

# Coalition Civic Engagement Case Studies

Each of the case studies in this collection were written by Norio Umezu Hall, with contributions from Kris Bein, Tracy Wright, Cat Fribley, and the sexual assault coalition staff named in the individual case studies. We are grateful for the time coalition staff spent answering questions, editing, and providing feedback on their stories.

If your coalition is doing some kind of civic engagement work (whether electoral or not) and would like to talk more about creating a case study together, please contact RSP Publications Specialist Norio Umezu Hall at [norio@iowacasa.org](mailto:norio@iowacasa.org).

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# Case Study: New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

What type of civic engagement:

Presidential Candidate Forums, Panels, and Interviews

How they funded it:

Unrestricted fundraised money

Summary of their story as told by Amanda Grady Sexton, Director of Public Affairs for the coalition:

The process of working with each candidate for their First-in-the-Nation (FITN) series was layered. The coalition began by asking candidates about the specific issues they wanted to learn more about and what issues the candidates were already familiar with. From there, the coalition pulled together briefings (some in as quick as 24 hours!), panels, or one-on-one meetings with survivors. Each event had its own format. The coalition recruited other survivors, member programs, volunteers, and the media to attend events as relevant. The coalition's public

affairs department worked together with other members of the coalition staff to turnout audience members and craft appropriate questions. The venues for the educational events varied based on the anticipated size of the press corps and the staff candidates brought with them.

Through these educational events, the coalition highlighted issues facing survivors of domestic and sexual violence and harassment, and the federal funding programs that support local sexual assault and domestic violence crisis centers and the need for more prevention education funding.

As Amanda Grady Sexton shared, “We’ve had a tremendous amount of feedback from candidates and survivors about how valuable these educational events were. These

forums not only helped people have one-on-one time with a presidential candidate, but also helped the public to understand how passionate candidates were about an issue that matters to them. And the events informed candidates as well. Candidates were impressed to learn about the work that was being done to end domestic and sexual violence in New Hampshire and across the country.”

#### What they learned:

Amanda Grady Sexton continued to reflect, “these events encouraged candidates to speak out about issues that are important to survivors and the public and also created a larger sense of community. Anytime we see the coalition or member programs in the news, there are new people who are learning about the critical work being done by crisis centers, and that there is help available. Whenever candidates and elected officials engage in educational forums and speak out about these issues, it helps survivors know that they are supported. When the media reports on our issues, we see an uptick in crisis center outreach and calls. People should not underestimate their ability to make a difference in how a candidate or elected official thinks or talks about an issue. Having survivors and



their advocates at the table will have a significant impact on a candidate. After meeting with us, we did hear candidates start to talk about these issues more on the campaign trail. It was a lot of work and it was all worth it. It's a fun way for coalitions to bring their staff together with member programs, and to engage survivors and volunteers.”



## Case Study: Jane Doe, Inc.

What type of civic engagement:

Survivor and ally panel about civic engagement

How they funded it:

Since this was an awareness event, they were able to use OVW and Department of Public Health grants. The event costs primarily consisted of paying for ASL interpretation and Closed Captioning. Panelists were also given small honoraria. The intern's time was paid for via an external internship.

Summary of their story, as told by Tara Agaba, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, with highlights from Lydia Begag's [written reflections](#):

When Tara came in to the coalition as the new Communications and Outreach Coordinator, she came into an organizational conversation about how the coalition could have civic engagement threaded throughout their work. They created a civic engagement committee to move this work forward. Jane Doe's

civic engagement committee is comprised of the advocacy, policy, membership, and communications coordinators.

The coalition had previously adapted the Virginia Action Alliance’s *Building Communities* toolkit to their state context. But they noticed that not a lot of people were using it. It was too large and overwhelming. People didn’t know where to start. So, they decided to organize a Civic Engagement 101 webinar for their membership and wanted to organize a public event.



