



2022 Tools & Tech Guide

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Table of Contents

05

SV Tools Suite

48

Free Downloads

15

Voter Registration Tools

50

Accessibility

17

Tech Guide

54

Tools for Data Practitioners

19

Hardware

59

Data & Technology Trainings

25

Office Equipment

61

Putting it all together

28

Software

45

Digital Security & Privacy

INTRO

01

In 2019, the State Voices data team made a concerted effort to research tools and vendors in the progressive space. Due to this effort, when the coronavirus pandemic shifted the way organizations do their work, State Voices quickly pivoted programs by investing in tools and vendors to transition the work online.

In 2020, as digital tools played a new role in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic, State Voices pivoted quickly. Through extensive research and investment in tools, apps, and vendors for State Voices Affiliated Network and partners, we prioritized meeting voters where they are and continuing working towards truly representative democracy.

State Voices conducted an audit of the civic engagement and advocacy tools landscape within our affiliated network. This audit took an in-depth look at what tools State Tables were actively using, demoing, had never heard of, was not interested in using, or were recommending that State Voices demo. The tools audited at the time included legislative advocacy, phone dialers, CRMs, digital, and relational organizing.

From this, State Voices utilized our vetting procedure for potential new tools and apps, found [here](#). As part of the vetting procedure, when a new tool is identified, the State Voices data team—along with the additional necessary departments—would request a demonstration of the tool and complete the tech demos review form to give their feedback on the tool.

We created a one-pager with information about each tool we demoed. The State Voices team has all together attended over 60 demonstrations of tech tools and/or vendor services from 2019 through 2022.

This guide is the culmination of those efforts.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to give organizations a quick overview of tools and vendors that might benefit the programs they're running. State Voices does not endorse or intend to promote any product. Instead, we hope that this guide will facilitate organizations' research to find the best fit for their programs.

State Voices' goal in creating these one-pagers was to be as objective as possible. However, we recognize that even though we used the same form for all demos, it doesn't guarantee each tool or vendor was asked the same questions. For that reason, this guide does not intend to replace an organization's own research. It is simply a supplement or a starting place for the organizations attempting to navigate a complex digital space.

02

We encourage each organization to do their own research and assess each new potential tool or vendor based on how well it will meet the needs of their organization, the people they serve, and the programs that will be conducted with said tool or vendor.

We did our best to keep each tool/vendor review to one page. While often we note cons based on the needs of our network, we do believe some cons apply to all organizations—regardless of their specific needs. For that reason, we encourage folks to think about some specific cons in greater detail.

Considerations we factored into our assessments of these tools include, but are not limited to the following.

Organizational Values and Practices

It is important to State Voices that the vendors we hold contracts with share values of social justice, representation, inclusion, and progressivism.

VAN Integration

VAN integration allows data to be pushed or pulled directly between VAN and a given tool and is very important if your organization uses the VAN. If you're a State Voices partner organization that uses VAN through and in a manner governed by the agreement between State Voices and you regarding VAN—we truly hope you're actively using your VAN committee since that's how we do our end-of-year reporting.

There are three types of VAN integration. They are:

- Pull VAN integration which means that data can only be pulled from the VAN and into the tool you're using.
- Push VAN integration means that results can only be pushed from the tool you're using back into the VAN.
- Pull/Push VAN integration means that data can be both pulled from the VAN and into the tool, and results from the tool can be pushed back into the VAN.

VAN integration in any combination is beneficial because it either decreases or eliminates the need for manual loading of data from one tool into another. It also eliminates the need to send data and responses back and forth via email—if you're working with a VAN administrator who's loading the data for you.

Our recommendation to partners reading the guide is that you invest in a tool that integrates with VAN, consistent with the agreement between your organization and State Voices, so that state data staff don't have to send you data via email/other online methods. You don't have to worry about sending response data back after a vended program, etc.

When asking a vendor about their integrations with VAN, it's also important to clarify which data fields can be pushed/pulled. Not all integrations are created alike.

Web-Based Versus Native App

Whether a tool is offered via website or app can sometimes be a dealbreaker and it's often tied to the above question. When something is web-based, it usually doesn't have an offline mode, because it requires an internet connection to connect to the website. Some apps operate via internet access only.

Something else to consider is the barrier to entry. Often, volunteers or paid staff won't want to download an app onto their personal phone. You then have to consider purchasing phones/tablets to ensure people can actually deploy the tool you invested in.

Longevity of Vendor

New tech will come and go, but the heart of the work will never change. We believe it's vital for organizations to think about where they're putting their money.

Organizations should ask tool vendors how long they've been in business and consider longevity a significant factor when deciding where to invest. Ask yourself; will this company still be around 1 year+ after this program? Are they likely to be bought out by another company? How can I recover my data if the company folds?

Data Ownership

This is a crucial factor in ensuring that your data is secure and not shared or sold to third parties. Before entering into an agreement with any vendor, it is essential to read the agreement carefully, have it vetted by a lawyer, and pay close attention to any details regarding data sharing or security.

Pricing Models

Before entering into a contract, be sure you understand the pricing model. Take texting vendors as an example.

In the case of texting vendors, you'll want to think about if a per-text or contacts model is best for your organization. Per-text models charge per outgoing text, allowing you to contact more individuals, while contact models typically charge a flat rate for your organization to text the same individuals as many times per the contract terms.

Voter File Vendors

When using a tool that requires voter file data, you should inform your state table or Tools for All, so they can provide the necessary paperwork to ensure your vendor is approved and has authority per State Voices' contract with its voter file vendor. Not all vendors have the authority or ability to use data from the State Voices VAN.

Open APIs

An API is a set of applications, functions, and/or procedures that provide programmers with the structure for communication between applications. This allows tools to automatically transfer data from one to another and facilitates layered contacts, reporting, and data integrity. It enables organizations to easily build and share capacity with the larger progressive community for more efficient and seamless data operations.

Open Source versus Non-Open Source

Open source technology/tools are tools in which the source code of the technology/tool is available for modification. This means an organization can adapt the tool to meet its needs.

While being able to make edits to the software can seem great, it often comes with a few drawbacks.

- First, you need to have someone on your team who has the skill to make those edits. If not, you have to pay someone, like a developer, which can be costly.
- Second, open-source tools are typically not as fleshed out, which can create a lot of work for your staff or a developer to make the product meet the needs of your organization

Language Accessibility

The ability to translate information and features into other languages easily is essential for those who may not speak English as their primary language to have equitable access to a tool.

Language support is a helpful addition to a tool's support offerings to ensure those who may not speak English as their primary language can receive assistance.

SV TOOLS SUITE

Based on our research, we believe that the following vendors currently best fit our needs and may best fit the needs of our tables and partner organizations, but we still recommend that each organization do their own research to find the best fit for them. To the extent that a certain number of these tools are available through State Voices, we remind partner organizations that the terms and conditions of usage of the tool, services, or software, including pricing, are specified in an agreement between State Voices and partner organization which must be signed by a partner organization and we recommend that you refer to such agreement for accurate information regarding such terms and conditions of use. Please contact datateam@statevoices.org for more details and the relevant agreement for any tool, services, or software used through State Voices.

05

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM): [Action Network](#)
- Data Analytics Platform: [Civis Analytics](#)
- Digital Organizing & Online Fundraising: [EveryAction](#)
- Event Management and Promotion: [Mobilize](#)
- Online Voter Registration Portal: [Rock the Vote](#)
- Relational Organizing (Digital Door-Knocking): [Reach](#)
- Social Media Management: [Organiz](#)
- Texting Services: [State Voices Dispatch](#)
- Voter Contact Portal/Hub: [Voter Activation Network MyVoters](#)
- Voter Guides and Ballot Issue Support: [Ballot Ready's Ballot Engine](#)



Dispatch Texting Platform

Website: dispatch.statevoices.org

Purpose: Dispatch shares MoveOn's Spoke civic technology that offers person-to-person texting to large audiences in a short amount of time. Dispatch works on any web browser and provides movement organizations a tool that integrates with State Voices' array of data technology.

Cost: State Voices 2022 SMS Messaging Rates are based on number of text segments

- Under 2 million, \$0.019
- 2-5 million, \$0.0175
- Over 5 million, \$0.015

Contact: dispatch@statevoices.org

Created: Spoke, originally created by Saikat Chakrabarti and Sheena Pakanati, is now being maintained by MoveOn.org.

