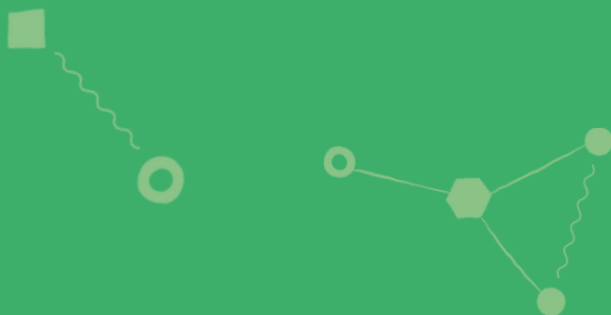




**A 'HOW TO' GUIDE
ON RECRUITING A
COMMUNITY ORGANISER**



**Community
Organisers**



LISTEN

POWER

ACTION

We believe in the power of listening.

We believe in the collective power of people.

We believe that the actions of people are powerful and can change things for good.



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Background information



Who we are

Community Organisers is the national charity, and leading organisation for community organising training, support, and action in the United Kingdom.

We are inspiring thousands of people to get involved in community organising practice. Joining the growing movement of people up and down the country coming together and taking action – whether setting up a new community-led housing project, lobbying for better public transport, challenging cuts to health services, finding local/wider/national solutions to the cost of living crisis, launching campaigns, or establishing community-owned enterprises – people who are transforming their neighbourhoods for good.

We are also the home for the National Academy of Community Organising which is a collective of locally rooted organisations (Social Action Hubs), committed to training and supporting people to develop their understanding and practice of neighbourhood community organising.

**Community
Organisers**



National Academy
of
Community Organising

Our history and experience

Since 2011, community organising has been supported by Office for Civil Society within the Cabinet Office and most recently as part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Support has come via two main programmes; the initial Community Organisers Programme (COP) which funded the employment and training of 500 Community Organisers and the Community Organisers Expansion Programme (COEP) which funded the training of 3,500 people in community organising.

These 4,000 people were hosted by organisations across the country working in a range of contexts. These initiatives brought community organising approaches and skills into places they hadn't been used before, and, as an organisation we supported these hundreds of organisations to embed new practices. Many have signed up with us to be part of our network of Social Action Hubs to continue to provide training and support to local people.

As well as working with local organisations we have also worked with national bodies to adapt and adopt community organising.





INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade there has been a significant increase in both the numbers of organisations exploring community organising and the number of people who are employed as a community organiser.

Since 2011, our organisation has been involved with the recruitment of over 500 community organisers and training many thousands more. We have worked with organisations (large and small) to explore both how they can adopt the principles and practice of community organising and how they can employ a community organiser.

In recent years, the number of organisations recruiting community organisers has widened to include social movements, campaign organisations, Political parties and statutory bodies. Whilst this widening of the field of organisations involved with the recruitment of community organisers is positive for the movement, it has meant that in some cases, organisations are having to quickly adapt and learn how to work with and embed new ways of working into their organisations.

This guide aims to provide a starting point for organisations as to what it takes to recruit a community organiser. It covers the role of a community organiser as well as the essential skills that should be looked for in the recruitment process. It also provides an overview of the training and support that organisations might want to consider, in order to support the community organiser in their personal and professional development.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ORGANISING?

Community organising is the work of bringing people together to take action around their common concerns and overcome social injustice. As an approach it has a distinct set of principles and methods which differentiate it from other forms of community practice.

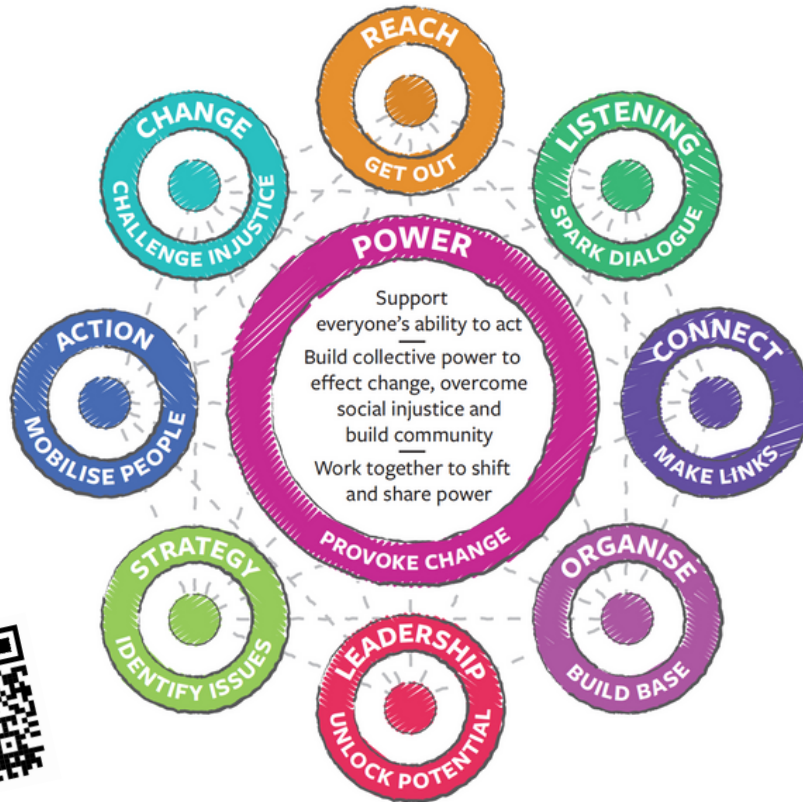
Thousands of people across the world, including in the UK, have developed the approach over many decades and in many different contexts supporting both communities of place, as well as interest. However, to seek to capture the commonalities across the different contexts, we have created a framework for community organising that aims to encompass the range of approaches and methods that have developed and are developing.

