity with campaign finance laws, you may not want to risk the legal and financial headaches that come with collectively donating to a candidate or spending money independently to promote a candidate, but you can always encourage your group members to consider making individual donations or to volunteer their time to a campaign. If your group is not incorporated but is interested in spending money on federal elections (but not direct contributions to candidates), you might be interested in our Distributed Fundraising Program.

Chapter 3: Why your Indivisible Group Should Consider Endorsing in Primaries

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-why-your-indivisible-group-should-consider-endorsing-primaries>

It's common to worry about negative effects of primaries, like division or nastiness. But the reality is that primaries are as healthy and constructive as we make them. In a good primary, there's a robust campaign and a healthy exchange of ideas, allowing for the best candidate to carry the nomination into the general election. And in a healthy primary, everyone unites behind the nominee at the end of the day. This Chapter is about how your group can make that happen.

Four Things Primaries are Good For

First, let's talk about the role that primaries play in our democracy. Primaries accomplish the following things:

1. Generate a healthy debate of ideas.

Without primaries, the only debate in the public square will come during the general election. And let's be honest -- one party has been taken over by a far-right, white supremacist cabal. This means you're not usually going to get a very good debate about policy in the general election.

The primary creates a space for candidates to talk about who they are, compare their visions for the country, and debate different policy ideas and priorities. If you want to talk about Medicare for All, or how best to stop climate change, or reforming criminal justice laws, these types of debates usually happen in the primary. And if you want to ensure the candidates who ultimately take power share your values -- well, that's decided by who wins the primary. A general rule of thumb is that candidates tack to the center during a general election. So if you wait until the general election to seriously engage with candidates about their policies, you'll have less of a chance to influence them.

Help! My progressive candidate is becoming a conservative in the general!

In many states and districts, strong progressive candidates tack to the center during the general election to try to win over independent voters. While messaging may change between a primary and general, you don't want a candidate who abandons their principles as soon as the primary is over. That's why primary elections are so important for getting candidates on the record before they feel the need to shift to the right during the general. Only in extreme cases should you consider rescinding your endorsement of a candidate -- generally if they have taken a new position in opposition to your group's core values.

2. Strengthen the general election candidate.

Every election cycle, at least a few candidates who look great on paper turn out to be duds. The primary process ideally eliminates these folks before they lose in the general. Competitive primaries work as a "stress test," forcing candidates and campaigns to seriously consider what it will take to win, uncovering anything problematic in a candidate's background, and confirming that a candidate really has what it takes. And because a competitive primary forces candidates to start earlier and work harder, winning nominees tend to be stronger, more experienced candidates by the time they get to the general election.

This is [borne out](#) by the [evidence](#), which suggests that having a greater number of candidates in a primary race correlates with a stronger eventual party candidate.

3. Build momentum for the general.

Political campaigns aren't born with a fixed amount of money, volunteer hours, or overall enthusiasm -- for good campaigns, these are renewable resources.

Primaries are an opportunity to energize people and build a strong campaign earlier in the year. Voters will have more time to get to know the candidates, learn their platforms, and (hopefully) interact with them throughout the primary process. Starting this ramp-up of voter enthusiasm and investment in an election early in the year will help ensure progressives are ready to go for the general election.

4. Ensure a more responsive elected.

There's a reason why Indivisible groups' advocacy gets results. It's because your electeds know that they will have to face you eventually when they run for reelection. And the risk of a primary tends to keep electeds -- even the ones in very safe seats -- on their toes and makes them more responsive to constituents.

If your elected representative has been genuinely non-responsive, or out of line with your values, considering endorsing a primary challenger shows them that there are consequences of failing to stand indivisible with you.

Three Key Principles for a Productive Primary

Not all primaries are created equal. You can engage in a primary and fail to have the impact you want. There are three key rules to follow to productively engage in competitive primaries as an Indivisible group.

1. No personal attacks.

Primaries work when they focus on ideas and policies, not personalities. If your group's effort to talk about a primary devolves into personal attacks on individual candidates (or each other), that's a warning sign you're not ready to endorse. If your group isn't sure if you're ready to endorse, our Organizing team is always on hand to talk it through (reach out by emailing supportteam@indivisible.org).

2. Have clear, transparent rules about how you'll make decisions.

One of the most common ways for primaries to get messy is if people feel they weren't heard or the rules weren't fair. You can avoid this by having a clear, transparent process (see [Chapter 5](#) for guidelines on this). And one key part of this process is ensuring that...

3. Everyone commits to supporting the nominee in the general election.

Emotions in primaries can run high. People get attached to their candidate and reasonable Indivisible members may disagree. But at the end of the day, we're all here for a reason: we're taking our country back from the plutocratic, white-supremacist forces currently in control. We asked the 2020 Democratic Presidential candidates to sign our [Indivisible Pledge](#), and we should approach other primaries in the same spirit: we must win general elections, and that means supporting the eventual nominee, even if they weren't your first choice.

To help unify and mobilize your group, you may consider hosting an Indivisible rally on the day after the primary election to throw your full support behind the general election nominee and start gearing up for November.

Reiterating this shared mission from the beginning -- and committing to endorse the winner of the primary as part of your decision-making process -- helps to reduce the risk that a primary gets divisive and turns people off. This is how we continue standing indivisible after primaries. This is how we win.

Common Questions and Misconceptions

Primaries weaken candidates ahead of the general election.

[Reams of evidence](#) show that primaries actually result in candidates who are stronger in the general election. Primaries are a chance for candidates to build their campaign, practice making their case, and engage substantively on the issues that matter to progressives -- and that makes them stronger.

Can't we all just agree to fight the Trumpist white supremacist uber-conservatives?

Yes! There's no conflict between fighting the Trump Right and engaging in primaries. At the end of the day, a general election between a Trump-supporter and a Democrat you have some quibbles with will be a no-brainer. It's crucial that all Indivisibles, whether or not they engage in primaries, recognize that ultimate goal.

Pushing a candidate too far to the left during the primary can hurt their chances in the general.

Primaries are about ensuring your elected officials are responsive to you, their constituents. If a candidate makes changes to their policy platform during a primary, they're being responsive to the wishes of their community.

Primaries burn campaign resources ahead of the general election.

There is no finite set of resources for a campaign. In fact, hard-fought primaries can elevate candidate name recognition, spur interest in a race, and lead to an influx of key small-dollar donations. Plus, they'll have a strong group of trained volunteers ready to talk to voters in the general.

Considering a primary endorsement will create divisions within your group that will weaken your organization.

Primaries can be emotional for groups and individuals -- and they're not right for everyone. But as long as the primary endorsement process is fair, and your group commits to supporting whoever the winner is in the general, the process can leave your group stronger.

Primaries hurt the party.

Primary challenges certainly create headaches for the leaders of the party -- any challenge to power does that. But they also bring new blood into the system and prevent parties from growing stale. And primaries for open seats are a golden opportunity to debate new ideas and hear from new voices. If we want a strong Democratic Party, primaries are a necessary part of the process.

Chapter 4: Factors to Consider When Endorsing a Candidate

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-factors-consider-when-endorsing-candidate>

At the end of the day, you're endorsing a candidate because you think they're the best person to hold political office. But making that assessment involves thinking through a lot of factors about who the candidate is, what they stand for, and what their chances are. This Chapter reviews key factors your Indivisible group will want to consider.

Values and Policies

Candidates should share your values and care about bold policies that your group does. What issues does your candidate focus on? What policies do they support? Do they share your values? In order to answer these questions, you may need to define for your own group what's most important. No one knows your community or your group better than you do, and no one can better assess a candidate than you can. By clearly stating your values and

preferred policies, and what you're looking for in an elected official, you can help shape the prominent issues in a race and push candidates to reflect your values.

When defining your values, it can be helpful to refer to our [Core Advocacy Issues](#), where we've outlined core issue areas that will deliver bold transformative structural change.

Representation Matters

Public policy is better when the people at the table reflect the diverse range of backgrounds and experiences of the people they represent. Americans all have life experiences that impact their understanding of politics and policy, and every elected official brings their own unique perspective -- as a person of color, a woman, a religious minority, a person with a disability, an immigrant, a transgender person -- to the table.

Today, [wealthy](#), [straight](#), [cisgender](#), [white men](#) make up the vast majority of the U.S. House and Senate. This is a big problem, but it's not new and it's not an accident. Our government was originally structured to explicitly exclude participation from non-white, non-male, working class Americans. Decisions are made by the people in the room, and for generations, that room was intentionally kept white, male, and wealthy.