Pros:

- Multiple Custom Responses for Campaigns, Texter Custom Canned Responses
- VAN API Support, Action Kit and Mobilize Integrations
- Dynamic Assignment for Texters; Custom styling for campaigns; Multiple administrators for organizations;
- Heroku, Microsoft Azure, and AWS deployment integration support;
- Support for outgoing multimedia messages (mms) and US Short Codes;
- Admin message review board for campaigns, texters, Live campaign administration of scripts, messages and conversations

Cons:

- Set up requires several steps
- Requires data staff for upkeep and maintenance

Support: FreshDesk, Slack

Security: [Latest MoveOn Release Notes](#)

Similar Tools: Hustle, ThruText

EveryAction

Website: everyaction.com

Purpose: Platform for online advocacy, actions, donations, and social network integration

Cost: varies based on records, let them know if you are a State Voices partner

Contact: Ashley Chase, achase@everyaction.com

Created: 2015

Pros:

- EveryAction has a great track record of working with State Voices for over a decade
- Twitter and Facebook integration is expansive
- Great for individual online donations; offers ability to track foundation support
- Platform setup/look is similar to NGPVAN's MyCampaign, which may make it easier to learn

Cons:

- Pricing model is based on number of records in the system each month, which can make it difficult to budget for annually

Integrations: Mobilize, VAN's MyVoters

Security: help.ngpvan.com/van/s/article/1669106-security

Support: Regular webinars, e-course, guides, and support tickets

Similar Tools: Salesforce, VAN's My Campaign, Action Network



NGP Voter Activation Network MyVoters

Website: ngpvan.com

Purpose: A platform for managing and interacting with the voter file

Cost: per state instance

Contact: Julia Heselton, jheselton@ngpvan.com

Created: 2004

Pros:

- NGPVAN has been working with State Voices for over a decade
- The gold standard for industry voter file management
- Integrates with most of the tools we commonly use
- Included as part of the State Voices Tech Suite

Cons:

- Can't add or edit voter records directly
- The Voterfile is a separate purchase either through Catalist or TargetSmart

Integrations: Mobilize, EveryAction, Reach

Security: help.ngpvan.com/van/s/article/1669106-security

Support: Regular webinars, e-course, guides, and support tickets

Similar Tools: PDI



Action Network

Website: actionnetwork.org

Purpose: A digital tool to organize people to take online and offline actions, send mass messages to recruit and mobilize new activists, and raise funds to fuel important work.

Cost: actionnetwork.org/partnerships

Contact: Obed Ventura, obed@actionnetwork.org

Created: 2017

Pros:

- Petitions and advocacy tools for targeting decision-makers
- One-click email donations
- Pre-load content to create consistent engagement across an entire campaign
- Federated tools structure for chaptered organizing “Activist” profiles with full action history
- Ability to send mass emails and track engagement through opens, clicks, unsubscribes, and actions
- Fundraising features to raise money for specific causes online
- Mobile messaging through Twilio with pre-written scripts and intuitive targeting
- Build in wait times and specific emails or texts dependent on people’s responses and how long it takes them to respond
- Create custom dashboards with action items
- Ability to phone bank and text bank using CallHub and Mobile Commons, and New/Mode Integration to click-to-dial call elected officials
- A few preset languages are available to create actions, more can be added if you have a translator.

Cons:

- No offline mode
- No VAN Integration
- API is very limited
- Tech support is only available in English

Integrations: BallotReady, Catalist, ActBlue, Salesforce

Support:

- Weekly getting started training for different aspects of the tool
- Tech support hours are 9 am – 5 pm ET, the average response rate is within hours during the business day

Security: actionnetwork.org/privacy

Similar Tools: SalsaLabs, Blue State, Nationbuilder, Mailchimp

Mobilize

Website: mobilize.us

Purpose: Hub for event & volunteer management as well as volunteer recruitment and online actions

Cost: varies depending on the number of dashboards and signups

Contact: Kathleen Wein, kwein@everyaction.com

Created: 2017, acquired by EveryAction in 2020

Pros:

- Set up and administration is simple
- Integrates easily with Reach
- Syncs with VAN

Cons:

- Volunteer page will show partisan and nonpartisan events nearby
- Many options without clear explanations of their function

Support: Email, HelpDesk

Integrations: EveryAction, Phone2Action, VAN's My Voters, Zoom

Security: help.mobilize.us/en/articles/3614010-how-does-mobilize-secure-my-data

Support: HelpDesk, Email, Chat

Similar Tools: Eventbrite, Facebook Events



Ballot Ready Ballot Engine

Website: ballotready.org

Contact: Sarah Guminski, sarah@ballotready.org

Purpose:

Tool to help voters in all 50 states make a plan to vote by checking their voter registration, locating their early voting or Election Day polling place, and offering assistance to request a vote by mail ballot.

Cost: Contact Ballot Ready

Created: 2015

Support: Support ticket system and knowledge base.

Pros:

- Ability to check your voter registration and be directed to your Secretary of State website to register to vote if needed
- Users can view the options in their area for early voting and Election Day polling places, as well as absentee voting drop-off sites
- For an additional cost, an organization can offer users the ability to have their ballot request form mailed to them
- For an additional fee, an organization can allow users to track absentee ballot requests
- For an additional fee, organizations can have a white-labeled page with their logo, and customized URL
- Organizations can gather the name, email address and phone number of users to send customized reminder texts about voting and add the users to their email list

Cons:

- No sync to a CRM or the VAN
- BallotReady works with all organizations, regardless of their values
- Updates to the Ballot Ready system from support tickets could take longer than expected during peak period

Support: Ticket System, Email

Similar Tools: VoteByMail.io



Organiz

Website: organiz.org

Purpose: Organiz is a digital organizing tool for coordinating Twitter and Facebook storms and has a dashboard feature that tracks engagement metrics.

Cost: Contact Organiz

Contact: Amanda Khan, amanda@organiz.org

Created: 2017

Pros:

- Eliminates the need for social media tool kits
- Affordable pricing
- Easy to use
- Client success manager available to help organizations brainstorm campaign ideas

Cons:

- Newer tool, future development, and product focus could change

Support: Email, Phone

Similar Tools: HootSuite



Reach

Website: reach.vote

Purpose: Digital organizing tool to track contacts regardless of where you meet them, facilitating site-based and event-based canvassing as well as on-the-spot recruitment.

Cost: reach.vote/pricing

Contact: Jake DeGroot, jake@reach.vote

Created: 2018

Pros:

- Information added by a volunteer for a person on the voter file can be exported and loaded into VAN by an admin
- Simple, intuitive GUI (graphical user interface)
- Leaderboard and Action Points can create friendly competition and serve as incentives for different organizing actions
- Easy to train on and learn
- Easily scalable and easy to input a lot of different data points
- Integrates with VAN
- Offline mode provides greater accessibility for users organizing in rural areas or native lands
- Users can easily share Reach actions from admins on their social media
- It is easy to import personal contacts based on area code or name, and users can assign their contacts different relationship types that are created by the admin
- Users can reach out to imported contacts on any messaging app they have on their phone, utilizing a pre-written script
- The Action Feed acts as a home base, directing users to a variety of actions they can take, which can be prioritized by the admin (import contacts, sign up for events, petitions, articles, post something on social media, etc.)
- The UI: User interface can be translated into various languages, including Spanish and French, with the ability for anyone to translate into another language via the Reach admin system
- Text magnification and screen reader support for increased accessibility

Cons:

- If you encounter someone, not on the voter file, you can manually add them to Reach, and their record will be pushed to My Campaign via the integration. However, it won't be added to My Voters (the voter file) because VAN doesn't allow for voter record creation.
- Cost may be high for organizations running statewide or nationwide efforts
- Must download the app to use
- Only allows one group chat per campaign
- Tags can't be mapped to AC in the VAN, only survey questions
- Chat and contact import does not work in offline mode

Security: reach.vote/knowledge-base/a-note-about-data-security

Support:

- Offer email and phone support for admins
- Offer email-only support for users
- Extensive Help Desk

Similar Tools: Impactive, OutreachCircle, OpenField, Empower



VOTER REGISTRATION TOOLS

15

Rock the Vote

Website: rockthevote.org

Purpose: Online voter registration portal

Contact: Melissa Wyatt, Director of Civic Technology and Policy | melissa@rockthevote.org

Camille Martin, Civic Tech Partner Manager | camille@rockthevote.org

Cost: Free to State Table partners who sign the agreement for use with State Voices under the State Voices partnership;

Otherwise based on number of applicants:

- 10,000 applicants: \$3,750
- 25,000 applicants: \$7,500
- 50,000 applicants: \$11,250
- 100,000 applicants: \$18,750
- 200,000+ applicants: \$30,000

Created: 1990

Pros:

- History of working with State Voices tables for over a decade
- A clean and simple user interface
- Customizable branding that can be embedded in other websites
- Multi-page process likely leads to higher conversion rates
- Robust access to data that will be easy to get into VAN

Cons:

- The tool gives the voter a pdf to download if they're unable to register online, rather than mailing a voter registration form (this is a feature that can be added on at a cost)
- Not flexible in terms of question order and required fields
- Multiple steps in the process can be cumbersome for users and cause some to give up before completing their registration
- Requires external applications (such as Google Sheets) for tracking the administration of the tool

Support: Provide start-up guide, FAQs, and ongoing support

Similar Tools: VoteAmerica, BallotReady Registration Engine, REGISTER2VOTE, Vote.org, Turbo Vote

Blocks

Website: blocks.app

Contact: For general questions about Politech or the Blocks platform, contact contact@politech.io

Cost: For sales inquiries, business opportunities or requests for demos, please [contact sales@politech.io](mailto:contact.sales@politech.io)

Created: 2012

Purpose: This tool is used for managing voter registration and quality control programs.

Support: Onboarding support, direct and regular training, train the trainer, user guides, national administration and oversight, reporting support, troubleshooting support, regular ongoing support.

