

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## INTRODUCTION

*Updated April 2021*

Since the inception of the Economic Opportunity Act, a fundamental goal of Community Action has been to provide low-income individuals with a voice in the administration of its poverty-alleviating programs. With the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act's call to achieve "maximum participation" of the low-income community in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSBG-funded programs, a critical venue for the low-income community's participation is their representation on the tripartite board.

Despite the importance placed on maximum participation of the low-income community, there is relatively little federal law that explains what this means in the context of governance practices and procedures. The federal CSBG Act requires that "(i) not fewer than 1/3 of the members [of the board] are persons chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures adequate to assure that these members are representative of low-income individuals and families in the neighborhood served; and (ii) each representative of low-income individuals and families selected to represent a specific neighborhood within a community ... resides in the neighborhood represented by the member..." [42 U.S.C. §9910 \(a\)\(2\)\(B\)](#).

The only further federal guidance comes in the [Information Memorandum \(IM\) 82](#) from the Office of Community Services (OCS). This nonbinding guidance advises Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to "assure that board members representing low-income individuals and families...have been selected on the basis of some form of democratic procedure either directly through election, public forum, or, if not possible, through a similar democratic process

such as election to a position of responsibility in another significant service or community organization such as a school PTA, a faith-based organization leadership group; or an advisory board/governing council to another low-income service provider."

IM 82 advises CAAs to ensure democratic selection procedures "directly through election [or] public form," but if that is not possible, it lists a number of alternatives. The case studies in *Raising the Low-Income Voice* are focused on the "direct" democratic procedures. If a CAA determines that direct democratic procedures are not possible, it will likely be able to comply with the law by creating what may be called "micro" democratic selection procedures, whereby the CAA asks another group that is representative or comprised primarily of low-income individuals (e.g., a tenants' association from a local low-income housing development) to select someone from their group to sit on the CAA's board. Some of the snapshots in CAPLAW's *Preserving the Low-Income Voice* resource discuss this type of "micro" democratic selection process.

While it is clear that CAAs must establish some kind of democratic selection procedure, it is not clear what that procedure should, or can, look like. Thus, it may come as no surprise that one of the more common questions asked of CAPLAW is, "How do we conduct a democratic selection process?" We initially created [Raising the Low-Income Voice: Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures](#) to help the Community Action network answer this question by learning from their peers.

When the COVID-19 pandemic upended CAA operations beginning in 2020, we updated the case studies to reflect how these CAAs

adapted their existing processes to retain maximum feasible participation while ensuring effective and safe governance practices. We also developed a supplemental resource, [Preserving the Low-Income Voice: Snapshots of Democratic Selection Procedures in a Pandemic](#), featuring additional examples of innovative and successful processes developed by CAAs in the midst of the pandemic.

In sharing the insights and practices of these CAAs, we hope to provide you with ideas for how to conduct the democratic selection process. It is CAPLAW's view that all of the practices contained in this resource are consistent with federal law and guidance from OCS. However, it is critical to remember that each state may establish its own law regarding the administration of CSBG funds, including the composition and selection of board members. A CAA will need to follow its state law, as long as the law is not in conflict with the federal CSBG Act. To ensure that your selection process is consistent with both federal and state law, CAPLAW recommends consulting an attorney who is licensed to practice in your state.

The selection procedures in these case studies may be employed by private or public CAAs, although public CAAs have the option to use “another mechanism specified by the State to assure decision-making and participation by low-income individuals in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs funded under [the federal CSBG Act].” [42 U.S.C. §9910\(b\)\(2\)](#). Public CAAs should note that if they choose to employ a democratic selection process, the federal CSBG Act requires that low-income board members “reside in the neighborhood served.” [42 U.S.C. §9910\(b\)\(1\)\(B\)](#). This residency requirement does not exist for private, nonprofit entities.

CAPLAW hopes to continue to add to these case studies and encourages other CAAs to contact us with their democratic selection procedures.

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## Table of Contents

Case Study 1: Community Action, Inc.	4
Case Study 2: Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency	16
Case Study 3: United Planning Organization	28

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## Community Action, Inc. (CAI)

*Data-driven recruitment, development of local leaders,  
and competitive elections*

### CAI Overview

Location:	Haverhill, MA
Staff Size:	140 employees
Annual Revenue:	\$15,000,000
Service Area:	11 cities and towns
Chief Executive:	Kerri Sheeran Perry
Board Size:	21 seats
Major Programs:	Head Start/Early Head Start; family child care; parent support; adult education; heating and weatherization assistance; homelessness and housing services; consumer services; WIC nutrition
Appendices:	Democratic selection procedures; sample recruitment letter; candidate registration form; bylaws excerpt

At one time, CAI publicized and recruited for the community representative sector of its board by mailing out nomination papers to all of the clients in its Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program—an impressive feat, considering the more than 7,000 households served by the program. Recently, however, CEO Kerri Sheeran Perry has explored ways to reduce the financial and administrative cost of the election while maintaining the spirit and integrity of the democratic process. Her organization has settled on a process that does just that.

Apart from a seat that is filled by CAI's Head Start policy council, all of the agency's community representative sector board

members represent specific neighborhoods within the service area. When a community representative seat is up for reelection, CAI uses its case management software to pull a random sample of at least 10% of low-income households from that neighborhood. Staff prepare a letter to potential candidates briefly explaining board roles and responsibilities and then mail this letter, along with a candidate registration form, to all of the randomly selected households. The registration form asks for basic demographic information, a description of why the candidate wants to be on the board, and a short biography. See Appendices 2 and 3 for a sample recruitment letter and registration form.



## HOLDING THE ELECTION

Once the deadline for receipt of candidate registration forms has passed, the Governance Committee of CAI's board of directors reviews the forms, removes any ineligible candidates, and conducts interviews with the remaining candidates to give them an opportunity to learn about board roles and responsibilities. The board and staff then prepare ballots to be sent to the same random sample of neighborhood residents. This mailing includes a 200-word biography written by each of the vetted candidates and informs residents of the voting deadline. Once the deadline has passed, the candidate that has received the highest number of votes is presented to the full board for selection.

## SELECTING THE BOARD MEMBER

The final step in the democratic selection process is when CAI's board votes to select the elected candidate. This step is an important one, as it allows the board to retain the ability to manage board membership, when necessary, and provides one last check to ensure that all members are fully qualified. This step also ensures that the board can remove a member, since some state laws only allow a board member to be removed by those that selected them. However, the board does not engage in substantive evaluation of the candidate at this stage. To retain the democratic spirit of the process, CAI board members limit their actions to ensuring that a candidate meets the basic qualifications for board service, such as residence in the neighborhood represented by the seat, and that members maintain compliance with board policies, such as conflict of interest and attendance.

## ENGAGING AND RETENTION

CAI's recruitment, publicity, and election procedures have produced strong results. In a recent election, 14 residents completed and returned ballots for the Haverhill city-wide seat. However, CAI has found that engaging and retaining board members can take as much effort as electing them. Its board has an active Governance Committee tasked with keeping low-income sector members engaged. The Governance Committee's interviews with candidates help to set realistic expectations about the responsibilities and obligations of board service. The committee also keeps track of attendance and, if necessary, enforces the board's rule, set out in its bylaws, that allows for removal if any member misses three or more consecutive meetings.

To mitigate the disruption that often comes with a vacancy, CAI has developed an interim board member policy that follows what is permissible under the state's CSBG regulations. When a vacancy occurs, the seat can be filled by selecting the runner-up from the most recent election. If that person is not available or willing to serve, the remaining community representative sector board members can select a replacement, as is permitted by the Massachusetts CSBG regulations.

## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY LEADERS AND A PIPELINE FOR BOARD SERVICE

Since becoming CEO, Kerri has concentrated her efforts on developing a large pool of potential community representative sector board members. In addition to the recruitment letters that are sent in response to a vacancy, CAI has started sending letters proactively, approximately every two years, to gauge the interest of community members and promote awareness of the democratic selection process. In the future, Kerri says, she'd like to make the recruitment letters an annual effort.

CAI also taps into the talent developed under some of its local programs for board recruitment. Make-It Haverhill, a neighborhood leadership development, educational, and economic opportunity initiative, provides a point of

contact between the agency and community members who are interested in taking an active role in giving back.

## MAINTAINING THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A summary of CAI's democratic selection procedures is found in the agency's bylaws, and a set of detailed, step-by-step procedures are memorialized in a separate document. These are included as Appendix 4 and Appendix 1, respectively.

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# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## Community Action, Inc. Appendices

### Table of Contents

Appendix 1, Low-Income Election Procedures	8
Appendix 2, Sample Recruitment Letter	9
Appendix 3, Candidate Registration Form	10
Appendix 4, Bylaws Excerpt	11

## Appendix 1, Low-Income Election Procedures

### *Based on 6/6/14 Bylaws Amendment*

When a Community Representative Seat terms out the Governance Committee will instruct CAI staff to begin the election process to fill the vacancy.

Community Rep Seats: Amesbury, Newburyport, Merrimac/Groveland = 1 seat each  
Haverhill – Acre and Mt. Washington = 1 seat each  
Haverhill – City-wide = 2 seats  
Total = 7 Community Rep seats

- A. Staff will be instructed to implement the use of a random sample of eligible households in the CAI Octopia database for the specified location above.

A minimum sampling of 10% or more will be extracted from the Octopia database for use in selecting household for filling the vacancy.

The following process is used in determining the random percentage. The 10% is selected automatically using a query that was designed by CAI's Octopis software company, Community Networks.

The process will work as follows:

1. Using Octopia a report is generated that pulls every family from the requested town.
  2. The data is then downloaded from this report into Access
  3. In Access using the query designed by Community Networks the specified percentage is extracted. The query uses an algorithm that preps the data and then uses a random number generator to pull the necessary info.
  4. Finally the results from the query is put in an excel spreadsheet that is converted to labels.
- B. Staff will prepare a letter and include a candidate registration form that will be sent to the random list of households selected for the vacancy to be filled.
- C. Nominations must be received by a specified date and the candidates must live in the geographic area s/he has been nominated.
- D. The board shall review those nominated, and may remove any candidate whom it determines does not meet the qualifications set by the board.
- E. The board shall instruct staff to prepare a ballot that will be sent out to the same random sampling of eligible households for them to vote and return by a specified date.
- F. The name of the candidate with the highest number of votes will be presented to the board for vote.
- G. In the event of a tie, the board shall conduct a run-off election by mailing a new ballot with the names of the candidates who are tied to the individuals who voted in the election that produced the tie.
- H. The board will further direct staff to seek out specific under-represented groups or types of groups as an option for selecting low-income board members when deemed appropriate through discussion among members of the governance committee and remaining low-income representatives who will present a recommendation to the full board for its approval.



## Appendix 2, Sample Recruitment Letter

August 1, 2014

Dear Resident,

Community Action, Inc. (CAI) has an upcoming vacancy on its Board of Directors for a volunteer community representative for low-income persons residing in the **Mt. Washington** area of Haverhill. We are looking for nominees who have a sincere interest in the needs of low-income people. Low-income people are facing many critical issues. We need strong, active Board members to strengthen our Board. Candidates must live in the **Mt. Washington** area, but they do not have to be low-income to be a community representative.

The Board seat is for a term of four (4) years. The Board meets one evening a month (generally the last Wednesday) to discuss policy issues and to participate in the planning for the agency. In addition, Board members have an opportunity to serve on various committees.