This is bad for democracy, and a progressive movement working to represent the people must aim to do better. Even among those who hold progressive beliefs, [unconscious biases](#) can still impact our perceptions of women and people of color who run for office. Those perceptions are even further impacted when those candidates are disabled or LGBTQ. Unfortunately, well-meaning attempts to "not see gender" or "not see race" can still wind up putting candidates who are not white men at a disadvantage. We have to consciously overturn the patterns of discrimination that have historically kept women, people of color, and other marginalized groups out of political power.

When contemplating making an endorsement, we encourage you to recognize the importance of seeking out and supporting candidates from underrepresented communities. While a candidate's race or gender or ability will not be the only factor in choosing whether or not to endorse, we cannot ignore these factors if we want politicians who truly reflect our electorate and movement.

Viability/Electability - but only to a certain extent.

Viability (also referred to as electability) is how we describe a candidate's chances of winning. To be blunt, it's a buzzword for political hacks, and it's usually used to describe why some upstart candidate has no chance. The thing is, hacks are often flat wrong. Remember when Trump was considered totally not viable? Yeah. This is why we include the "viability" factor with some strong caveats.

In reality, the importance you place on viability depends on the local context and your Indivisible group's goals. If you're in a swing district with an open seat, there may be a dozen candidates in the primary, some much stronger than others. Understanding who's got a strong foundation can help you decide where to focus attention. On the other hand, if you've got a front-runner who's the overwhelming favorite but consistently votes against progressive values, you may want to endorse a longshot progressive candidate -- even if they don't have much of a chance of winning the primary.

Candidates anointed by a party -- both those recruited to run and incumbents -- aim to give the impression of invulnerability. This is a smart tactic, but no candidate is actually invulnerable. Even the most entrenched establishment politicians can be defeated by a challenger with a clear vision, strong fundraising, and excellent campaign strategy.

Typical component parts of viability:

- **Money:** The lazy political hack will look at money and little else. There are two main factors to consider here: the candidate's overall financial strength and the percentage of donations that come from small-dollar donors. For financial strength, what's most important is not exact dollar amounts but rather how each candidate is doing in comparison to the others. You'll want to look at current Cash on Hand to get a sense of campaigns' books. For federal elections, you can find candidate fundraising information on the Federal Election Commission's (FEC) [website](#). Federal candidates have to report their fundraising totals every quarter (this is why you get a barrage of fundraising emails in the final days before a quarter ends - they're trying to goose their stats). For state elections (for Governor, Attorney General, State Senator, State Delegate, etc.), the information will be available on a state website - usually your state's Secretary of State or Department of Elections page.

Just as important as overall financial health is the percentage of donations coming from small donors. As an organization, we believe that money in politics is a big problem and dilutes the voices of the American people. It is absolutely worth giving extra consideration to candidates with a strong record of small-dollar donations. People with the wealthiest friends or the ability to self-fund shouldn't be able to buy their way into a seat.

The FEC website does list small-dollar vs. high-dollar donations, but [OpenSecrets](#) does a particularly good job of laying out this information in a clear manner. If a candidate does have a lot of big-dollar donations, it's also helpful to check out whether that money is coming from industries and companies who don't represent progressive values or good governance and labor groups.

- **Polling:** Polls seem objective -- it's just numbers! -- but the reality is that they move up and down significantly over the course of a race, and different polls may show very different results. Polling can be a tricky business, and like anything in politics, candidates will try to use polls to their advantage. Upstart candidates will often release sketchy polls to establish that they have a chance, incumbents may trumpet their own popularity polls to show just how invulnerable they are.
In some races (particularly statewide races, like the Governor's race or a Senate race), there will be frequent public polling. In others, including some House races, Mayor's races, City or County Council elections, and State Senate or Delegate races, polling may be harder to come by. Some well-respected resources for both polls and general race monitoring include [538](#), [Daily Kos Election Report](#), and [Cook Political Report](#). 538 is a reputable poll aggregator and political news site with up to the minute polling averages for high-profile races. You can sign up on the Daily Kos website to receive their daily election updates, which give a great nationwide look at key races. Cook Political keeps a tracker on races for the US House of Representatives, Senate, and Governor, and updates once a week as we get closer to election day.
- **Other Endorsements (including other Indivisibles!):** As you head into making your own endorsement decision, it's helpful to be aware of the landscape of endorsements for all candidates in the race. Endorsements that take into account other progressive movement partners will be even stronger for this collaboration.
It's also very important to consider how other Indivisible groups are approaching making an endorsement in the same race. In many congressional districts across the nation, there are more than one Indivisible group doing work on their home turf; your endorsement will be even more powerful if you coordinate on a fair process and end up uniting around the same candidate!

Chapter 5: How to Make an Endorsement

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-how-make-endorsement>

Chapters 1 and 2 discussed why campaigns care about your Indivisible group endorsement and what a powerful endorsement entails. Chapter 3 focused on the when -- whether you should get involved early in primaries. Chapter 4 looked at what factors you should consider when thinking about candidates and campaigns.

This Chapter discusses how your Indivisible group can go about making that endorsement: from getting to know a candidate to issuing your endorsement statement, you'll learn what to do -- and what not to do -- when your group wants to throw its hat into the electoral ring.

Given this Chapter's length, we've given you some clear landmarks for what we'll be covering in the sticky menu below. This Chapter is the longest for a reason: understanding these steps and establishing a formal process around endorsements is the most effective way to get involved in a race while maintaining the integrity of your group. Our Organizing team is happy to talk through your process with you -- reach us by emailing supportteam@indivisible.org.

How to Set Up Your Group's Endorsement Process

Having a clear, fair process makes everything go smoother. In the weeks or months since your Indivisible group was established, you have had to make a number of internal decisions about how to operate. You've had to prioritize policy issues, choose which tactics to use to engage with your elected officials, and balance competing perspectives within your group itself. The fact that you are now looking to weigh in on politics by contemplating an endorsement shows that you've learned to work together as an organization.

As your group wades into electoral work, you'll need a similar fair, transparent process like you've used for legislative advocacy. Primaries are a healthy part of the political process, but they can still get heated. Most group members will be OK if their preferred candidate isn't chosen, but they won't be OK if they feel like the process was unfair. That's why it's vital that you decide on rules and internal policies for endorsements that are transparent, fair, and agreed upon ahead of time.

You can check out our [How to Run a Meeting](#) resource for some ideas of how to set up the space to talk about how you'll run an endorsement process. It may also be worthwhile to check out our [How to Make Decisions as a Group](#) resource to help move you through any sticky choice points you may encounter while creating your process.

Step 1: Create a fair process.

All your internal processes should be open, transparent, and inclusive. Ensuring that everyone feels heard and respected throughout the decision-making process will make it that much easier for your group to hit the ground running following any endorsement you choose to make. Here are key questions to answer when setting up your internal processes for endorsement:

- *Who makes the decision on process?* In general, the person(s) currently running your group are the people best suited to run this process and be the point person for the decision. The group leader may delegate this role if there is another person suitable within the group, but be mindful that the point person may wind up spending a lot of time defending and clarifying the process as well as defending the eventual decision. The group leader, or their designated representative, will roll out the process, administer the process, determine the decision based on the vote, and announce the decision internally and externally.

- *Who can vote in your group?* We would recommend that voting members be limited to people actively engaged with the group. Minimally, these are folks regularly attending offline meetings and events, but can also include people on other internal lists. You will have maximum buy-in from group members if you bring in the widest pool of people possible. That said, we err strongly on the side of not making voting open to publicly accessible venues like a public Facebook page, as these venues are susceptible to interference by candidates, their proxies, and trolls.
- *How will you vote?* Voting systems matter! Just ask Putin. Seriously, the way you vote can determine who votes and whether or not your members feel the process was fair. Will you vote in person or online? Will the vote be anonymous or public?
- *What level of consensus do you need?* We've been hearing from a number of groups that they're wary of engaging in a potentially contentious vote. One way to avoid that is to establish a required level of consensus your group agrees is fair from the get-go. Different groups chose different voting systems based on what worked best for them (i.e., $\frac{2}{3}$ majority, plurality, consensus, etc.):
 - "We had set it up to have a two-thirds majority to win." - Judy, Indivisible Lumpkin
 - "We needed a strong majority to consider a candidate endorsed. If the majority wasn't strong, we looked at the strength of the votes in the actual district. We didn't have a strict threshold, it was more like a gut check that we were all on the same page." - Christine, Indivisible Action Tampa Bay
 - "We let people rank the candidates on their responses to our questions" - Pinny, Indivisible Valley of the Sun
- *What happens to your group members who disagree?* Except in the rare case where a group managed to achieve true consensus on a candidate, there will be some members of your group who would have preferred another outcome. We would recommend your group determine a plan for this in advance. One solution can be to clarify in advance that though the group will put their endorsement behind a candidate, individual members are welcome to volunteer in their personal time with any candidate. However, it's critical that all group members agree to support the ultimate decision in their capacity as a member of the group -- leaving the debate and hard feelings in the deliberation space.