Similar Tools: RegTrak

Pros:

- Flexible with integrations to external databases.
- Strong and long-standing relationship between State Voices and Politech staff.
- Strong development support and feedback implementation from Politech.
- In-tool reports.
- In-tool field management functionality and resources.
- In-tool quality control functionality and resources.

Cons: No support infrastructure from State Voices for non-Voter Registration Project states.

TECH GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to give organizations a quick overview of current technology, software, and office equipment that might assist them in their day-to-day work.

This guide is not meant to replace an organization's own research. It can supplement or serve as a starting place for nonprofit organizations to assess their needs.

We encourage each organization to do their own research and assess each item based on how well it will meet the needs of their organization, the people they serve, and their ongoing operations. We would note that, unlike our Tools Guide, we did not do a values assessment of the companies in this Guide, due to the fact that none of their items are limited in their availability to a specific type of organization. Everything listed here is available to the general public for any and all use cases.

Considerations we factored into our assessments of these tools include, but are not limited to the following:

Need

The 2022 Tech Guide continues to be geared towards technology and software, and office equipment that is optimal for working from home as this has become more popular and necessary during COVID-19. Future iterations of this guide may adjust to account for more traveling and office work.

Equity in Tech

When purchasing technology it's important to be mindful about creating an inclusive, equitable and accessible work environment. NTEN has put together a wonderful guide on how to eliminate biases that often play out in the distribution of technology in the workplace. nten.org/equity-guide-for-nonprofit-technology

User/Buyer Reviews

When seeking items to suggest for each category, particularly those in the hardware and office sections, we narrowed to items that had four to five-star reviews, and those with many reviewers (usually in the hundreds or thousands). This helps to ensure quality while also filtering out those items that only have fake or paid reviews.

Pricing

We understand that nonprofits have limited resources and as such, decided to focus on technology and office needs that are affordable. We also used a browser extension (price blink) to help us find the website that was selling the item for the lowest possible price, so note that many of these items may also be available on other sites. Likewise, the software that we included in this guide is either free, has free trials or generous nonprofit discounts, or is generally affordable for individual users or small teams. To the extent that a certain number of these tools are available through State Voices, we remind partner organizations that the terms and conditions of usage of the tool or software, including pricing, are specified in an agreement between State Voices

and partner organization and we recommend that you refer to such agreement for accurate information regarding such terms and conditions of use. Please contact datateam@statevoices.org for more information and the relevant agreement for any tool, services, or software used through State Voices.

Integrations

Since nonprofit organizations already have access to and use a variety of tools in their everyday work, we made an effort to choose software that seamlessly integrates with the most commonly used tools by nonprofit organizations, such as Slack, Google Suite, and the most commonly used browsers. Many of these also have apps that can be downloaded onto Apple or Android devices.

Longevity

We made an effort to list companies and websites that have a proven track record of reliability and innovation. Most of the software listed has been around for over a decade with a few exceptions. The hardware is available from vendors that are well-established and widely used in the tech community.

18

Ethical Buying

Before diving into a few points on ethical buying, we think it's important to lift up the need for funding tech, software, and office equipment. When creating budgets and requests for funding, we believe that it's very important to not just budget and request funds for the typical expenses: staffing, print costs, etc. but also the technology and tools that help your organizations get the work done. We made an effort to list affordable prices on all the items, because we recognize that many grassroots and nonprofit organizations are operating on tight budgets.

Unfortunately, many of those cheaper prices are found on websites that don't always match our values. So, in an effort to not direct all profit to large tech companies, we tried to include links to [Amazon Smile](#). "When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. You can choose from over one million organizations to support." So, if you're shopping at Amazon, set up Amazon Smile and automatically donate to your favorite nonprofit organization.

In addition, we would encourage anyone reading this guide to do further research into affordable options at other retailers who match prices or support your values, or to consider local stores in your area that support your local economy.

HARDWARE

Laptops

Recommended Specifications:

- **HDD/Storage:** 1TB SSD
- **Processor:** 6 cores, 3.50 GHz or more (Intel Core i7 processors or newer)
- **RAM/Memory:** 16 GB
- **Screen Size:** 13" – 17" (dependent on how often you travel or bring your laptop to and from an office, as well as which size works best for your vision and ease of use)
- **Ports:** USB-C (3.0 or higher), HDMI, Ethernet
- **Programs to Install:** Microsoft 365 Business Standard or Office 2019, Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox as your browser, Windows Defender (Windows only) or another antivirus, AdBlock or uBlock Origin

How to choose between Mac and PC:

Go with what you are most comfortable and familiar with. It is hard to switch from one to the other after you've continuously used one for a while. However, if you are completely indifferent, consider cost, compatibility with software and peripherals (such as external mice, keyboards, monitors, docks, and other devices that plug into your computer for power) that you normally use, processing speed, storage capacity, the longevity of the device, and upgradability in your decision. If you prefer support from colleagues or friends, only 17% of the world market uses MacOS X so it will be harder to find someone to answer your questions. At the same time, Mac support is readily available from Mac Geniuses at all Mac stores, while it's a bit more difficult to find PC support for a particular laptop due to the variety of different manufacturers.

2022 Recommendations

★ Top Choice

PC: Dell – Inspiron 15 3593

dell.com/en-us/member/shop/dell-laptops/inspiron-15-laptop/spd/inspiron-15-5510-laptop/nn5510eyvmh

- 15.6" HD Touch Screen Laptop
- Intel Core i7
- 16GB Memory
- 1TB SSD
- Windows 11 Home
- Integrated Widescreen HD 720P Webcam

Upgrade

PC: HP Spectre x360

hp.com/us-en/shop/ConfigureView?urlLangId=&catalogId=10051&langId=-1&storeId=10151&catEntryId=3074457345620138318

- 13.5" OLED touchscreen
- Intel® Core™ i7
- 32 GB Memory
- 2 TB SSD
- Windows 11 Pro
- 720p IR Webcam

Mac: Apple MacBook Air

apple.com/shop/buy-mac/macbook-air/space-gray-apple-m1-chip-with-8-core-cpu-and-8-core-gpu-512gb

- Apple M1 chip with 8-core CPU, 7-core GPU, and 16-core Neural Engine
- 16GB unified memory
- 1TB SSD storage
- Retina display with True Tone
- Backlit Magic Keyboard – US English
- Touch ID
- Force Touch trackpad
- Two Thunderbolt / USB 4 ports

Chromebook

While Chromebooks are incredibly affordable and are beginning to include more powerful hardware, we wouldn't recommend substituting either a Windows or Mac laptop for a Chromebook. Chromebooks are great for individuals who only need to use Google Apps (such as Gmail, Google Calendar, Sheets, Docs, Slides, etc...), and other online-only programs. We recommend Chromebooks as an affordable option for fellow or volunteer laptops as they can easily run the VAN, Hustle, GetThru, and other movement programs. Anyone needing to do more multitasking, or to use external applications such as the Microsoft Suite, should generally aim for a more powerful laptop like the ones suggested above.

Lenovo Chromebook Flex 5 13" Laptop

smile.amazon.com/Lenovo-Chromebook-i3-10110U-Integrated-82B80006UX/dp/B086383HC7

- 4 GB Memory
- Core Intel i3 Processor
- 2.1 GHz CPU
- 13.3-inch screen
- Intel Integrated Graphics
- 64 GB HD

- Touchscreen

Computer Monitors

Recommended Specifications:

- 24 inches or larger
- 1080p
- Energy Star Certified, Includes Warranty
- HDMI and USB and Thunderbolt
- Built-in speaker, microphone and webcam
- Consider a Swivel Base

Why might you need this?

Maybe your laptop screen is too small or you need 2 screens when you are working. This can stay in your office and attach to your laptop as needed.

2022 Recommendations

★ Top Choice

27 inch: Dell 27 4K UHD USB-C Monitor - S2722QC

dell.com/en-us/member/shop/dell-27-4k-uhd-usb-c-monitor-s2722qc/apd/210-BBQT/monitors-monitor-accessories

Economical Option

27 inch: BenQ 27 Inch IPS Monitor

smile.amazon.com/dp/B072XFFQ4K/amazon.com/dp/B072XFFQ4K

Upgrade

32 inch: Dell 32 Curved 4K UHD Monitor – S3221QS

dell.com/en-us/member/shop/dell-32-curved-4k-uhd-monitor-s3221qs/apd/210-axkm/monitors-monitor-accessories

Webcams

Recommended Specifications:

- 1080p
- HD Video
- USB connection
- 360-degree swivel (if desired) Built-in Microphone (if desired)
- Ring Light (if desired)

Why might you need this?

If your laptop and/or monitor don't have a built-in webcam or their webcam is broken, then you will likely need this for video calls and meetings or training that require video.

2022 Recommendation

C920s Pro Hd Webcam

target.com/p/logitech-c920s-pro-hd-webcam/-/A-76168087?

Specs:

- AutoFocus
- 1080p Webcam
- Stereo Microphone and Privacy Cover
- Compatibility: PC, Mac, Chromebook

Docking Station

Recommended Specifications:

- Compatible with Windows and Mac
- Multiple USB ports and HDMI connection
- SD card reader

Why might you need this?

