STATE VOICES

TOOLS + TECH GUIDE

SECOND EDITION

2021 CIVIC ENGAGE-MENT & ADVOCACY TOOLS GUIDE

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 was able to quickly pivot 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 the network and partners, we made it a priority to meet voters where they are and continue working towards a 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 table states were actively using, demoing, had never heard of, were 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 have all together attended over 50 demonstrations of tech tools and/or vendor services in 2019, 2020, and early 2021. The tools and vendors demoed this year include but are not limited to: legislative tracking and advocacy, relational organizing, digital organizing, and patch-through calling tools.

This guide is the culmination of those efforts.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to give organizations a quick overview of tools and vendors that might be beneficial to programs they're running.

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

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 oftentimes we noted 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.

COMPANY VALUES AND PRACTICES

It is important to State Voices that the vendors that we enter into contracts with share our 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—we truly hope you're actively using your VAN committee, since that's how we do our end of year reporting.

There are three main types of VAN integration. They are:

- **Pull** VAN integration which means that data can *only* be *pulled* from the VAN and into the tool that you're using.

- **Push** VAN integration which means that results can *only* be *pushed* from the tool that you're using back into the VAN.

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

VAN integration in any combination is beneficial, because it either decreases or completely eliminates the need for manual loading of data from one tool into another. It also eliminates the need of sending data and responses back and forth via email—in the event 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, so that state data staff don't have to send you data via email/other online methods and then 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 get clarification from them about 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 often 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. Oftentimes, 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 important for organizations to really think about where they're putting their money.

Organizations should ask tool vendors about how long they've been in business and consider that as a big 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 key factor in making sure that your data is secure and will not be shared or sold with third parties. Before entering into an agreement with any vendor, it is important 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 you with the required 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 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 allows 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 their 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 what you need it to be in order to meet the needs of your organization.

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

The ability to easily translate information and features into other languages is important 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.

STATE VOICES FAVORITES

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

- Relational Organizing (Digital Door-Knocking): **Reach**

- Cell-Compliant Dialer: **ThruTalk**

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM): **Action Network**

- Digital Organizing & Online Fundraising: **EveryAction**

- Online Voter Registration Portal: **Rock the Vote**

- Texting Services: **State Voices Switchboard**

- Voter Contact Portal/Hub: **Voter Activation Network** (VAN)

- Digital Marketing and Communications: **Social Movement Technologies**

- Voter Guides and Ballot Issue Support: **Ballot Ready's Ballot Engine**

- Third Party Texting and Script Support: **Movement Labs**

OTHER TOOLS TO CONSIDER

State Voices and its tables have not entered into contracts with the following vendors, but based on our demos and analysis of their website and offerings, feel that they may meet the following needs:

- Event Management and Promotion: **Mobilize America**

- Online Voter Registration Portal: **Register2Vote**

TOOLS BEING TRIALED BY STATE VOICES

State Voices recommends organizations ask vendors about trial periods for their tools whenever possible before signing a contract. The State Voices Policy team is going to be trialing a few Advocacy and Bill Tracking tools in an effort to select the best tool for the State Voices Network. Tools that will be trialed include but are not limited to:

- **Phone2Action**

- **FiscalNote**

- **FastDemocracy**

- **Enview**

The following are one-pagers on each vendor mentioned above. We also conducted research on additional tools, however, did not include them below, as they are not a current recommendation for our network. We are happy to discuss our analysis. Please contact Angela Tombazzi, Director of Data & Technology, at angela@statevoices.org if you have any questions.

ACTIONNETWORK

WEBSITE:

actionnetwork.org

CONTACT:

Obed Ventura, obed@actionnetwork.org

COST:

actionnetwork.org/partnerships

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2017

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.

SUPPORT:

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

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices has a current contract with this vendor.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

SalsaLabs, Blue State, Nationbuilder, Mailchimp

PROS:

- Petitions and advocacy tools for targeting decision-makers
- One-click email donations
- Federated tools structure for chaptered organizing
- "Activist" profiles with full action history
- Integrations with ActBlue, Salesforce and more
- 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
- Ability to make petitions with images and video
- Ability to write letters to elected officials with built-in target lists or customized people/districts, with tracking to identify how many letters are sent
- A few preset languages are available to create actions, more can be added if you have a translator

CONS:

- No offline mode
- Organizations are charged for both outbound and inbound texts
- Tech support is only available in English
- No VAN integration

BALLOTREADY'S BALLOT ENGINE

WEBSITE:

ballotready.org

CONTACT:

Alex Niemczewski, alex@ballotready.org

COST:

Contact Ballot Ready

MONTH OF DEMO:

August 2020

CREATED:

2015

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.

SUPPORT:

Support ticket system and knowledge base.

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices had a contract with this vendor in 2020.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

VoteByMail.io

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 cost, an organization can allow users to track absentee ballot requests
- For an additional cost, 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 periods

ENVIEW

WEBSITE:

civiceagle.com

CONTACT:

Wintana Melekin, wintana@civiceagle.com

COST:

Contact Civic Eagle

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

Civic Eagle was founded in 2015. Enview was founded in 2019.