"Gillum's name was on the flier we left at people's doors, but if our canvassers weren't feeling really pro-Gillum, they could still participate in the canvasses. They talked about the Senate race, or the County Commissioners races. We had a lot of canvassers

that didn't support Gillum in the primary, but we as a group did. We worked side by side." - Christine, Indivisible Action Tampa Bay

- *How will you roll the process out to group members?* Last process question! You've determined all other parts of the process. Now you need to take the time to let your group members know that you are engaging in the primary, why that work is important, and what your structure and process will look like. Not everyone checks their email or attends the meetings, so it's important to be vocal about all of this in multiple places.

Step 2: Determine in which races you're going to endorse.

Your thorough, fair, transparent internal process may reveal deep disagreements about the candidates in a given race. After the voting is done, your group may choose to stay out of an election altogether. That's fine! That's the whole point of a process. The important thing is that this is an affirmative decision your group makes using the fair, transparent process that you've all agreed upon. As your group considers whether or not to engage in an election, keep these two points in mind:

- *Engaging in elections isn't an all or nothing choice.* Your group's decision may be different for primaries than for the general election, and it may be different for local races than for federal races. You may endorse in your congressional election primary, only get involved in the district attorney general election, and sit out the school board elections entirely. This is all reasonable and should be determined by your group's process, not by anyone else.

"We learned pretty quickly that some candidates may not want our endorsement. And some simply wouldn't be able to earn it. But Hiral really understood the power of our endorsement" - Pinny, Indivisible Valley of the Sun

- *Your power, while mighty, is not limitless.* There could be anywhere from a handful to dozens of races taking place in your area in any given election year. You likely won't have the time or desire to engage in every single race. Before you begin the full endorsement process, decide how much capacity your group has. Endorse only when you're confident you can commit real resources to the candidates you pick. This will likely limit the number of races you can engage in, but that's OK! Choosing to begin the endorsement process in a race doesn't necessarily mean you will wind up making an endorsement. But prioritizing your top races early in the process -- or deciding to stay out of endorsements entirely -- is the very first choice you should make.

When NOT to make an endorsement

Endorsing is not right for every group. Just as important as recognizing when to make an endorsement is recognizing when NOT to endorse. The prospect of getting to endorse a candidate can be thrilling. Still, it's important to consider why you are endorsing and whether the process is working. If you're not sure if you're ready, you can reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org to discuss further. If you find yourself falling into any of the below categories, it means you're not in the right place to endorse

Don't Make an Empty Endorsement

Are a lot of people in your group excited to work to support the candidate that you're endorsing? If not, you're not ready to endorse. Endorsements are a promise of hard work to come, and a commitment that your group is in it for the long haul. You don't want to commit your group's time and resources to a candidate you feel, at best, lukewarm about. Only endorse if your group members are enthusiastic about supporting the candidate -- in the end, it'll come down to whether they're going to work on the candidate's behalf.

If you endorse just for the sake of endorsing, without enthusiasm from your group members, it could potentially undermine your power in the future. Candidates will be less likely to actively seek your endorsement in future cycles if they can't be sure that you really mean it, and are committed to putting the weight of your organization behind helping get them elected.

Don't Create an Exclusionary or Unfair Endorsement

Endorsement decisions need to be inclusive. Your group members need to feel that the endorsement process was fair, transparent and accessible. If members feel like they were kept out of the process, either through direct exclusion or lack of consideration of special circumstances (transportation accessibility, late-night meetings for parents of young children, meetings held in wheelchair-inaccessible buildings, etc.), the endorsement process will leave a sour taste in their mouth.

It is important that your endorsement process reflects your group's progressive vision of inclusion and solidarity. If people feel the process was unfair or exclusionary, the endorsement process could potentially hurt your group. On the other hand, if people feel like the process was thoughtful and fair, they will be far more likely to accept the outcome, even if it leads to their non-preferred candidate.

Step 3: Team up with other Indivisible groups to stand Indivisible.

Strength in numbers. The only thing better than the endorsement of one Indivisible group is the endorsement of every Indivisible group in the district.

Indivisible groups across the country have approached coordinating with other groups in a variety of ways--and how Indivisible groups work together on endorsements will vary quite a bit as well. But we are stronger when we stand Indivisible -- and that includes when endorsing candidates! There's strength in numbers and if you choose to endorse together, you can have an even greater impact. It is also important to make sure multiple groups aren't planning to come out with conflicting endorsements or messages without being aware.

Groups that work together will be more powerful because of it, and groups that endorse competing candidates may end up frustrated that they're butting heads with each other. Here are some things to keep in mind about coordinating:

- *Reach out early.* If you're planning to endorse in a race you share with another Indivisible group, it's a good idea to reach out to let other groups know - that way you can see if they have similar plans. It's okay and expected that different Indivisible groups may prefer different candidates -- we're all independent -- but you'll want to know that at the beginning. And if you talk about why you disagree, you may find a way to work through your differences, develop a shared process, and agree to support the same candidate.
- *Consider a joint endorsement.* Especially if there is a nearby group or groups you've successfully collaborated with in the past, consider coming together for an endorsement. In this case, you should work together to determine a decision-making process and make sure all group members are up to speed.
- *Be clear on your group's process and values.* Remember: before committing to work with another group, it's important to ensure your values and priorities in a candidate are similar. Take the time on the front-end to talk about what you're looking for, work out a process, and make sure the process is transparent for all your group members. If you'd like help connecting to other groups in your area, reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org and an organizer from our team can follow up with you.

Endorsement Dos and Don'ts

Don't: Bite off more than you can chew: For many groups, there will be over a dozen races that you could consider making an endorsement in. It can be tempting to weigh in on every single one, but doing so may drain your resources and cause you to burn out early in the election cycle.

Do: Remember that your endorsement is as meaningful as the commitment behind it. Be careful and selective in the races you choose to get involved in, so that you have the time and energy to devote to each one.

Don't: Ignore other local Indivisibles: Your group should make the decision that is best for you and your members, but you should absolutely reach out to other local Indivisibles.

Do: Coordinate with other groups in your area: Your endorsement will be even stronger in instances where you come to the same considered decision as others. Check in with your neighboring groups to see if they are considering making an endorsement, and coordinate whenever you can.

Don't: Endorse prematurely. Take time to determine how you will endorse and ensure your group members are on board.

Do: Establish a realistic timeline for endorsement, and ensure you have group buy-in. If your group is not prepared to make a decision, can't decide how to make a decision, or is not invested in any of the candidates, you may not be ready to issue an endorsement this cycle.

Don't: Let a single person make the decision: Indivisible groups have been successful because of their people power. Don't dilute that power now by putting the endorsement decision in the hands of a single person.

Do: Create fair and transparent processes for decision making. Make sure you are involving as many group members as is realistically possible in the decision-making process, and that everyone knows how the final decision will be made. Remember the importance of accessibility.

Don't: Relitigate fights from past elections: This election isn't a rematch of the last. Don't let your group become mired in old discussions of old elections.

Do: Keep your eye on the prize: Remember to take a step back and focus on the actual candidates and actual issues up in this election.

Don't: Slack on candidate research. Endorsements are public and definitive. You don't want to be surprised at the last minute by information you could have found at the outset.

Do: Gather all the facts before you make your decision. Make sure you head into the final decision with all the relevant facts.

Don't: Only follow the lead of other organizations: Looking into endorsements by other progressive organizations and grassroots leaders can be an element of your decision process, but should not be the only factor in your decision.

Do: Consider other organizations, but make your own decision: It's helpful to see what other progressive organizations are saying to give context to your own endorsement, but make sure you are leading with your own values.

Create a Timeline

Endorsements are most meaningful when you leave yourself enough time to have an impact on the election. It's helpful to build a calendar backward from the election date, and figure out when to take action.