If you feel that you would be a good candidate for this volunteer community representative seat and would like to become involved, ***please complete and return the enclosed Candidate Registration Form by August 22<sup>nd</sup>***. Feel free to contact me at 978-373-1971 should you have any questions or need help.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marge Hooper  
Election Certification  
Committee Member



## Appendix 4, Bylaws Excerpt

Permit use of a random sample of program participants to elect low-income representatives amended 6/6/2014.

Role of Alternate Head Start Low-Income Representative delineated, 2/27/13

Residency requirement for board seats representing geographic areas added 4/25/12

Re-written and adopted 7/27/2011

(Last full version approved as amended, Wednesday 4/30/03)

*Incorporated as "Haverhill Community Action Commission" on 11/3/65. Amended to "Northern Essex Regional Community Action Commission" on 7/22/75. Again changed to "Community Action, Inc." on 2/28/78.  
(Information in italics added by Board vote on 3/26/03)*

## Article 1 - Name and Purposes

- A. Name. The corporation's name shall be as stated in its articles of organization.
- B. Purposes. The corporation's purposes shall be as stated in its articles of organization.

## Article 2 - Board of Directors

- A. Authority and Responsibility of the Board of Directors. The corporation's board of directors shall supervise, control and direct the business and affairs of the corporation. The board shall fully participate in the development, planning, implementation and evaluation of the programs offered by the corporation in its service of low income individuals and families.
- B. Number of Directors. The board of directors shall consist of twenty-one (21) directors. The number of directors may be decreased (but not to fewer than fifteen (15) from time to time by resolution of the board.

- C. Tripartite Board Structure.

1. Public Sector Directors. One-third of the directors shall be elected public officials, holding office on the date of selection, or their representatives, except that if the number of such elected officials reasonably available and willing to serve on the board is less than one-third of the membership of the board, appointive public officials or their representatives may be counted in meeting such one-third requirement (Public Sector Directors);
2. Low-Income Sector Directors. At least one-third of the directors shall be persons chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures adequate to assure that these members are representative of low-income individuals and families in the neighborhood served (Low-Income Sector Directors); and
3. Private Sector Directors. The remainder of the directors shall be officials or members of business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the community served (Private Sector Directors).

- D. Head Start Board Composition Requirements. At least one director shall have a background and expertise in fiscal management or accounting. At least one director shall have a background and expertise in early childhood education and development. At least one director shall be a licensed attorney familiar with issues that come before the governing body. However, if a person described in any one of the three preceding sentences is not available to serve as a director, the board shall use a consultant, or another individual with relevant expertise, with the required qualifications, who shall work directly with the board.

Additional directors shall: (1) reflect the community to be served and include parents of children who are currently, or were formerly, enrolled in Head Start programs; and (2) be selected for their expertise in education, business administration, or community affairs.

- E. Selection Generally. Following are the procedures to be used to select board members in each of the three board sectors. By resolution, the board may, from time to time, adopt additional selection procedures, provided that they are consistent with the selection procedures specified in these bylaws. After each prospective director has been selected to serve on the board through the appropriate selection process described below for the sector in which s/he proposes to serve, and has been determined by the board (or a committee thereof) to meet the qualifications set by the board from time to time for service as director, the board of directors shall vote whether to elect him or her to the board.
- F. Public Sector Directors. The board of directors shall select elected public officials to serve as Public Sector Directors. If the number of elected officials reasonably available and willing to serve on the

board is less than one-third of the board, the corporation may select appointed public officials to serve. If a public official selected by the board of directors cannot serve him- or herself, s/he may designate a representative, subject to approval of the corporation's board, to serve as a Public Sector Director; the representative may, but need not be, a public official. Should a public official fail, within the period specified by the corporation's board, to accept the seat him- or herself or to designate a representative to serve, the corporation's board shall select another public official to fill the seat or to appoint a representative, subject to approval of the corporation's board, to fill the seat.

- G. Low-Income Sector Directors. To fill one low-income sector community representative seat, the board shall request that the corporation's Head Start Policy council elect two Head Start parents from among its members to serve on the board, one as the regular representative and the second as an alternate. The Head Start Policy Council Alternate can serve, sit-in and communicate what happened to the regular Representative, but cannot vote, does not count towards determining CAI Board of Directors quorum, nor can the Alternate be an officer of the Board. To fill the remaining seven low-income sector community representative seats, the board shall direct staff to mail nomination papers and ballots to a random sample of eligible household in its integrated database in the communities of Haverhill, Amesbury, Newburyport, Merrimac and Groveland, seeking respectively nominations for election to: one seat representing Amesbury; one seat representing Newburyport; one seat jointly representing Merrimac and Groveland; one seat representing the Acre neighborhood of Haverhill; one seat representing the Mt. Washington neighborhood of Haverhill; and two seats representing the balance of low-income Haverhill residents. To be eligible to be nominated for, to be elected to and to hold one of these seats, an individual must reside in the geographic area s/he has been nominated and, if applicable, elected, to represent. After receiving back all nomination papers within a specified period, the board shall review those nominated, and may remove any candidate whom it has determined does not meet the qualifications set by the board from time to time for service as a director. The board will then direct the staff to mail ballots to the same random sampling of eligible households in the corporation's integrated database in each community/neighborhood listing the individuals nominated for each respective seat. Unless a waiver has been granted by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, only persons at or below 175% of the poverty line shall be permitted to vote in these selection processes. The name of each individual receiving the highest number of ballots for each respective community/neighborhood within a specified period of time shall be submitted to the board for the vote described in Section E of this article.. In the event of a tie, the board shall conduct a run-off election by mailing a new ballot with the names of the candidates who are tied to the individuals who voted in the election that produced the tie.

The board will further direct staff to seek out specific under-represented groups or types of groups as an option for selecting low-income board members when deemed appropriate through discussion among members of the governance committee and the remaining low-income representatives who will present a recommendation to the full board for its approval.

- H. Private Sector Directors. To fill Private Sector Director seats, the board of directors shall select organizations representing business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the corporation's service area (Private Sector Organizations) to designate, from among their officials or members, individuals to serve on the corporation's board of directors. Each such organization shall be entitled to designate one individual, subject to approval of the corporation's board, to serve as a Private Sector Director. Should such an organization fail, within the period specified by the corporation's board, to designate an individual to serve as a Private Sector Director, the corporation's board shall select another organization to designate such an individual.
- I. Petitions for Board Representation. A low-income individual, community organization, or religious organization, or representative of low-income individuals that considers its organization, or low-income individuals, to be inadequately represented on the board may submit a petition for representation to the board. The petition must be signed by at least 15 individuals, unless

the chairperson determines that it is appropriate to waive this requirement in a particular case. A written statement of the board's action on the petition shall be provided to the petitioning individual or group (and, if required by law, regulation or government funding source policy, a copy of the statement shall be sent to the appropriate government funding source(s)). Should it decide to provide representation to the petitioning organization or interest, the board shall take any actions necessary to provide that representation while ensuring that the board's composition meets the requirements of the federal Community Services Block Grant Act, the federal Head Start Act, and any other applicable laws or regulations.

J. Terms of Office. Each Low-Income Sector and Private Sector director shall serve for a four-year term, or until he or she sooner dies, resigns, is removed, or becomes disqualified. Each Public Sector Director shall serve for a one-year term, and a public official shall serve as a Public Sector Director only while s/he continues to hold public office. A representative of a public official shall serve as a Public Sector Director only while the public official who designated him/her continues to hold public office. An individual designated by either a Low-Income Organization to serve as a Low-Income Sector Director or by a Private Sector Organization to serve as a Private Sector Director shall so serve only while s/he continues to be associated with the organization that designated him or her. Directors may serve consecutive terms.

K. Removal of Directors.

1. Grounds for Removal.

- a. Incapacity. The board may remove a director, if in the opinion of the board, the director is incapacitated or otherwise unable to carry out the duties of his/her office.
- b. Cause. The board of directors may remove a director for cause for one or more of the following reasons: conduct the board deems contrary to the best interests of the corporation; misappropriation of assets of the corporation; violations of the corporation's articles of organization, bylaws, conflict of interest policy, board resolutions or other policies; absence from three (3) or more consecutive board meetings; repeated disruptions of board and/or committee meetings; conviction of a crime of moral turpitude; false statements on documents completed in connection with service as a director or officer of the corporation; or any other justifiable cause as determined by the board.

2. Removal Procedures. The board shall provide all directors, including the director proposed to be removed, with at least 14 days' notice of the meeting at which the removal is to be considered. The notice must specify that a purpose of the meeting is to consider removal of the director. The director proposed to be removed shall be entitled to an opportunity to be heard at that meeting. A vote of 2/3 of the directors present and voting is required to remove the director.

Representatives of public officials may be removed by the board; public officials may not be removed before the expiration of their term on the board while they still hold public office.

L. Resignation of Directors. A director may resign by delivering his or her written resignation to the chairperson, to a meeting of the directors or to the corporation at its principal office. The resignation shall be effective upon receipt unless specified to be effective at some other time. A director who has ceased to meet the qualifications for service as a director, as specified in these bylaws and by the board from time to time, and/or for the board seat to which s/he was elected, is deemed to have resigned as of the date s/he ceased to meet those qualifications.

M. Vacancies. The board shall take steps to ensure that vacant seats are filled in a timely manner. After each prospective director has been selected to fill a vacancy on the board through he appropriate

selection process described below for the sector in which s/he proposes to serve, and has been determined by the board (or a committee thereof) to meet the qualifications set by the board from time to time for service as a director, the board of directors shall vote whether to elect him or her to the board.

When a vacancy occurs in a Public Sector board seat held by a public official, the board of directors shall select another public official to serve as a replacement director or to appoint a representative, subject to board approval, to so serve. When a vacancy occurs in a Public Sector board seat held by the representative of a public official, the board shall request that the public official either take the seat him- or herself or name another representative, subject to approval by the board, to serve as a replacement director. If the public official fails to take the seat him- or herself or to name another representative within the period specified by the board, the board shall select another public official to serve as a replacement director him- or herself or to appoint a representative, subject to board approval, to so serve.

A vacancy in the Low-income Sector Head Start Policy Council seat shall be filled, subject to approval of the corporation's board, by the Policy Council Alternate, if that person available and willing to serve at the time of the vacancy. If such Alternate is unavailable, the vacancy will be filled, subject to approval of the corporation's board, by election of the Head Start Policy Council from among its parent members. Vacancies in the remaining seven Low-Income Sector seats shall be filled, subject to approval by the corporation's board, by the next highest vote recipient for the vacant seat if that person is available and willing to serve at the time of the vacancy, and, if such a person is not available and willing to serve, the remaining low income representatives may select a replacement who, to the maximum extent possible represents the same constituency as the original representative.

When a vacancy occurs in a seat held by an individual designated by a Private Sector Organization, the board shall ask the Private Sector Organization that designated that individual to designate another individual, subject to approval by the corporation's board, to fill the vacancy. Should that Private Sector Organization fail, within the period specified by the corporation's board, to designate an individual to fill the vacancy, the corporation's board shall select another Private Sector Organization to designate an individual, subject to approval of the corporation's board, to fill the vacancy. Each successor shall hold office for the unexpired term of his/her predecessor or until the successor sooner dies, resigns, is removed or becomes disqualified.