Click below or scan the QR code to get your copy of 'Community Organising Compared'
www.corganisers.org.uk/book



THE COMMUNITY ORGANISING FRAMEWORK

Scan me to download the full Framework poster



The Framework sections in more detail



REACH

- Engage everybody and anyone ensuring inclusivity and equality
- Go to where people are



LISTENING

- Develop relationships and identify passion, interests and potential leaders
- Build a picture of people's life in the neighbourhood
- Encourage reflection and explore possibilities
- Challenge people about the way things are



CONNECT

- Connect and create groups of people with shared interests and concerns
- Build bridges between different groups
- Identify community resources needs and visions
- Share stories



ORGANISE

- Build local democratic and accountable associations of people that can start to act co-operatively and collectively
- Build your power base
- Build a structure



LEADERSHIP

- Develop a culture of possibility where people believe in their ability to create change
- Motivate and support people to take and share leadership
- Identify natural leaders



STRATEGY

- Use stories and information to identify issues
- Understand power and tactics for shifting it through people taking action together
- Analyse information and agree tactics, targets and allies
- Address root causes of concerns whilst tackling immediate symptoms



ACTION

- Facilitate local, regional and national collective action on the issues that matter most to people
 - DIY Action
 - Campaigns
- Bring together and use resources
- Engage with power-holders



CHANGE

- Fight for sustainable change for good
- Strengthen democracy – government by people
 -
- Bring together and use resources
- Engage with power-holders



POWER

- Support everyone's ability to act
- Work together to shift and share power
- Build collective power to effect change, overcome social injustice and build community



PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE



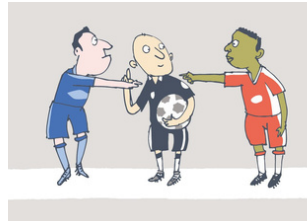
Help people to develop their collective power to act together for the common good of the whole community.



Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.



Build on what already exists if that is what the community needs and wants, and co-operate with others.



Manage conflict constructively and non-violently.



Put the wellbeing, development and progress of people first.



Remain Politically neutral.



Take responsibility for maintaining the quality and ethos of community organising.



Do not put yourself or others in danger.



Work for a just society



Do not promise what you cannot deliver.



Demonstrate honesty and integrity and uphold public trust and confidence.



Use the community's starting point as your own, and move at their pace according to need.



Demonstrate respect for diversity and promote equality.



Scan me to download the full principles of practice poster

THE ROLE OF A COMMUNITY ORGANISER

What does a community organiser do?

A community organiser works with people to build their collective power to effect change. They do this by reaching out, listening and connecting people together to identify common interests and define problems or issues.

Depending on the community organising approach that is taken the entry point to the community can differ (e.g. if the organising is place-based, in a workplace, with a community of interest or with faith based institutions). However, the initial focus is always on holding 1:1 meetings with people (listening conversations) to develop relationships and build trust. Through this process of reaching out, listening and connecting with people, the community organiser identifies individuals (often those with the least power who find themselves on the margins and excluded from services and support), and enables them to develop their leadership skills so that they can work with others to act on the issues that matter most to them.

The action that a community organiser supports can vary. The action may be DIY projects such as community clean-ups or taking over a building, or they may be about campaigning for change, such as saving a bus route or fighting against loan sharks. Some people will want to take action on national issues that require political, economic and/or legislative changes, for example the #OperationWifi campaign that targeted data poverty.

Why employ a community organiser?

Community organisers play a crucial role in developing and revitalising networks and communities, and strengthening the democratic nature of organisations. Listening campaigns, led by a community organiser, renew relationships and develop deeper insights into the people the community organiser is working with. By developing deeper relationships with people, the community organiser uncovers potential leaders who can both catalyse new community activity and take the burden off the organisation to meet all of the community's needs. It can also help refresh the governance of an organisation by bringing new people.



Impact of a community organiser

Over the last 10 years, we have seen the direct impact of the work of a community organiser. The Ipsos Mori and New Economics Foundation evaluation of the Community Organisers Programme (2011 – 2015) highlighted the impact of having a dedicated community organiser in a community.

“[The organiser] engaged a huge range of people. This included individuals who were isolated or lacked confidence about getting involved ... those who were already leaders in their community; people who were passionate about a particular issue; and those who were interested in seeing broad community change in their area”

Ipsos Mori & NEF, Evaluation of the CO Programme – 2015



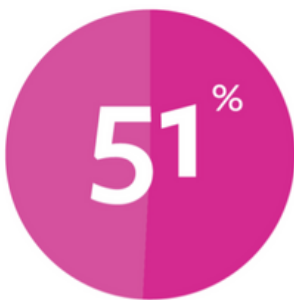
We know that where community organisers are at work, people feel a stronger sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods, they feel more valued, and they become more likely to team up and improve their area

CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY
Cabinet Office, (p37, August 2018)

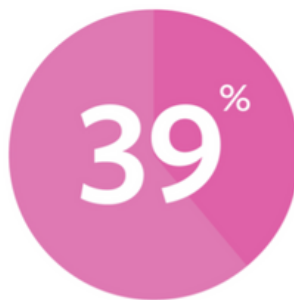
In addition to this, data from the Community Life Survey 2014, shows that where a community organiser is active, people are more likely to pull together to improve their neighbourhood and have a greater sense of belonging. It also highlighted that people living in those areas were more inclined to take action to influence decisions on issues. For example:

- 44% of people were likely to organise a paper petition compared to 37%
- 9% would organise a group, compared to 4%
- 14% would contact local media or journalists compared to 8%

Agree that local people pull together to improve the neighbourhood



Community organiser areas

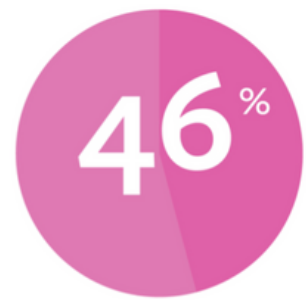


Comparable non-community organiser areas

Agree that they have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood



Community organiser areas



Comparable non-community organiser areas

RECRUITMENT

Community organising is not new, but the widening interest from organisations in community organising has meant that the recruitment of people as a community organiser has increased significantly since 2010.