You will want to make your final endorsement four to five months out for general elections and at least two to three months out for primary elections. This means you need to give yourself enough time to reach out to other Indivisibles, conduct candidate research, send questionnaires and pledges, and schedule Q&A sessions prior. You should plan to give yourself at least a month to conduct this research. Candidates have busy schedules, so you will want to get any "asks" into them as soon as you can.

Worksheet: Endorsement Timeline Checklist

Below is a worksheet you can use when designing a process for endorsements. This checklist follows a 3-month endorsement process, from evaluation to announcement, guiding you through key considerations and choice points along the way. [Download your own copy of this timeline here.](#)

How to Interact With Candidates

Alrighty! So your group has done all the tough prep work. You've developed an internal process for endorsements. You've rolled that process out to your whole membership. You decided to explore making an endorsement in a race. And you've reached out to other local Indivisible groups to see if you can coordinate on the endorsement.

So now what? Well, now you've actually gotta talk with the candidates in the race! As with the internal process work, this is a simple 3-step process. Here's how: do your research, introduce your group, and have a conversation.

Do Your Candidate Research

Peek under the hood. Before reaching out directly to candidates or campaigns, you should do some research into the candidate's stated values and policy positions. Determining how well a candidate's stated policy stances match up with your group's values often requires some digging. Here are some go-to resources to review:

- *Candidate websites.* Almost every candidate has a section of their campaign website dedicated to "Issues." This is the first place to go to check out where the candidate stands on the issues that matter to you. Keep in mind, a candidate's website is friendly (or sometimes not-so-friendly) propaganda. Everything on there is made to sound good and make the candidate look great. That means that they may be incomplete, gloss over key questions, or not include information on controversial issues or positions.
- *Press coverage.* All incumbents will have press coverage of their positions, and many candidates will too if they're not total political newbies. Often candidates will purposefully or accidentally say things to press that they won't put on their website. No need to get fancy in your research - just use [Google News Search](#) and search for the candidate's name (and particular issues if that's of interest Tip: you can use this research process to get ready to do your own media outreach later. As you read local stories, keep track of the reporters who are writing them. You'll notice that the same four or five names keep coming up. Put those names in a spreadsheet, along with their contact information as you find it: this is your media list. Those are the key reporters covering this race, and they're the same reporters you'll be in touch with later on.
- *Past votes (for incumbents).* Once you've had a chance to look over the information they release publicly, it's worth looking into their past positions. [GovTrack.us](#) has great resources that track current Members of Congress' past votes and positions. Finding this information can be more challenging for state and local level incumbents. [The National Conference of State Legislatures](#) has a bill tracker you can use to find your legislator's position on a specific piece of legislation, and [LexisNexis](#) also has some strong state and local resources, but this is definitely a heavier lift, and you shouldn't be discouraged if finding this information is challenging.

Flip-flopper?

An important consideration of policy issues is the extent to which a candidate's views on policy have shifted over the years. Back in 2004, John Kerry was attacked for being a "flip-flopper." In 2012, Joe Biden and Barack Obama both evolved for the better on the issue of marriage equality, becoming champions for the right to marry ahead of that year's election.

Flexibility and a willingness to learn are crucial characteristics for a political candidate. At the same time, the consistency of values across a candidate's history is also important. That's why these kinds of shifts have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Your group will have to evaluate how much emphasis to place on a candidate's past positions. You don't want to discourage people from evolving and taking on better policy positions by dismissing it as flip-flopping. But if a politician has made a shift, it's important to understand why they made that shift and how they've put it into action in their words, decisions, and voting record if you're going to support them.

When looking at the inconsistency in a candidate's past statements, it can be helpful to see if those inconsistencies represent real learning and a willingness to admit mistakes on that candidate's part or if they mainly shift their positions only when it becomes politically convenient. At the end of the day, you should look for candidates who have a record of championing issues most important to YOU.

Introduce Your Group to the Candidates

The next step is reaching out to the campaign. It's usually a good idea to reach out to the press secretary or communications director as the first point of contact. If your candidate is issuing press releases, their name and contact information will often be at the top of the release. That said, depending on how early in the campaign you get in touch, they may or may not have a dedicated communications staff. If you can't figure out who to direct your initial query to, almost every campaign will have a "Contact Us" box on their website.

When you get in touch, be sure to come prepared with information about who your group is (mission, size, and focus). Campaigns don't have lots of time to research your group, so you'll have better luck getting a response if you're clear and concise about why they should pay attention to you and what you want from them.

At this stage, you may not have decided whether you'll be supporting a candidate through independent spending or by coordinating directly with a candidate's campaign. Protect your options by making sure you don't receive any information about a campaign's strategy or tactics that isn't publicly available.

Once you are ready to start planning your electoral activity, explore our [Campaign Finance FAQs](#) for more on independent vs. coordinated spending to help you make an informed decision when the time comes. Keep in mind that campaign finance laws vary at the local, state, and federal levels, so it may make sense for your group to consult a lawyer before engaging directly in electoral politics, particularly if you're planning to raise or spend money on the election.

Whether or not you're planning to endorse, your group should find ways to get to know candidates better in person. If you want to invite candidates for a Q&A session with your members, remember to Invite all candidates, not just member-favorites, and draft a pre-set slate of starter questions to ask all candidates. It's also a good idea to set a time limit on each Q&A session to make sure no candidate gets to spend more time with group members than others.

Finally, if you have already hosted these Q&A sessions, you know that weekends are often better for working parents than school nights, and providing a livestream of the event can help group members who may not be able to make it in person. Be sure to consider whether the ways that you're putting events together are making it as easy as possible for your members to be part of the process.

Note on Hosting Events with Candidates.

In general, if you spend money on an event at which a candidate can advocate for their own election (or against someone else's), that spending will be treated as an in-kind contribution to that candidate, unless the event falls into a specific exception. We recommend that groups avoid spending any money to host candidate events unless they have received guidance from a campaign finance attorney about how to structure the event. One way to avoid campaign finance implications is to host a candidate event without incurring any expenses. For instance, a group may be able to avoid spending money on a candidate event if they invite a candidate to do a Q&A at the end of the group's regular meeting instead of hosting a separate event.

Remember these best practices to follow when interacting with candidates.

- **Be Inclusive** -- You should contact all candidates in a race, even if you're fairly certain from the get-go that their policies won't align with yours. In a primary race, this means you should reach out to all candidates -- even perennial "also-rans," or "stunt candidates." In the general election, you should absolutely reach out to candidates from both major parties, and you should consider soliciting information from any third party candidates in the race as well.

"Josh actually had a primary opponent, and we invited them to come separately to speak at our regular meetings. Dave refused our invitation, but we did invite them both." - Marisa, Indivisible Lumpkin

- **Be Systematic in Your Process** -- Fairness means approaching every campaign in the same way. If you put together a candidate questionnaire (discussed below), make sure you are sending the same questionnaire to every candidate. If you invite one candidate to speak to your group one-on-one for a Q&A session, you should invite all candidates. It's fine if not all candidates wind up accepting your invitation to fill out a questionnaire or participate in a Q&A -- what matters is that you offered all candidates the same opportunities to respond. It's also fine to impose some limitations on candidates you're willing to interact with or consider for endorsement as long as those limitations themselves are policy-related, clearly established, and fairly implemented.
- **Stick to Issues** -- Interactions with a candidate or a campaign are an opportunity to ask specific questions about the candidate's policies and values. By this point in the endorsement process, you'll know how a candidate is polling, how much fundraising money they're bringing in, and what their campaign team looks like. While this is all crucial information, it is best to focus on policies and values during interviews or on questionnaires. You should avoid getting any inside information from the campaign on strategy or tactics, and stay focused on the issues, not the campaign process.

Gather More Information

Beyond holding Q&A sessions, there are several ways you can interact with a candidate or campaign to get more information on the issues that matter most to you. You can send a campaign a candidate questionnaire, ask the candidate to sign a candidate pledge, or attend as a group events hosted and paid for by a campaign.

Send a Candidate Questionnaire: one of the best ways of getting information from a campaign on the issues that matter most to you is to send the campaign a candidate questionnaire. The process of assembling the questionnaire can itself help your group clarify what issues you're most focused on.

“We invited everyone from our group to join us to plan the questions we would ask the candidates, on issues that matter to us.” - Pinny, Indivisible Valley of the Sun

Designing your Questionnaire: so what issues should you include on your questionnaire? We all know there’s a lot at stake this election. Democrats need to fix our democracy and reverse the damage done by the Trump administration. We’ve outlined the issues we’re following closely in our [Core Advocacy Issues](#). We know these issues aren’t all-inclusive, but your group can use them as a jumping-off point for drafting your questionnaire.