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency (SEICAA)

*Word-of-mouth engagement, program-based voting, and a commitment to the low-income voice*

### SEICAA Overview

Location:	Pocatello, ID
Staff Size:	36 employees
Annual Revenue:	\$4,000,000
Service Area:	11,000 square miles
Chief Executive:	Shantay Bloxham
Board Size:	12 seats
Major Programs:	LIHEAP and WAP, housing, senior programs (Meals on Wheels), GED program
Appendices:	Democratic selection procedures, board member application, board member job description, bylaws excerpt

## RECRUITMENT

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, recruiting candidates for the low-income sector of the board at SEICAA was largely a word-of-mouth endeavor. SEICAA runs several programs that provide opportunities for staff to interact directly with clients, including multiple food pantries and a market salvage food program. Staff use these interactions to educate clients about the mission of Community Action, the importance of the low-income voice on the tripartite board, and the procedures for upcoming elections. But when a seat in the low-income representative sector opened up in the fall of 2020, new CEO Shantay Bloxham knew that her agency would have to switch

things up in order to successfully recruit a board member who would be ready and engaged, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Since the amount of time SEICAA staff spent interacting with the community dramatically decreased when the agency had to reduce access to its offices to ensure the safety of clients and staff, recruitment efforts for its low-income sector election also looked quite different. For the first time, SEICAA devoted substantial time and resources to conducting its recruitment and election process online. This was facilitated in part by the fact that at the beginning of the pandemic, SEICAA



decided to implement a new client database that interfaces with the Idaho state CSBG office and allows clients to submit benefits applications and documentation through SEICAA's website. SEICAA used its new database to contact over 300 clients by email to gauge their interest in standing for election to the low-income representative sector. The agency also publicized the open seat using its Facebook page.



## PUBLICITY

Once candidates have been recruited for the election, the Board Liaison—a SEICAA staff person—usually prepares written biographies for all of the candidates, which are then distributed to clients as they come through the office for services. Staff again use the power of word-of-mouth to strengthen the process by encouraging participants to vote and educating them about the election—who is running, what the position means, and when and how voting will take place. During the pandemic, SEICAA made its board application form available on its website. The form was a fillable PDF that encouraged applicants to identify skills or characteristics they could contribute to the board, other major interests they had, any civic or community involvement, and participation on other boards. The form also contained information about SEICAA's bimonthly board meetings and required applicants to commit to attending regularly scheduled meetings and a training session for new members. Finally, the application asked broad, narrative questions like, "Why would you like to serve on SEICAA's Board?" and, "Please write a brief statement of your understanding of the mission". CEO Shantay Bloxham says that these questions are important because they help to identify candidates who are passionate about uncovering the foundational causes and conditions of poverty and implementing outcome-based initiatives. Such candidates contribute to the

board's ability to work collectively, with a shared understanding of their community and their role in it.

Like many CAAs across the country, SEICAA runs a number of programs with different income eligibility requirements. Some, like its Affordable Homeownership Program, have higher income limits. Because of this, SEICAA's election recruitment, publicity, and voting are usually focused on programs with income limits consistent with its CSBG-funded programs. However, the federal CSBG Act does not require that CAAs verify CSBG income eligibility for voters for low-income sector democratic selection procedures.

## HOLDING THE ELECTION

Because of SEICAA's success with word-of-mouth publicity and face-to-face interactions, the agency's election is usually scheduled on a day with high foot traffic in its community programs. When participants come through a program, staff ask if they are interested in voting and may also offer some thoughts about the importance of low-income board service. While there is an occasional "No thank you," the vast majority of participants are interested in casting a ballot, and turnout is often substantial—Shantay's predecessor Debra Hemmert saw elections with as many as 250 votes cast.

In the era of COVID-19, SEICAA staff were pleasantly surprised by the level of participation they witnessed in their web-based election procedures. Two community members stood as candidates for the open board seat. Shantay and her team developed an online ballot using SurveyMonkey, which was distributed to clients using the email list created during the recruitment



phase. Ballots were collected for almost a month via online submission and using paper copies distributed throughout a housing complex run by the CAA. Through those two avenues, they received a total of 37 votes.

## ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

Of all of the challenges that CAAs face in running a tripartite board, retaining low-income sector members is one of the most difficult. Some low-income sector members have difficulty balancing work and family commitments to attend board meetings, and some may be intimidated by the business or professional backgrounds of other members. SEICAA has developed a number of creative strategies to combat low-income sector attrition, including:

- Being clear about board responsibilities and expectations during the recruitment phase;
- Using a board member application and job description, both of which are on SEICAA's website (see Appendices 2 and 3);
- Providing orientation to all new board members;
- Utilizing a Community Development Committee, comprised of staff, the Executive Director, and other low-income board members, to support the low-income sector and keep it engaged. The committee holds quarterly meetings to discuss a variety of topics, from program evaluation to alignment with the strategic plan and community needs assessments. Shantay says that in this smaller setting, low-income sector board members are more likely to speak up and offer their thoughts and feedback, leading to more effective conversations; and
- Proactively seeking low-income member input during board meetings.

While the pandemic created additional challenges for board member engagement, CEO Shantay Bloxham says that the board has also benefitted from the increased accessibility of meeting online, especially given that their service area spans such a large, mostly rural area. She says in response to this crisis, it feels like the board has come together and become more cohesive, with a renewed sense of the importance of their role to the community. Shantay hopes

that this feeling will continue after the area recovers from the pandemic and accompanying economic downturn.

## MAINTAINING THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SEICAA documents its policies and procedures in a number of ways, including: retaining all of the ballots cast in the election; maintaining written procedures for the low-income sector election in a policy separate from its bylaws (see Appendices 1 and 4 for written procedures and bylaws); and posting a board member application and job description to its website.

*The initial version of this publication was created by the Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. (CAPLAW) in the performance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services Cooperative Agreement – Grant Number 90ET0441. Updates were made in 2021 by CAPLAW in the performance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services Cooperative Agreement – Grant Award Number 90ET0467-03-02. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.*

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency Appendices

### Table of Contents

Appendix 1, Democratic Selection Procedures	20
Appendix 2, Board Member Application	21
Appendix 3, Board Member Job Description	23
Appendix 4, Bylaws Excerpt	24

## Appendix 1, Democratic Selection Procedures

- Seek applicants through social media, word of mouth, civic/community involvement and other entities that serve low-income population.
- Qualified applicant(s) is/are elected by low-income population in service area.
- Ballot election is held:
  - » In Community Services Department
  - » During high volume service time
  - » Bio for applicant available during the election process
  - » Educate voting participants in person and in written document as to the need for low income Board representation
  - » Voter sign in sheet
  - » Ballots are tallied when election is complete
  - » Hold orientation for newly elected Board member before the next scheduled Board of Director' meeting
- Outcome of election is presented to Board of Directors for approval at the next scheduled meeting
- Ballots/Voter sign in sheet retained in Board Minutes permanent record

## Appendix 2, Board Member Application



**South Eastern Idaho  
Community Action Agency**

*Helping People. Changing Lives.*

### Application for Nomination to the Board of Directors

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Social Security #** (Will be asked for if nominated)

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**County:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Business Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employer:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send mail to:** \_\_\_ My Home \_\_\_ My Work

### Your Background

What Characteristics or skills could you contribute to our Board? (Please check all that apply)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Experience  | <input type="checkbox"/> Management                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Relations   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education             | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising          | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Dvlpment/Mgmt | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Low-income services   |

Other involvements, skills or major interests: (please explain)

---

---

Civic/Community involvement: (please list and explain)

---

---

---

Participation on other Boards:

---

---

---

## Your Ability to Serve

SEICAA Board Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every other month, beginning in January, (generally recessing in the summer months (June-August); from 12 PM – 1:15 PM, in Pocatello. (You are required to attend most regular scheduled meetings board membership)

Will you attend regularly scheduled Board meetings?  Yes  No

Will you attend a training session for new Board Members?  Yes  No

Will you offer services & expertise as needed at times other than Board Meetings?  Yes  No

Why would you like to serve on SEICAA's Board?

---

---

Please write a brief statement of your understanding of the mission of the Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency.

---

---

Please summarize the education, skills & expertise you would bring to SEICAA.

---

---

## Board Member Definition

Which one of the following 3 Board Membership Sectors are you eligible to fill?

SEICAA has a 12-member tripartite Board of Directors. According to the Community Action Agency Bylaws, 1/3 of its members must be proportioned in the following 3 categories:

**Public Sector:** 1/3 of the members of the Board are elected public officials, currently holding office, or their representatives.

\_\_\_ I am a current, elected public official \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of office & term of office)

\_\_\_ I am a representative of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of official, office & term of office)

**Low-income Sector:** 1/3 of the members of the Board are democratically elected representatives of low-income individuals and families.

\_\_\_ I am qualified under this category because:

\_\_\_ I represent low-income individuals & families

\_\_\_ My income does not exceed current poverty guidelines.

**Private Sector:** 1/3 of the members of the Board are officials or members of business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the community served.

\_\_\_ I am qualified under this category. Describe private sector affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return application to: SEICAA, 641 N 8<sup>th</sup> Ave., Pocatello, ID 83201 or Fax to (208) 234-4429

## Appendix 3, Board Member Job Description



### SEICAA Board Member Job Description

***Board members provide governance of Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency Inc. (SEICAA), a private non-profit 501c3 corporation serving Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Power and Oneida counties in southeast Idaho. SEICAA's Board of Directors is comprised of 15 members from three different population sectors, Public, Private and Low Income.***

#### Duties:

1. Demonstrate a strong belief and commitment to SEICAA's mission.
2. Devote the necessary time to prepare for and participate in Board and or Board Committee Meetings.
3. Exhibit high ethical standard and integrity in all Board actions.
4. Be an enthusiastic advocate for SEICAA's administration of its mission and programs.
5. Be willing to attend trainings to enhance Board expertise.
6. Ability to work as a team member with a 15 member Board for the betterment of SEICAA.
7. Commit to attend regularly scheduled Board of Director meetings
8. Willing to assist as needed in SEICAA fundraising efforts.
9. Willing to recruit new Board Members as needed.
10. Knowledgeable of fiduciary responsibility of a non profit corporation.

#### Qualifications:

- Education level to understand basic written/verbal requests.
- Possess good communication skills.
- Low-Income Sector members must be either qualify according to CSBG low income guidelines or represent a low income organization, neighborhood or community group.
- Public Sector members must be elected officials or their designee.
- Private Sector members may be from private or public business, industry, or the community at large.

#### **SEICAA's Mission Statement**

**SEICAA is dedicated to providing opportunity and support for individuals and communities to thrive and reach their fullest potential, promoting self-sufficiency and greater economic independence through services, education, affordable housing and training**

## Appendix 4, Bylaws Excerpt

### ARTICLE V – DIRECTORS

**Section 1. Number and Term.** The property, affairs, activities and programs of the Corporation shall be managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of no fewer than nine (9) directors (hereinafter, at times, “the Board”). The directors shall be elected for four-year terms except as noted herein. The members of the Board shall, upon election, immediately enter upon the performance of their duties and shall continue in office until the election of their successors. Directors may be elected for three successive four-year terms. Notwithstanding the above, the terms of Public Sector elected officials, or their representatives or appointees, serving as directors shall be determined by their terms of office.