Choosing the right candidate for the role is crucial, but equally important is attracting candidates from the outset. From the initial drafting of the job description through to face to face interviews and assessment centres, it is crucial that a thorough process is followed to ensure that you can attract a diverse set of candidates, and so that you can get the best possible insight into their personality, competency and experience.

The template job descriptions below are taken from different approaches to community organising. This and the competency framework, aim to serve as a guide to support organisations (who are new to both employing a community organiser and to community organising), with the recruitment process.

Insider -v- Outsider

Often one of the biggest debates in the recruitment of a community organiser is whether or not the community organiser should be 'from within' the community or 'from the outside'. There is no right or wrong answer or preferable point of view to this challenge. However, what is paramount, is that the person recruited in to the role has the requisite skills and qualities.

In considering the 'insider -v- outsider debate' it is useful to consider such aspects as:

1. How will the community organiser negotiate and set boundaries around distinct roles and responsibilities? If they are from within the community they may more easily fall into leading projects rather than developing the leadership capacity of others. In addition it may be harder for them to differentiate personal and professional boundaries.
2. Those with knowledge and understanding from 'within' have existing relationships, networks and experience from which the community organising work can be built. However, those from the outside may bring new insight and ability to build relationships beyond existing networks. Also, they may not carry preconceived beliefs or assumptions that somebody from the inside may hold from their existing experience.
3. Individuals who are recruited from within the 'lived experience' of a specific community may be perceived as having certain advantages such as that of authenticity and legitimacy and consequently able to build trust more easily. However, despite the obvious advantages that a community organiser from the inside may bring, an outside organiser can build that legitimacy as effectively through demonstrating their core skills and ability to build trust.

In summary, whether a community organiser is recruited from within a community, or from the outside, it is crucial they are able to fulfil effectively the core competencies so they can build the community organising capacity of individuals from within the community.

Example job descriptions

Place Based Organising - Rotherham Federation

About Rotherfed

Rotherfed supports communities to grow and develop, working with them to build their sense of belonging, community pride and spirit. We work with and through grass root community groups that are committed to bringing communities together, giving all communities a voice and creating local solutions to local issues.

Main Purpose of the Job

- To support Rotherham communities to grow and develop, working with them to building their sense of belonging, community pride and spirit.
- To listen to local people, to support people to develop power to act together for the common good and help people take action on the local issues that are important to them

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To enable community organising, increased community activity and engagement both locally within communities and with Rotherham Federation through one-to-one listening, building networks and fostering leadership and resident-led action.
2. To support the empowerment of under-represented groups within local communities, enhancing community cohesion and collaborative working
3. To support community groups to develop, enabling project development and training opportunities in local communities
4. To increase community influence in decision making within Rotherham supporting individuals and groups to identify community issues, needs and problems and help resolve them



Issue Based Organising - The Climate Coalition

About the Climate Coalition

The Climate Coalition is the UK's biggest group of people dedicated to action on climate change with a combined supporter base of more than 22 million people. We encompass over 100 organisations spanning nature, environment, international development, faith, community and women's groups – from the National Trust to the NUS, WWF to the Women's Institute, the RSPB to Islamic Relief. We bring people from all walks of life together to use their voices to ask decision-makers to take urgent action to tackle climate change and protect what we love from its worst impacts.

About the role

1. Overall purpose of the job: using and adapting TCC campaign moments (Great Big Green Week, COP26) as hooks to engage people:
2. To help strengthen the climate movement by supporting local campaigners to build effective, visible and representative local networks
3. To help broaden the climate movement by bringing new organisations and individuals into local climate campaigning, particularly in strategic areas
4. Alongside the TCC Secretariat, help to identify and develop grassroots climate leaders, amplifying their work at the local, regional and national level, and identifying opportunities for their personal growth
5. Broaden and expand the TCC network of community climate campaigners

Overarching Job Description

1. Lead on community mobilising and organising around key campaign moments (Great Big Green Week, COP26)
2. Work with TCC member organisations and their regional staff and volunteers to turbocharge local mobilising and organising around key campaign moments
3. Coordinating, supporting and recruiting volunteers in key areas
4. Research and build relationships with trusted organisations, channels and voices in target constituencies
5. Support local organisers to be effective climate campaigners in their local areas. You will do this by developing effective working relationships and communicating regularly using phone, e-mail, online and other communications tools, and occasional face to face meetings dependent upon the public health context.
6. Support local activists to organise local community events and mobilisations as part of national TCC campaigns, and to build networks that last beyond this year
7. In consultation with the TCC Secretariat and local network members, support and develop influencing strategies for priority MPs, and support local networks to deliver them.
8. Be responsible for administration relating to the programme, maintaining efficient records and generally be self-servicing.

Community or Tenants Unions - ACORN

About ACORN

ACORN is a mass membership organisation: a vehicle for collective action. By taking action on issues, we build the hopes, expectations and experience of our members and the communities they come from.

Our organising is premised on two simple truths: problems affecting working class communities—from unhealthy, unaffordable and insecure housing, to cuts to public services—stem from a lack of power, and; the most effective means of building power is for people to get organised.

About the job

1. As a community organiser with ACORN, you will be responsible for recruiting, supporting and working with members to take action on issues affecting them and the communities they come from.
2. ACORN is a union in the community. Like any union our members pay membership dues so that they can have a sustainable independent organisation to fight for their interests.
3. You will be the organiser for ACORN in Liverpool. Your daily work will involve:
4. Recruiting individual ACORN Members through door-knocking, social media and other means (door-knocking takes up around 50% of our organisers' time),
5. Managing organising drives to build new and maintain existing ACORN branches, groups, and teams,
6. Identifying issues of common concern at the neighbourhood and wider level,
7. Identifying and supporting potential leaders to enable them to take on leadership roles in the organisation, and
8. Supporting elected leaders to enable them to carry out their roles



Broad Based Organising - TELCO, CitizensUK

About TELCO

TELCO (The East London Citizens Organisation) is Citizens UK's Founding Chapter. We are over 90 organisations across six east London boroughs. We have a proud history of pioneering and winning social justice campaigns over the last 20 years, including the Living Wage Campaign, Community Land Trust, Good Jobs, and Refugees Welcome. We have an exciting future as we continue to fight for social justice in east London.