Remember, these questionnaires are framed around the issues that matter most to your group; you don’t need to include every issue, and some questions may be more important to your group than others. Think about what pushing forward a progressive agenda looks like in your district. A good place to start is identifying if your group has any “dealbreakers,” issues on which the candidate must align to earn your endorsement. For example, in our national endorsement questionnaire, the candidate must support universal health care to pass.

When framing your questions, keep a few things in mind:

- The candidate is the one looking to earn **your** endorsement, not the other way around. Don’t tailor a questionnaire to fit any one candidate, and don’t feel like you have to compromise if a candidate doesn’t align on the issues important to your group.
- A candidate shouldn’t have to answer every question correctly to earn your endorsement, just the really important ones. The questionnaire is aspirational, written so that your ideal candidate would get a perfect score. Decide ahead of time what you’ll consider a “passing grade,” and if you have any questions that are absolute dealbreakers.
- Some questions are about getting candidates on the record. If you end up endorsing, you can point to these responses to hold the candidate accountable to their positions.

Keep it Simple!

Campaigns are overstretched and don't have a ton of people at the early stages -- so one poor staffer (or, in very local races, the candidate themselves) is probably handling all the questions that come in. It's common for campaigns to answer dozens of questionnaires from different organizations and interest groups, and it's actually a lot of work. Your odds of getting a response are higher if you minimize extra work: for example, ask 'yes or no' questions -- do you support Medicare for all? -- instead of asking them to write a paragraph. If multiple groups you're in touch with are sending in questionnaires, it's smart to coordinate on a single set of questions.

How to Make the Endorsement

After all group members have had an opportunity to review candidate information, it is time to make a final decision on whether or not to endorse specific candidates. If you've done a good job of setting up a clear process at the beginning, this will be a lot easier.

There are a number of ways your group can go about making its final decision, each with benefits and drawbacks. The most important thing is not the method, but the fact that the process is clear and fair from the beginning.

First, set in place a clear plan for how the votes will be counted. There are a variety of ways your group can vote. Here are a few ideas you can consider:

- **Two-thirds Majority (Recommended):** The endorsement goes to the candidate who receives greater than 66% of the vote. You may need to vote multiple times to reach this percentage. This is our recommended method.
- **Consensus:** All members of a group must be in agreement for an endorsement. This can be very difficult to achieve and is generally not recommended.
- **Plurality:** The endorsement goes to the candidate with the most votes regardless of the percentage. This can result in a low level of buy-in, so is generally not recommended.

We strongly recommend requiring a two-thirds majority to move forward with an endorsement. After all, your endorsements only matter if a lot of people in your group are excited about the candidates you're supporting. You could also require a mere plurality (going with the candidate with the most votes, regardless of what percentage of people voted for her), or a true consensus (where every member needs to agree to endorse). We've found that those options can either engender bad feelings or leave groups immobilized, unable to reach any decision at all. But you know your group best, and what will work best for you.

You should also consider what to do if there are more than two candidates competing for your endorsement. We would recommend holding two rounds of voting: an initial count, and a runoff election. The initial election has all eligible candidates, and the runoff is between the top two vote-getters. It's in this second election that we would advise requiring a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority to move forward with an endorsement.

Once you've determined a voting mechanism, figure out how and when you'll vote. This can be during a regular meeting, online over a specified period of time, or in a meeting called specifically for this purpose. If this is likely to be a contentious vote, making voting anonymous (online or some other manner) can be really helpful in keeping the peace.

Finally, if you're taking a vote on a primary endorsement, we strongly recommend asking everyone to commit in good faith to support the eventual nominee. This is an important time to remind people of what's ultimately at stake, and why it's important that no matter who wins the primary, we're united heading into the general.

Hold an In-Person Meeting

In-person meetings have the benefit of feeling more personal, and of allowing interaction among members of your group. If you choose to hold an in-person meeting, you may ask if any members want to speak up in favor of or against endorsing particular candidates. Do be sure to carefully facilitate this conversation, though, so that even if it's contentious, it doesn't overflow into ill-will.

On the other hand, in-person meetings may be more challenging for some members of your group to attend. Single parents and group members who work in the evening may struggle to make it to nighttime meetings. Depending on where your meetings are held, and whether you have a group member qualified to serve as an ASL interpreter, some group members may also face accessibility issues for in-person meetings. Consider providing childcare, and the option for members to vote by proxy (sending a friend) or absentee (voting in advance) if they are unable to make it to the meeting.

Set up an Online Vote

You can also choose to conduct the final endorsement decision online, using online software to come to group consensus. Both [Survey Monkey](#) and [Doodle](#) can be used to create online polls that group members can vote in. Once you've created a poll, you can email it to group members. Online polls should not be shared on public websites like Facebook, to ensure non-group members aren't influencing the vote.

In general, online votes will be more accessible to group members than in-person votes, because online surveys can be taken on each member's own time in their own home. Still, it is important to make sure your poll is clear and easy to understand. Some group members may be less familiar with online polling software than others, and may struggle to deal with new technology if there are too many options or if the options are unclear.

Online votes are necessarily less personal than face-to-face meetings. This can help prevent arguments between group members, but also reduces the opportunity for dialogue about pluses and minuses of different candidates. Members often raise points during in-person meetings that would go unheard during an online poll. As a best practice, we recommend that even if you're ultimately going to be voting using an online poll, you hold at least one meeting to discuss the candidates before doing so.

Announcing Your Endorsement

Prepare to make your announcement.

After your group has decided which candidate(s) to endorse, it's time to announce that decision. There are three parties you'll need to communicate your decision to: your group, the candidates, and the media.

Prepare a general statement about why you're endorsing the candidate. You'll use this language in multiple ways as you announce your news, so this is an important starting place! The statement should be short -- no more than three paragraphs -- and should be fully focused on the candidate and why you are excited to work on their behalf in the upcoming election. This is a great place to highlight particular policy stances your group supports and to demonstrate the importance of those policies in securing your endorsement. It can include one or two quotes from group members and should end with a line reemphasizing your group's excitement to work for the candidate.

Telling your group.

Regardless of how you conducted your vote, there will inevitably be some group members who were unable to participate. It's vital that all group members are informed about your endorsement decision before you go public. Having some group members read about the decision after the fact in the press would be particularly bad for morale.

Prepare an Internal Statement. Whoever controls your group's Facebook group, email list, or other way of communicating with your membership should be in charge of drafting an internal statement. The statement should reiterate the decision-making process, the results of the vote, and why you are excited to endorse the candidate(s) you've chosen. It is also a good idea to give a heads up as to what your group will be doing in support of the endorsement -- such as canvassing, phone banking, and voter registration efforts.

Telling the candidates.

You should inform both your endorsed candidate and any other candidates you considered. After all, they did take the time to fill out your questionnaire and go through your process.

Contact the Candidates. Send your general statement along with a quick note to any candidates who responded to your candidate questionnaire, thanking them for their time, and letting them know who your group decided to endorse. Make sure to let the candidate you've decided to endorse know first, and then send to all other candidates. You can also ask your endorsed candidate if they'd like to contribute a quote to your press release, or if they'd like to organize a joint announcement to the press.

Remember: if you spend money on publicizing your endorsement to the general public, federal, state or local campaign finance laws may apply. It also may be prudent to check whether endorsement communications to the general public are required to have authority lines that state, among other things, who's making the communication and whether or not it was authorized by any candidate.

Telling the media.

Now it's time to tell reporters about your decision. Your goal here is to insert your endorsement into the narrative of the race.

[Prepare a Press Release.](#) Whoever handles external communications should work on drafting a press release about your endorsement. If you have a dedicated spokesperson, that's great. If not, a group member who enjoys writing can take on the responsibility.

First, Consider Offering an Exclusive. Offering an "exclusive" means reaching out to a single reporter and asking if they'd like to hear who your group will be endorsing before anyone else, in exchange for agreeing to write a story about it. This tactic takes some extra steps, but it's the best way to get a story specifically about the endorsement, right at the time you want it. Often, a reporter may decide that "Organization Endorses Candidate" doesn't merit its own story, but instead will note this type of development and plan to mention it in an upcoming

story. When a reporter knows their story will be unique and will be the first to deliver a “scoop,” it sweetens the deal and makes the story more interesting for them and their editors. If reporters you contact with this tactic aren’t interested, that’s OK! Skip ahead.