This allows a laptop to function as a desktop computer, with connections for a monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer, etc.

2022 Recommendation

Belkin Thunderbolt 3 Dock Pro

amazon.com/Belkin-Thunderbolt-Transfer-Upstream-Charging/dp/B07YLMJZXB

Headphones

Recommended Specifications:

- Bluetooth calling

Why might you need this?

- You are on a lot of calls and video meetings and your audio isn't great on your phone or computer.

2022 Recommendations

★ **Top Choice**

Sony WH-1000XM3/B Wireless

electronics.sony.com/audio/headphones/headband/p/wh1000xm4-b

- Industry-Leading Noise-Cancelling
- Over-Ear Headphones
- Google Assistant

Economical Option

Anker Soundcore Life Q20 Hybrid Active Noise Canceling Headphones

amazon.com/Soundcore-Cancelling-Headphones-Wireless-Bluetooth/dp/B07NM3RSRQ

Barcode Scanners

Recommended Specifications:

- Cordless
- USB Supported
- Works with Windows and IOS devices
- Rechargeable battery

Why might you need this?

VAN Data Entry from a paper list

2022 Recommendation

Inateck 1D USB Barcode Scanner with Intelligent Stand Wired

smile.amazon.com/dp/B07F5ZCRG5

Internet Connectivity Recommendations

2022 Recommendations

Wifi Mesh

Amazon Eero Pro

smile.amazon.com/Amazon-eero-pro-6-3-pack/dp/B085VNCZHZ

- Covers up to 6,000 sq. ft.
- Wi-Fi 6 tri-band
- Works with Alexa, Amazon Zigbee, Bluetooth
- Supports Gigabit Internet Speeds

Wifi Recommendations:

- If you encounter Wi-Fi dead zones or poor signal strength in your home or office, a Wi-Fi mesh system can dramatically improve your coverage by providing a strong Wi-Fi signal in multiple locations.
- A Wi-Fi mesh system is essentially a router that connects directly to your modem. Instead of being a single device, however, the mesh consists of a number of different “nodes” that you can place throughout your home or office.
- The number of nodes you use will depend on the size of your home or office, but most systems usually come with two or three out of the box.
- The nodes are all part of a single wireless network that you connect your various devices to, so it’s like having wireless routers placed throughout your home or office.
- The mesh systems start at around \$100 for one that can cover a couple of thousand square feet and top out at around \$1,000 for up to 10,000 square feet of coverage.
- Some popular makers of Wi-Fi mesh systems include Eero, Linksys, Netgear, Asus, and Google.
- Amazon and Best Buy are great places to shop for a mesh router. Your internet service provider may also sell them.

Upgrade your internet package

- Check with your current provider to make sure you have the best internet package available because faster speeds are becoming increasingly available.
- Make sure that you have their most up-to-date equipment; find out if there would be a cost for this new router, etc. or if they would be covered under your current contract.
- If you are going to be charged a rental fee, it might be more economical to purchase your own equipment. You'll want to check with your internet provider for a list of compatible devices.
- If your equipment is out of date, you may not be getting the full bandwidth you're paying for.
- You can compare providers here if there are multiple service providers in your area: [reviews.org/internet-service/best-internet-service-providers](https://www.reviews.org/internet-service/best-internet-service-providers)

HotSpot

- Find out from your cell phone provider whether a hotspot is available on your cell phone plan.
- This will be necessary if your internet goes out at home and you don't have somewhere that you can go to access the internet or if you're traveling and no wifi is available. [pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-turn-your-phone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot](https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-turn-your-phone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot)

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

An ergonomic workstation can improve productivity and decrease the risk of workplace injuries such as back pain and carpal tunnel syndrome. Consider the placement of your essential tools when setting up your office. You'll want to make sure your desk height, computer placement, and desk chair are configured for an ergonomic and comfortable workspace.

ehs.tamu.edu/media/1272950/ErgonomicConsiderationsForOfficeSetup.pdf

Office Chairs

Recommended Specifications:

- Mesh Back
- Adjustable seat height
- Adjustable seat width and depth
- Adjustable seat tilt
- Lumbar support
- Adjustable armrests (height adjustable at minimum, but pivot adjustable is a plus)
- Reclining mechanism
- Neck support (if needed)

Why does it matter what chair you sit in?

Lumbar and pelvic support promotes good posture and causes less muscle strain. Research suggests poor posture leads to poor concentration, headaches, and lower back pain. It can even lead to herniated disks.

2022 Recommendations

These are the most popular, highly recommended, and affordable chairs that provide the key elements of a good ergonomic chair.

★ Top Choice

Autonomous.ai Ergo Chair Pro

autonomous.ai/office-chairs/ergonomic-chair?purchase_method=2

Upgrade

If you spend a lot of time at your desk, consider investing in a quality desk chair. These chairs are widely praised for their design and durability and should last for 10 years or more.

Herman Miller Aeron

store.hermanmiller.com/office-chairs-aeron/aeron-chair/2195348.html

Economical Option

These aren't going to be as good as the recommended chairs, but do provide many of the elements of good ergonomics.

Amazon Basics Ergonomic Adjustable

amazon.com/Amazon-Basics-Ergonomic-Adjustable-Upholstered/dp/B08KTP15LJ

Heating pad

Why might you need this?

If you have back pain from sitting all day, or tend to get cold in your office, this can help ease your muscles and keep you warm at the same time.

2022 Recommendation

smile.amazon.com/XL-Heating-Pad-Electric-Shoulder/dp/B07T85CNX2

Standing Desk (Desk Riser)

Recommended Specifications:

- Height Adjustable
- Warranty
- Accommodates at minimum a monitor and laptop, with a tray accommodating keyboard and mouse.
- Supports 33 lbs or more (to accommodate monitor, keyboard, laptop)

Why might you need this?

health.harvard.edu/blog/the-truth-behind-standing-desks-2016092310264

2022 Recommendations

★ Top Choice

Vivo Monitor Riser Tabletop Sit to Stand Height Adjustable Standing Desk

smile.amazon.com/dp/B0784HWPNG

Economical Option:

FlexiSpot AlcoveRiser Sit-To-Stand Desk Converter, 42"W, Black

flexispot.com/alcoveriser-standing-desk-converters-m7?sscid=21k5_huqdg

Sit to Stand Full Desk

Recommended Specifications:

- Electronic lever, though manual crank works fine too.
- Adjustable height that works for your individual stature. If you are on the taller end you may want to go with a taller model versus someone who's shorter.

Why might you need this?

health.harvard.edu/blog/the-truth-behind-standing-desks-2016092310264

2022 Recommendations

★ Top Choice

Jarvis Bamboo Standing Desk

fully.com/standing-desks/jarvis/jarvis-adjustable-height-desk-bamboo.html

Economical Option

SmartDesk 2

autonomous.ai/standing-desks/smartdesk-2-home

Upgrade

iMovR Lander Desk

imovr.com/lander-standing-desk.html

Anti Fatigue Mat

Recommended Specifications:

Why might you need this?

It is a great compliment to a standing desk and can help reduce some of the negative effects of standing like joint soreness and fatigue.

2022 Recommendation

New Life Gel Pro Anti-Fatigue Mat

smile.amazon.com/NewLife-GelPro-Anti-Fatigue-Resistant-Grasscloth/dp/B00MVYIAQ4

SOFTWARE

Computer Backup Software

Why might you need this?

Protects files against data loss from hardware failure or theft. It's constantly scanning the files for changes, and every time a file is saved on your computer, it's backed up on a server. This tool is explicitly designed to prevent data loss and not for collaboration like syncing programs (like Google Drive.)

Backblaze

Website: backblaze.com

Cost: \$7/month or \$70/year

Compatibility: Mac or PC

Created: 2014

Purpose: This creates a copy of the files on your computer so if something happens to the computer if it's stolen or breaks, there is no loss of data. It can also track your lost computer.

Pros:

- It's easy, unobtrusive, a kind of "set it and forget" syncing going on in the background.
- It keeps a version history for 30 days. You can add unlimited version history for an additional \$2/month.
- Offsite, so there's no worry about the backup drive being destroyed or stolen

Cons:

- Additional costs for restoring large files on top of the monthly fee.
- It takes a day or more to perform the first backup
- Limited by download speed or by requesting a hard drive through the mail; restoring an entire drive isn't instant.

Support: Chat, Support Ticket

Security: All backups are encrypted with SSL encryption, 2FA, and passphrase authentication

Recommendation: Periodically check your backup by downloading some files to ensure its working correctly. Store a copy of critical files to Google Drive or Dropbox cloud service for redundancy and immediate backup. It's also a good idea to periodically create a local backup. This will prevent you from having to wait for a complete re-install and get you back up and going faster. It isn't helpful for daily backups or in the case of total loss or up-to-the-minute file recovery.

Similar Tools: iCloud (Mac only), Carbonite, Google Drive, DropBox, OneDrive

Legislative Advocacy Tool

Why might you need this?

If you are tracking legislation in various states, you might want to use a tool like this to monitor and alert you to changes in the legislation..

FiscalNote

Website: fiscalnote.com

Purpose: Allows organizations to monitor and be proactively alerted about state legislation and regulations, including bills, bill summaries, research reports, committees, hearings, voting records, and state executive orders.

