

National NOW Chapters Report

To: NOW National Board

From: Supria Bhatia, Chapter Relations Manager

Date: December 19, 2020

Chapter Services Staffing Changes

Title Change: Chapter Relations Manager – Supria Bhatia

Online Chapter Portal

Every chapter officer now has access to an online chapter portal. The chapter portal is an excellent resource for chapter leaders and it is important for them to gain access as soon as possible.

All state and local chapter officers are able to do the following through the online chapter portal:

- Update Chapter Information: Contact, Address, Phone Numbers, Leadership Change
- Run Membership Lists: Active, Inactive, or Both
- Run Transaction Reports

If there is a chapter officer in your district who still does not have access to the portal, they must contact chapters@now.org so the Chapters Specialist or intern can reach out to assist them.

Local chapter officers must send a request to their state president to obtain at-large membership list for their area. In the event no state president is available, the Chapters Specialist will run the report for them.

Portal Changes:

1. The system will lock out the officer for 20 minutes after two unsuccessful login attempts. After 20 minutes, officers are able to log in using their existing credentials. After the first failed attempt, I usually ask the officer to reset their password by clicking on “Forgot Password.”
2. **New Page:** Chapter leaders must know their rebate eligibility status at all times. To achieve that goal, we have added a new page to the chapter portal that highlights all rebate eligibility requirements and if the chapter is currently meeting that requirement. Changes made appear 24 hours after the update has been input. This will allow chapter leaders to immediately notice what needs to be done so their rebates are not suspended.

Convening Chapters

When a chapter becomes a Convening Chapter, it means 3 NOW members are listed on the Convenor Authorization Form, the form was signed by the convenor and state president (or relevant board member, if there is no state president), the form was submitted to National, and the chapter was created as a convening chapter in the database.

Currently, we are working on writing out policies to help convening chapters complete all required conditions of becoming a NOW chapter. This will prevent newly convened chapters from losing their motivation, assure them that they do have National support, and ensure they convene the chapter by the end of the year. New chapters need to apply for an Employer Identification number as soon as the name of the chapter has been approved, open a bank account in the chapter's name, have 10 members (including officers) and have at least 8 chapter meetings by the end of the year and we have decided to add deadlines to certain conditions to keep all new chapters organized. Along with the status of "Convening Chapter," each new chapter will receive a \$250 start up check to begin organizing the chapter. *Please bear in mind that checks will not be issued until the chapter has opened their bank account.*

We have seen a decline in convening chapters this year due to the pandemic. However, I connect all interested members to our state leaders so they can help them get acquainted with new leaders in their state.

High School and College Campus Action Networks (CANs)

National NOW is dedicated to motivate more youth to organize in their communities. We have personally reached out to current CANs and provided support. The new CANs resource guide is now complete and is sent to all newly established CANS. As Board members and activists, we urge you to visit the local high schools, community colleges, and universities to promote the core values of NOW and urge students to start a Campus Action Network in their school.

Currently conducting Zoom meetings with deans and leaders of the Women's Studies departments of colleges and universities in effort to revive inactive campus action networks.

Rebate Eligibility

To be eligible for rebates, chapters must have:

- At least 2 distinct chapter officers with current memberships - Mandatory officers: president and treasurer.
- A valid address on file
- Submitted a current annual report (2018 or 2019)
- Cashed their last rebate check

Robo Calls: National NOW can now facilitate robo calls to the members in your state! If your chapter is interested in placing robo calls for actions, please fill out the Robo call request form located on the Members Only Page. National requires a request at least 5 business before the call, a 60 second .mp3 file of your recording, the date the calls should be placed and a call back number. The person placing the call will need you to be available when the calls are scheduled. For any questions, please reach out to Supria for further clarification.

National Action Campaign Request: Chapter Services has been overseeing and processing grant proposals that National has received. Since ERA is of the highest priority, National has provided three grants for the promotion of the ERA. The chapters that have been awarded the grants are Arizona NOW, North Carolina NOW and Virginia NOW.

For any chapters looking for financial aid for planned actions should feel free to submit a National Action Campaign Grant Request. The grant proposal will be processed by the Chapters Services Specialist, Supria, and she will be your contact person for any questions regarding your submission.

Note: I am currently working with our Vice President to create a procedure that will allow us to address all grant proposals in a timely manner. Although there is a budget for monies awarded for grant, all proposals are taken into consideration.

District Grant Request – District Board Members! If you are looking for additional funds for an action or state chapter revival, please submit a grant proposal and budget. The link can be found on the Members Only Page under Chapter Management. The grant proposal will be processed by the administration but Supria will be your contact person throughout the grant period.