- *If you have a good, friendly relationship with a local reporter:* Reach out to the reporter about a week in advance to offer an exclusive. If the reporter agrees to an exclusive story, be prepared to tell them what your endorsement means: how will your group use its people power to help your candidate? They need these details to fill in the column-inches that will make their story work. You can point to planned future events, or highlight how your group has mobilized around a past endorsement.
- *If not:* You can still use a similar tactic to up your chances of a story getting published. Find a reporter who’s been covering the race. Read a couple of stories to make sure you think their coverage has been fair. A day or so in advance, email them and offer to share an exclusive copy of your press release in advance. When you share it, write “EMBARGOED UNTIL” at the top, and list the time and date that you are OK with the story going public. The reporter may pass, or say yes.

Note: A group member posting on social media about who you’re endorsing before the story breaks could mess up the story, and possibly your relationship with this reporter. You should be very clear with group members about this, or consider limiting the circle of group members you inform during this period. Think through this timeline carefully and balance these priorities in a way that feels right for your group.

Then, Send Your Press Release Out Far and Wide. Send the statement out to local press, remembering to BCC all contacts. Make sure you’ve included anyone who covers local campaigns and elections. If you don’t know who that is, check the newspaper’s masthead, or search to see who has recently written stories about other races. Twitter is also a great tool for finding reporters’ contact information.

Finally, Post your Statement Online. Post your public statement on your website and social media accounts.

There Wasn't a Story About Our Endorsement!

Even if reporters don't cover your endorsement when it happens, they may talk about it down the line. When local Indivisible groups endorsed Lauren Underwood in IL-14, there was no headline in the local papers about it. But once Underwood won her election in November, [stories about her victory mentioned](#) local Indivisibles and their role in her win. It's always recommended that you do media outreach and put out a press release, because it can lead to media coverage that grows your group's capacity and our movement as a whole.

Now the Fun Starts!

Once you've made your endorsement announcements, election season swings into full gear. Read on to learn more about best practices for political campaigning, and how your group can have a real impact on electoral politics.

Finally, always feel free to reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org to let us know what resources would be most helpful to your groups. You are the leaders of this movement, and we're excited to stand Indivisible with you as you take on electoral politics.

Example Endorsement Process

As explained above, every group should approach these decisions in a way that is best for your group and keeps with your values. To aid in your process, below is a fabricated example of how an endorsement goes from an idea to an announcement. This follows Indivisible ABC through their endorsement process from start to finish. You can download this example endorsement process [here](#).

Chapter 6: Post-Endorsement Planning

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-post-endorsement-planning>

Congratulations! Your local group has just issued an endorsement for an awesome candidate. But now what? While this is an incredibly important step, Indivisibles know that just simply saying your group endorses a candidate won't get them over the finish line. What's meaningful about an endorsement is the commitment of real work behind it. And together, we will deliver.

This Chapter gives you a great sampling of some of the many different ways you can get involved in the election after an endorsement. For a deeper dive on how to plan and execute a rocking voter engagement plan, keep an eye out for our VET Guide, coming later this year. It's a comprehensive, one-stop-shop for planning and executing a smart campaign, guiding you through choice points and key considerations at every step.

As always, reach out to your Indivisible Organizer to help you develop these ideas into a comprehensive, winning plan that works for your group and your district.

Building Your Path to Victory

Every district or state is unique and groups will be ready to endorse with different amounts of time before the primary. If you endorse with **three months or more** before the election, *you can be really intentional about planning and go through all these steps*. If you endorse with **less than a month** until the election, you can do some really quick planning, but *your group should jump straight into voter contact and getting out the vote (see last section)*.

Make a plan with your group and other local groups.

While you're waiting for the endorsement vote, start working on your plan. If this is for a district with multiple groups or for a statewide race, your work will be even more powerful if you make a plan together.

Have a kick-off or strategy session. Bring together your group members and folks from other groups to have fun and do some planning. This is another point in your process where our [How to Run a Meeting](#) and [How to Make Decisions as a Group](#) resources may come in handy.

Plan out your tactics. Whether at a strategy session, on a conference call or over email, work on the tactics that you're going to employ and your timeline to make sure your endorsed candidate wins in the primary and the general election.

Ask folks to commit. It's important to make sure that you'll have the energy behind your endorsement, so start early on getting folks to commit to volunteer for your candidate. You should also take this time to figure out who can lead on certain activities -- like identifying a canvassing lead, press liaison and more (if you don't already have those roles assigned in your group or coalition). Make sure when you're asking folks to commit that way you're collecting the best way to contact them so you can follow up effectively. You can even consider identifying a recruitment captain who can follow up and do confirmations before big events.

Time to build momentum.

After several years of organizing, Indivisible groups have a lot of power. That means it's exciting for candidates to get your endorsement, so make the most of the rollout of your endorsement and make a big splash. You can do all of these tactics to kick off the endorsement or pick which ones work best for your group.

Send out a press release. Candidates love earned media, and announcing your endorsement and the investments of time & energy your group is making are newsworthy! Your group or

collection of groups should plan to send out a release about why and how you're supporting the candidate. Don't be afraid to get personal with it! Check out this [great example](#) from groups in NY-24.

Throw a kick-off party. Pulling together a big party to announce your endorsement is a great way to bring in new members and potentially gain some media attention.

Start talking to voters.

Neighbors talking to neighbors is still the best organizing tool we have. Indivisibles are pros at this point at knocking doors and making phone calls, but it's still worth making sure your group knows how important it is! If you're getting started several months before the election, your voter contact will likely be focused on identifying supporters and having persuasive conversations with folks who are undecided. This is a great opportunity to share your group and personal reasons for being behind this candidate -- and could be an opportunity to connect with like minded individuals who may want to join your group.

Connect with the campaign or get set up with Indivisible tools. There are two options for how you can start talking to voters -- one is to work directly with the campaign and the other is to run your own independent voter contact program through Indivisible.

- Campaign: Check in with the campaign to figure out how to get started with canvassing and phone banking. They'll be able to let you know about upcoming events.

Indivisible is on the Independent Expenditure side, so if you work directly with the campaign you'll just have to be careful not to tell Indivisible staff non-public information.

Note: If your group is incorporated as a 501(c)(4) or otherwise wants to do work on the Independent Expenditure side, just doing regular volunteer work with a campaign likely won't raise campaign finance issues. However, if your group wants to spend money in connection with that campaign volunteer activity, please check with a campaign finance attorney in advance.

- Indivisible: If working directly with the campaign doesn't work for you group, Indivisible can help you get started running your own canvassing and phone banking program. Check out the resources in [the Technology tab of our Group Support Hub](#) and connect with your Indivisible Organizer with help getting set up (or you can go to indivisible.org/ask-organizer if you're not already in touch). Indivisible is on the Independent Expenditure side, which means we cannot coordinate strategy with campaigns or learn non-public information about the campaign. If you go this route, you'll be held to those same restrictions. You may not use Indivisible tools for any coordinated activity with a campaign/candidate or provide those tools to campaigns directly.

Write a letter to the editor. You can also talk to folks in your community by sending letters to the editor to your local paper to share why you are so excited about your candidate. Check out our [website here for some examples](#).

Voter Contact Best Practices

Having conversations with voters is a crucial piece of making sure you're getting your candidate elected. And the earlier your group can get started with these efforts the better because it generally takes several touches with a voter to make an impact. We always want to be upfront about what works and what doesn't work as well. When it comes to voter contact, the most effective way to sway a voter is through canvassing -- so we encourage you to start there. For folks who are unable to canvass, phone banking is a great option. Who you talk to is also very important, so make sure you're sticking to who is on your list. That's why doing something like visibility on a street corner isn't as impactful since you're not controlling who you are targeting and aren't having an actual conversation.

Get out the vote.

Everything leads up to turning out your candidates' voters. If you end up endorsing just a few weeks before Election Day, your group should jump straight into this step to make sure your work is having the greatest impact. If you've been campaigning for this candidate for months already, your group members will already be canvassing and phone banking pros and ready to give it a final push. These conversations will differ from the identification and persuasion conversations you were having earlier on with undecided voters. At this point, the focus will be talking to your candidate's supporters and making sure they have a plan to get out to vote. Generally, at this point you'll be targeting folks who are likely to support your candidate, but need that extra push to get to the polls. Work with your group members early to plan out when folks can volunteer so that they proactively plan out child care, leaving early from work, recruiting friends, etc.