Cost: \$1,800 per state

Contact: Kristina Dorsey, kristina.dorsey@fiscalnote.com

Created: 2013

Pros:

- Can create very tailored, Boolean searches for bills and regulations
- Can filter bills by legislative session, point in the process, and other criteria
- Bill information includes sponsor affiliation, “likelihood of passage” predictor, and whipboard
- Has contact info for legislators and their staffers
- Allows users to create various lists of bills and share them as emails, website embeds, PDFs, or excel spreadsheets

Cons:

- Has a learning curve
- Requires a staff person to dedicate time to set up searches, folders, and labels, and to reviewing and editing alerts on a weekly or more frequent basis during the legislative session

Support: Provides initial training, email support, and online training library

Similar Tools: Fast Democracy, Enview, GovPredict

Knowledge Management System

Why might you need this?

This is a web app for managing internal documentation, allowing institutional knowledge to live in one place, organized, and easily accessible without having to request it.

FreshDesk Knowledge Base

Website: freshdesk.com/helpdesk-management/knowledge-base

Cost: Included in a subscription to FreshDesk Support Ticket System. There is a free plan with limited options. The paid subscription starts at \$15/agent per month.

Nonprofit Discount: Varies up to 15%

freshdesk.com/industries/help-desk-software-ngo-nonprofits

Compatibility: Online, Apps for iOS and Android available

Created: 2010

Purpose: It's an application that allows staff and volunteers to find answers to questions and documentation quickly and easily.

Pros:

- Simple to use
- Collaborative editing
- Easy to organize documents

Cons:

- Likely results in some redundancy with Google Drive
- Existing documents have to be migrated manually

Support: Support Ticketing, Phone, Email

Security: SSL certificate enabled by default, Restricting login access requires an upgrade

Integrations: More than 1000 integrations available

Similar Tools: Confluence, Notion, Google Drive, ZenDesk

Notion

Website: notion.so

Cost: notion.so/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: notionup.typeform.com/to/nlhrVv

Created: June 2018

Purpose: All-In-One Workspace

Pros:

- Ability to create flexible product management tables like in Jira and Asana,
- Ability to notetake and organize information like in Google Docs and Confluence,
- Ability to create databases and inventories/directories like in Airtable,
- Various methods of support available for whole teams and individuals,
- A broad variety of pricing plans for all types of teams and individuals,
- Non-profit discount available.

Cons:

- While not large, there is a degree of learning involved with the tool, just as with any new tool.

Support: Guides, Tutorials, Help and Support Centers (respectively).

Security: notion.so/Privacy-Policy-3468d120cf614d4c9014c09f6adc9091

Integrations: notion.so/Embeds-6b7133323590447b9d8e963c136ebce5#a60d80ee63a046d08e12388363e8f587

Learning Management System

Why might you need this?

Learning Management Systems facilitate online training programs. They allow you to create lessons and courses for learners and test them on their grasp of the material.

Litmos

Website: litmos.com

Contact: Brian Gellman, brian.gellman@sap.com

Cost: litmos.com/litmos-pricing

Nonprofit Discount: techsoup.org/sap-litmos-details

Created: Bought by SAP in 2011

Purpose: An alternative to Google Classroom, which allows users to learn via classroom-style modules within various learning paths. The learning paths are set up by administrators and assigned to users.

Pros:

- Integrates with FreshDesk
- SCORM & xAPI compatible
- Simple to use interface for learners
- Only charges for active users

Cons:

- Can be complicated to set up and admin
- Cost can be prohibitive for some organizations

Support:

- Onboarding training and support
- Dedicated account manager
- Video and Webinar training on website

Similar Tools: Docebo, Google Classroom, Moodle

Staff Communication

Why might you need this?

In a remote workplace, quick communication is vital. Slack allows you to have one-off conversations with coworkers without having to send an email or text their phone. It also allows you to send a notification to multiple people without sending a bunch of emails. It can also foster community by facilitating those water cooler conversations via social channels and direct messaging.

Slack

Website: slack.com

Nonprofit Discount: Free for qualifying nonprofits up to 250 members

Compatibility: Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android

Created: 2014

Purpose: Communicate with staff, partners, funders, or vendors in channels or via direct messages

Pros:

- Cross-platform compatibility
- Easy to use
- Widely used in progressive community
- Can be fun!

Cons:

- All messages, even those in Direct Messaging, can be read by the application administrator, making it inappropriate for privileged communications.
- Difficult to organize links and documents in the tool, forcing you to search for what you're looking for.

Support: Online library and tips, webinars

Security: slack.com/trust/security

Recommendation: Apply for the free nonprofit upgrade. To foster a sense of community in an online workspace, create channels for sharing anything from recipes to playlists to vacation photos. Set up integrations with Google calendar, so people know when you're in a meeting or OOO and Google drive to make sharing documents easier. You can even start a FreshDesk support ticket or a Zoom meeting right from Slack.

Integrations: 2.4k integrations including Google Suite, 1Password, Asana, Zoom, FreshDesk, Dropbox, Calendly

Similar Tools: Microsoft Teams, RocketChat, Discord, Google Hangouts

Writing Support

Why might you need this?

Editing software helps make your writing clearer and looks more professional. It also checks for bias, tone, and misspelled words.

Grammarly

Website: grammarly.com

Purpose: Spelling and grammar check on everything you write everywhere, including emails, Google Docs, Microsoft Office, Websites, and more

Cost: grammarly.com/plans

Nonprofit Discount: grammarly.com/nonprofits-ngos

Integrations: Microsoft Office, Chrome Extension

Created: 2015

Pros:

- Provides reports of weekly word usages, including the most common grammar fixes from the week and how to learn and avoid them in the future.
- Tone detection

Cons:

- Geared toward everyday writing and not technical writing
- Pop up feedback box can get in the way when trying to read or resize text boxes

Support: Articles, Support Requests

Security: grammarly.com/security-practices

Similar Tools: Linguix, ProWritingAid

Recommendation: Free plan is sufficient for most users, but users that write a lot for large audiences, such as communications staff, may want the premium plan.

Other Writing Resources

Conscious Language Guide

Website: consciousstyleguide.com/general

Scheduling

Why might you need this?

Finding a meeting time that works for multiple people is challenging, and doing this over email or DM can be time-consuming. Online schedulers allow the person (or persons) you're meeting with to pick a time that works best for them, based on your calendar.

Calendly

Website: calendly.com

Cost: calendly.com/pages/pricing

Created: 2013

Purpose: Individual and Team scheduling options

Nonprofit Discount: Yes, nonprofit pricing is available, email support@calendly.com.

Integrations: Google Calendar, Zoom, Zapier, Chrome & Firefox Extensions

Pros:

- Black-owned business
- Group Scheduling
- Multiple types of scheduling

Cons:

- Free version only allows one event type
- If someone tries to schedule too close to another meeting, it might not let them

Support: Resource Library, Help Center, Video Tutorials

Security: calendly.com/security

Recommendation: Try the 14-day free trial and then try out the free version for another week. If you miss the paid features, the premium account should meet most of your team's needs. If you go with a paid version, have one person on your staff or team set up an initial account and add the others so that you can have event types that coordinate with all of your calendars. Make sure your availability is set to only when you want to have a meeting.

Similar Tools: Fantastical, MixMax

Online Signature Collection

DocuSign

Website: docusign.com

Cost: docusign.com/products-and-pricing

Nonprofit Discount: available by contacting sales team

Created: 2003

Purpose: DocuSign eSignature accelerates agreements, eliminates manual tasks, and makes it easy to connect with the tools and systems you're already using.

Pros:

- Eliminates manual tasks such as printing of documents, physical signatures, and scanning back of completed forms.
- Sign from anywhere, your computer or mobile device via the app.
- Relatively easy to use
- Instant status availability, always know where your agreement is in the signing process.
- Ability to create custom fields so you can collect and track the most important information to you or your organization.
- Highly secure, DocuSign meets some of the most stringent US, EU, and global security standards, and uses the strongest data encryption technologies available.

Cons:

- It is easy to go over your limits for signatures without realizing it.

Support: Resource Center, Webinars

Security: support.docusign.com/en/articles/Legal-FAQ#_Toc534813253docusign.com/trust

Integrations: 350+ integrations

Recommendation: If you're going to use DocuSign, we recommend reaching out to them directly to get a contract designed to fit the needs of your organization. Ask about nonprofit and volume-based discounts.

Similar Tools: AdobeSign, HelloSign

PDF Editor

Why might you need this?

Worth the cost if you often have to fill out, edit or create PDFs. We suggest the annual subscription to get a discounted rate.

Adobe DC Pro

Website: acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/features.html

Cost: \$14.99/month with annual subscription

Nonprofit Discount: Open to organizations with annual operating budgets of \$10 million or less
techsoup.org/products/adobe-acrobat-pro-dc-1-year-individual-membership-access-to-discounted-rates-special-offer-g-50856-

Compatibility: Mobile or Desktop Mac/PC, Android, iOS

Created: 1993

Purpose: Edit, Create, Convert and Sign PDFs

Pros:

- Save on printing costs: paper, ink, and printer
- Edit and split PDFs with ease
- Create forms and collect signatures
- Multiple features available

Cons:

- Accounts can't be shared; limited to a single computer

Integrations: Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive, other Adobe products

Support: User Guide, Tutorials, Chat Support

Security: adobe.com/security.html

Similar Tools: Mac Preview, Nitro Pro, PDF Expert

Password Manager

Why might you need this?

