

Student and Youth Organizing Guide For a U.S. Department of Peace



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Introduction

To create a Department of Peace we need a movement. We need a movement of collective actions and a strong alliance of local organizations. Across the nation students are organizing student campaigns for a U.S. Cabinet level Department of Peace. The following guide is a collection of lessons that a few of us have learned while organizing at our schools and in our communities. This document and our movement is a collective work in progress. We hope this document will support you and we look forward to your contributions.

Starting an Organization

While each school and each community is different and unique, there are some general ways that most organizers start a student organization for a Department of Peace. First, think about how your school and your community are affected by violence and peace. Who in the community would support your efforts to organize in support of a Department of Peace? Think about which individual students, professors, student clubs or organizations might support your efforts. Consider both those on and off-campus. Learn about the Department of Peace (DOP) bill and campaign. Contact local organizers to learn about the DOP bill itself, as well as learn about the progress of the local department of peace campaign. This can be done by contacting both the local district coordinators and the state coordinators- they are great resources! You can find their names and email addresses online at www.thepeacealliance.org/organize/. Together your student organization and the state campaign can make significant headway in the campaign for a U.S. Department of Peace. To learn more about the DOP Bill and the national student campaign, respectively visit www.thepeacealliance.org and www.studentpeacealliance.org.

After learning about the Department of Peace and the progress of the local and state department of peace campaign, research how to form a student organization on your campus. All campuses vary, but typically student unions or student activities directors are great resources to learn how to start a campus organization. They will have materials available and will be able to speak to you about how to start a club or organization at your school. Many schools will require proof that students want the club (ie a sign up sheet) or a preliminary constitution. If you need a preliminary institution there is one available on the website, but we recommend that you update and personalize it with the members of your group as soon as you are organized.

When dealing with your student and school administration: learn the rules and follow them. This will only help you later on in terms of receiving funding, booking rooms, and building strong partnerships.

Messaging

Whether you are recruiting, publicizing, lobbying, speaking publicly, or taking action, a strong and consistent message is crucial. In a nation that is polarized into red states and blue states, conservatives and liberals, it is crucial to develop a strong message that speaks to everyone. This does not mean that you have one message that you repeat verbatim to every single person you meet. On the contrary you can develop one strong message that you pull parts from every time that you speak to someone. For instance, if you are speaking to someone that is concerned about school bullying, you will discuss the Department of Peace bill differently than if you discuss the bill with someone that is concerned about national security and big government. With the person that is concerned about school bullying, you could discuss how a Department of Peace will work to support school-bullying prevention initiatives through increased research and funding. With the person concerned about national security and big government, you could discuss how a Department of Peace would work to augment our current international conflict-solving modalities. The Department would also make our government more efficient by enhancing the peacebuilding abilities of the military and law enforcement and consolidating their violence prevention programs.

To create a strong message that speaks to everyone fill out the box below. It is crucial that your message comes from YOU. So reflect on why you support a Department of Peace, and fill out box one. In box two, list potential concerns or arguments that critics might raise. In box three, respond to the questions or concerns raised in box two. In box four, create a values-neutral message from your heart that addresses the concerns of critics and your responses to the concerns that you listed.

Department of Peace Message Box

1. Why you support a Department of Peace	2. Concerns raised by those that do not support the creation of a Department of Peace
3. Response to concerns raised by those that do not support a Department of Peace	4. Message that speaks to everyone

Department of Peace Message Box: Example

<p>1. Violence has to be addressed within the United States and across the globe. To address this issue, we need to support peace-builders and peace-building programs with the funding that they deserve and need. A Department of Peace will support these individuals and programs most effectively do the job that we need them to do.</p>	<p>2. a. Peace building is the responsibility of the private sector. Government should not meddle with the efforts of the private sector.</p> <p>b. The Department of State already exists, thus we do not need a Department of Peace.</p>
<p>3. a. \$300 billion was expended by the US as a result of interpersonal violence. Violence is not a public good. Peace builders and peace building programs are effective and should not be limited to the private sphere. Building peace is a public good. Like other public goods such as defense, or education, we must invest in peace.</p> <p>b. The role of the United States Department of State is to represent the interests of the United States among nations. We have to support the Department of State with the most cutting edge peace-building techniques. Furthermore, the Department of Peace's activity would be both domestic and international in scope.</p>	<p>4. It is time to address violence within the United States and abroad. We must invest in a Department of Peace to support peace builders throughout our nation, increase the problem solving modalities of government officials, and make our government more effective.</p>