Main Purpose

To build, support and develop CITIZENS UK as a broad-based community organisation of diverse mediating institutions and trained leaders capable of acting together in the public arena for the common good.

Main Duties

1. To recruit and expand the institutional membership of CITIZENS and broaden the geographical base, working in Hackney.
2. To undertake between fifteen and twenty-one to one meetings a week and build a network of power relations which give energy, accountability and succour to CITIZENS.
3. To provide leadership training for new and existing member groups and their leaders.
4. To assist CITIZENS leadership teams with actions and campaigns and to develop their skills and capacity as effective institutions.
5. To organise public assemblies and actions as and when necessary.
6. To organise and lead regular Retreats and training sessions for CITIZENS UK and the CITIZENS Network.
7. To raise the income (local dues and foundations) needed for CITIZENS and manage and extend the overall budget of the organisation.
8. To manage or mentor staff, volunteers, interns, and leaders, where appropriate





PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Community organising requires individuals to have a wide range of skills and competencies. Whilst skills can be developed, it is important to be able to assess an individual's starting point.

In their daily work a community organiser can be:

- working with people who find themselves on the margins of society and therefore need to be able to listen and build trust
- engaging with people in positions of power and need to be able to effectively establish strategic relationships, and,
- speaking with groups to inspire and mobilise action and therefore need to be a confident communicator.

The Performance Management Framework, which we have developed and refined, sets out the Core Competencies of a community organiser and how they can be assessed throughout the recruitment process.

Core competencies

- Maturity and emotional intelligence
- Resilience/robustness
- Cultural competence
- Relationship building
- Strategic behaviour
- Self Awareness and Reflective Practice
- Organisational skills
- Communication skills
- Enterprising mindset
- Quantitative outputs

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The scoring system

- 5 Excellent – really understands and shows real skill
- 4 Good – understands and shows potential to do well
- 3 Average – gets it and should make targets
- 2 Cause for concern will need support to achieve targets
- 1 Not suitable

Core competencies

- Maturity and emotional intelligence
- Resilience/robustness
- Cultural competence
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- Strategic behaviour
- Self Awareness and Reflective Practice
- Organisational skills
- Communication skills
- Enterprising mindset
- Quantitative outputs

Competency	Characteristics	Overview	Linked to	If not strong here...
1. Maturity and emotional intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. effective questioning skills b. quality of judgement and decision making c. levels of defensiveness d. overall professional attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can seek out ‘win – win’ situations and where this isn’t possible able to find constructive alternatives • Able to ask good questions that can achieve further clarity and depth in conversation • Can make reasoned judgements based on available information and is willing to take difficult decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection and action • Relationship building • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May find self-management difficult and unable to control emotions including anger and disappointment • Likely to need support and coaxing to find and execute constructive solutions.

Competency	Characteristics	Overview	Linked to	If not strong here...
<p>2. Resilience / robustness</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. handling uncertainty 2. dealing with setbacks 3. balance of consultation/ independence 4. persistence and tenacity 5. self-starting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is consistently able to deal with the ebbs and flows of daily activities of a Community Organiser without losing heart (eg door slamming, negativity, getting wet through, house meeting no shows, handling challenging conversations) • Self-reliant when sorting problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetwise • Strategic behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be disheartened quickly and lack ability to maintain commitment • Can overly rely on others in difficult or challenges situations
<p>3. Cultural competence</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. having shrewd awareness, experience and resourcefulness 2. versatility 3. flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will have a broad range of experiences and is comfortable in meeting people in many contexts across a broad range of socio-economic profiles • Not overawed by situations. • Able to think on their feet. Likes a challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience/robustness • Strategic behaviour • Enterprising mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to come across as naïve. • Frequently fazed by situations • Often asks context questions • Very unsure of own self and presence, boundaries and application of programme values
<p>4. Relationship building</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. empathic 2. relate and walk with people of all backgrounds and experience 3. build trust 4. establish boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to use their listening skills effectively to inspire, influence, and connect to others and manage conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maturity and EI • Reflection and action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is unable to progress activities with others • Doesn't trust people

Competency	Characteristics	Overview	Linked to	If not strong here...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. challenge constructively, 6.. listening skills 7. team working 8. empowering approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of power dynamics within relationships and can empower others in the relationship building process • Is able to build positive relationships with others and create commitment to shared goals 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veers towards ‘doing for’ people • Unable to show empathy
5. Strategic behaviour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ability to place community organising principles and practice in a context 2. managing local power structures 3. understanding and dealing with competing agendas 4. understanding of community action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to see a bigger picture or interdependent system and is politically aware. • Understands and can deal with power from inside the system. • Able to work towards mutual and or negotiated solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetwise • Enterprising mindset • Resilience/robustness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be confused by competing agendas and unable to identify solutions. • Can demonstrate poor judgement when forming alliances i.e. tendency to go with the loudest voices • Never considers own power impacts.
6. Self-Awareness and Reflective Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understanding of self and one’s impact 2. evidence of reflection-action-reflection, 3. balancing objective & subjective considerations 4. has a learning focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable strong self-awareness – takes responsibility for self. • Able to show, in practice, the action/reflection cycle and committed to ongoing learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maturity and EI • Relationship building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks self awareness and the impact that their behaviour can have on others • Can’t act/reflect in the moment