**Section 2. Qualification and Selection of Directors.** The directors must reside within one of the seven counties of Southeastern Idaho that comprise the Corporation’s service area: Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida and Power Counties. The directors shall be chosen from the public, low-income and private sectors as follows:

- (a) **Public Sector.** One-third of the Board are elected public officials, holding office on their date of selection, or their representatives, except that if the number of such elected officials reasonably available and willing to serve on the Board is less than one-third of the membership of the Board, membership on the Board of appointive public officials or their representatives may be counted in meeting the one-third requirements.
- (b) **Low-Income Sector.** (i) No fewer than one-third of the Board are persons chosen in accordance with democratic selection procedures adequate to assure that these members are representative of low-income individuals and families in the neighborhood served; and (ii) each representative of low-income individuals and families selected to represent a specific neighborhood within a community under clause (i) resides in the neighborhood represented by the member.
- (c) **Private Sector.** The remainder of the directors are officials or members of business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the communities served.

**Section 3. Duties of Directors.** The Board of Directors shall: (1) hold each year the annual meeting described in Article IV, above; (2) hold such additional regular meetings each year as the Board schedules at the annual meeting, and hold special meetings at such times and places as the Board of Directors (or a majority of the directors) determines are needed; (3) appoint committees of the Board of Directors on particular subjects (as provided in Idaho Code Section 30-30-617); (4) disburse the funds of the Corporation in accordance with the charitable purposes and programs of the Corporation; (5) carry on correspondence and communicate with other associations interested in like endeavors; (6) employ agents; and



(7) generally exercise the powers of the Corporation as provided in Idaho Code Section 30-30-601.

**Section 4. Meetings of the Board.** For any regular or special meeting of the Board of Directors, notice of the meeting, signed by the Secretary, shall be sent (by mail, facsimile or e-mail) to the address of each director at least three (3) days before the time appointed for the meeting. The Chairperson may, when he or she deems it necessary, or the Secretary shall, at the request in writing of a majority of the members of the Board, issue a call for a special meeting of the Board, and three (3) days' notice shall be required for such special meetings, with notice of the special meeting to be provided to the directors by the Secretary in the manner prescribed in this Section 3 for regular meetings of the Board. Any director may participate in a meeting of the Board of Directors by telephone to the same effect as if personally present, as provided in Idaho Code Section 30-30-612(3). Any director may waive notice of a regular or special directors' meeting, as provided in Idaho Code Section 30-30-615. Notice of a regular or special meeting to consider amendment of the Bylaws shall require a ten (10) day advance notice, as provided in Article XII of the Articles of Incorporation. All Board meetings shall be open to the public.

**Section 5. Quorum.** A majority of the members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any regular or special meeting. In the absence of both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson at any regular or special meeting, the quorum present may choose a Chairperson for the meeting. If a quorum is not present, a lesser number may adjourn the meeting to a later day, not more than ten (10) days later, with written notice of such adjournment to be promptly given by the Secretary to each director.

**Section 6. Voting.** Each director of the Corporation shall be entitled to one vote upon every proposal submitted to vote at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

**Section 7. Vacancies.** Whenever any vacancy occurs in the Board of Directors by death, resignation, or otherwise, the vacancy shall be filled without undue delay by a majority vote of the remaining members of the Board at a special meeting which shall be called for that purpose. The Board will fill the vacancy from the appropriate sector best completing the coverage, while trying to maintain diverse representation. Any such required election shall be held within sixty (60) days after the occurrence of the vacancy. The person so chosen shall hold office for the remaining term of the person succeeded.

**Section 8. Removal of Directors.** Any one or more of the directors may be removed upon a showing of cause, at any time, by a vote of two-thirds of the directors present at any special meeting called for that purpose. Cause may include the unexcused absence of a director from two or more regularly scheduled Board or committee meetings during a calendar year.

**Section 9. Informal Action by Directors.** Any action required by law to be taken at a meeting of the directors, or action which may be taken at a meeting of the directors, may be

taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed by all of the Directors, as provided by Idaho Code Section 30-30-613.

**Section 10. Compensation.** Directors shall serve without compensation to further the charitable purposes of the Corporation, but shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses incurred in service as a director.

**Section 11. Director Conflict of Interest.** Pursuant to Idaho Code Section 30-30-619, the standards and procedures of the Corporation with regard to director conflict of interest shall be as follows:

- (a) A conflict of interest transaction is defined as a transaction with the Corporation in which a director has a direct or indirect interest.
- (b) A director will be considered to have an indirect interest in a transaction if:
  - (i) Another entity in which the director has a material interest, or in which the director is a general partner, is a party to the transaction; or
  - (ii) Another entity of which the director is a director, officer, or trustee is a party to the transaction.
- (c) Any director who may have a direct or indirect conflict of interest on a transaction proposed for the Corporation, before voting on any issue related to the same (or taking any action in furtherance of the transaction), shall disclose to the full Board of Directors (or to any committee of the Board of Directors considering the transaction) the material facts of the transaction and the director's interest therein.
- (d) A transaction in which a director has a conflict of interest may, nevertheless, be approved if, following the disclosure referred to in subparagraph 11(c), above, the Board of Directors authorizes, approves or ratifies the transaction.

**Section 12. Miscellaneous.**

- (a) Directors cannot be the immediate family of an employee of the Corporation.
- (b) No person may be elected to or serve on the Board who is currently, or has been within the preceding 12-month period, an employee of the Corporation.

- (c) Current Directors and individuals who served as Directors in the preceding 12-month period may not be employed by the Corporation.

## ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

**Section 1. Officers.** The officers of the Corporation shall be a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Any two (2) offices may be held by the same person, except the offices of Chairperson and Secretary and Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

**Section 2. Method of Election.** The Board of Directors shall elect all officers for one-year terms, with all officers being elected from the members of the Board of Directors.

**Section 3. Duties of Officers.** The duties and powers of the officers of the Corporation shall be as provided generally in Idaho Code Section 30-30-622, and as provided specifically in the following paragraphs of this Section 3.

**CHAIRPERSON** – The Chairperson shall preside at the meetings of the Board of Directors. The Chairperson shall communicate to the Board at the regular meetings of the Board (and at such other times as the Chairperson deems appropriate) such matters and suggestions as may, in the Chairperson’s opinion, tend to promote the welfare and purposes of the Corporation and shall perform such other duties as are necessarily incident to the office of the Chairperson.

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON** – In the case of the absence of the Chairperson, or of the Chairperson’s inability from any cause to act, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson.

**SECRETARY** – It shall be the duty of the Secretary to give notice of, and attend, all meetings of the directors of the Corporation and keep a record of their proceedings; to carry on all correspondence and to implement all orders, votes, and resolutions of the Board; to keep a list of the directors, including their addresses; to notify the officers of the Corporation of their election; to notify members of the Board of their appointment to committees of the Board; to furnish the Chairman of each committee with a copy of the resolution of the Board under which the committee is appointed, and at the Chairman’s request, give notice of the meetings of the committee; to prepare, under the direction of the Board of Directors, an annual report of the

# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## United Planning Organization (UPO)

*Neighborhood-based recruiting, strong tradition of campaigning, independent election certification*

### UPO Overview

Location:	Washington, DC
Staff Size:	400 employees
Annual Revenue:	\$35,000,000
Service Area:	Washington D.C. and surrounding area
Chief Executive:	Andrea Thomas
Board Size:	21 seats
Major Programs:	Child, Youth, and Family Services (including Early Head Start & Head Start), Job Training and Placement, Housing Assistance, Substance Abuse Treatment, Community Leadership Academy, Shelter Hotline, Community Reinvestment Division
Appendices:	Democratic selection procedures; community election kit (board application); press release; election notice; 2017 election timeline; election poll workers guide; flyers; postcard

As former UPO President and CEO Dana Jones once said, “If you want to make change in communities, you’ve got to create vehicles where people can be part of the change.” Since taking on the role of President and CEO at UPO in 2019, Andrea Thomas has done just that. She has stewarded the democratic selection procedures implemented by her predecessor and expanded them to engage an even broader cross-section of the community. UPO’s robust outreach efforts and partnerships have paid off, as demonstrated

by the record-breaking turnout in its 2020 elections, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UPO board has 21 members and operates on three-year terms. Board members may serve two consecutive terms, after which they must take a break in service of at least one year and then may return for one additional three-year term. This results in a maximum tenure of nine total years. Board terms are staggered, which helps avoid large waves of turnover.

## RECRUITING CANDIDATES

One of the board's seven community representatives is elected by UPO's Head Start Policy Council. For the remaining seats, UPO relies on an extensive network of local community organizations to nominate candidates for the low-income representative election. There are no income restrictions on who can run for a board seat. When an election is approaching, a notice is sent to 200-300 organizations, such as Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, neighborhood groups, and other organizations that serve the low-income community. This one-page notice provides some basic information about UPO, the tripartite board, and UPO's upcoming election, and asks the organization for candidate nominations. The board also emails staff, partners, and other contacts with a fact sheet about the upcoming election to engage support in identifying nominees. See the Community Election Kit in Appendix 4.

Alternatively, UPO allows nominations by petition. Individuals who have not been nominated by an organization may gather signatures from at least 10 households in their Election Service Area (ESA, see below) and submit that petition to UPO for placement on the election ballot. Petition signees must be at least 18 years old, and the petition form is included in the board application (see Appendix 2). Andrea says that most candidates use the petition method, rather than being nominated, which she appreciates. "It shows me their commitment," she says. "Serving on the board isn't just a resume builder."

UPO's residency requirements are established in its bylaws and guide the recruitment process: low-income sector representatives are elected to represent specific election districts—called ESAs—within UPO's service area, and eligible candidates must live in the ESA they represent. Though the federal CSBG Act does not establish a general residency requirement for CAA board members, if a CAA chooses to have low-income sector board members represent specific neighborhoods within a community, then those board members must reside in the neighborhood they are elected to represent. See [42 U.S.C. section 9910\(a\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)](#). ESAs are developed through needs assessment data and are updated by the board as community demographics change, but no less frequently than every five years. The ESAs are the geographic areas with

the highest rates of poverty and must have poverty rates that are at least above D.C.'s overall poverty rate.

UPO's multi-pronged recruitment strategy has proven very successful; elections are usually competitive, with two or three candidates on each ballot. The use of social media and virtual open houses for interested candidates to meet current board members has proven to be instrumental in attracting candidates. Occasionally, an election will have up to four candidates, and there have been elections where incumbent candidates have been unseated.



## BACKGROUND CHECK

Once the nomination and application processes are completed, candidates' information is submitted to a third-party reviewer to confirm the application is complete, and that all pertinent information is included to confirm eligibility. Then, the information is submitted to UPO's general counsel's office for a criminal background check. Authorization to perform a criminal background check is required as part of the application process for all board members (see Appendix 2). The scope of this check is limited and is not intended to broadly exclude individuals with criminal backgrounds, which would result in the loss of a critical voice. Rather, the board is concerned about convictions that are directly related to the duties and responsibilities of board membership, such as fraud or embezzlement. The board is committed to keeping the scope of the background check narrow and is less concerned about a person's past mistakes and more concerned about an individual's ability to govern.

Once UPO's general counsel completes the background check process and the candidate is confirmed to reside in the appropriate ESA, the nominee's information is submitted to the board's Nomination, Bylaws and Board Governance (NBBG) committee. The committee certifies the nominee for the election, and then UPO begins advertising the election.

