



USING TEXTING FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HOW TO USE TEXTING TO BOLSTER A CAMPAIGN OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING EFFORT

Texting and messaging apps are fantastic campaign tools that enable you to have a real-time, two-way dialogue with supporters and move them to action. Because texting is such a common form of communication in our world, communicating with supporters in the same way they communicate with friends and family members can help build trust, put a human “face” to your organization, encourage interaction and move people to act. **Leverage text messaging applications as an engagement and relationship-building tool.**

Note of caution: The California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) funded organizations are not permitted to engage in lobbying. Make sure your texting efforts do not include language that is, or could be, perceived as lobbying. Your organization may have IT restrictions against using personal cell phones for business purposes that make implementing a texting program more difficult. You may consider engaging your coalition members to drive this aspect of your campaign if texting is not the right fit for your organization.

LET'S BEGIN!

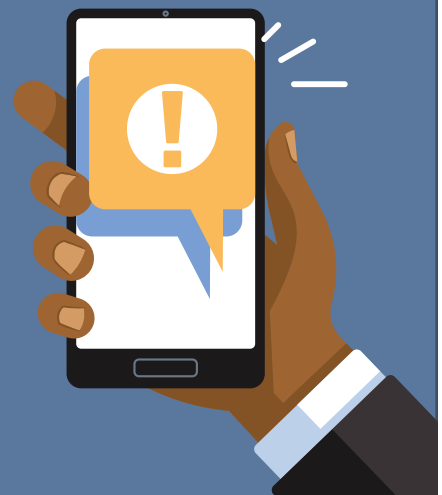
While paid peer to peer programs like Hustle and Relay can be effective tools in campaign organizing, CTCP funds at present cannot be used to support them. There are however effective free services such as *WhatsApp*, *Google Voice*, *Facebook Messenger*, and *Signal*. This resource focuses on how to use these free texting/messaging applications for community organizing and engagement. These types of applications are available on all major platforms, including iOS, Android, Windows Phone, and Mac and PC.

Please note that it is difficult to ensure full privacy while using these apps.

MAKE SURE YOU COMPLY WITH APPLICABLE LAWS

Organizations can only text people who have previously provided their contact information to the campaign and cannot use auto-dialers to send messages to people.

If your supporters ask you to no longer text them, you must comply with their request and take them off your text list.



FREE TEXTING AND MESSAGING APPS YOUR CAMPAIGN CAN USE



GOOGLE VOICE

You can send text messages for free to U.S. numbers using a *Google Voice* number on your phone, tablet, or computer. Using *Google Voice* allows your volunteers or staff to send text messages on behalf of your campaign without sharing their personal phone numbers.

Google Voice is best used to text supporters with whom you do not have an established relationship.

Advantages

- Can send messages to any U.S. number even if the recipient does not have the *Google Voice* application downloaded to their smart phone or device.
- Allows users to keep their personal phone number private.
- Allows you to text from your internet browser.

Disadvantages

- Cannot send mass messages to a list or group of more than seven people at one time.
- Limits text messages sent from *Google Voice* to 160 characters if you are texting a non-*Google Voice* number.
- Requires a Wi-Fi connection to work.

Sign up for *Google Voice* at <https://voice.google.com/u/0/about>



WHATSAPP

WhatsApp can be used to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, as well as share images, videos, and documents to other U.S. numbers who have also installed the *WhatsApp* application.

WhatsApp is best used to text supporters with whom you have an established relationship.

Advantages

- Works on any smartphone, tablet, or computer.
- Unlimited real-time messaging.
- Allows you to create groups of up to 256 people so users can have a central place of communication.
- Allows you to share images, videos, documents, and other forms of media.
- Allows you to make video calls with up to eight people at once.

Disadvantages

- Requires that people you are communicating with have *WhatsApp* on their phone, tablet, or computer.
- Not effective for recruitment due to the requirement that others have the app on their device.

Sign up for *WhatsApp* at <https://www.whatsapp.com/join/>



SIGNAL

You can send messages for free using *Signal* on your phone, tablet, or computer.

Signal is best used to text supporters with whom you have an established relationship.

Advantages

- Simple. *Signal* only has a single screen for all of your messages and a single compose button.
- Allows you to send texts, photos, videos, documents, and voice messages to an individual or a group.
- There's no limit on the number of people you can add to a group.
- The app is encrypted and allows you to set an expiration date on messages, so they are no longer recoverable.
- You can download a desktop app for your computer or tablet.

Disadvantages

- The other person(s) you are communicating with must have *Signal* on their phone, tablet, or computer.
- Few customization capabilities.

Sign up for *Signal* at <https://signal.org/en/>



FACEBOOK MESSENGER

Facebook Messenger allows you to message people using an app on your phone, computer, or tablet.

Facebook Messenger is best used to text supporters with whom you have an established relationship.

Advantages

- On average, 1.79 billion people log onto *Facebook* daily – there is a lot of opportunity to connect.
- You don't need a *Facebook* account to use *Facebook Messenger*.
- Allows you to message any *Facebook* user.
- Allows you to send messages to individuals or groups of up to 150 people.
- Can send voice messages, photos, and videos, or capture your own media using the *Facebook Messenger* camera.
- Allows you to create polls to quickly get a group opinion on an idea.