Competency	Characteristics	Overview	Linked to	If not strong here...
<p>7. Organisational skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handling paperwork 2. Information Technology 3. Adhering to systems and process 4. Managing learning and development 5. Meeting deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to recognise value of both objectivity and subjectivity • Able to act in the moment with humility and strength of character • Can complete work to deadlines • Can manage a varied workload often with competing deadlines • Requisite IT skills are present and improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favours either facts/logic or emotion/feeling – no balance. • Constantly must be chased for paperwork. • Doesn't understand or respect the systems/processes. • Does not have an efficient or effective means to manage filing and documentation
<p>8. Communication skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening skills 2. Engage in dialogue 3. Articulate 4. Positive and engaging 5. Friendly and open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good with language – and able to positively communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and situations • Can keep a conversation going. • Shows genuine interest and connection with others. • Comfortable with silence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building • Maturity and EI • Reflection: action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can struggle to get sustained and in-depth one to one conversations with people • Finds it hard to express him/herself well. • Closed body language. • Talks over others and cannot judge when to speak and when to say silent

Competency	Characteristics	Overview	Linked to	If not strong here...
<p>9. Enterprising mindset</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creativity and imagination 2. Ambition/aspiration 3. Energy 4. Passion and enthusiasm 5. Problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has clear and articulate aspirations for community/organising principles and practice and the future. • Shows passion for others and for the process. • Always believes there is a solution and good at facilitating solutions. • Shows imagination and creativity in thinking and doing and can inspire and motivate action in others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetwise • Strategic behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not have, and cannot co-create, a vision for the future • Can often see the problem but cannot find ways to get to the 'solution'. • Struggles to animate/inspire others to do things.
<p>10. Meeting the numbers challenge (Quantitative outputs, no of:)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listenings 2. Volunteers / Leaders 3. Actions 4. House/ Group meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to meet required numbers of 1:1 listening conversations • Is confident in building leadership in others and can inspire them to take action • Can bring leaders together to form new teams and associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low output in terms of listening conversations and identifying leaders • Doesn't seem to report many 'successes'. • Has difficulty in building teams of people who can act on issues

CASE STUDY - GRAPEVINE



Grapevine was set up in 1994 as a project of Coventry and Warwickshire Co-operative Development Agency. It became a charity in 2004 helping people who experience isolation, poverty, and disadvantage to tackle issues for themselves and others around them. We currently employ 12 community organisers. To date we have only employed one person who had community organising experience prior to joining us, it has therefore been important to explore and develop training and coaching and have the right structures in place. This is still work in progress.

As part of our induction process all our CO's complete the Act Build Change online training programme and have access to coaching and a dedicated monthly meeting where we share updates, skills, and resources. We are currently co-producing new content for these sessions that includes aspects of training and the opportunity to bring issues forward and receive support and solutions from the wider organising team.

We value opportunities for regular touchpoints between the CO's and have created a biweekly Monday morning catch up, dedicated reflection time, shadowing of 1:1's and support with actions across pieces of work. This allows us to understand each other's work and to learn from one another.

We have explored different recruitment processes including assessment days and preselection Q&A sessions. The latter worked well, affording potential applicants the chance to understand the work in more depth and ask questions prior to applying.

For those that are invited to interview, we send out the questions and set task in advance to ensure a level playing field. They are also given a specific scenario to respond and are asked to create a 3-month plan for who they plan to listen to and how they will carry out listening activity. We also ask them what they think Community

Organising is and how they think it benefits local people.

We recently trialled paying a potential candidate to shadow a listening activity, so we can observe them on the job, and they can get a feel for what the role is like on the ground. Both the interview process and the shadowing has helped us to understand whether the person is right for the job and essentially if they have the ability to grow and nurture local leadership.

Mel Smith (Deputy Chief Executive)



THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Getting the right candidate is a crucial part of any recruitment process. It is no different with finding the right person to work as a community organiser. The following pages set out some advice and guidance on the questions you may want to ask and the activities that you might want people to take part in so that you can assess them against the Performance Management Framework .

Example Questions

Sample questions, which you may ask during the job interview:

Personal skills and qualities:

- What is your greatest strength?
- What are your areas for improvement or development?
- What inspires or motivates you?
- What is the most challenging experience you have had? How did you deal with it?
- What did you achieve recently that you are proud of?

Understanding of community organising:

- What do you know about community organising?
- What do you think is the purpose of community organising?
- Why are you interested in working as a community organiser?
- What could be the most difficult aspect for you when you think about working with communities as a Community Organiser?
- What does community action mean to you?
- Do you have experience of working with groups, in particular with marginalised groups or under represented groups?
- Imagine that you came into conflict with one of the members of the group you work with. What steps would you take to resolve this situation?





Assessment Centre Exercises

As part of any recruitment it is often useful to see people take part in a variety of activities. Below are just a couple of different activities that could be used to test out a person's communication and team work skills.

Elevator Exercise - 1:1

Purpose

The elevator exercise tests a person's communication skills including public speaking and the ability to communicate information in a concise and clear manner. It also assesses their ability to work under pressure.

Instructions

You have applied for a jobs as a community organiser and you have to attend an assessment centre. On your way into the building you get into a lift and find yourself alone with one of the interviewing team. Desperate to be considered for the role you decide to impress the person with your knowledge of the 'Iron Rule' of community organising – i.e. Do not do for others what they can do for themselves. You are only travelling a few floors and therefore you have about 1 minute to deliver your message.

You have 20 mins to prepare what you would say, you then have 1 minute to deliver it

Role Play - Listening conversation with a resident

Purpose

To assess the candidates ability to build a relationship with someone who they have not met before through listening. It also assesses their ability to act and reflect in the moment and how they can demonstrate both empathy and respect.

Instructions

You have just been introduced to a local resident through one of the members of your staff at your organisation. You have 10 minutes to engage them in a conversation about their area. In the conversation you need to find out what life is like for them living in the area and what their vision is for the future.

Can eggs fly? - Group exercise

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to assess the candidates ability to work in a team, how they interact with others to build an effective working environment and the role that they take. It also assesses their negotiation skills and ability to manage conflict

Instructions

Each team must design and build a structure that will prevent their egg from breaking when dropped from a height of 10 feet onto a solid floor (do not give any guidance as to the style of design, if questioned simply restate the objective). Each team must use only the listed materials below to construct their structure.