## PUBLICIZING THE ELECTION

UPO employs a variety of strategies to publicize the election. Information about the election is shared via email and through postal mail to a broad array of contacts, such as supporters, clients, and community organizations. The information shared includes candidate biographies and the time and location of voting. This information is also posted to UPO's social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, and Instagram. Postings are also shared in community newspapers, community-based centers in the UPO network, and other community locations. UPO also coordinates a "Meet the Candidates Forum" for each ESA, giving voters an opportunity to meet and question candidates.

An important avenue for publicizing the election is the candidates' own campaigning. UPO has found that candidates often run spirited campaigns for election to the board, and while they may not have funds for traditional campaign strategies like paid advertising, word-of-mouth campaigning goes a long way toward informing the community about the elections.

## RUNNING THE ELECTION

During the election, UPO aims to maximize voter turnout by placing locked and secured election boxes at multiple locations around the ESA, from UPO offices and program sites to libraries and other community organizations. While there are no income restrictions to vote, voters must live in the appropriate high-poverty ESA. Voters are required to show a photo ID or other proof of residency and must sign their name on a voter register that is maintained by UPO's Election Manager.

Residency documentation is verified by volunteer election poll workers, and UPO has



created an Election Poll Workers Guide with detailed instructions and guidelines for volunteers who are monitoring and assisting in the election process. See the 2011 Poll Workers Guide in Appendix 6.

Once the votes are in, and the secured ballot boxes have been returned to a designated location, the next step in the election process begins: independent verification of the election results. UPO relies on an outside organization, such as the League of Women Voters or an independent accounting firm, to count the ballots and certify the election. When the League of Women Voters has not been available, UPO has always been able to find an accounting firm to handle the task pro bono. This step in the process is one that President and CEO Andrea Thomas is particularly proud of, and she believes it is crucial to safeguarding the integrity of the process and avoiding the appearance that UPO insiders are influencing the results of the election.

After the votes are independently verified, the results are given to the board's NBBG committee to vote on the result. The role of the NBBG committee is not to second-guess the election, but to verify basic eligibility for board service. After this vote, the nominee is sent to the full board to be officially seated on the board of directors.

For UPO, the reality of having such a careful and deliberate process is that it takes time—a typical low-income selection process takes about four months. But for UPO, that up-front investment is worthwhile because it yields committed board members who stay engaged. For a breakdown of the timeline of a typical UPO election, see Appendix 5.

## ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When four vacant seats in the low-income sector of UPO's board opened up in late spring 2020, President and CEO Andrea Thomas was confident that her agency's strong record of election turnout would help to sustain participation despite pandemic-related restrictions on in-person gatherings. In addition to sending out notices through the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and other community organizations, her team publicized the upcoming election and solicited nominations through the neighborhood-based social networking app Nextdoor. They received multiple nominees for each open seat and decided to host a virtual forum on Facebook Live to help the community get to know the candidates.

Current members of UPO's board also filmed short videos, [now displayed on UPO's Youtube channel](#), about what board service entails and what it has meant to them personally. They emphasized that when serving on the board, board members should not just be thinking about the interests of their ESA or Ward. They must put the interests of UPO as an organization at the top of their minds.

Just as it engaged in multiple strategies for recruitment during the pandemic, UPO decided to take a dual approach to its election process. Voters could show up to a UPO service site and vote in-person—socially distanced of course—or

they could download [Mobile Cause](#), a fundraising app for nonprofits that can be used to circulate surveys and petitions. Participants could enter their personal information, including proof of residency within the ESA, into the app on their phone, which sent a message to UPO. Once their eligibility was confirmed by a volunteer election poll worker, the voter could vote for the candidate of their choice via text message. As they had done in the past, UPO engaged the League of Women Voters to open and tally the votes that were cast in-person, adding them to the virtual results.

Once the winners of the elections were announced, Andrea and her team faced another governance challenge unique to the pandemic: welcoming and training brand new board members without meeting them in person. UPO decided to conduct its new board member orientation virtually in two parts, each taking place over four and a half hours on a Saturday. The orientation included a ROMA training, introductions to UPO's different divisions and programs from division directors, a primer on the Organizational Standards, and presentations from the HR and finance departments. Andrea says that the board members were engaged and asked thoughtful questions during their orientation. Understanding that it can be difficult to focus throughout a four-hour virtual session, her team did their best to promote participation and incorporated new topics, like Robert's Rules of Order, into the agenda. UPO will also be conducting quarterly "refreshers" on governance topics at board meetings throughout the year.

## ENGAGING AND RETAINING BOARD MEMBERS

Rather than seeing the rules governing low-income sector representation as a burden or an obstacle, UPO views the low-income sector election as an important factor in engaging and retaining board members. It represents their important role in and to the community served by the agency. At a board retreat several years ago, the board was strategizing around the operation of a prisoner reentry program. One of the low-income sector representatives had served a lengthy prison sentence, and his personal experience transitioning back into the community provided a new and deeply valuable perspective to the board.



There are more pragmatic aspects to UPO's board engagement as well. For example, UPO expects to have a "100 percent giving board." There are no minimum donations, but all board members are expected to give within their means, whether that is \$20 or \$10,000.

To remove obstacles to retention in the low-income sector of the board—especially for those members who are low-income themselves, which is typically around half of the sector—UPO will either provide transportation to board meetings or reimburse for expenses. Carpooling is common and carries with it the added advantage of encouraging connections between board members of different sectors and from different backgrounds. The board also now provides members with access to a laptop and Wi-Fi, if necessary, in order to allow them to attend meetings virtually.

The result of UPO's efforts at engagement and retention is a low-income sector with low turnover and few vacancies. Lively engagement of the low-income sector is evidenced by its visible leadership—low-income sector representatives have often served in officer positions in the recent past.

## MAINTAINING THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

UPO maintains detailed democratic selection procedures in a document that is separate from the bylaws, and those procedures are included in Appendix 1. The Appendices also include a sampling of some of the other documentation related to UPO elections.

## LOOKING FORWARD

In the last two years the UPO board has been investing energy into the creation of "content area advisory councils." These councils focus on specific areas of program content, such as training, employment, and youth services, and the councils regularly report to the full board. The composition rules of these councils require that 1/3 of the council be consumers of UPO services. The responsibilities of the councils include making recommendations on program goals, objectives, and implementation, conducting quarterly review of relevant programs, and advising the organization

on community needs. President and CEO Andrea Thomas hopes these advisory councils will function as springboards to board membership and lead to more low-income representation on the board.

*The initial version of this publication was created by the Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. (CAPLAW) in the performance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services Cooperative Agreement - Grant Number 90ET0441-03. Updates were made in 2021 by CAPLAW in the performance of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services Cooperative Agreement - Grant Award Number 90ET0467-03-02. Any opinion, findings, and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.*



# Raising the Low-Income Voice

Case Studies in Democratic Selection Procedures



## United Planning Organization Appendices

### Table of Contents

Appendix 1, Democratic Selection Procedures for UPO Board of Directors	34
Appendix 2, Community Election Kit	38
Appendix 3, 2020 UPO Press Release re Election Procedures	50
Appendix 4, Election Notice to Nominating Community Organizations	52
Appendix 5, 2017 Election Timeline	53
Appendix 6, 2011 Poll Workers Guide	54
Appendix 7, 2020 UPO Board Election Flyer	67
Appendix 8, 2020 UPO Board Election Postcard	68
Appendix 9, 2020 UPO Virtual Open House Flyer	69

## Appendix 1, Democratic Selection Procedures for UPO Board of Directors

### Members who are Representatives of Low-Income Residents

(Approved 6/14/07); (Reviewed 8/9/10); (Amended 7/21/11); (Amended 1/19/12);  
(Amended 3/20/14); (Amendment 9/18/14)

#### Amendment 05/18/17

- A. The UPO Board of Directors will designate the number of representatives of Low-Income Residents from each Election Service Area (ESA). Areas will be based upon the concentration of poverty within the Wards of the City.
- B. Based on a Board size of twenty-one (21) members, the required one-third representation of low-income residents, and the concentration of low-income residents in the city, the following ESAs have been designated:

ESA	No. Reps	Wards Included	Total Population	Poverty Populations by Ward	% *
1	1	1	82,859	11,186	13.50%
		3	83,152	7,816	9.40%
<b>Total</b>			<b>166,011</b>	<b>19,002</b>	
2	1	2	77,645	10,404	13.40%
		6	84,290	10,536	12.50%
<b>Total</b>			<b>161,935</b>	<b>20,941</b>	
3	1	4	83,066	9,885	11.90%
		5	82,049	15,589	19.00%
<b>Total</b>			<b>165,115</b>	<b>25,474</b>	
4	1	7	73,290	19,935	27.20%
5	1	8A	81,133	30,587	37.70%
6	1	8B			

- C. Elections will be conducted on dates established by the Board in order to fill vacancies for the Representatives of Low-Income Residents.
- D. The UPO Board will appoint a UPO Election Committee that will have custody of all documents and will certify the nominees.
- E. The UPO Board will appoint an Election Manager to administer the election.
- F. Notice of the election and a request for Candidates will be sent to at least one newspaper of major circulation, community newspapers, community-based centers in the UPO Network, and other community locations.
- G. UPO will provide each candidate with an Election Kit (application).
- H. Eligible residents who are interested in becoming a candidate must complete an application and provide it to UPO's Election Manager. Applications will be reviewed for completeness. Applications that are incomplete may be rejected.
- I. All candidates must meet the eligibility criteria set forth in the UPO Bylaws and UPO Governance Guidelines.
- J. Upon certification, candidates will be placed on the UPO ballot for their respective Election Service Area.
- K. UPO will widely circulate an election notice that includes the names of the candidates for each Election Service Area.
- L. UPO will coordinate a "Meet the Candidates Forum" for each Election Service Area so that voters will have an opportunity to meet and question candidates.
- M. For the convenience of voters, a polling place will be identified in each Ward of the city for the respective election.
- N. UPO will engage an independent organization, such as a CPA firm, or the League of Women Voters to monitor all polling places, receive sealed ballot boxes, and count and certify the votes.
- O. Community voters must appear in person. No proxies will be accepted. Voters will be required to show a photo ID, or other proof of residency, and sign their name on a Voter Register that will be maintained by UPO's Election Manager.
- P. Winners will be notified of the unofficial results, by phone, within 24 hours of the voting and in writing after official results have been certified. All others will be notified by mail after the certification has been completed.