Disadvantages

- Difficult to fully protect your privacy.

Sign up for *Facebook Messenger* at <https://www.messenger.com/>

PAID PEER-TO-PEER PROGRAMS



There are several paid peer-to-peer texting platforms that you or your coalition members can use to text supporters (using non-CTCP funds). Hustle and Relay are the two biggest peer-to-peer platforms that allow you to easily send and track thousands of messages in minutes using a program or website. These peer-to-peer texting programs can be used to:

- Invite people to come to an event or city council meeting.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Recruit people to send messages to decision makers.
- Solicit signatures in support of a campaign issue.
- Stay in touch with supporters to maintain your organization's relationships.

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEXTING YOUR SUPPORTERS

An illustration of a white smartphone with a dark screen. Two text message bubbles are overlaid on the screen. The top bubble is orange and contains three horizontal lines representing text and a person icon. The bottom bubble is blue and also contains three horizontal lines and a person icon. The background is a solid dark blue color.

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DRAFT A SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR VOLUNTEERS OR STAFF TO USE

Have the initial text and a set of potential responses ready, so your staff or volunteers can easily stay “on message.”



REACHING OUT TO SUPPORTERS

Whether you're using texting or another communication and engagement device, effectively advancing tobacco control policies requires supporters, people in the community who care about the issue and want to make change happen. These supporters may be individuals – peers, friends, family, and co-workers – who want to get involved and support your policy efforts. Or they may be local organizations who could join your coalition and bring with them their unique brand and membership. These supporters represent the people with whom you can engage through effective texting and messaging efforts, to give them things to do in support of your policy goals and campaign activities.

HOW TO DRAFT A SAMPLE SCRIPT:

1. Start with a greeting to ensure the text will be read.
2. Provide an “opt-out” option.
3. Pose open ended questions to lead to back and forth conversations.
4. Quickly get to your ask.
5. Say why their support/help is needed.
6. Thank the person for their time.

See some sample scripts below that you can use when using texting or messaging apps to reach out to your supporters.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DRAFTING A SAMPLE TEXT SCRIPT

- Keep your texts short.
- Consider how people will respond. Draft sample answers for your texters.
- Even if you write a detailed script, provide options on how to respond. Anticipate they will go off-script and will need to know how to get back on message.
- Preparing volunteers and staff to stay on message will be key to any peer-to-peer texting effort.
- Sometimes a volunteer or staff needs the help of a leader.
- Make sure your texters know to ask if they need help responding to a message. If you don't have the answer to their question, let them know that you will flag it for someone who has more experience to respond.
- Prepare texters to respond to/or de-escalate aggressive responders.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

You: “Hey Cindy, this is Max with the local tobacco-free coalition. Have you heard that we are trying to raise awareness with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors about how flavored tobacco addicts youth?”

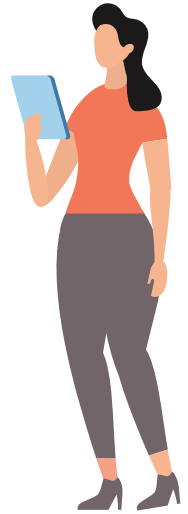
Supporter: “Hi Max, no I haven’t. Tell me more.”



You: “Using candy-like flavors is one of the top ways tobacco companies get kids hooked on a lifetime of addiction. We are asking you to add your name to the list of people who are asking the Board of Supervisors to protect kids from flavored tobacco. Will you add your name to the list of concerned residents?”

Supporter: “I think I need more information before I can sign something.”

You: “Sure, visit [website] for more information. I can text you later to see if you need more information or answer your questions.”



SAMPLE SCRIPT

You: “Hey Cindy, this is Max with the tobacco free coalition. We’re having an event next Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. to show the Los Angeles City Council how many people in our community are concerned about how flavored tobacco products are addicting our kids. Can we count on you to make it?”

Supporter: “Hi Max, I can’t make that. Sorry.”

You: “No problem Cindy. Are you concerned about the issue? We’re also asking for people to post on social media in support of the campaign. Would you be willing to post on Twitter?”

Supporter: “Sure, no problem!”

You: “Thank you Cindy! Here is the post: [insert post].”



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KEEP AT IT!

Remember texting is a great tool. Rather than texting only for certain events, use texting throughout your campaign. Recruit volunteers and stay in touch with supporters to maintain your organization's relationships even when you are not actively organizing for an event or campaign. Remember, be mindful of how much you are texting your supporters and don't overwhelm them with texts!



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TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Don't forget to take stock of your texting program – what worked and what improvements you would make. Did your text messages bring new supporters to an event? Did you receive more petition signers after you sent out a round of texts? Take time to think about the things your campaign should do differently next time. If you are finding your messaging is not resonating with your supporters after multiple actions, think about new ways to engage with them – for example, by email or on social media.

Remember texting is a mobilizing tool! Use this tool to help create a real connection with your supporters and move them to action. When your supporters are engaged, your campaign is placed in a position to win!

California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement
A Project of the American Heart Association

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