Tara was working with an intern whose work was to focus on civic and youth engagement that summer. The intern, Lydia Begag, was highly accomplished, having had experience building power with women to take office and

planning TED talks. Lydia worked on numerous projects during her time with JDI, but she spent the most time organizing a virtual public event about civic engagement. In planning the event, she thought about her own experience. She thought about and what her friends and peers were considering. And she realized that what would be most helpful was an honest conversation where people could hold multiple truths. Lydia created an event to honor the importance of voting and seeking to change the system in other ways, while also talking about the harm and violence young people, women, trans people, people of color, and others face as they do this work, and acknowledging the limited choices and compromises folks often have to make as they consider who to vote for.

As Lydia [remarked](#), “This event arose from my frustration regarding the political injustice and degradation of survivors in conversations around the upcoming elections. Before coming to JDI, I had no idea how to craft substantial change on this issue.” Through the “Multiple Truths: Survivorship in the 2020 Elections” panel, Lydia and JDI sought “to validate survivors’ experiences at the polls and beyond.”

The audience for the panel was young folks, sexual assault survivors, and people who have been disenfranchised, particularly Black transgender women. Folks from Jane Doe reached out to people they knew who were involved in civic engagement and asked them to come speak about their experiences.

#### What they learned:

Planning for the Multiple Truths panel taught them a lot. They learned that many folks want to talk about what it's like to see candidates who don't hold the same values as them. The majority of the people who attended the online event were from out of state, but they downloaded the toolkit and expressed a lot of excitement. Tara reflected, "it's valuable for coalitions to organize who they can and to talk through the different ways people can get engaged civically. Not all people can vote. But if they want a role in it, there's a role. It's about organizing and getting the word out."

In the future, Tara wants to continue tying threads together so advocates can see what they do as part of civic engagement. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Awareness Months are civic engagement. The Multiple Truths panel helped the coalition see where folks are at and how to best connect with them moving forward.

One of the biggest pieces of advice Tara had for other coalitions was to consider, "how many diverse voices you can bring together (specifically, Native/Indigenous/First American folks and Black women, both transgender and not). Their leadership in civic engagement is often unrecognized and we have so much to learn. Most importantly, compensate them for their contribution!"



# Case Study: Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence

What type of civic engagement:

Voter registration drives

How they funded it:

Local foundation grant

Summary of their story as told by Tasha Menaker, Chief Strategy Officer of the coalition:

In 2017, the Protecting Arizona's Families Coalition (PAFCO) contacted the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACESDV) to see if they would be interested in supporting a statewide effort to increase voter registration and engagement. ACESDV leadership at the time saw an opportunity to deepen the coalition's civic engagement work and said yes. The goal of the coalition's involvement was to register a certain number of people through one-on-one conversations and voter registration parties. To accomplish this, the coalition reached out to local programs and brought voter registration materials to every tabling event they participated in. They also released an online toolkit to support

people in hosting their own registration parties. ACESDV received a small grant from PAFCO to support these activities.

This effort was the first time the coalition attempted to do this type of civic engagement work. The public policy team held primary responsibility for collecting voter registration pledges and getting people to actually register to vote.

As a result of participating in the PAFCO project in 2018, they've built and strengthened relationships with more civic engagement organizations they can collaborate with as they continue to increase their own skills in this area.

#### What they learned:

As Tasha Menaker, Chief Strategy Officer of ACESDV, reflected on what civic engagement work will look like for the coalition in the future, she said in a January 2020 interview, "We want to do something for the 2020 election but we're not sure of what that will look like just yet. The executive director of PAFCO used to be the Public Policy Manager at the coalition, so we're reaching out to brainstorm ways the coalition can support voter engagement that play more to our strengths moving forward." She shared that, if they were to do the voter registration pledge drive and parties again, they would start the conversation earlier within the coalition and connect with local partners who do this kind of work more frequently. They would also be intentional about how they approach programs in rural areas versus urban areas. Tasha noted that "programs have their own political ideologies." These were reflected in the mix of responses the coalition received from local programs when asked to host voter registration parties. In Arizona, though the coalition is non-partisan, they are still perceived as a liberal organization which created challenges when approaching more conservative and rural communities.





When asked for advice she'd share with other coalitions looking to do civic engagement work for the first time she said, "Do the pre-work. Don't underestimate the work it takes to build and engage partners. Connect with others who know more about doing this work and find ways to collaborate with them."