- Q. In the event that UPO receives only one application from a specific ESA that meets the eligibility criteria, the election for the specific ESA shall be cancelled and the unopposed candidate will be declared the elected Representative of Low Income Residents for approval by the UPO Board of Directors for the ESA located within the Ward(s).
- R. In the event that UPO does not receive an application from a specific ESA that meets the eligibility criteria, the Election Manager and Nominating, Bylaws and Board Governance Committee will identify a community organization located in the ESA that provides services to and involves low-income community residents in the ESA, to democratically elect and designate a representative for approval by the UPO Board of Directors as a Representative of Low-Income Residents; or the members of the UPO Board of Directors who are Representatives of Low-Income Residents shall democratically elect and designate a representative for approval by the UPO Board of Directors as Representative of Low-Income Residents for the specific ESA.
- S. In the event that a Representative of Low-Income Residents cannot complete his/her term and the candidate with the next highest votes from the specific ESA in that election is available to serve and meets the eligibility criteria, the Election Manager and Nominating, Bylaws and Board Governance Committee shall designate the candidate for nomination to the UPO Board of Directors as a Representative of Low-Income Residents.
- If the Representative of Low Income-Residents ran unopposed in the election or the candidate with the next highest votes from the specific ESA in the election is unavailable, the UPO Board of Directors members who are Representatives of Low-Income Residents shall democratically elect and designate a representative to the UPO Board of Directors as a Representative of Low-Income Residents.
- T. Each elected representative will serve a three-year term in accordance with the UPO Bylaws.
- U. When a representative fails to complete eighteen (18) months of an elected term, UPO will conduct a mid-term election to fill the seat.
- V. Prior to the end of the designated Representative's first term and for Representatives interested in serving an additional term, the UPO Board of Directors may vote to have the Representative serve an additional term, consistent with the Bylaws. The Nominating, Bylaws, and Board Governance Committee will consider the following factors in making a recommendation to the Board of whether to have the Representative serve an additional term: attendance at Committee and Board meetings, participation in the meetings, any

feedback and/or concerns raised by the Representative's community members, compliance with the Board documents (Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, UPO Governance Guidelines, Democratic Selection Procedures, Conflict of Interest and Related-Party Transaction Policy, and any other Board document in place at that time), and any other relevant information. Consistent with the Bylaws, no member shall serve more than two successive terms and members shall serve until his/her successor has been appointed.

- \* **UPO has assessed the level of poverty by Ward and Census Tract based upon information extracted from data provided by the D.C. Office of Planning. Updates will be made as data becomes available.**

## Appendix 2, Community Election Kit

### UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION (UPO) BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMUNITY ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF RESIDENTS WITH LOW INCOMES

Join the UPO Board!

Here's *Your* Opportunity to:

- ✓ Make a Positive Impact in the Community
- ✓ Contribute to Strategic Planning to Alleviate Poverty
- ✓ "Friend-raise" and Fundraise to Combat Poverty

The United Planning Organization (UPO), the designated community action agency for Washington, DC, was launched in 1962 to plan, coordinate, and implement human services programs for community residents. Today, UPO continues to offer with a wide array of programs, including: early childhood education; youth development; employment and training; community health; housing counseling; case management; and referrals to other supportive services.

**UPO tears down barriers and builds people up.** Our staff is hands-on, tackling inequity across the city every day. We change the system and empower people to learn new skills, change their families' lives, and touch the future they've dreamed of.

UPO's Board of Directors is governed by a 21-member tripartite structure. Members represent Washington, DC's 8 wards and the public and private communities:

- ✦ 1/3 are democratically elected representatives of residents with low incomes, including one designated representative of the UPO Policy Council
- ✦ 1/3 are elected public officials or their representatives: one member designated by DC's Delegate in the US House of Representatives and 6 members designated by the Mayor
- ✦ 1/3 are representatives of major groups and interests, elected by the UPO Board

This passionate group of people has the responsibility is to ensure that UPO assesses and responds to the causes and conditions of poverty in the District, and remains fiscally and administratively sound.

#### SELECTED ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS in 2019:

- 52,430 customers served
- 722 customers obtained jobs
- 859 children educated and nurtured in DC's largest Early Head Start program
- 5,831 youth mentored by senior volunteers (Foster Grandparents)
- 186,834 total volunteer hours
- 81,825 emergency calls answered by Shelter Hotline about people experiencing homelessness

(Source: 2019 UPO Annual Report)

## HOW TO APPLY

UPO is seeking 4 people interested in serving as a Representative of Residents with Low Incomes. Open positions are in **Ward 1/3** (jointly), **2/6** (jointly), **4/5** (jointly), and **8B**. If you're Interested, please complete the application to be considered for inclusion on the ballot. Prospective board members are elected by community residents and then approved by the Board.

To apply, you must be at least 21 years old, a District of Columbia resident and live within one of the Election Service Areas (District of Columbia Census Tracts). Election Service Areas (ESAs) are selected based on the economic characteristics of the community. Also, you must be able to complete and pass a background check.

**Mail or hand-deliver the completed application to UPO Community Elections, United Planning Organization, General Counsel, 301 Rhode Island Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001. Applications must be delivered by 5:00pm or postmarked by 11:59pm on Friday, July 24, 2020.** Incomplete applications will not be considered. If you have questions about the application process, please send an email to [communityelections@upo.org](mailto:communityelections@upo.org)

### Application MUST include:

### Check Completed

Application MUST include:	Check Completed
1. Completed Application for Nomination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. <b>Biography</b> (not to exceed 1 page) which includes hobbies and talents, and <b>Resume</b> (not to exceed 2 pages)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Copy of a government-issued Photo Identification	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Full color headshot of applicant	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Signed "Statement of Interest" detailing your interest in becoming a UPO Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Two signed "Recommendation Letters" (From a non-family member, preferably from someone who knows you from a community, civic, or faith-based organization)	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Petition signed by members of 10 different households in your Election Service Area	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Signed Photo Release Form	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Signed Criminal Background Check Authorization Form	<input type="checkbox"/>
Optional: Self-addressed Return Receipt Request Card (if you want a record that your application was received)	<input type="checkbox"/>

UPO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APPLICATION FOR NOMINATION

APPLICANT'S INFORMATION

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY Washington	STATE DC	ZIP	WARD	ESA
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

ELECTION SERVICE AREAS (ESA) (check one)

VISIT [WWW.UPO.ORG/COMMUNITYELECTIONS](http://WWW.UPO.ORG/COMMUNITYELECTIONS) TO CONFIRM

YOU LIVE IN AN ELIGIBLE ELECTION SERVICE AREA BY ENTERING YOUR ADDRESS

OR CONTACT AYANA BIAS: [ABIAS@UPO.ORG](mailto:ABIAS@UPO.ORG) OR (202) 231-7946 FOR ASSISTANCE.

- ESA: Ward 1/3
- ESA: Ward 2/6
- ESA: Ward 4/5
- ESA: Ward 8B

COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Organization:	Date (s):
Duties and Responsibilities:	
Organization:	Date (s):
Duties and Responsibilities:	

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Organization:	Date (s):
Duties and Responsibilities:	
Organization:	Date (s):
Duties and Responsibilities:	



**Applicant's Affirmation**

I swear or affirm that the information provided in this application package is true to the best of my knowledge.

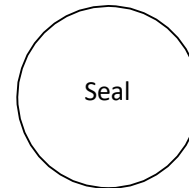
\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**District of Columbia Notary \***

On this, the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, before me a notary public, the undersigned officer, personally appeared \_\_\_\_\_, known to me (or satisfactorily proven) to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged that he/she executed the same for the purposes therein contained.

In witness hereof, I hereunto set my hand and official seal.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public, District of Columbia

My Commission expires on \_\_\_\_\_

**\*NOTE:** Free Notary Public Services are available by appointment at United Planning Organization, 301 Rhode Island Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001. Call Kay Phillips (UPO Office of General Counsel) at (202) 238-4700

**STATEMENT OF INTEREST**  
**(Explain why you want to be a UPO Board Member.)**

**APPLICANT'S INFORMATION**

PLEASE TYPE/PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY	STATE	ZIP	WARD	ESA
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

Please include these items:

- Your passion and commitment to serve underserved communities and residents.
- Why do you want to represent citizens of your ward and what will be your greatest contribution?
- What are your ward's pressing issues and what role have you played, if any, in addressing them?  
 (Also, what was the result of your efforts?)

**Signature:**

# 1<sup>st</sup> RECOMMENDATION LETTER (2 are required)

(You can attach signed letters with the requested information instead of using this form.)

## APPLICANT'S INFORMATION

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY Washington	STATE DC	ZIP	WARD	ESA
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

## RECOMMENDER'S INFORMATION

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ORGANIZATION				TITLE	
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY Washington	STATE DC	ZIP	WARD	
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

1. How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your relationship with the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe the applicant's community leadership abilities.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the applicant's greatest attributes?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Provide a brief statement about the role the applicant played in bringing change to the community. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Recommender: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2<sup>nd</sup> RECOMMENDATION LETTER (2 are required)

(You can attach signed letters with the requested information instead of using this form.)

### APPLICANT'S INFORMATION

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY	STATE	ZIP	WARD	ESA
	Washington	DC			
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

### RECOMMENDER'S INFORMATION

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY IN INK

FIRST NAME	MI	LAST NAME			
ORGANIZATION			TITLE		
ADDRESS (P.O. Box Not Accepted)	CITY	STATE	ZIP	WARD	
	Washington	DC			
TELEPHONE NUMBER			E-MAIL ADDRESS		

1. How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your relationship with the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe the applicant's community leadership abilities.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the applicant's greatest attributes?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Provide a brief statement about the role the applicant played in bringing change to the community. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Recommender: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION

DC's COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY  
301 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001

## PETITION TO BECOME A CANDIDATE FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE UPO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please provide signatures of support from at least 10 different households in your Election Service Area. They must be 18 years of age or older.

Please print neatly

	Print Name	Signature	Address
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

## PHOTO RELEASE FORM

I hereby authorize the United Planning Organization to use my likeness and my name and photograph in any and all of its publications, advertising, including website entries and educational training, without payment or any other consideration.

I acknowledge that since my participation in publications, advertising, including website entries and educational training, produced by the United Planning Organization is voluntary. I will receive no financial compensation and waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the photograph.

I understand and agree that these materials will become the property of the United Planning Organization and will not be returned.

I hereby irrevocably authorize the United Planning Organization to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish or distribute this photo for purposes of publicizing the United Planning Organization's programs, or for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears.

I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the United Planning Organization from liability for all claims, demands, and causes of action which I or any third party may have in connection with or, by reason of this authorization.

I am 21 years of age and am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

---

(Signature)

---

(Date)

---

(Printed Name)

---

(Date)

# Criminal Background Check – Authorization Form

## Disclosure and Authorization Form for Obtaining Consumer Reports for Employment or Volunteer Purposes

### DISCLOSURE

In consideration of your employment or volunteer eligibility (or continued employment or volunteer eligibility if you are currently an employee or volunteer) with the United Planning Organization (UPO), UPO may request and rely upon one or more consumer reports or investigative consumer reports about you that UPO obtains from one or more consumer reporting agencies, such as Intellicorp Records, Inc. or any other vendor chosen by UPO to furnish such information.

IntelliCorp Records, Inc. can be contacted by mail at 3000 Auburn Dr., Suite 410, Beachwood, OH 44122; by phone at 888-946-8355; or on its website at [www.intellicorp.net](http://www.intellicorp.net).

Explanation of the terms:

A “consumer report” is a written, oral or other communication of any information by a consumer reporting agency bearing on your credit worthiness, credit standing, credit capacity, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living which is used or expected to be used or collected in whole or in part for the purpose of serving as a factor in making an employment-related decision about you. Such information may include, for example, credit information, criminal history reports, or driving records.

An “investigative consumer report” is a consumer report in which information on your character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living is obtained through personal interviews with your prior employers, neighbors, friends, or associates, or with others who may have knowledge concerning any such items of information. In the event that an investigative consumer report is requested about you, you are entitled to additional disclosures regarding the nature and scope of the investigation requested, as well as a written summary of your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).

Under the FCRA, before UPO can obtain a consumer report or investigative consumer report about you for employment/volunteer purposes, UPO must have your written authorization. Before UPO takes adverse action on the basis, in whole or in part, of information in that report, you will be provided a copy of that report, the name, address, and telephone number of the consumer reporting agency, and a summary of your rights under the FCRA.