- Knock doors. Face to face conversations are so important and it's crucial to get as many volunteers out on the doors as possible.
- Make phone calls. Phone calls are a great supplement to knocking doors (or a good option for folks who are unable to canvass). Work with the campaign or reach out to Indivisible to get phone banking going to get out the vote.

Want to take your voter outreach plans to the next level? Read on to learn about **Local Voices, Local Power**, Indivisible plan to support groups in their local endorsement programs. We're putting money and resources back into the movement's hands to help our groups take

action, reach voters, and elect candidates who represent your communities values & will fight for your priorities.

PLEASE NOTE: How you engage in elections depends a lot on your group's organizational status. This guide is intended for local groups that can engage in political activity, including: groups that are currently unincorporated and haven't sought any formal entity status, groups that have formed 501(c)(4) organizations, groups participating in Indivisible's Distributed Fundraising Program (which generally follows 501(c)(4) spending rules), and groups that have formed political organizations (i.e., 527 organizations or PACs). This guide is not intended for 501(c)(3) organizations as 501(c)(3)s organizations are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity, including endorsing candidates as a group, but individual group members can get involved in their volunteer capacity

Political spending can trigger campaign finance rules and reporting requirements, so if you have questions about specific political spending that your group would like to do, please consult with a campaign finance attorney who can help you plan for compliance.

Chapter 7: Local Voices, Local Power

<https://indivisible.org/resource/endorsements-guide-local-voices-local-power>

We know groups all across the country have already started thinking about the next election: which races they want to engage in, how they'll get involved, what level of support they'll be committing to get their candidates over the finish line. Some groups have already dug in and endorsed some candidates! For groups who chose to make endorsements, we have a new program to help you level up your electoral engagement post-endorsement: **Local Voices, Local Power**.

We still live under an election ecosystem deeply out of balance, where Corporate PACs use their deep pockets to press on the democratic scales and buy influence, all the while driving a wedge between us and our elected officials. Since our start, Indivisible has been about empowering the grassroots to resist the right-wing takeover of American government, and that includes fighting back against power-thirsty billionaires and their candidate puppets.

Local Voices, Local Power will support and spotlight the hard work you and your groups do to win elections. Through **Local Voices, Local Power**, Indivisible is putting money and

resources into the movement’s hands to reinforce the work you and your groups are already doing to take action, reach voters, and elect candidates who represent your community’s interests, not the interests of CEOs or their billion-dollar corporations.

Making an impact in elections is hard and invaluable work, and is often deeply under-resourced if you’re not connected to a billionaire or two. We may not be billionaires, but we are the grassroots. We’re a network that digs deep, builds connections, and supports one another with the resources we’ve got to help transform our world into something better. Through **Local Voices, Local Power**, we’re offering you the resources we’ve got to help amplify your local voice to build local power.

[APPLY NOW!](#) Take part in **Local Voices, Local Power** to receive support for electoral work at different levels of the ballot!

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply? What are the requirements?

Your application will need to satisfy three key criteria to be considered for **Local Voices, Local Power**:

1. We’ll need to see committed support to your headline candidate through the election.
2. Your headline candidate needs to be a Fighter, aligned with our vision of defeating MAGA Republicans in order to save democracy, protect our personal freedoms, and build an economy that works for all of us.
3. Your headline Fighter needs to have some viability.

Hot tip: If you want a really detailed overview of everything we ask for in the application and why, check out the “Application Walk-Through” section below.

Your group is committed to your candidate.

Your group has run a local endorsement process and issued an endorsement.

We’ll want to see that your group has run a fair local endorsement process and will ask you to provide us some details about your process in the application. You can learn more about how your group can make local endorsements in [Chapter 5 of our Endorsements Guide](#).

Your group has a plan to support your endorsed candidate in meaningful ways.

The greatest asset we have to offer in elections is our people power. We want to see what your group is doing to take action, reach voters,

	<p>and elect Fighters. Check out the Chapter 6 of the Endorsement Guide for help with post-endorsement planning.</p>
<p>Your candidate is a Fighter.</p>	<p><i>Your candidate has a Fighter profile.</i></p> <p>We'll want to verify that your candidate is aligned on baseline issues, but we're more interested to know what draws you to support them. What kind of issues are they running on? How do they align with your group's vision? If this is a primary, what makes this candidate stand out against others in the field? Hype us up!</p>
<p>Your Fighter is viable.</p>	<p><i>Your Fighter is already in the conversation.</i></p> <p>Is your endorsed candidate getting talked about in the media? What has your local political blogger had to say about the race? We'd love for you to share links to these kinds of things with us in your application!</p> <p>We also love to see other progressive organizations and endorsing groups (e.g. your local League of Conservation Voters chapter or Equality Federation affiliate, your local teachers union) coalescing around the same Fighter. We also love supporting bench building efforts. Let us know if your candidate has been recruited to run by a local candidate recruitment group (e.g. Emerge, Run For Something, Arena).</p> <p>There is no one specific characteristic of a race that can show us the extent of a candidate's viability. To learn more about how we think about viability, check out Chapter 4 of our Endorsements Guide.</p>

Do we need to do a local endorsement process before applying?

Yes! If you'd like more information on how to run a local endorsement process, check out our [Local Endorsement Checklist](#). To dig deeper, take a look at our [Endorsement Guide](#).

What level of the ballot can we submit applications for?

We're excited to announce that **Local Voices, Local Power** is accepting applications from groups doing electoral work at any level of the ballot!

Cycle after cycle, we see Indivisibles across the country leveraging their local insight and expertise to win elections. We know you and your groups are supporting candidates at all levels of the ballot, not just the top of the ticket, and want to help you build local progressive power. That means whether you're supporting a candidate for your school board, for city council, or Secretary of State, your group has a place in this program.*

* Some exclusions apply. See “Considerations We Make While Reviewing Your Application” below.

What is the deadline to apply?

We’ll be accepting applications for **Local Voices, Local Power** on a rolling basis and announcing selected groups in rounds spread out across 2024. You can find our [tentative round announcement schedule here](#).

What is a “headline” race and why are you asking me about it in the application?

Your group’s “headline” race is the race that has your group the most energized and excited to get out and talk to voters. It can be a race at any level of the ballot.

We know that many groups endorse in multiple races at multiple levels of the ballot. Every race is important, not just the ones at the top of the ballot. But for some races, there’s something about them that sets them apart. Maybe it’s a competitive seat, maybe your community sees it as a referendum on an important local issue, maybe there’s a barrier-breaking candidate running, or maybe it’s simply the top-of-the ticket race. Whatever it is, it’s got people’s attention.

What resources do groups get as part of the program?

If selected for **Local Voices, Local Power**, your group will receive:

- reimbursements for event supplies - up to \$400 per event
- swag & social graphics
- priority access to our voter engagement tools (OpenVPB, miniVAN, Mobilize, EveryAction, etc.)
- dedicated technical assistance from our staff of political experts

On top of that, we’ll highlight the ongoing and invaluable contributions each group is making to win the races they’re focused on. **We know that when Indivisibles get behind a candidate, they mean business.** The more people see the impact you’re making, the more they’ll want to be a part of it. And we need as many folks involved in this election as we can get!

We are always looking for new ways to support and shout out the work Indivisibles are doing, so don’t be surprised to see that this list changes over time!

Is this an endorsement/what makes this different from an endorsement?

Local Voices, Local Power is not an endorsement program, but a group support program. The biggest distinction between this program and an endorsement program is that in an endorsement program, support and resources would go directly to candidates. **Local Voices,**

Local Power is instead providing you, our groups, with resources to support your voter outreach efforts within your group's own local endorsement program.

Does the candidate need to answer a national questionnaire to be accepted?

Nope! We'll want to see that you've verified that your candidate is aligned on some baseline policy issues. There are a variety of ways you can do that through your group's endorsement process. We recommend asking candidates to complete a questionnaire or participate in a Q&A or candidate forum. You can learn more about ways to evaluate candidates in [Chapter 5 of the Endorsements Guide](#).

What will the candidate get?

Candidates will get supercharged support from you, their local Indivisible group. Our resources are going to your group and the work you're doing for your candidates, rather than to the candidates directly. We'll be providing all **Local Voices, Local Power** groups with a tailored local endorsement badge, which you can share with your locally endorsed candidates.

The Application Walk-Through

We'll walk through every page of the **Local Voices, Local Power** application and give some insight into why we're asking for this information, what things you should consider in your responses, and some program exclusions.