Recruitment

Recruitment allows you to connect with other individuals and describe how your event or your organization meets their needs. Reflect on why you participate in certain activities, attend certain events, and are a member of different organizations and communities. What is it that attracts people to attend rallies, sit through meetings, and devote part of their schedules to taking part in a political action? Here are some of our thoughts in terms of why people participate in the Department of Peace campaign:

1. **A connection to the specific issue:** Students that participate in the Department of Peace campaign do so out of a connection to the issue of peace and in particular granting peace a voice in the federal cabinet. Some students might feel connected personally, as they have experienced peace or violence in their own lives. Or they might know people who have been affected by peace or violence.
2. **Desire to take action, create, and make a difference:** Students that participate in the Department of Peace campaign do so out of a desire to make a difference, and to contribute in a positive way. If they did not think that

there was a need *for them* to act and contribute, they would let *other people* act and contribute.

3. **Effectiveness of action:** Not only do students want to be involved and take action, they also want to know that their actions are actually effective and make a real difference. If the action is not perceived as having an impact, students won't be motivated to participate in the action.
4. **Community:** A Student Peace Alliance group attracts members by offering a positive, enthusiastic community working together for change.

To effectively recruit for a Department of Peace, keep in mind the reasons why people join organizations and initiatives. When you recruit, whether it is over the internet, on the phone, or in person: speak to the importance of peace and the Department of Peace. Mention the organization's activities and that the individual's involvement is valuable and will make a difference.

Before you begin recruiting members, think about possible questions and concerns people may have about your group and their involvement. Prepare answers and options. Make sure you are able to provide people with information on time, commitment, responsibilities, and the basic who, what, where, when, why, and how of your organization.

Recruitment Methods:

- Tabling at activities fairs, events and in student centers/cafeterias.
- Chalking the sidewalks about your next meeting or event
- Posting flyers around your campus
- Making announcements to classes (especially in departments that would have a vested interest in the government and peacebuilding)
- Getting air time on your campus radio station
- Writing an editorial or posting an advertisement in your campus newspaper
- Appearing on a campus television network
- Create a Facebook group and Facebook events (see below)

Facebook: Online organizing can be an incredibly effective tool to build a strong constituency of supporters at your school. Unlike other forms of publicity, Facebook is interactive so that the individuals that are receiving the information can respond and participate. Start a Facebook group for your campus Student Peace Alliance and invite all your friends and those interested in peace and nonviolence. Make sure you also create a Facebook event for each action you take on your campus! Each of these methods also allows you to send out messages to your participants and possible participants, utilize it! (But not to the point where people will stop opening them!)

Plan and Facilitate Meetings

What is it about meetings that make you want to attend? Make sure that meetings are a space where effective actions are decided upon, where people feel included and respected as community members, and where people have fun! To plan a meeting, decide on an agenda and a facilitator.

Example Agenda:¹

Introduction: Introduce the meeting and the purpose of the meeting. Move around the room and ask attendees to introduce themselves and what has brought them to the meeting. From the beginning of the meeting, make sure to engage meeting participants as much as you can.

Administrative: Review the agenda of the meeting. If there was a meeting prior, review the content of the meeting. Present the agenda (that which is in the content of the meeting), and ask if anyone would like to modify or contribute anything to the agenda. Pick a note-taker if one was not chosen at a previous meeting. Pass out a sign-in sheet (to get email addresses and phone numbers).

Facilitation: After deciding on an agenda, pick a facilitator. The facilitator is responsible for moving from agenda item to agenda item and making sure that everyone is included in the conversation to the greatest extent possible. A few tips to help with facilitation:

- Select a time keeper. This way the facilitator does not have to keep track of time and make sure that everyone is included as much as possible.
- At the start of the meeting agree on ground rules (such as speak when it is your turn, work to create a safe and comfortable space, etc.). Ground rules allows everyone to be involved in the decision making concerning how the meeting will be facilitated. Hand rules (such as a signal for moving forward, or a signal for a quick response to a question or point raised) allow for more than the facilitator to have a say in what direction the meeting moves.

