

Chapter Skill-building Webinar

Working Together: State and Local Chapters



Welcome from National NOW Action Center



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Agenda

- Models of state and local chapter structure
- Working with other local chapters
- Outreach to your state chapter
- Ways to partner
- Outreach to local chapters
- Chapter development opportunities

Benefits: State and Local Chapters Working Together

- Increase visibility within the state
- Greater diversity of state board
- Availability to have more statewide actions/campaigns
- Increase chapters working in coalition with one another
- More regional issues are covered
- State and local chapters support system
- Prevent burn-out on at local chapter level and at state board level
- More possibilities to partner with coalition groups throughout the state
- More chapters in your area/state/region
- Existing/at-large members become active
- Reduce/avoid duplication of efforts



Case Study: Michigan NOW

- State is actively connected with 4 chapters, but trying to outreach to more chapters.
- Talk to chapter leaders and ask them to draw up a list of items that they need state support on. This way you can determine what each chapter needs and what they would like from the state chapter.
- Have events, conferences and actions at the area that has the membership stronghold and is easy for other chapters to get to.
- When having state board meetings, give chapter reports first, so all the chapters have a chance to speak and express their concerns. This way chapters feel valued, which can also increase attendance.
- Have a key issue that all chapters can connect on. For MI NOW, the issue is choice. If there is a choice event, leaders are more likely to attend and take notice.



Case Study: Rhode Island NOW

- This state has a state chapter and three local chapters, but mainly functions as a state chapter.
- This model has been in place for 6 years.
- State chapter has representation from most of the regions in Rhode Island.
- This model is very easy to do. There is one large state board, not tons of local chapter boards.
- This model helps the state focus on the core campaigns and legislators.
- This structure may work better for smaller states, because it is easier include all areas of the state.
- Don't be afraid to travel around the state when having actions, events, meetings, conferences. This can include regional diversity and membership recruitment in a particular area.
- The chapter makes good use of its online network to have activists call local legislators and/or advocate for progressive candidates during electoral years.



Types of State and Local Chapters

- Model One: State acts as a “Super Chapter”
- Model Two: State as a “Connector”
- Model Three: Hybrid

Model One: State Chapter as “Super Chapter”

- All the local chapters work together as one
- The state board is a regionally diverse group that runs the state

Success Tips for State “Super Chapter”

- Have different types of committees help run the chapter
- These committees can include programming, fundraising, communications and budgeting
- Make sure the state board has delegates from local areas to create geographic diversity
- Try to spread meetings across the state to ensure for membership recruitment and for chapter diversity

Is a State “Super Chapter” Right for You?

Pros:

- *If your state is very small, then it will be easier to commute to one action, one meeting.*
- *You can have a large board that represents all the geographical areas of your state and everything can get done in one meeting.*



Cons:

- *Area can be so large as to be unworkable (long commutes to meetings).*
- *Some chapters may need their own individual leadership.*
- *It is easier to have local groups to target specific elected representatives because it makes clear that these constituents are going after a certain rep.*

Model 2: State Chapter as a Connector

- State exists primarily to support work of local chapters

Success Tips for State Chapter as Connector

- Have local chapter leaders serve as delegates to the state board
- Make sure local chapters participate in state board meetings and bring their ideas
- Make an effort to lift up local chapter events so other chapters can participate

Model 3: Active State and Local Chapters

- Both the state and local chapters are very active, with large functioning chapter boards and memberships

Success Tips for Active State and Local Chapters

- Make sure the chapters communicate with one another and the state when planning action campaigns, emails, conferences, etc.
- Coordinate on campaigns
- Have the local chapters leaders go to the state meetings and offer ideas and vice versa

Raise Your Hand

- Is there state currently working as one of the three models?

Discussion Questions

- Does your state's current model work for your state?
- What are the advantages of your state's current model?
- Does your chapter ever work with other local chapters?