A password manager can generate passwords, save them for later, and securely share passwords with coworkers.

1Password

Website: 1password.com

Cost: 1password.com/teams/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: 50% on team accounts; 25% on business accounts

Compatibility: Mac, Windows, iOS, Android

Created: 2005

Purpose: Generate random, secure passwords, share Passwords securely, as well as autofill them in your web browser

Pros:

- Create strong, randomly generated unique passwords
- Share passwords securely with staff or a team
- Receive alerts for compromised websites and vulnerable passwords
- 2-factor authentication
- Secure document storage

Cons:

With any password manager, if you forget your Master Password you may lose access to your saved passwords

Support: HelpDesk, KnowledgeBase, Forums, Email

Security: 1password.com/security

Similar Tools: LastPass, BitWarden, NordPass

URL Shortener

Why might you need this?

pcmag.com/how-to/your-business-needs-a-url-shortener

Bit.ly

Website: bit.ly

Cost: bitly.com/pages/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: No

Compatibility: Web

Created: 2008

Purpose: Share links as neat, short URLs and measure where the clicks came from

Pros:

- Free version is robust
- Customizable link ending
- Can create QR Codes
- Allows user to track engagement for url

Cons:

- Need paid version to use custom domain
- If the company goes out of business, none of your links will work

Support: Self-help Desk

Security: support.bitly.com/hc/en-us/categories/360001889251-SSO-Security

Similar Tools: Rebrandly, TinyURL

Task Manager

Asana

Website: asana.com

Cost: asana.com/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: Not for political or advocacy organizations. 50% off annually for Premium or Business subscriptions. Details here.

Integrations: asana.com/apps

Notably: Slack, Tableau, Microsoft Office 365, Gmail, Chrome Extension, Freshdesk, Mobile app, Dropbox, GitHub

Created: 2011

Purpose: manage team projects and tasks

Pros:

- Free Version: automated reminders for tasks; project templates available; easily track project progress; log, review, and report out on completed tasks
- Paid Version: create dependencies and relationships between tasks and projects; multiple views to suit different style preferences; public-facing forms to submit requests and tasks

Cons:

- Requires an investment of time to set up custom projects
- Only works if users are in the habit of logging and updating tasks and projects
- Integrations can be clunky

Support: User Guide, Asana Academy Courses & Webinars, Forum, Support Articles

Security: asana.com/guide/help/faq/security

Recommendation: The free version works great for small teams. Larger teams, remote teams, and those with many concurrent projects may benefit from Asana Premium.

Similar Tools: Trello, Todoist, Notion

Support Ticketing System

Why might you need this?

This tool tracks support requests. It helps with time tracking, improving response time, and coordinating support from multiple people and more than one department.

FreshDesk

Website: freshdesk.com

Cost: freshdesk.com/pricing

Created: 2010

Nonprofit Discount: freshdesk.com/industries/help-desk-software-ngo-nonprofits

Compatibility: Online, Apps for iOS, Android

Purpose: Tracking requests and centralized place to ask for help

Pros:

- Free Version: Email & Social Ticketing, Knowledge Base, link tickets
- Paid Version: Automated Ticket routing, ID tickets already being addressed

Cons:

- Requires an investment of time to set up (and maintain) Knowledge Base
- Only paid version can be automated
- Can't remove CCed email addresses
- Customer service is ironically slow

Support: Support Helpdesk, Email, Phone

Security: SSL certificate enabled by default, Restrict login access by whitelisting only office network addresses for agents and employees

Recommendation: The free version is surprisingly robust, but larger teams will need the Premium version. Definitely apply for a nonprofit discount.

Similar Tools: ZenDesk, Jira, ZohoDesk, HappyFox

Data Reporting & Visualization

Why might you need this?

To create data visualizations, such as charts, graphs, or maps. Most people can comprehend data better in a visual format, rather than just numbers on a spreadsheet.

Tableau

Website: tableau.com

Cost: buy.tableau.com

Nonprofit Discount: techsoup.org/tableau (only open to organizations with annual operating budgets of \$5 million or less)

Integrations: Text files, Excel spreadsheets, Google Sheets, Microsoft Access, SQL, etc.

Created: 2003

Purpose: Software for creating data visualizations, such as charts, graphs, and maps

Pros:

- Very powerful
- Easy to use
- Graphics are very nice
- You don't need to know how to write SQL queries (but it's helpful if you do)
- Free 2-week trial

Cons:

- Can be expensive if you don't qualify for the nonprofit discount
- Complex visualizations can be a bit of a learning curve

Support: Knowledge Base, Live Training, Recorded Webinars, Consulting, FAQ

Security: help.tableau.com/current/server/en-us/security_data.htm

Recommendation: A 2-year individual license for \$58 Tableau Desktop (through TechSoup) can't be beat (if your nonprofit qualifies). It offers the same full functionality as other versions of Tableau.

Similar Tools: Google Data Studio, Periscope

Canva

Website: canva.com

Cost: canva.com/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: You can apply for free Canva Pro--support.canva.com/account-basics/nonprofit-program/apply-for-nonprofit

Created: 2011

Purpose: You can use it to design engaging posters, posts, presentations for your social media, for marketing and educational purposes.

Pros:

- You can still create engaging designs with the free version-- so no purchase is required
- The interface is easy to navigate and people with little to no design experience can create
- Numerous templates are made to scale for the purpose you intend to use them for

- Has Brand Kit features to ensure all your designs are using the same colors and elements (Canva Premium)
- Many fonts and colors available
- There is the ability to upload your own images or use theirs

Cons:

- Collaborating on projects can be difficult with more than 1 person because the users usually have to refresh their browser to see the changes
- In order to use most of the culturally relevant images and elements (pictures of people from a specific demographic, for example), you have to pay for them for either \$1.00 each or buy purchasing Canva Pro
- Not easy to track changes made by others on your designs

Support: Has an entire 'Learn' section with tutorials, blogs, and courses and has a help center with multiple subjects. You are also able to submit questions through a contact form

Security: Password protected

Integrations: Can integrate with your Facebook and Instagram to post your creations and schedule posting (versus having to download your image and upload separately into each tool)

Recommendation: The additional access to elements, photos and features is worth the price for your organization even if you can't get it free as a nonprofit.

Google Data Studio

Website: support.google.com/datastudio/answer/6283323

Cost: Free

Nonprofit discount: Included in Google Account Suite

Created: 2016

Purpose: Visualize your data with reports and tables, share and collaborate on reports with your team, and connect to a variety of data sources.

Pros:

- It's free! Included in your Google Account Suite
- Great tool for beginning your visualization journey without having to pay anything
- Easily connect to your spreadsheets in Google Sheets
- Easily share reports, charts, and graphs with anyone
- Easily collaborate with anyone similar to Sheets, Docs, and Slides
- No SQL needed

Cons:

- Not as powerful as dedicated visualization software

Support: Help Center, Guides, Support Community

Security: support.google.com/datastudio/answer/6371135

Integrations: datastudio.google.com/data

Recommendation: Any and all data staff should take full advantage of Google Data Studio. It can be on the fly, no risks, low investment reporting and visualization tool that helps to get the job done when you just need something simple and quick. It would still be recommended to use Tableau or other options for larger and more demanding visualization, however.

Data Entry Vendor

Why might you need this?

You have collected information on paper at events or in the field and don't have any staff or volunteers available to enter that data for you.

Chorus

Website: vidado.ai/

Contact: vidado.ai/contact-sales

Cost: Custom, vidado.ai/contact-sales

Nonprofit Discount: Contact Sales

Created: 2011, Acquired by SS&C Chorus in 2021

Purpose: Platform for reading, enriching, and delivering data from paper.

Pros:

- Great for automating the data entry process of any program
- Uses AI to assist in the reading and digitization of on-paper handwriting
- Customer UI has a lot of functionality and even allows you to compare templates and overlay documents and templates to find pain points or just to compare

Cons:

- A good amount of work to set up the system before actual data entry happens
- There isn't a whole lot of documentation about how best to use the tool for our typical work

Integrations: support.vidado.ai/support/solutions/articles/60000669954-technical-integration-faqs

Security: vidado.ai/privacy-notice/

Support: Knowledge base, Tutorials, FAQs, Customer Support Representative

Similar Tools: There are many data entry vendors available but State Voices only has experience with this one.

DIGITAL SECURITY & PRIVACY

Virtual Private Network

Why might you need this?

cdt.org/insights/techsplinations-part-5-virtual-private-networks

VyprVPN

Website: vyprvpn.com

Purpose: Protect yourself and your data online. Securely access apps, and websites.