Example Meeting Content:

- Review the Department of Peace Bill – why is it needed and what will it do?
- Members of the organization speak to what draws them to the Department of Peace
- Discussion of the Department of Peace: Attendees ask questions of the facilitator and other participants

¹ This agenda builds upon the sociocratic meeting model. See www.sociocracy.biz for more information.

- Ask people what actions interest them the most: Passing a city council resolution, passing a school resolution, meeting/writing/calling members of congress, or participating in service to support local organizations that participate in peace-building?
- Take action! Have post-cards or your member of congress' phone number for students to write or call their member of congress and ask for their support of the department of peace.

Closing and check-out: Decide on the date and time of the next meeting. Pick a facilitator and note-taker for the next meeting if those roles move among the group. Include a 'check-out' of the meeting so that you can evaluate the meeting and so that you let people know that you care about their thoughts. Some ways to do this is through asking people to speak to how they thought that the meeting went, or you can ask people for 'Pluses and Deltas' (Pluses are things that went well, and Delta's are suggested changes).

Organizational Planning and Structure:

An organizational structure eases the process of organizing efforts on your campus. There are many different types of organizational structures. What is important is that the organizational structure comes from the people that will participate in the actions. Work to build an organizational structure that is both inclusive and effective. How can you create an organization that includes as many people as possible in the decision-making process, but do so in a way that decisions can be made in a timely fashion so that the organization is effective? That decision will have to be made by your organization. The following is a suggestion on how to come about that decision.

Hold a meeting on organizational structure and planning. As a group define the vision of the organization. The vision is the long-term reality that the organization is working to shape. Then write out a mission statement that details specifically how the group will work to support its vision. Use the vision and mission statement to outline organizational goals. Make sure that the organizational goals are specific and can be achieved. Organizational goals could include: Passage of a school resolution, passage of a city council resolution, organization of a peace forum, successfully lobbying a US Representative to sign onto the department of peace, or to have fun! After organizational goals are outlined, identify the process needed to achieve those goals. Consider both general and specific needs that the organization has to have met in order to effectively organize. These needs could include media relationship-building, the creation of communication networks within the organization (list-serves, facebook groups), financial support, facilitation of meetings, and general coordination.

Potential organizational structures include structures of an executive board that is made of individuals that each have an individual role within the organization. It is the role of the board 'to execute' the behind the scenes logistics necessary for the organization to run smoothly. Other organizational structures move away from board

structures and all/most decisions are made by the general organization. Some organizational structures distribute responsibility of specific tasks to certain people. Organizations can create permanent roles in which those who fill the roles have a specific responsibility (i.e. the communications efforts are handled by the communications director and finance is handled by the treasurer). Other organizations shift responsibilities among membership and do not have set positions within the organization. Whichever organizational structure your organization chooses, it is important that it is a structure that provides a way for responsibility to be clearly outlined and distributed throughout the organization.

Organizational Sustainability and Membership Retention

Organizational sustainability and membership retention are crucial for the creation of a strong organization. Consider the characteristics of the organizations that you belong to (religious, sports, or activist) that keep you coming back. Here are our thoughts on principles to embody and actions to take that will support organizational sustainability and membership retention:

Communication: Make sure that everyone within the organization is connected and in a way that people can effectively communicate. Create a list-serve and up date it frequently. Check in with group members periodically to see how they are doing. When checking in with group members, be specific and direct. Ask if they have enough responsibilities. Ask if they have too much responsibility and would like some of the responsibilities to be delegated.

Openness and Trustworthiness: Make sure that an atmosphere of openness is created so that people feel comfortable communicating any thoughts or needs that they have. Trust people and let them know that you trust them. With your trust, they will feel more comfortable about being open and communicating what they need.

Celebrate: Make sure to acknowledge and celebrate successes throughout organizing. Whether it is an article in the newspaper, meeting a recruitment goal, passing a city council resolution, or successfully lobbying a Senator to co-sponsor the Department of Peace; acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments. Make sure to acknowledge and celebrate individuals that played a critical role in the accomplishment in addition to the group as a whole.