Working with Other Chapters

- Working with other chapters is a key component of strengthening your own chapter.
- Chapters can learn from one another and lend support.
- Always outreach to chapters in your area, including surrounding cities, counties, suburbs, etc.
- This may be more difficult if you are in a more rural area, but you never know what will happen if you reach out.
- If you heard of a new or a dormant chapter starting up, be sure to offer your support.
- Invite other chapters to meetings, actions and events.
- Look for opportunities for your chapter to partner with other chapters.



Local Chapters Unite

- Chapters can learn from one another and play up one another's strengths.
- It is good for chapters from a conservative area to have a liberal area ally for support and chapters from the liberal area to see what is like to be in a conservative area.
- Also small chapters and large chapters partnering can increase the visibility of the smaller chapter and add diversity to the larger chapter.
- Local partnership between chapters is an important component of having chapters statewide partner and work with the state chapter.



For Chapters Disconnected from the State

- Reach out to your state board and let them know that your chapter wants to be more involved with the state chapter.
- If there is a nearby state board officer, invite them to a chapter meeting or have lunch with them to find out ways to have your chapter become more involved.
- Try to have your chapter represented at state meetings/events and bring ideas.
- Run for your state board and/or take part in a committee.
- Let your state board know what issues are important to your region of the state and why.
- If you are having trouble contacting your state board, outreach to your regional director.



Coordinated State Action Campaigns

- Check out your state chapter's website on a regular basis and see if any meetings, events, etc. for coming and bring your ideas to partner.
- Something that is statewide issue, such as a bad ballot initiative, an extremist senator running, a radical state house bill.
- Campaigns that can be done at local level to achieve a common goal, such as the Enough Rush campaign, may also come with support.
- Build in a mechanism for membership recruitment on a local level.
- Then figure out in what capacity your chapter can help and reach out to the state board.



Opportunities for Action & Collaboration

Ways for the state and local chapters to work together:

- Statewide day of action
- Online petitions
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blog carnival
- Rallies
- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Statewide call-in days or tweet days
- Meetings with a specific campaign planning component



Raise Your Hand

- Does your chapter partner with your state chapter on issues and actions?

Discussion Questions

- What issues does your chapter and your state chapter work on?
- Do you wish that there was more collaboration between your state chapter and your chapter?
- How does your chapter outreach to your state chapter for support and/or partnership?

For State Board Members: Outreaching to Local Chapters

- Local chapters can help achieve the goals of the state board.
- A state board is made up of local chapter members; it's important to get new members to represent the geographic diversity of your state.
- Look at the local chapters in your state and try to help when you can.
- Connect chapters that are close and share common goals.
- Try to email with the chapter presidents every couple of weeks to keep up with local chapters.
- Always welcome a new chapter president and offer to help them out.
- When you have meetings be sure to invite local chapter leadership, so they can add in their own perspectives and ideas.
- Try to have someone on the chapter board go to local chapter events or meetings if they live in the area.



Chapter Development Opportunities

- Always reach out right away to new and revived dormant chapters, so they know that they have support.
- If you come across someone who wants to start a chapter, connect them with someone in the region, so they have state and regional support.
- If someone wants to start a chapter in the state or revive a dormant chapter, let them know about the area (maybe they are new to the area and don't know how conservative it can be or what the chapter worked on before).
- Take the time to really talk to someone who is starting a chapter, your help can mean major support for the new chapter.



Raise Your Hand

- Does your state chapter provide chapter development support for local chapters?

Discussion Questions

- How does your state chapter reach out to local chapters?
- How do new chapters get support from your state chapter?
- How do local chapters support chapter development efforts?

Resources from National NOW

- Request a list of at-large members with the state president's approval to engage them in your chapter's events.
- Check out www.now.org/chapters for all the chapters in your state to connect with.
- Find a convener kit on our chapters' only site for anyone who wants to start a chapter.
- Give us a call if you have trouble reaching to a chapter or your state leaders.
- Take a look at our take action section for possible campaigns for you to work on with your state chapter and other local chapters.



Next Chapter Skill-Building Session

- Working in Coalition at the Local Level
- Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 8 p.m. EST
- Contact Anita Lederer at fieldorg@now.org if you have any questions.
- Give us feedback at:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MTVJLNW>