On the A4 paper, they must also develop and deliver a presentation which outlines the strategy that the group used to complete the task. After the presentation each team will place the A4 paper into the structure and demonstrate just how well their structure works by dropping it.

Teams must choose a leader, a construction team and a presentation team.

Team Materials

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 1 sheets of A4 paper | 4. 1 metre of string | 7. 1 small kitchen bin bag |
| 2. 35 straws | 5. 10 rubber bands | 8. 1 metre of masking tape |
| 3. 1 metre of duct tape | 6. 1 zip sandwich bag | 9. 2 raw eggs |

Additional materials

1. A step ladder which will allow launching from 10 feet.
2. Plastic sheeting to cover the landing area
 - Each team has 30 mins to construct their structure and prepare their presentation.

Launching

- Designated launchers will take up their position on or steadying the ladder whilst the rest of the team gather near the landing area.
- Presenters will give their presentation then put the A4 paper in the structure.
- Launchers will then launch (drop) the structure
- Each vehicle is opened after landing to see if they are still intact.
- If more than one egg survives the winner will be the structure that uses the least straws and has two eggs intact.
- Any team who breaks both eggs before launching will be disqualified from the launch but will still have to give their presentation.

Reflection

Each team will be asked to consider the following questions:

1. What kind of feelings did you have during the experience?
2. What helped or hindered during the task?
3. How did you choose your leader and was it useful to have a leader?
4. How well did you work together as a team?
5. How does this activity and the learning relate to everyday life in communities.

CASE STUDY - ACORN



ACORN is a community union which started in 2014 in Bristol to give marginalised communities control over things which are important to them. In 2018, we had 1,000 members in 5 places, and we now have 6,500 members in 25 places. This growth has enabled us to have greater impact both locally and nationally, and the work of our community organisers has been key to that.

We have 35 staff and 25 of those are organisers who undertake a range of activities such as, door knocking, outreach to groups, 1-to-1 coaching and organising drives in specific areas.

We have three types of Organisers; Field organisers - who build local groups and campaigns in specific areas, Member defence / case support organisers - who build case support teams taking action on housing issues, and Remote organisers - who support groups that don't yet have their own dedicated member of staff.

We recruit them in several ways; job adverts on local voluntary and community sector job sites, emailing our local and national members, contact with local community groups in the relevant areas (particularly those working with women and/or marginalised ethnicities) and we hold a "Work For ACORN" call close to the application deadline.

We find a significant barrier to people applying is not seeing themselves doing the role, so we hold these calls to ensure people understand the support available and what it entails. We also hold a mapping session with local organisers to identify members and community leaders who would be suitable and arrange 1:1s.

Once Organisers are in post there is a range of support in place for them, beginning with a full week of intensive community organising training. This focuses on the theory and practice of how to be a community organiser. They also have 1-2

hours additional skills training per fortnight in the first 3 months and 30-40-minute supervisions every week, which can later move to fortnightly.

For all staff, there is a package of training and peer support, with more experienced Organisers training newer Organisers, to develop different skills in both groups. There are also 1-2 development days each quarter, 30-minute outreach practice and troubleshooting sessions each week and a monthly 1-hour meeting with their immediate team. Organisers also have training in how to conduct outreach with people who speak English as a second language, a workplan developed once per quarter, a residential once per year, 6-monthly Organiser reflection meetings and an annual appraisal.

We believe to truly understand and be able to support and manage a team of Organisers you should have experience in being an Organiser, as organising is complex, difficult work that has multiple highs and lows and takes time and patience. It is vital you and your organisation understand that and have a strategy for the long term so you can support their development, build their resilience, and give them time to reflect. You will then have Organisers who are key to their communities, who build collective power and shape what happens next.

Tom Scott (Head of Fundraising)

ACORN

TRAINING

Community organising is a craft, learned through ongoing training, mentoring and practice. The work of a community organiser is continually evolving, having to adapt to the context in which the organiser is working so their ongoing development is key.

To ensure the continuing personal and professional development of a community organiser they must engage in formal learning to develop their practice of community organising. They must also receive mentoring from more experienced organisers, and of course, engage in the practice of organising by doing it themselves.

This process of learning through ongoing action and reflection is what develops and sustains the practice of skilled organisers. Community organisers can learn through training inputs, then initiate action, and then spend time with experienced organisers to reflect on the impact of their action. This cycle of ongoing action and reflection is what is needed to continue to develop the relationships and build the network.



Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

ARISTOTLE

Training providers

There are an increasing number of formal and informal training providers who provide training in community organising. The below list is not an exhaustive or definitive list but should serve as a helpful starter when thinking about where you can find training for community organisers.



Training Provider	Title of Course/Learning Programme	Curriculum Content / Learning Outcomes/ Course Description	Duration	Where to find more info
Act Build Change	Essential Community Organising	Online Course enable people to learn the basics of community organising to build powerful teams, develop leadership and win on the issues that matter to us	Online and self directed	https://actbuildchange.com/training/abc101/
Citizens UK	Learning Thursdays	Learning Thursdays are free, online, weekly training sessions taking place every week. Previous topics have included Race, Privilege and Power; an Introduction to Community Organising; Leadership; Accountability Assemblies...and more!	4pm - 5:15pm every Thursday	https://www.citizensuk.org/leadership-training/
	3-day Community Leadership Training (Online) - Accredited by Newman University, Birmingham	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An Introduction to Community Organising 2. The Five Steps to Social Change Both courses also include a 50-hour practical placement in your community, which will be guided by your Community Organiser	Each course is 3 days followed by 25 hours of workshops	https://www.citizensuk.org/leadership-training/
	Community Leadership Training (Residential) - Accredited by Newman University, Birmingham	National community leadership training is a six-day immersion in Community Organising theory and skills, with a particular emphasis on building the method into the culture of your organisation through institutional development After the six-day residential course there is a 50-hour practical placement in your community, supported by your local Community Organiser.	6 days	https://www.citizensuk.org/leadership-training/