### AUTHORIZATION FOR OBTAINING CONSUMER REPORTS FOR EMPLOYMENT OR VOLUNTEER PURPOSES

I have read and understand the foregoing Disclosure, and authorize the United Planning Organization to obtain and rely upon consumer reports or investigative consumer reports concerning me. By my signature below, I authorize UPO to obtain any such reports and to share the information received with any person involved in their decision about me. I understand that this release is signed, free from duress, and with the full knowledge and understanding that any information obtained will be used in assessing my relative fitness for employment or volunteer eligibility with UPO.

I also agree that this Disclosure and Authorization in original, faxed, photocopied, or electronic (including electronically signed) form will be valid for any consumer reports or investigative consumer reports that may be requested about me by or on behalf of the United Planning Organization.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Personal Data - Please print the information below:**

<b>First Name:</b>	
<b>Middle Name:</b>	
<b>Last Name:</b>	
<b>Other Names Used (including maiden name):</b>	
<b>Current Address (include street, city, state and zip code):</b>	
<b>Addresses for the past seven (7) years (include street, city, state and zip code)</b>	<b>Dates of Residence</b>
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	<b>Social Security Number:</b>
<b>Driver's License # or ID #:</b>	<b>Issuing State:</b>

I have the right to make a request to **IntelliCorp Records, Inc.**, or other vendor used by UPO, upon proper identification, to request the nature and substance of all information in its files on me at the time of my request, including sources of information, and the recipients of any reports on me which **IntelliCorp Records, Inc.**, or other vendor used by UPO, has previously furnished within the two year period preceding my request.

I certify that all elements of the personal data I have provided are true, accurate and complete. I understand and agree that any omission, false statement, misleading statement, or answer made by me will be sufficient grounds for rejection or discharge.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Revised: 7/21/17





301 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 238-4609

[www.upo.org](http://www.upo.org)



**United Planning Organization**

301 Rhode Island Avenue NW

Washington DC 20001

Tel: 202 238 4600

Email: [info@upo.org](mailto:info@upo.org) Website: [www.upo.org](http://www.upo.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JUNE 2, 2020**

Press Contact: Zohar Rom | (202) 812-4001, [zrom@upo.org](mailto:zrom@upo.org)

# UPO Sets Board Elections, Seeks Exceptional DC Leaders



WASHINGTON, DC: The Board of Directors of United Planning Organization (“UPO”) announced elections for 4 open seats. These directors will represent low-income residents of the District of Columbia who are striving towards the middle class.

“UPO is in search of *remarkable human beings*,” said Jacqueline Kinlow, chair of UPO’s Board of Directors. “People with compassion, grit, high character, and a unique set of experiences that define them as community leaders. In these exceptionally challenging times, nothing less will do. **If that person is you, please step up. We’d like to welcome you to the UPO Family.**”

UPO’s mission is to **Unite People with Opportunities** so DC residents can become self-sufficient. As the District’s nonprofit Community Action Agency since 1962, UPO’s innovations have changed the lives of whole families for generations.

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY FOR WASHINGTON DC

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [v](#) [t](#) #IAMUPO

UPO tears down barriers and builds people up by tackling inequity across the city. Its staff changes the system and empowers people to learn new skills, transform their families' lives, and touch the future they've dreamed of.

- UPO runs the city's largest Early Head Start program.
- UPO prepares youth for college and careers.
- UPO helps people manage their money so they can build wealth and keep their homes.
- UPO's job training and placement opens doors to the first job security ever for many of our residents. Then, they become part of the UPO Family for life.

**Applications for nominations are due on July 24, 2020.** The online application is available at [www.upo.org](http://www.upo.org). To pick up a printed application, please visit 301 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001. For more information on UPO's Board of Directors elections, please contact Ayana Bias at (202) 231-7946 or email [communityelections@upo.org](mailto:communityelections@upo.org). UPO community elections will be held on **Tuesday, September 1, 2020**.

The 4 open seats will represent low-income residents striving towards the middle class in Wards 1 and 3 (combined); Wards 2 and 6 (combined); Wards 4 and 5 (combined); and Ward 8B in the District of Columbia. Candidates must live within the wards' prescribed boundaries and be at least 21 years old. To check if you live within these boundaries, please [type in your home address](#); if it's inside the green area, you are eligible.

(If not, then unfortunately you are not eligible. If you're looking for other ways to get involved, please consider volunteering. For more information, please contact Ayana Bias at [abias@upo.org](mailto:abias@upo.org))

#### **About United Planning Organization**

UPO is a human and community development organization. As the Community Action Agency for Washington, DC, UPO's federally-mandated purpose is to help people lift themselves out of poverty. UPO surveys DC residents to learn community needs and gaps in service delivery, then develops ways to bridge those gaps by Uniting People with Opportunities. Over 400 staff members and 500 volunteers help over 50,000 DC residents each year, with impacts in education, employment, health, housing counseling, and in strengthening families and communities.

UPO has a 21-member governing board: 7 are appointed by senior elected officials in DC (Mayor and Congressional Representative); 7 represent major groups and interests; and 7 are elected by UPO's customers—low-income residents striving towards the middle class.

## Appendix 4, Election Notice to Nominating Community Organizations

2011 Letter to Community Members

August 18, 2011

Dear Community Member:

The United Planning Organization (UPO), the Community Action Agency for the District of Columbia, is governed by a tripartite Board of Directors that includes 1/3 “representatives of low-income residents.” Representatives of the poor are secured through a democratic process, allowing community residents to elect individuals from Election Service Areas (ESAs) designated in accordance with the number of citizens in poverty. As in the past, assistance has been solicited from Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in targeted areas to inform the public, regarding upcoming elections and to encourage qualified individuals to apply to become members of the UPO Board of Directors.

A representative of low-income residents is needed for Election Service Areas (ESAs) serving Wards 1 and 3. In accordance with the “Democratic Selection Procedures for the UPO Board of Directors, your organization may elect and designate, “an individual living in DC Voting Precincts 7, 27, 28, 20, 22, 23, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, or 137,” for consideration. The nominee is required to submit an **“Application for Nomination”** by no-later-than **Monday, September 26, 2011**. If applications for eligible persons are submitted by more than one community based organization, UPO reserves the right to accept the best candidate to serve for the first 3 year term of service. The candidate will be expected to compete for reelection for a second term.

Enclosed for your information, and use are application kits, information and instructions. Your participation is vital in our efforts to empower District of Columbia residents to participate in the governance of the agency charged with the provision of relevant, effective services for the poor.

Please feel free to contact Mrs. Vanessa C. Rawls at 202-238-4734 or [vrawls@upo.org](mailto:vrawls@upo.org) for any additional information. We look forward to your participation as we work to serve low-income residents of the District of Columbia. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Ron Collins, Chair  
Nominating, Bylaws & Board Governance Committee  
UPO Board of Directors

## Appendix 5, 2017 Election Timeline

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>Notification of Current Representatives</b>	<b>Thursday, July 27</b>
<b>Notification of Community Residents</b>	<b>Thursday, July 27</b>
<b>Web Page Announcement of Planned Election (COS)</b>	<b>Monday, July 31</b>
<b>Solicitation of Candidates (30 days)</b>	<b>August 1 - August 31</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press release</li> <li>• Letters to partners</li> <li>• Circulation of Application Kit in the Community</li> <li>• Phone calls to stakeholders</li> </ul>	
<b>Secure third party validation partner for election</b>	<b>Thursday, August 19</b>
<b>Deadline for applications</b>	<b>Thursday, August 31</b>
<b>Compliance Division review of applications</b>	<b>Thursday, September 7</b>
<b>Acceptance and validation of candidates</b>	<b>Tuesday, September 21</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal background check</li> <li>• NBBG Committee review of candidates and recommend a slate to the Board</li> <li>• Board approval of the slate</li> </ul>	
<b>Slate of Candidates announced and circulated to affected communities</b>	<b>Tuesday, September 26</b>
<b>Identification and preparation of election sites</b>	<b>Monday, October 23</b>
<b>Advertisement of Election (COS)</b>	<b>October 2 – October 24</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web page announcement</li> <li>• Fliers in the community</li> <li>• Slate</li> </ul>	
<b>Election</b>	<b>Tuesday, October 24</b>
<b>Validation of Results</b>	<b>Thursday, November 2</b>
<b>NBBG Committee Accepts and Recommends For Board Action</b>	<b>Thursday, November 9</b>
<b>Board Approval</b>	<b>Thursday, November 16</b>

UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Community Elections

Election Poll Workers Guide



**Tuesday, November 08, 2011**  
**4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

## Table of Contents

Greeting	3
Voting Day	4
Volunteering On Election Day	5
Election Guidelines	6
Voter Instructions	8
Election Supply Checklist	9
Voting Process Diagram	10
Polling Locations	11

**GREETINGS ELECTION VOLUNTEER!****THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS  
IMPORTANT UPO EVENT**

Without your support, a major project of this type would not be possible. As a volunteer, your dedication and commitment to the election procedures will help to ensure that the election operates as planned. In response, the voters will truly appreciate all of our efforts for making the voting process an enjoyable one.

Our goal is to elect Board Member's who will advocate for the poor and help to improve the conditions that cause poverty in the District of Columbia. Every DC Resident should have an opportunity for a quality life and this can only be accomplished if we have strong families. This election is a step in the right direction, your leadership and hard work will make it a reality,



## VOTING DAY

Remember to smile. Your graciousness with voters is an important factor in promoting positive community relations with city residents.

1. Greet all voters
2. Be especially attentive to the handicapped or elderly. Help them with any special needs that they may have. If a voter enters the election site with a service animal do not interfere or make physical contact with the animal.
3. Follow the Election guidelines
4. Give clear directions and accurate information on voting procedures.
5. Stay in your assigned area. The Ward Captain will give you your volunteer assignment.
6. If an emergency arises, contact the Ward Captain immediately. Depending on the nature of the emergency, 911 should be contacted. Notify UPO headquarters of any special circumstances.
7. Monitor the flow of traffic. Do not allow "bottlenecks to occur".
8. Each voter has a "right to privacy". Make sure you preserve it.
9. Thank each voter for participating in the election. Tell them that their vote counts.

## Volunteering on Election Day

### Site Logistics

1. Please report to your assigned election site by 2:15 p.m. in order to prepare the election room for voters. The election starts at 4:00 p.m. and ends at 8:00 p.m. Adhere to all posted hours. Do not begin or end the election prior to the official scheduled time that has been advertised for the election.
2. Put on your nametag. Wear it at all times.
3. Exert every effort to ensure that the election site is clean and comfortable for voters.
4. Review all election materials and secure all supplies and Election documents for processing. Make sure all items are put in place prior to the start of the election. See Election Supply listing.
5. Post signs showing arrows pointing voters to the election room, bathrooms and exits. All voters should enter and exit the same way to avoid congestion. Hang both indoor and outdoor signage.
6. Water and juice will be provided, please bring any other medicine or snacks that you will need to sustain you during your shift. Do not eat or drink in front of voters, check with your Ward Captain for break assignments or job rotations.
7. Dress for comfort. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear since you will be standing for several hours.
8. If the media comes to the election site, do not make statements or volunteer information. Tell them to see the Ward Captain, he/she will provide the media with a copy of the UPO press statement. All official UPO spokesperson will be on hand to respond to media questions.

## UPO ELECTION GUIDELINES

Please note the following mandatory procedures.