Cost: vyprvpn.com/buy-vpn

Nonprofit Discount:

Compatibility: Windows, Mac, iOS, Android

Created: 2009

Pros:

- 70 server locations
- Does not log any internet activity
- Can bypass anti-VPN restrictions

Cons:

- Slower in some cases than unprotected connection
- Some websites block VPN IP addresses

Support: 24/7 Email, Chat, HelpDesk, Community Forum

Security: www.goldenfrog.website/privacy

Similar Tools: NordVPN, Mullvad, ProtonVPN

VPN Comparison Chart: www.goldenfrog.website/privacy

Two Factor Authentication

Why might you need this?

Two Factor Authentication prevents your account from being taken over by a password breach because it requires both your password and a one-time code to log in. It's more secure than SMS authentication because with SMS authentication there is a risk of your text message being intercepted.

Authy

Website: authy.com

Cost: Free

Compatibility: iOS or Android

Created: 2012

Similar Tools: Google Authenticator

45

Personal Data Removal Service

Why might you need this?

Your personal information such as name, address, family relationships, email, and phone number are available via data brokers on the internet. Data Removal Services remove these listings.

DeleteMe

Website: joindeleteme.com

Cost: joindeleteme.com/privacy-protection-plans

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Compatibility: Web

Created: 2011

Purpose: Remove personal information from the internet to protect you against identity theft or harassment

Pros:

- Does the work for you so you don't have to request from each site individually
- Continuously scans for new information
- Offers a free guide to remove data yourself

Cons:

- Not Free, Requires Subscription
- Cannot remove from all sites
- Cannot remove public court or arrest records

Support: HelpDesk, Phone, Email

Security: joindeleteme.com/help/kb/trust-the-deleteme-team

Similar Tools: Data Broker List, Reputation Defender

Browser Add-Ons

You'll want to install privacy and ad blocking extensions for your web browser. These can prevent your browser (and computer by extension) from being exploited or downloading viruses via malicious code. A few that are recommended by digital security experts are

HTTPS Everywhere

This makes your browser default to the secure version of a website, protecting your information from interception by a third party. eff.org/https-everywhere

UBlock Origin

An ad-blocker stops intrusive ads from taking over your browser or even preventing you from seeing content on a website. Not all websites, particularly news sites may require you to disable it to access their website. Use it especially for unfamiliar sites.

ublockorigin.com

Privacy Badger

Similar to an Ad-blocker, Privacy Badger blocks advertisements, but it's primary function is to prevent malicious code from taking over your computer. It also blocks cross-site tracking.

privacybadger.org

FREE DOWNLOADS

Archiving & Compression

Why might you need this?

Creating compressed files that take up less space on your hard drive, and opening compressed files

Windows: 7-Zip 7-zip.org

Mac: Archive Utility included in Mac OS

Digital Scanner/PDF Creator

Why might you need this?

This is a mobile application to scan documents using your phone camera. This allows you to create a digital copy of a paper document without having to use a physical scanner.

Adobe Scan: acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/mobile/scanner-app.html

PDF Reader

Why might you need this?

PDF is a popular document format. To view a PDF you need a PDF Reader app.

Adobe Acrobat Reader: acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/pdf-reader.html

Screenshots

Why might you need this?

This application takes a picture of your screen. This can be useful for creating documentation, or for troubleshooting.

Windows: Snip and Sketch built into OS

Mac: Screenshot built into OS

Screen Recorder

Why might you need this?

Record your desktop is helpful for recording a training or for bug reporting.

Windows: Built into OS tomsguide.com/how-to/how-to-record-your-screen-on-windows-10

Mac: Built into OS

Website: support.apple.com/en-us/HT208721

48

Text Editor

Why might you need this?

Text editors are useful for cleaning up and standardizing messy data

Windows: Notepad ++

Website: notepad-plus-plus.org/downloads

Mac: TextMate

Website: macromates.com

ACCESSIBILITY

26% of Americans have some kind of disability and BIPOC communities are consistently underserved and under-represented. Implementing accessibility technology will help us bridge that gap. It doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. The tools and resources featured here are free and open to anyone.

Common Types of Accessibility Technology

- Colorblindness friendly color schemes
- Accessible fonts & design
- Multiple modes of training material
- Screen-readers & screen enlargement tools
- Braille signage
- Sign language interpreters for in-person events
- Audio descriptions in videos
- Captioning for videos

Additional Resources

Job Accommodation Network

askjan.org/toolkit/index.cfm

Accessibility Resource List

docs.google.com/document/d/1tELKMi8zXEfn6RNsUfyZ6OXT-D4-eIUyfk0TEkrP-Es/edit

Creating An Accessible Workplace

themuse.com/advice/how-to-create-an-accessible-workplace

Creating Accessible Documents

aem.cast.org/create/creating-accessible-documents

Color Blindness

Why is this important?

Make your materials accessible to people with color blindness so it's easily discernible regardless of your ability to discern color.

Recommendations

Check to make sure your color scheme is differentiated enough to be clear regardless of color perception. You can use a color contrast check, use patterns, symbols, proportion and labels to make your graphics more clear and easy to understand.

Color Contrast Checkers

- tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/
- colorsafe.co

Color-blind friendly color Schemes

- jacksonlab.agronomy.wisc.edu/2016/05/23/15-level-colorblind-friendly-palette/
- davidmathlogic.com/colorblind

Dyslexia/Dysgraphia

Why is this important?

1 in 5 people in the US is dyslexic. Dyslexia and Dysgraphia affect the way your brain processes text-based information. The principles of making text-based communication clearer will benefit everyone consuming your content.

Recommendations

Some simple accommodations are to use clear navigation and headings, keep text spacing wide, use accessible fonts, and make text bigger. Keep your layout consistent, make required fields clearly marked, and when possible, use symbols and icons in addition to text. Enlarged sans serif fonts are the easiest to read. Text to Speech tools can be helpful for some people with dyslexia.

Accessible Fonts

pixelpex.io/blog/choosing-the-right-font-and-its-presentation

OpenDyslexic

Website: opendyslexic.org

Dyslexie

Website: dyslexiefont.com

Visual Impairment

Why is this important?

These are tools that make technology more accessible for people with visual impairments.

Recommendation

Follow Web Accessibility standards for websites and digital materials. Use audio descriptions and auditory prompts. For in-person accessibility, keep furniture in the same place, push in chairs at desks and tables, if possible use braille on office signage. Keep rubber bands on hand for differentiation for things like pens and water bottles.

Screen Reader

Text to speech allows people with visual impairments to navigate digital tools.

Built-in Text to Voice tools

Windows: Narrator

support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/complete-guide-to-narrator-e4397a0d-ef4f-b386-d8ae-c172f109bdb1

Mac: Voice Over

apple.com/accessibility/vision

Similar Tools:

NV Access

A free and open-source, portable screen reader for Microsoft Windows

Website: nvaccess.org/download

High Contrast Interface

Windows: support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/change-color-contrast-in-windows-fedc744c-90ac-69df-aed5-c8a90125e696#PickTab=Windows_11

Mac: mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/increase-contrast-macos-1015-catalina

Audio Descriptions

Why is this important?

Videos are less accessible to people with visual impairments, audio descriptions help by literally describing what is happening on the screen. The simplest way to accomplish this is to build in descriptions. Instead of saying “click here” in a video, be specific about what action you’re performing on screen; for example, “click the Submit button.”

Additional Resources: digital.gov/2014/06/30/508-accessible-videos-how-to-make-audio-descriptions

Voice Recognition

Speech to Text makes text-based easier for those with visual impairment, learning disabilities, and people with mobility limitations as well.

Built-in Voice to Text

Windows: support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/use-voice-typing-to-talk-instead-of-type-on-your-pc-fec94565-c4bd-329d-e59a-af033fa5689f

Mac: Dictation

support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/use-dictation-mh40584/mac

Screen Enlargement

Why might you need this?

Screen magnification can help people with low vision read more clearly.

Windows: Magnifier support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/make-windows-easier-to-see-c97c2b0d-cadb-93f0-5fd1-59ccfe19345d

Mac: Magnifier support.apple.com/guide/mac-help/change-zoom-preferences-for-accessibility-mh40579/mac

Hearing Impairment

Why is this important?

Visual communication is helpful for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. While captioning and sign language interpretation are very useful, low tech options such as text messaging and simple pen and paper work too if other resources aren’t available.

Video Captioning

Adding captions to videos is the simplest way to make spoken digital communication accessible. There are many types of captioning from automatic options to more advanced professional services.

Some services and applications include captioning features. Youtube, for example, includes optional auto captioning.

Cadet (Cross Platform)

ncamftp.wgbh.org/cadet/help/introduction.html

Amara (Online)

amara.org/en

Adding captions to popular platforms:

washington.edu/accessibility/videos

Live Captioning

While it's always going to be better to have an interpreter or real time translator, there are a number of tools that can fill in gaps.

Zoom

support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Managing-closed-captioning-and-live-transcription

Live Captioning Initiative

lc.midcamp.org

Web Captioner

webcaptioner.com

TOOLS FOR DATA PRACTITIONERS

Why might you need this?

These are some tools and reference materials to help make your work a little easier.

ExcelJet

Purpose: Find an excel formula to do the thing you need it to do.

exceljet.net

Pandas

Purpose: The definitive python-based data manipulation and analysis tool

[Pandas.pydata.org](https://pandas.pydata.org)

54

Software Code Editor

Why might you need this?