Training Provider	Title of Course/Learning Programme	Curriculum Content / Learning Outcomes/ Course Description	Duration	Where to find more info
Community Organisers	Bitesize Series	A series of four short webinar sessions looking at what is community organising.	4 x 45 minutes Online	https://www.corganisers.org.uk/training/
	Framework Focus	A series of 9 courses exploring the Community Organising Framework	Online and self-directed	
	Introduction to Community Organising	This course is a starting point for anybody who is interested in community organising. It will help you begin to understand what community organising involves and what it looks like in the real world	6 hours Online or in person	
	Listening Skills for Community Organising	This course covers how to develop the listening skills required to lead listening campaigns in the community. Participants will gain practical tools to engage people, build relationships and find leaders through relational conversations.	7 hours Online or in person	
	Building Power through Community Organising	On this course you will explore and develop your understanding of power, which is what drives community organising,	7 hours Online or in person	
	Action for Change through Community Organising	This course will explore how you can make change for good through collective action. You will explore different strategies and approaches on how to facilitate and lead action	7.5 hours Online or in person	

Training Provider	Title of Course/Learning Programme	Curriculum Content / Learning Outcomes/ Course Description	Duration	Where to find more info
Community Organisers	Award in Community Organising (L2/L3) - Nationally recognised qualification	<p>This course is for people who want to advance their knowledge and understanding of community organising by providing deeper insight into the theories that underpin the core principles of listening, power and action to improve their practice</p>	12 x 3 hour sessions plus assignments and self-directed study	https://www.organisers.org.uk/training/
Leading Change Network	Orientation to Organizing	<p>Online course exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introductory overview and basic understanding of the six practices of community organizing using a real example; • The opportunity to learn and connect with other organizers and leaders from around the world; • An introduction to the Leading Change Network and our programs 	3 hours - online	https://leadingchangenetwork.org/events/
New Economy Organisers Network	Transformative Organising	<p>Transformative organising seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transform the conditions we live in • Transform who has power in society, long term • Transform ourselves and our capacity <p>Transformative organising is a long term, sustainable approach to organising. This training will outline all the key tools in a Transformative Organiser's toolbox and what it means to do them well.</p>	6 days over 2 parts	https://neweconomyorganisers.org/training/transformativ-organising

Training Provider	Title of Course/Learning Programme	Curriculum Content / Learning Outcomes/ Course Description	Duration	Where to find more info
TCC (Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru/ Together Creating Communities)	Introduction to Community Organising	This introductory training covers the essential principles and values of community organising, touching on: power, public/private, self-interest, relationships, issues/problems, taking action	24 hours (overnight)	https://www.tcc-wales.org.uk/training
TCC	Residential Training	<p>The intensive training goes deeper into all of the topics covered in learning sessions and the half-day intro to community organizing.</p> <p>Sessions are interactive and cover the key principles, values and skills of community organising, including: relational meetings, building power, working with decision makers, and developing public relationships. We also touch upon strategic non-violence, and how this can work with other methods of agitating for social change.</p>	4 hours	

CASE STUDY - HIGH TREES



High Trees is a well-regarded and trusted community organisation and charity based in Tulse Hill, in the London Borough of Lambeth. Our work focuses on delivering a range of integrated services to connect people and communities to strengthen their skills and build stronger voices.

We have employed Community Organisers since 2013 to support residents to act on issues important to them. These community organisers predominantly work in Tulse Hill where they reach out, go to where local people are, and listen to them. Through listening they identify local leaders and support and train them in community organising to help build groups of local people to take action on issues they care about.

Community organising is embedded within the Senior leadership of High Trees who are wholly committed to using this approach long term and the values and principles, which underpin all community action projects that we deliver.

Community organising moves at the speed of trust, which often takes time to build, therefore it is paramount that any organisation wishing to recruit community organisers are committed to using this approach over the long term. As an organisation you need to have a clear understanding of how community organising helps the organisation to meet its objectives long term as well as enough structure around the community organisers to support, capture and scale the work that they do.

Our community organisers are led by our Head of Community Action who has 10 Years of experience working in in Tulse Hill and are supported to develop their practice and ability to provide ongoing training, support and mentoring in community organising to our staff and residents. This ensures that community

organising practice is held by several staff within the Organisation building resilience around the approach, enabling the practice to continue even if a member of the Community Action team leaves the organisation. Our decade of experience of the practice of community organising has also allowed us to develop training and tools to help other organisations on their community organising journeys.

Graham Weston
(Head of Community Action)





SUPERVISION, MENTORING AND PEER SUPPORT



Learning is a process where knowledge is presented to us, then shaped through understanding, discussion, and reflection.

PAULO FREIRE

For a community organiser to be successful, they require ongoing support, learning and development to help them reflect on their role, overcome obstacles and continue developing their knowledge. We recommend this should include formal supervision, mentoring from a more experienced organiser and peer support

There also needs for commitment from the employer at all levels, both in implementing community organising as an organisation, and in ongoing personal and professional development of staff. Therefore, senior level staff and Board members should also continue to develop their own knowledge and understanding of the practice and principles of community organising.

Supervision, Mentoring and Peer Support

Support for community organisers should focus on their personal and professional development whilst ensuring that their practice leads to both individual and collective impact. The table below illustrates the differences between formal supervision, mentoring and peer support. We would strongly advise that a community organiser has access to all three forms of support.