- All voters must register to vote by signing in on the UPO Election sign-in sheet. Take the time to make sure that they fill out all areas of the form.
- Identification is required for all voters. No exceptions. Check for residency. It is important to determine their eligibility before they proceed to the next voting checkpoint.
- All residents who reside in the Ward are eligible to vote, but you must verify address.
- Do not give voters your opinion on which candidate should be elected. This is a democratic process, do not influence voters.
- Do not argue or engage in a confrontation with voters. Remember, you are the host/hostess for this event and have the important role of enforcing the election procedures and promoting positive public relations during the event.
- Once eligibility is verified, the voters will be given a regular or provisional ballot and directed to the voting area.
- Persons may vote at any polling location. If a ballot is cast at an alternate site, the voter must use a provisional ballot. These ballots will be cross-checked to prevent duplicate votes.
- Each voter can vote for one candidate only. If a voter makes a mistake, they must give the Ballot Clerk the "spoiled" ballot prior to receiving another Ballot. All spoiled ballots will be stamped or marked "VOID" and placed in a special box marked "SPOILED BALLOT".
- All voters will deposit their completed ballots into the box marked "Ballots". After fulfilling this task, they must exit the voting room. ~Thank them for coming and inform them that the results will be posted on the UPO web ([www.upo.org](http://www.upo.org)) and at UPO centers. ~

- The voting process will be observed by an independent group of staff, volunteers or a partner agency that also will collect the locked ballot boxes for release to the group or person responsible for counting the ballots. The keys will be maintained at a separate location and will be released only to the counters, that claim the boxes prior to counting.
- Persons must be in line to vote by 8:00pm. Persons coming after 8:00pm will not be allowed to vote.
- Clean up and remove all election materials. Each Ward election will be held at a different location. Return all materials to the Ward Captain. ***Thank the site personnel for allowing us to have the election at their organization.***

### Counting The Votes

- All ballots will be counted by a third party accounting firm or independent entity.
- The candidate with the highest number of votes will be nominated to the UPO Board of Directors.

## Voter Instructions

### How To Vote:

1. Fill in the oval next to your choice with a blue or black pen.
2. If the ballot is marked incorrectly, return to the registration desk for a new ballot.
3. Fold the ballot.
4. Insert into the Ballot Box.

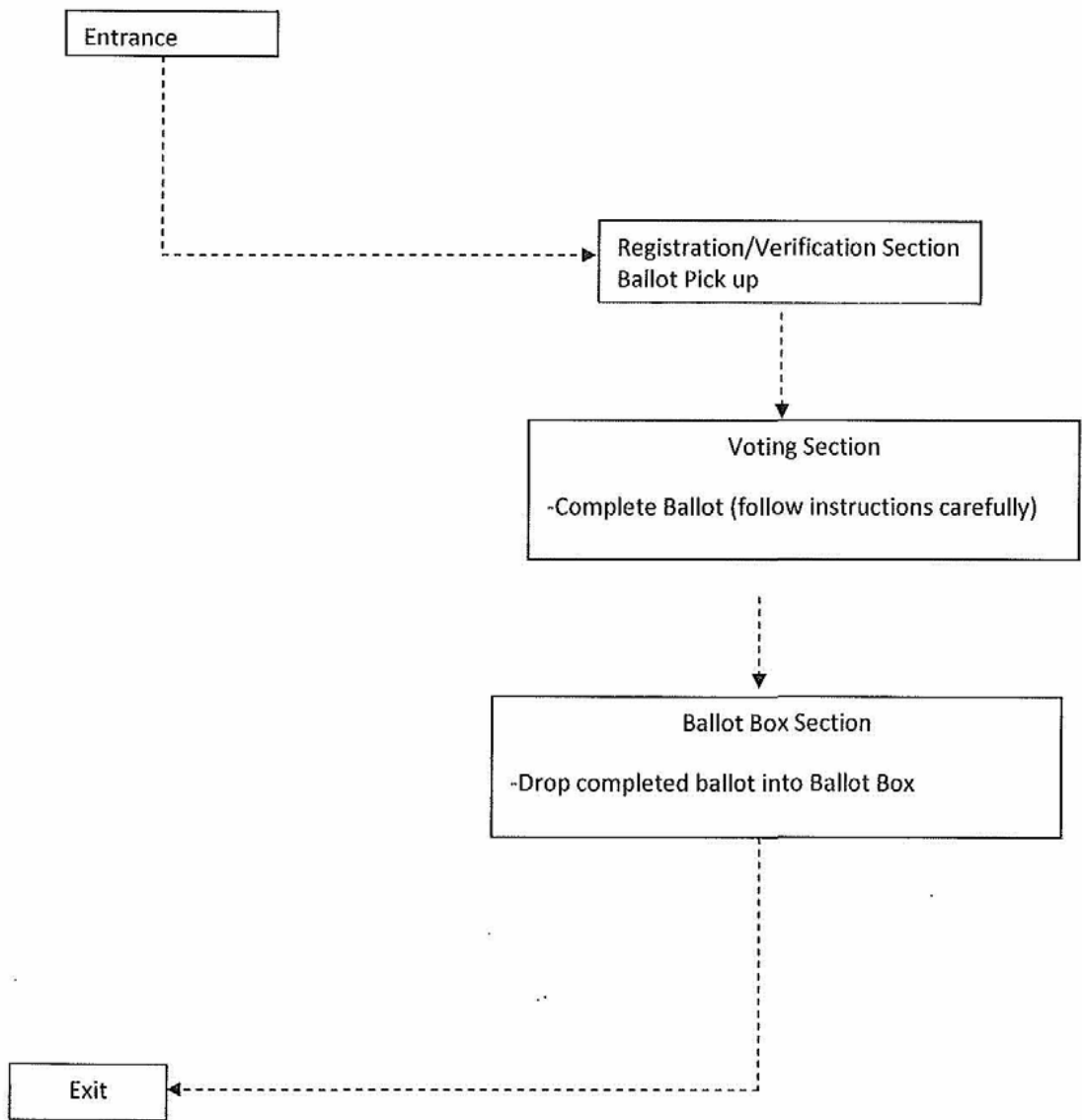
## ELECTION SUPPLY CHECKLIST

1. Instructional Manual
2. Markers and paper for preparing signage
3. Copies of all Ward Election Flyers
4. Batch of corresponding Ward flyers - the specific site where you are volunteering
5. Volunteer schedule
6. Registration Forms & Master Street Index Listing
7. Ballot Box
8. Spoiled Ballot Box
9. Ballots for each per site
10. Provisional Ballots For Polling Site
11. Provisional Ballot For Other Wards
12. Other Ward Ballots- 50 each per site
13. "VOID" Stamps
14. Pens
15. Rubber bands
16. Paperclips
17. Writing tablet
18. Arrow Signage
19. UPO Press Statement
20. Refreshments for Volunteers

**United Planning Organization  
Community Election for Low-Income Representatives to UPO Board of Directors**

<b>Date:</b> (Insert Date)	<b>Ward</b> (Insert Ward No.)
<b>Polling Location:</b> Insert Address of polling location)	

**VOTING PROCESS DIAGRAM**



United Planning Organization  
Community Elections

Tuesday, November 08, 2011  
4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Election Polling Places

### **Polling Site**

#### **Ward 4**

Fort Stevens Senior Recreation Center  
1327 Van Buren Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20012  
202-541-3753 or -55

#### ***Ward 5 (precinct 135)***

Mount Bethel Baptist Church  
1901 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 409-3257  
Contact: Pastor Bobby Livingston

#### ***Ward 7 (precinct 102)***

Dorothy I. Height Public Library  
3935 Benning Road, NE.  
Washington, DC 20019  
(202) 281-2583 Library  
Contact: Mr. Martin Burrows (202/281-2598)







**UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**Election Committee**  
301 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 238-4600

## Appendix 7, 2020 UPO Board Election Flyer



### HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO BECOME A UPO AMBASSADOR:

A vocal champion and supporter of our programs and initiatives in the wider community

UPO tears down barriers and builds people up. Our staff is hands-on, tackling inequity across the city every day. We change the system and empower people to learn new skills, change their families' lives, and touch the future they've dreamed of.

- 】 We run the city's largest Early Head Start program.
- 】 We prepare youth for college and careers.
- 】 We help people manage their money so they can build wealth and keep their homes.
- 】 Our job training and placement opens doors to the first job security these strivers have ever had. And we're never "done" with them. They become part of the UPO Family for life.

## UPO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Join Our Team and Be The Change You Want To See in Your Community

### REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL MEMBERS

- 】 Must be a DC resident who's over 21 years old
- 】 Must live within one of the Election Service Areas accepting candidates
- 】 Must be able to complete and pass a background check

### COMMITMENT

- 】 Attend Full Board Meetings bi-monthly
- 】 Attend Board Committee Meetings: monthly or bi-monthly
- 】 Participate in at least 2 UPO-sponsored civic engagement events.

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE WE NEED

- 】 Fundraising & Resource Development
- 】 Communications & Public Relations
- 】 Advocacy & Grass Root Organizing
- 】 Community Planning & Economic Development
- 】 DC Policy & Research
- 】 Early Learning & Education
- 】 Executive Administration (Finance & Human Resources)
- 】 Legal

### BOARD MEMBERS REPRESENT ALL 8 WARDS, THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITIES

- 】 **1/3** are democratically selected representatives of residents with low incomes, including one designated representative of the UPO Policy Council
- 】 **1/3** are elected public officials or their representatives (1 member designated by DC's Delegate in the US House of Representatives and 6 members designated by DC's Mayor)
- 】 **1/3** are representatives of major groups and interests elected by the UPO Board

[WWW.UPO.ORG](http://WWW.UPO.ORG)

# Appendix 8, 2020 UPO Board Election Postcard



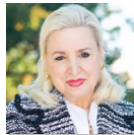
UPO tears down barriers and builds people up. By helping DC residents become self-sufficient, we transform families for generations.

**On September 1: text to VOTE for the best representative for YOUR WARD!**

Find your in-person voting location and learn about the candidates

[WWW.UPO.ORG/COMMUNITYELECTIONS](http://WWW.UPO.ORG/COMMUNITYELECTIONS)

## WARD 1 & 3



Christine Warnke

Text **ESA1** to **41444**

## WARD 2 & 6



Rhonda Hamilton



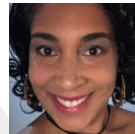
Tamara Phelps

Text **ESA26** to **41444**

## WARD 4 & 5



Hadiyah Muhammad



Wendy H. Giles

Text **ESA45** to **41444**

## WARD 8B



Chamarcra M. Outlaw



Salim Adofo

Text **ESA8B** to **41444**



Be the **CHANGE** you want  
to see in your **COMMUNITY**

## JOIN THE UPO BOARD



Find out more at our:

### **VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE**

Tuesday, June 30 | 6:15 - 7:30PM

Thursday, July 16 | 6:15 - 7:30PM



**LIVE** on Facebook:  
**fb.com/UPOinDC**



RSVP at [communityelections@upo.org](mailto:communityelections@upo.org)  
to join the Webex event

You can become the voice of  
residents with low incomes  
who are striving towards the  
middle class.

If you live in Wards 1-6 or  
8B, this can be your chance  
to make a difference,  
helping DC residents  
become self-sufficient.

**Our team will answer all of your questions.**

**We appreciate you!**

Online Application is now available at: **UPO.ORG/COMMUNITYELECTIONS**