Group Information

On this page, we're collecting information about you and your group. This includes information like your name, personal phone, email address and mailing address, your group's name, and your role in the group. Having this information allows us to contact you about your application. We also need to know where to send physical materials, should your group be selected to participate.

We also ask for information about the [legal structure of your group](#). This question is vital, as your group's structure has a big impact on your application. **Specifically, due to legal constraints, we cannot admit groups into LVLP who have incorporated as a 501(c)3.**

Separately, if your group is registered as a federal or state PAC, there may be limitations to how we can support your work through Local Voices, Local Power. Your group is not automatically disqualified from participating, so please don't be dissuaded from applying, we may just need to adjust what supports & resources we make available to your group.

Additionally, we want to know how your group might already be involved in some of our other national programs, so we ask who your Indivisible organizer is and whether your group

participates in the [Distributed Fundraising program](#). If your group doesn't have a relationship with your Indivisible organizer, be assured that your group is still more than welcome to apply for LVLP. We ask about your organizer in the application because we want to make sure our groups have all the resources they need to be successful, and there is no better resource than a solid relationship with your organizer. If you're not in touch with your organizer, we'd love to help get you connected to discuss the benefits of organizing with Indivisible! Shoot an email to supportteam@indivisible.org and we'll get you sorted!

Additional Group Information

This page is meant to capture additional information about your group. We specifically want to know if there's a member of your group who is designated to speak to the press about your electoral activity. Different groups have different leadership structures and roles. Some groups designate a member to be a press or media contact, who will represent the group when speaking to the media. Your group may or may not have a designated media contact. If you're unsure how to answer, list your own information and we can sort those details out at another time.

We also include space on this page for you to upload your group's logo and other images of your group. These can be portraits of your group, photos of your group in action, images of your group with your endorsed candidate, or any other image your group has taken or produced that you think would be a good representation of your group and the work they do. Additionally, there's a question asking for your consent for us to use the images and written responses from your application in our public-facing materials. A major benefit of **Local Voices, Local Power** is putting a spotlight on your work for the movement to see, appreciate, find inspiration from, and get energized by. **Groups who do not consent to their images and written application responses being used in our public-facing materials will not be admitted into the program.**

Lastly, this page includes a space for you to add in your group's contact links. These can include a group website, email address, Facebook group, Threads account, X (formerly Twitter) page, and more. **This information will help us to connect activists in your area to the work you're doing.** If your group does not have a social media presence, or you want to learn more about how to leverage social media in your organizing, check out our [Guide to Emerging Social Media Platforms!](#)

Local Endorsement Process

On this page, we ask you about your group's local endorsement process. **To participate in Local Voices, Local Power, your group needs to have administered a local endorsement process and made an endorsement.** This does not bar your group from coming back and applying once you have made a local endorsement. If making endorsements sounds

overwhelming or you're not sure where to start, our [Endorsements Guide](#) is the perfect resource to help get you going.

When telling us about your local endorsement process, you can include as much or as little detail as you want, but generally more information is better. Here are some questions you can consider when crafting your answer:

- When did you initiate discussions about making endorsements?
- How many members of your Indivisible community did you talk to about the race & candidates running?
- Did you engage with other Indivisible groups in your area?
- What kind of voting procedure did you employ?
- What level of consensus did you need to reach to endorse (e.g. simple majority, supermajority, plurality)?

We're especially interested to know whether you engaged other Indivisible groups in your area in your endorsement process, and if so, which groups. We've pulled that out into its own question to make sure we're collecting this information from everyone.

We know many groups endorse in multiple races and support multiple candidates at many levels of the ballot. If your group has endorsed in multiple races, that's awesome! We ask you to list out all the candidates your group has endorsed for this election, along with the offices those candidates are running for. This list helps us determine if there are any limitations on how your group can use LVLV resources. Campaign finance regulations and reporting requirements vary between and within states; we'll use your list to determine if there are any legal constraints in your group's area that would prevent Indivisible resources from being used to support any of your candidates.

Finally, we want to know if your group is planning to independently support your candidates' campaigns for office, or if your group intends to coordinate with campaigns. We have [a great explainer on campaign finance and the difference between IE and coordination](#), if you're not sure what either of those things entails. **Please note that we cannot admit groups who are coordinating with the campaigns of the candidates they've endorsed (including their campaign committees).** If you're unsure whether your group is coordinated or not, let's connect! Reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org to connect with our expert staff.

Candidate Information

On this page, we ask for information about the candidate you're most excited to be supporting this election cycle. **Think of this as your group's headline race, or the race that is most important to your group.** We ask for the candidate's name, the office they're running for, and whether you're engaging in the primary or general election. We also include space for you to provide links to the candidate's website, Facebook page, and X account, as well as a

space to upload a headshot of the candidate and a space to link to any news clippings about your candidate's run for office. The links, headshot, and news clippings are not required, so don't worry if you don't have those on hand.

We also ask for some additional information about the candidate. Specifically, we'd love to know if, to your knowledge, your candidate has participated in a candidate recruitment program or received any endorsements from other groups. Candidate recruitment programs are typically designed to provide training and campaign support to candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Run for Something, EMERGE, Run to Win, and Arena are all organizations involved in candidate recruitment. Other endorsing groups can be Indivisible groups or other kinds of politically engaged groups like the Sierra Club, the teachers union, your local LGBTQ advocacy organization, your state's Working Families Party, etc. **It's totally fine if you don't have this information on hand!** We just like knowing how a candidate might be plugged into your local progressive ecosystem.

Candidate Support

This is the part of the application where we want you to get us hyped up about your candidate! Tell us what makes you excited about your candidate and how *Local Voices, Local Power* will take your electoral engagement to the next level! Again, while you can include as much or as little information as you want, more information is better. Here are some questions to consider while thinking about what makes you excited about your candidate:

- Why does my group think this candidate is the best person to hold this office?
- How does this candidate's values and policy stances align with my group's values and policy stances?
- What issues does this candidate champion and how are they already, without being in the office they're running for, working to address those issues?

Some questions to consider when thinking about how LVLV will help you support your candidate through the election are...:

- Aside from making an endorsement, how has my group already been investing time in this election?
- What voter engagement activities would my group be better able to do with the support of this program?
- What activities do I know my group generally enjoys doing, and how can I channel that interest into voter engagement?

SUBMIT

Congrats! You've reached the end of the application walk-through. Now it's time for the real deal. [Apply now](#) to be a part of *Local Voices, Local Power*!

Considerations We Make While Reviewing Your Application

These are many of the considerations we make when reviewing an application to be a part of *Local Voices, Local Power*. Please reach out to supportteam@indivisible.org with any questions you have about *Local Voices, Local Power*, including how we evaluate applications.

Legal Reasons

- **Your state/local election laws do not permit Indivisible Action to support your electoral work --**

Election laws vary greatly between and within states. We want to highlight a broad variety of elections and endorsements through this program, but due to those variations in state and local election laws, we may not be able to deliver some or all aspects of *Local Voices, Local Power* to your group. We'll reach out quickly to inform you if your submission falls outside our legal framework.

Programmatic reasons

- **Space or time constraints! --**

We are only able to spotlight so many groups at a time! Each round, we'll select the strongest applications based on group electoral plans, candidate viability, election timing, and other factors. But don't worry! **If your application isn't selected due to space or time constraints, we'll hold onto it and consider your group for future rounds.**

- **Your candidates are not aligned with Indivisible's values or priorities. --**

Your candidates should be Fighters – folks strident in their efforts to save democracy, protect our personal freedoms, and build an economy that works for all of us. Each of those fights will look different depending on where in the country you're having them. We trust your group to endorse candidates who you believe will best represent you on these issues.

That said, we have some minimum expectations that the work you're doing is in support of candidates who align with our values and priorities. **We will not include your group in *Local Voices, Local Power* if your endorsed candidates:**

- support restrictions on abortion;
- support censorship in the classroom around topics of race, sexuality, and gender;
- support anti-union policies;
- espouse COVID conspiracy theories;
- espouse election conspiracy theories.

The above list is not intended to comprehensively cover all of our red lines around organizational values & priorities. If we determine your candidate is out of alignment, we will provide your group with a detailed explanation as to why.

Automatic Disqualifications

- Your group has not administered a legitimate endorsement process.
- Your group is registered as a 501c3.
- Your group does not consent to its content being included in public-facing materials.
- Your group is coordinating with your candidates' campaigns.
- You have endorsed in a primary **against** a sitting member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.