	Supervision	Mentoring	Peer Support
Goal	Performance Management	Practice Development	Personal Support and Team Building
Who leads it	Line Manager	Experienced community organiser	Fellow community organisers
Required CO experience of leader	None	Higher	Equivalent
Method	Review of progress against targets	Conversations and questions with mentor	Group reflection and discussion of learning
Recommended frequency	Monthly	Quarterly or Monthly	Weekly

Supervision

Effective supervision of a community organiser requires the community organiser and the supervisor to have a clear understanding of the expected outcomes, outputs and milestones. These can then be reported against in Supervision meetings (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and should consist of:

- 1:1s – How many 1:1s has the community organiser held? What are the key themes and outcomes that are emerging from these listening conversations? How many potential leaders has the community organiser identified?
- Meetings – Which organisations and individuals is the community organiser meeting with and for what purpose? It would also be useful to understand what the outcome of the meeting was and any follow up or next steps.
- Actions – what actions are emerging? Are any campaigns or projects being initiated? What resources or support might the community organiser need?
- Objectives – how is the work progressing against the agreed objectives? Are the activities leading to new objectives or priorities? How are we doing against the project plan and any targets from funders?

As well as having a clear understanding of how the work of the community organiser is progressing, it is also important for the supervisor to consider the training and development needs of the community organiser. This is so an effective training and development plan can be established. One way to assess the training and development needs could be through an assessment of the community organiser's ability against their key activities (as set out in the table below).

The Activities table can be used to assess a community organiser's skill level in various aspects of their role. In areas where the community organiser is demonstrating both high levels of both skill and competency, the Supervisor should look to utilise these strengths to support the development of other organisers. Conversely, where a community organiser is showing areas for development, the supervisor should be able to support by creating a development and training plan to improve their practice.

	Low Confidence ←————→ High Confidence				
Activities	1	2	3	4	5
Ease in building 1:1 relationships					
Time Management					
Understanding of and working with group dynamics					
Facilitating groups					
Conflict resolution and management					
Moving people to action					
Providing training					
Engaging with power holders					
Providing feedback and reflection					
Developing leadership in others					
Self-reflection					

Mentoring

Mentoring of community organisers requires somebody with greater experience, knowledge and understanding of community organising acquired through greater time in the field. A good mentoring conversation should be 1:1 and the conversation led by the Mentee, with them given enough time and space to reflect on their organising practice.

A mentoring conversation should aim to provide less experienced organisers with:

- guidance and encouragement from a more experienced community organiser and opportunity to ask questions
- insight into effective listening conversations and a chance to reflect on how to handle challenging conversations
- a way to work with community leaders to identify and prioritise issues as well as create solutions
- strategies to build organisation and how to ensure leaders, volunteers and the wider membership maintain both engagement and activity

- tools to build the capacity of members of the network including training, mentoring and practice based support
- stories of successes through community organising and shared learning of how setbacks can be overcome

Mentoring conversations should happen fairly frequently. However, the pace and rhythm of meetings should be dictated by the needs and demands of the Mentees and the availability of the Mentor. To ensure that there is clear distinction between supervision and mentoring, it is important that the personal information and challenges shared by the Mentee are not disclosed outside of the conversation.

Peer Support

One other important aspect in supporting the personal and professional development of the work of the community organiser is through formal and informal networks and reflective practice.

Community organisers need a space to be able to reflect and learn from their peers. If there are other community organisers employed by the organisation, they should hold be a regular team meeting to reflect together, share stories and deepen their practice. Employers should ensure they have dedicated time for this in their working week.

Peer support can also be achieved through professional and organised networks of community organisers and other community practitioners including the Community Practitioners Network (CPN), led by Community Organisers, and through European wide networks such as the European Community Organisers Networking (ECON).

By accessing these and other networks, community organiser should be able to reflect with peers working in different contexts and for different organisations. This creates opportunities for new learning and development whilst ensuring the organiser keeps a broader focus on where similar issues are arising in other areas.



CASE STUDY - STARTING POINT



Starting Point Community Learning Partnership is based in Stockport Manchester and has been involved in community organising for over 10 years. As a small organisation, when we first got involved with community organising the majority of the staff team were involved with both developing our understanding of and implementing the process of community organising within the organisation.

The commitment to understanding how to apply the principles and practice of community organising within the organisation meant that it gave us a strong foundation from which we were able to build. As the organisation has grown we have kept true to the community organising framework, have trained all of our staff in community organising and we have two community organisers who are doing direct organising work. Our two community organisers were recruited directly through the relationships built up whilst working on the local estate which has given us a crucial bridge in to the community.

Unlike other roles, which have defined activities and outcomes, the role of a Community Organiser is more fluid. As an organisation we do have set targets around number of people listened to and our Organisers are measured against this. To ensure that we can support them in their role we have non-managerial sessions with them both 1-to-1 and in groups to help them reflect on their practice. We also ask our Community Organisers to create a reflective diary which they bring to the 1:1 sessions we have with them.

When Community Organisers join us we offer all our Community Organisers training, and it is mandatory that they undertake the “Award for Community Organising” as well as sessions on “What Community Organising” is. They also are required to undertake training in safeguarding and GDPR. It is an expectation that they join the

Community Practitioner’s Network, run by Community Organisers, that supports our Organiser’s ongoing personal and professional development.

If we were to give advice to others about what it takes to employ a Community Organiser then we would advise people to remember that this role is about trust, and it is paramount that the Organiser can connect with others and engage with people. Organisationally, we can train people in the process of organising, but you cannot train them to be personable and this is a key skill you need to look for when recruiting an Organiser. It is a messy job and one where you set your own workload based on who and how many people you need to listen to. This isn’t easy to manage and track and therefore there needs to be the right support and management put in place around them to ensure that progress can be effectively monitored and the Community Organiser feels fully supported

*Nicola Wallace Dean
(Chief Operating Officer)*



COMMUNITY PRACTITIONERS' NETWORK

The Community Practitioners' Network (CPN) brings together community practitioners from across the UK. It provides an informal space where people come together, reflect and listen to each other's experiences. It also provides expert input and guidance through guest lectures and webinars as well as informal networking opportunities and wider issue based discussion groups.

KEY INFORMATION

What do I get ?

- Peer Learning Circles (Monthly)
- Issue Based Discussion Groups
- Guest Lectures (Every 2 months)
- Expert Webinars (Monthly)
- Networking Sessions (Monthly)

Click below or scan the QR code to find out more about the CPN
www.corganisers.org.uk/cpn



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