Have Fun: Make sure to schedule fun social activities outside of meetings and Department of Peace actions to build community!

Action-oriented: Make sure that your organization is action-oriented. If students and youth perceive that the group is not taking action or is not being effective; they will question the purpose of participation in the organization in the first place. Make sure to

continually take actions in whatever form the group decides, and to speak to the actions that took place.

Delegate Responsibility: One reason that organizations are not sustainable is burnout. Responsibility should be delegated as much as possible throughout the organization to avoid a few individuals doing all the work. Through clear communication concerning each member’s respective responsibilities, and a strong organizational structure, responsibility will be evenly distributed.

Ownership: Everyone in the organization should feel like they have ownership of the organization. They should feel that the group’s actions and its decisions, as co-owners, will affect them personally and equally. This sense of ownership is felt when students both give their energy or resources to an initiative and receive something in return (whether that be satisfaction of making a difference, or membership in a community).

Effective Actions: Planning and Implementation of Effective Actions

There are two types of actions: events and campaigns. An event is a specific action that occurs at or over a specific time at a certain location. A campaign is a series of events and actions over a period of time to achieve a certain end. Examples of events include movie-screenings and meeting to write letters to the editor. Examples of campaigns are efforts such as passage of a city council campaign for a Department of Peace or an initiative to garner the co-sponsorship of a Senator to co-sponsor the Department of Peace. Campaigns include events, but are not limited to events. Events require planning, campaigns require tactics and strategy.

Campaign Planning:²

Goals:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the long term goals? 2. What are the middle term goals? 3. What are the short term goals?
Organizational Considerations:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resources: What resources does the organization have and what does the organization need to accomplish its goals? 2. Organizational Benefits: How will the organization benefit from the

² Adapted from the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart: Bobo, Kim; Kendall, Jackie; Max, Steve. Organizing for Social Change. Washington, DC: Seven Locks Press, 2001.

	activity?
Targets:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary Targets: Who are those that have the power to implement the goal of your campaign? 2. Secondary Targets: Who has the ability to sway those that have the power to implement the goal of your campaign?
Constituents/Allies:	List all those that are constituents and allies within the area in which you are organizing
Tactics	What plans will allow you to reach your campaign goals?

A campaign often includes events. For instance, a student campaign for a Department of Peace might hold a variety of events both relating directly to the Department of Peace or indirectly relating to the Department of Peace.

Example campaigns for a Department of Peace:

City Council Resolution Campaign: One effective campaign to support the Department of Peace is a city council resolution initiative. A resolution passed by a City Council in support of a Department of Peace states that it is the opinion of the city council (which represents the larger municipality) to lend support for a Department of Peace. To garner support for a city council resolution, consider the goals of the initiative. Recognize that while the long-term goal might be to support the Department of Peace, that passing the resolution will play a crucial role in demonstrating support for a Department of Peace (which will in turn support the long-term goal as the resolution will influence members of congress). In terms of organizational considerations; consider all of the resources that your organization has at its disposal to support the campaign: people, facilities, funds, etc. Also, reflect on the relevancy of the initiative (i.e. for advancing the local department of peace campaign). The resolution campaign is important, but equally important is the relationships and the connections that are made that can be utilized later on to advance the Department of Peace campaign. Consider how to use the campaign to nurture leadership within the organization, and how to use the initiative to build strong

coalitions. Consider all of the constituents within the city: religious groups, political organizations, peace builders; and list those that are already allies and partners. Identify targets. Primary targets would be those that can vote on the city council resolution (city council members). Secondary targets could be representatives to the state legislature, donors, or those that elected the respective city council member into office. From the above information, shape your tactics. Tactics could include a series of public forums with a complementary media strategy or a petition initiative to demonstrate to the primary targets that constituents support the resolution. After deciding on tactics, create a timeline and lay out the various tactics over a period of time.

Student Council Resolution Campaign: Similar to a city council resolution, students are also organizing student referendums or resolutions in support of a Department of peace. The process of organizing is similar to a city council resolution, but is focused on a school community rather than a municipality. The importance of setting goals, understanding organizational considerations, mapping out allies and constituents, picking targets, agreeing on tactics, and drawing out a timeline applies to both school-based and municipality-based resolution in initiatives.