Other Projects and Notes

I am currently working on ordering more SWAG items for the organization as it is vital to promote the name of NOW and motivate our activists to organize and get involved. I am always in search for ideas for merchandise, so please do reach out with any ideas you may have.

In addition to providing technical support for the chapter leader portal, I also train each incoming intern to assist chapter leaders on using the portal for their chapter. If there are chapter leaders who need any assistance with the chapter portal, they can write to chapters@now.org or now@now.org.

Project: Chapter Compliance Report

The chapter compliance project was completed to assess the status of all NOW subunits. Historically, all subunits of NOW were required to be actively registered with the IRS, have an EIN, have a valid mailing address, chapter bank account in the chapter's name, and a minimum of two distinct officers in the role of President and Treasurer, as well as file the annual 990-N.

Through our research, it was uncovered that there were chapters that were registered under the incorrect "subunit" name, had submitted an Employer Identification number that did not exist, did not have a minimum of two distinct officers, or were functioning with a lapsed IRS status.

Incorrect Subunit Name: Many of our chapters were doing business as The National Organization for Women, Inc. When National reports the yearly list of subunits to the IRS, they report each chapter with their chapter code and approved chapter name. Recently, our attorney provided instructions for changing chapter names and it is as follows:

The specific detailed instructions are set out at:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/change-of-name-exempt-organizations>:

If the organization files a full annual Form 990, the form provides space for notice of the name change and instructions concerning supporting documentation. However, if the organization is small and therefore only required to file the postcard sized Form 990N, a letter must be sent to the IRS containing the following:

1. If the organization is incorporated, the letter must include a copy of the amendment to the Articles of Incorporation, and proof of filing with the appropriate state authority.
2. If the organization is an unincorporated association, the letter must include a copy of the amendment to the Articles of Association, Constitution, or other organizing document, showing the effective date of the change of name and signed by at least two officers, trustees or members.

The letter is to be sent (by mail or fax) to:

Internal Revenue Service
Exempt Organizations Determinations
Room 6403
P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Fax: (855) 204-6184

Please note that the state in which the organization was formed is likely to have statutory requirements relative to name changes and tax exempt status. Generally, such statute(s) will refer to, or require, a Restatement of Articles of Incorporation. It may also require a refile of a state tax exemption. For specific questions about your state or jurisdiction, please consult with local counsel.

If you have additional questions, your local IRS office may be able to help as well. You can find your local IRS office, by inputting your zip code at this link:

<https://apps.irs.gov/app/officeLocator/index.jsp>

Invalid EIN numbers: Chapters that submitted invalid EIN numbers were advised to submit the IRS determination letter reflecting their Employer Identification Number and, when confirmed advised them to apply for new EINs to be in compliance with the IRS listing requirement.

Officer Listing: I took this opportunity to train chapter officers in accessing and updating their chapter and officer information via chapter leader portal. Although I received a bit of frustration, many chapter leaders were relieved to have learned the use of the portal.

Chapter Annual Report: I accepted the online 2018 chapter annual reports until the 2019 annual report went live in the first week of January. For the sake of the compliance project, I accepted 3 hard copies of the annual report. The **2020 Chapter Annual Report** will be uploaded and active for access on January 3, 2021.

Bank Accounts & Mailing Address: Upon receiving feedback from our chapters, we concluded that it was best for our chapters to have the option of opening a chapter bank account with a social security number and have a chapter mailing address to where it was convenient for them. The rule still remains that the chapter's mailing address must be valid in order to receive rebates.

Being compliant with National's policy will allow chapters to be eligible to receive rebate checks and be eligible to apply for National Action grants.

A digital copy of each state's compliance letters were sent to the appropriate board members as well as all state leaders. As of February 20, 2020, I have only heard from 127 chapters and 82 have submitted requested documentation. Although the deadline was January 31, I have been doing everything in my power to hear the thoughts of each chapter leader and work with them to the best of my abilities.

I have also taken the opportunity to request chapter bylaws and logos so our database can be up to date with each chapter's information. The goal for this was to update the system and have chapter bylaws in the system in the event new leadership needs access.

Because I understand the value rebate checks have on many of our chapters, I have been committed to working with every chapter. I personally feel that I have handled this project with care, but if there are chapter leaders who still are in need of assistance, please do send them to chapters@now.org.

Chapter Compliance Update: The database has been organized. An exception was made mid-March. Chapters no longer need to move forward with a name change if they are only missing the chapter code on their determination letter. An incorrect name has not prevented any chapter from receiving rebates as the IRS has lagged behind in communication.