PURPOSE:

Legislative tracking intelligence and policy collaboration software.

SUPPORT:

- Customer solution managers available to answer any questions
- Training, onboarding, and system management
- Chat system for immediate responses
- Assistance to prepare reports, create teams, and use different features

ORGS THAT USE IT:

ProGeorgia

PROS:

- Black created, owned, and operated
- Can track bills for specific teammates or teams
- Civic Eagle acquired Open States, another legislative tracking tool, therefore offering an artificial intelligence (AI) that scans the state website and uploads the information to Enview
- Can create short names for bills to remember them easily
- Willing to customize and build out features
- Seems mission-aligned
- Can export reports into Excel
- Willing to do free trial

CONS:

- The search feature seems basic
- Limited information available on bills

EVERYACTION (NGPVAN)

WEBSITE:

everyaction.com

CONTACT:

Faizan Faruq, FFaruq@everyaction.com

COST:

Contact Faizan for pricing, let them know if you are a State Voices partner.

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2015

PURPOSE:

Platform for online advocacy, actions, donations, and social network integration.

SUPPORT:

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

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices has a current contract with this vendor.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

Salesforce, My Campaign, Action Network

PROS:

- NGPVAN has progressive values, and 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

FASTDEMOCRACY

WEBSITE:

fastdemocracy.com

CONTACT:

Sara Baker, sara@fastdemocracy.com

COST:

Contact FastDemocracy

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2018

PURPOSE:

Nationwide bill tracking tool.

SUPPORT:

- Chat bot, staff available by email
- Individual trainings and one-on-one office hours available

PROS:

- Can track bills as far back as 2013
- Founded by an organizer
- Able to easily share bills on all social platforms
- Provides news articles and tweets on the bill page that relate to said bill
- Provides similar bills in the same state or on the national level in order to do a comparison of the bills and how they may overlap
- Able to embed legislative tracker on any website and capture supporter emails who sign up to get legislative updates on bills
- Can search for specific topics or keywords to see bills that mention the topic/keyword
- Can add comments and notes that get tagged/assigned to others so they can comment back

CONS:

- Seems like a very new tool, not many advocacy functions

FISCALNOTE

WEBSITE:

fiscalnote.com

CONTACT:

Courtney Mastrangelo,
courtney.mastrangelo@fiscalnote.com

COST:

Contact FiscalNote

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2013

PURPOSE:

Legislative and social media tracking tool.

SUPPORT:

- General support between 9 am – 5 pm ET
- Account support for setting up searches and some training available

PROS:

- Power mapping analysis features
- Social media monitoring (goes back a full year)
- Can share links to FiscalNote bill pages easily
- Helpful reporting features to share data with stakeholders
- Ability to create sophisticated features
- The ability to organize issues seems easy
- Can easily export some data and information to non-paid users

CONS:

- The user interface during the demo seemed complicated and not user friendly
- Issue summary coordination is not available to people without accounts
- FiscalNote works with all organizations, regardless of their values

MOBILIZEAMERICA

WEBSITE:

mobilizeamerica.io

CONTACT:

Allen Kramer, allen@mobilizeamerica.io

COST:

Contact Mobilize America

MONTH OF DEMO:

October 2019

CREATED:

2017. Acquired by EveryAction in 2020.

PURPOSE:

Hub for different communication channels for online volunteer engagement.

SUPPORT:

- Introductory training
- Organizers that provide direct client support through training and onboarding
- 24/7 chatbot that is accessed by Mobilize staff
- Provide bi-monthly check-ins depending on the contract type

SIMILAR TOOLS:

MyCampaign, Eventbrite

PROS:

- Mobile version of the website is good
- A/B Testing available
- Organizations can add their own custom branding
- Tags tell volunteers what's a priority for the campaign, which drives higher conversion rates
- They send an email and text 24 hours prior to an event/ volunteer shift, which has reduced flake rates and eliminates the need for confirmation call
- Can collect qualitative feedback from participants
- Data syncs back to My Campaign
- Distributive organizing feature that allows volunteers to create their own events with approval from the organization or campaigns account admin
- Cross-promotion of events encourages volunteer engagement
- Pre-populates data from volunteers who may have volunteered for other events on the platform
- Integrates with some mobile and texting platforms
- Company works exclusively with progressive organizations

CONS:

- Not an "in-text" app: Mobilize sends confirmation/reminders, but it's not meant to replace a texting platform like Hustle/Relay
- Doesn't integrate with ActionNetwork
- No clear firewall for 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 to prevent incidental cross-promotion

MOVEMENTLABS

WEBSITE:

movementlabs.com

CONTACT:

Yoni Landau, yoni@movementlabs.com

COST:

Contact MovementLabs

MONTH OF DEMO:

July 2019

CREATED:

2017. Changed name January 2021.

PURPOSE:

Movement Labs (formerly Resistance Labs) is a texting vendor that offers scriptwriting, texting, reporting, etc.