Campaign targeted at a specific member of congress: To organize a campaign that will target a specific member of congress, go through the process outlined above. This campaign will most likely involve smaller campaigns or events within the larger campaign of garnering congressional support.

Event Planning:

Event planning is crucial for taking effective actions. Events are single actions, that might stand alone, but ideally are part of a larger campaign. For instance, one campaign might include 5 events, all of which have to be planned and contextualized within the larger campaign. Once you have picked your event and decided that it is relevant to pursue, start planning.

What is the goal of the event?	The overall aim of the event
What will the event be?	Provide details about the event
When and where will the event occur?	Location, time of the event
How will the event run?	Detail the logistics of the event

What will be the outcome of the event?	State what the event will do for the overall campaign.
What is necessary to organize the event?	Publicity, facilities, people, materials, funding
How can the event be used to build coalitions on campus or in the community?	List organizations that might be interested in co-sponsorship, and contact them!
What do you have?	List all resources available: people, materials, funding
What do you need?	List all resources that are needed: people, materials, funding

Based upon the above information, create a timeline that details specifically when you have to achieve each step. Start with the day of the event and work backwards to the present day.

Examples of Events:

Peace Forum: Peace Forums bring together members of our communities to discuss how conflict and violence affects our respective communities and what is being done to build peace. Peace Forums provide a venue for those that are working to build peace in schools, communities, and in homes, to speak publicly about what they observe and what work they are doing (such as organizations that work with gang violence, domestic abuse, or early childhood conflict resolution education). Some Peace Forums address a variety of issues of peace and violence while others address a specific issue such as building peaceful schools. There are a variety of outcomes that can come from the Peace Forums. Consider documenting the peace forum by recording or videotaping it. Then you can prepare a document that summarizes the day and speaks to the details about violence and peace in your community. The document can be given to all the different organizations as well as to the legislature and members of congress. Campuses and schools are great places to hold peace forums as they are often connected with the local community and have the facilities and resources necessary to make the event happen.

Speakers: Student groups often will host speakers that either speak in support of a Department of Peace or concerning a specific part of the bill that is of interest to them. Evaluate the relevancy of each speaker and how a speaker will effectively support the mobilization of a student body.

Film Screenings: Student Peace Alliance chapters showed the film “Gandhi” and various other films concerning nonviolence and films that specifically dealt with the Department of Peace and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Advocacy Party: You can organize an advocacy party/event where you bring people together to write letters or make phone calls to members of congress to ask for their support of the Department of Peace.

Coalition Building:

Coalitions are crucial to the success of your organization. Think about which organizations are affected by peacebuilding or whose missions would lend support to the establishment of a Department of Peace. Some examples of these could be environmental groups, labor rights/human rights groups, STAND, DFA, SDS, etc. Build relationships with these individuals or groups and more importantly, build a partnership. When planning specific events, think about which partners and people in the community would support the action. Departments on campus can also be great resources and partners, such as the Politics Department, Sociology Department, or Peace Studies Department. Coalitions can be formed through verbal agreement (i.e. a group endorses a Department of Peace). Send members of your group to the meetings of other coalition members. But coalitions are often stronger when those groups within the coalition organize an action together. Work to build actions that further the collective visions of all groups that are part of the coalition. Often these actions are more inclusive when each group in the coalition participates in the planning process. Such partnerships can also assure a larger student turnout at coalition events and your individual Student Peace Alliance events.

Most importantly, as embodiments of the principles that a Department of Peace would support, you as students can begin representing how a culture based on peace and nonviolence exists on the ground level. The coalitions and partnerships you are building may one day be the foundation for a U.S. Department of Peace!

Resources:

We’ve included links to websites with information for activists on organizing and campaigning:

www.casagordita.com/tools.htm- This is one of the most comprehensive sites out there, with “tools for organizers, activists, educators and other hell-raisers.”

www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/- Excellent resources for building community

www.campusactivism.org/- Tools for campus activists

<http://www.ic.org/nica/Process/meeting.html>- Resources for meeting and group process