Code editors are specialized software designed to help software developers write programming code.

Visual Studio Code

Website: code.visualstudio.com/

Cost: Free

Compatibility: Mac, Windows

Created: 2015

Purpose: Editing source code

Pros:

- Most widely used code editor with numerous resources for support
- Very user-friendly for beginners
- Auto-suggests completion of code

Cons:

- Auto-suggestions may slow down advanced programmers
- Built on Electron platform which uses a lot of RAM
- Lacks some advanced features required for very complex coding

Support: code.visualstudio.com/learn

Security: privacy.microsoft.com/en-US/privacystatement

Similar Tools: Sublime Text, Atom, PythonCharm

Versioning Tool

Why might you need this?

This is a repository to store, manage, track, and share software code. It also allows you to store all the changes to the code overtime so you can restore previous versions or manage multiple versions. It also allows you to share your code with other organizations via projects called “repositories” that store

GitHub

Website: github.com

Cost: Free for 501c3 organizations

Nonprofit Discount: support.github.com/contact/nonprofit

Compatability: Online, Desktop App for Mac, Windows

Created: 2008

Purpose: Managing and tracking changes to programming code, facilitates code collaboration, and sharing

Pros:

- Allows you to rollback changes to code
- Can control access and limit who can save code

Cons:

- Has a learning curve
- Public repositories are completely open to anyone to see

Support: Online Community, Support Tickets

Security: SSL, 2FA, private code repositories

Recommendation: If your organization does any kind of software coding or code scripting, using a version control system is strongly recommended. This a form of institutional knowledge sharing. Check out the shared repositories of other organizations.

Similar Tools: GitLab, BitBucket, Azure DevOps

Command Line Tools

Why might you need this?

These are tools that do not have a graphic user interface (GUI) with buttons and windows. Command line utilities run in a text-based program called a “command line interface” (CLI). They are generally more powerful and faster than using an application. They can be used to do things that are difficult or impossible to do with a GUI application. Typically CLI utilities can automate tasks and can perform multiple tasks simultaneously.

Parsons

Why might you need this?

An API wrapper for Python to streamline integration of frequently used tools in the progressive community, such as NGPVAN, ActionNetwork, Twillio, AWS, and Civi.

Website: github.com/move-coop/parsons

Cost: Free

Compatibility: Mac/Windows

Created: 2019

Purpose: Reduce the amount of code necessary to use APIs for common tools

Pros:

- Free
- Actively Maintained
- Focused on and directed toward our typical work

Cons:

- Still requires Python coding knowledge
- Not all API features are supported

Support: Slack Channel, listserv, Github

Security: Parsons doesn't retain or transmit any data.

Similar Tools: Individual tool APIs

CSVKit

Why might you need this?

This tool is for working with csv files. It can convert to and from csv, combine or split files.

Website: github.com/wireservice/csvkit

Cost: Free

Compatibility: Mac/Windows

Created: 2016

Purpose: Facilitates working with csv files too big to open in Excel

Pros:

- Free
- Easy to install
- Doesn't require prior coding ex

Cons:

- Requires using CLI
- Text to CSV requires additional steps
- No support beyond existing documentation

Support: Documentation

Security: No data leaves the computer

Similar Tools: Awk, Python

PowerShell

Why might you need this?

A powerful administration tool for automating and managing tasks in the cloud and for a computer system.

Website: docs.microsoft.com/en-us/powershell

Cost: Free

Compatibility: Windows/Mac

Created: 2006

Purpose: Automates common tasks and allows management of computer resources from command line

Pros:

- Free
- Easy to install
- Well-maintained because it's distributed by Microsoft
- Wide user-based so lots of resources exist

Cons:

- Requires using CLI
- Need to learn PowerShell scripting language
- Developed for Windows so Mac support limited

Support: docs.microsoft.com/en-us/powershell/?view=powershell-7.2

Security: docs.microsoft.com/en-us/powershell/scripting/learn/security-features

Similar Tools: Awk, Python, rsync

Data Warehouse

Civis

Website: civisanalytics.com

Purpose: Consolidates all the data in one place facilitating retrieval and secure storage without having to manage your own server.

Cost: Varies depending on storage space and the number of users

Contact:

Created: 2013

Pros:

- Integrates with our most commonly used tools
- Consolidates all data in one place
- Support is very responsive
- Lowers barrier to using APIs and programming

Cons:

- Expensive
- Still requires programming and API knowledge
- Steep learning curve

Integrations: Notably Google Drive, VAN, Salesforce, Action Network civis.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115004269763-List-of-Platform-Integrations

Support: Email, HelpDesk

Security: civisanalytics.com/blog/how-civis-platform-strengthens-and-simplifies-data-security-for-political-campaigns

Similar Tools: Redshift, Google Firebase

DATA & TECHNOLOGY TRAININGS

This year, we thought it would be helpful to add a Trainings section to our Guide, to help nonprofits and their staff decide which Data & Technology trainings might most fit their needs.

State Voices Data Certification Program: VAN Track

Our Data Certification Program (DCP): VAN Track is recommended for people who wish to improve their knowledge of VAN and gain expertise using data to power their civic engagement work.

Through our Data Certification Program, we provide training to help organizers, advocates, activists, and more to grow in their ability to use data and digital tools to foster positive change in their communities.

Technology and data are often used to further oppress marginalized people, but we can use data to help free us. We can do this by investing in BIPOC organizers and their ideas about what digital tools and strategies we should explore, while making sure technology, tools, training, and resources are in the hands of people experiencing oppression in society.

How to Sign Up: Sign up for [State Voices Inside Voices](#) email list to be the first to know about future sessions of DCP: VAN.

State Voices Data Certification Program: Digital Organizing Track

Our Data Certification Program (DCP): Digital Organizing Track is recommended for people who wish to improve their knowledge of digital organizing, from demos of different tools to lessons on how to make digital trainings accessible, inclusive, and engaging.

How to Sign Up: Sign up for State Voices Inside Voices email list to be the first to know about future sessions of DCP: VAN.

Social Movement Technologies

SMT is a non-profit/NGO providing organizing strategy, training and campaign support to build people power and win in the digital age.

How to Sign Up: State Voices sometimes qualifies for discounts when multiple people from the network sign up for SMT trainings, so if you're ever interested please contact someone at State Voices, or you can also sign up on your own via [SMT's website](#).

Re:Power

Re:Power is a team of organizers, strategists, and technologists dedicated to building transformative political power. They train leaders within communities to create change.

How to Sign Up: You can [visit their website](#) to learn more about the various live and online trainings they are hosting.

Generation Data

Generation Data is a non-profit that focuses on training the next generation of diverse leaders in the progressive, civic, and social impact data community. They offer both free and paid trainings for data practitioners.

How to Sign Up: [Visit their website](#) to find their current training opportunities and be added to their listserv.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

This effort was a labor of love by the State Voices Data & Technology Department in an effort to share their collective knowledge of the tech space as it currently exists. The entire department contributed to the 2020, 2021 and 2022 versions of State Voices' Nonprofit Tech Guide. Contributors and Editors and some of their personal preferences, which are not intended to constitute an endorsement, include:

ANGELA TOMBAZZI, Director of Data & Technology, State Voices

Favorites: Asana, Calendly, Grammarly, Slack, Zoom, Heating Pad

What I'm Listening To: [The Problem with Jon Stewart podcast](#)

BRANDON JESSUP, Deputy Director East of Data & Technology

Favorites: GitHub, Dual monitors, Beats Studio3 Noise-cancelling headphones, M&M's

What I'm Listening To: [GOTMFV Podcast](#)

IRIDANE SANCHEZ, Deputy Director West of Data & Technology

Favorites: Height Adjustable Desk, Ergonomic Chair, and Slack.

What I'm Listening To: [NPR Science Friday](#)

PAUL MEADE, Senior Data & Technology Training Manager

Favorites: Docking station (with external monitor, keyboard, mouse, webcam, and speakers), Google Suite (Gmail, Calendar, Chrome, Sheets, Docs, Hangouts, Meet, Messages), Slack, Zoom, Calendly, Google Home, Spotify

What I'm Listening To Podcasts: Clark Howard, The Bronx Pinstripes Show, Admissions Beat

AMY HARPER-SMITH, Senior Digital Technology Manager

Favorites: Noise-Cancelling Headphones, Trello, Apple Music, Diet Coke

What I'm Listening To: [Deep Focus](#)

ARTURO GONZALES, Deputy Director of Data and Voter Registration

Favorites: Notion, Spotify, and Slack

What I'm Listening To: [Ennio Morricone: Fotogramma per fotogramma, Vol. 2](#)

ALEXANDRIA BRATTON, Senior Policy Manager

Favorites: Gel Fine Point Pens, TUL Notebook & Headphones

What I'm Reading: All About Love by Bell Hooks

P.S., Data Analytics Manager

Favorites: Tableau, Excel, FOSS (free and open source) tools - Joplin, Atom Text Editor; external monitor, wireless keyboard and mouse, headphones

What I'm Reading: The Shadow King, Maaza Mengiste; There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job, Kikuko Tsumura

61



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