SUPPORT:

- Training course and guides on many topics available on the website
- Staff available through email and chat for questions
- Organization-specific training sessions on Spoke available

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices had a contract with them in 2020 for GOTV and Census texts.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

Red2Blue

PROS:

- Provides all SMS related services to their clients: script creation, texting, reporting, etc.
- Doesn't resell lists and won't use the lists for anything except the work they've been contracted to do
- Progressive values
- Uses Spoke as primary texting tool

CONS:

- No self-service of their tool is available, like with Hustle and GetThru's ThruText
- Resistance Labs has to operate the tool for contract holders

PHONE2ACTION

WEBSITE:

phone2action.com

CONTACT:

Aditya Komanduri,
akomanduri@phone2action.com

COST:

Contact Phone2Action

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2012

PURPOSE:

Phone2Action allows people to connect with lawmakers via their phones via integration of text opt-ins, email, social media, and petitions/forms for organizations doing advocacy work. GovPredict tracks and monitors legislation.

SUPPORT:

- Dedicated account manager
- Help desk available 24/7 with average response rate of 5 minutes
- Unlimited training and assistance to build search queries, troubleshoot, etc.

PROS (PHONE2ACTION):

- Has a dashboard and reporting
- Could send data to a secure HTTP daily for us to load to VAN
- Great user experience, simple process to acquire
- One place where organizations can create campaigns and individual stories for local, state, or national work via a tweet, email, or phone call
- Can contact multiple legislators on one phone call
- Can create embedded widgets to add to your website to send tweets and emails
- Integrates with MailChimp, Salesforce, Nation Builder, Constant Contact, and other tools

CONS (PHONE2ACTION):

- Doesn't integrate with VAN
- There may be limits on 501c3 organizations on the use of this type of advocacy tool

PROS (GOVPREDICT):

- Ability to track and analyze trends and will eventually integrate with advocacy arm to make public comment during the legislative process easier
- Federal bills are available from over 10 yrs ago to showcase complete voting records
- State bills show where an issue is being tracked across the states and turn into graphs or other visuals and set specific periods of times or dates
- Map is public-facing so it can be posted on a user's website

CONS (GOVPREDICT):

- Could require a lot of back-end work if legislative tracking tags aren't sufficient

REACH

WEBSITE:
reach.vote

CONTACT:
Jake DeGroot,
jake@reach.vote

COST:
reach.vote/pricing

MONTH OF DEMO:
January 2021

CREATED:
2018

PURPOSE:
Grassroots relational organizing app to meet voters where they are.

SUPPORT:
- Offer email and phone support for admins
- Offer email-only support for users
- Multilingual support coming soon

ORGS THAT USE IT:
State Voices had a contract with them in 2020.

SIMILAR TOOLS:
Impactive, OutreachCircle, OpenField, Empower

PROS:

- Allows you to search the voter file for people you might meet on the street corner, at an event, or while conducting site based canvassing
- 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.
- Information added by a volunteer for a person on the voter file can be exported and loaded into VAN by an admin
- Can recruit people to join a Reach campaign on the spot
- 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 are able to be prioritized by the admin (import contacts, sign up for events, petitions, articles, post something on social media, etc.)
- The UI: User interface is able to 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:

- 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

ROCK THE VOTE

WEBSITE:

rockthevote.org

CONTACT:

Melissa Wyatt, melissa@rockthevote.org

MONTH OF DEMO:

April 2020

CREATED:

1990

PURPOSE:

Online voter registration portal.

SUPPORT:

Provide start-up guide, FAQs, and ongoing support

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices had a contract with this vendor in 2020.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

register2vote.org, vote.org, Turbo Vote

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 tools administration

SOCIAL MOVEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

WEBSITE:

socialmovementtechnologies.org

CONTACT:

Kevin Pujanauski,
kevin@socialmovementtechnologies.org

COST:

Contact SMT

MONTH OF DEMO:

October 2020

CREATED:

2018

PURPOSE:

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

SUPPORT:

Coaching hours, informational articles, and videos

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices had a contract with this vendor for the 2020 general election.

PROS:

- Mission aligned
- Coaching services for digital marketing, communications strategy, and social media
- On-demand course library with specific training videos and articles to compliment coaching services
- Small group training & coaching where multiple groups who have expressed a similar priority learn together, maximizing the impact of the coaching hours further developing peer relationships in the progressive movement
- Certificate programs for digital advertisements, digital campaigns, and more
- SMT is unionized: once a staff member has worked 10 billable hours, they join the staff union—The Pacific Media Guild/CWA's Freelancer's Division

CONS:

- Cost of digital trainings can be expensive (Disclaimer: State Voices only used this vendor for digital advertising services)

STATE VOICES SWITCHBOARD (SPOKE)

WEBSITE:

Coming soon

CONTACT:

Brandon Jessup, bjessup@statevoices.org

COST:

Varies

CREATED:

2020

PURPOSE:

An open source peer-to-peer text-distribution tool for organizations to mobilize supporters and members into action.

SUPPORT:

- Multiple GitHub Libraries for developer, application support
- SV Activity Admin Dashboards planned for Q2 2021
- State Voices led hosted administrator and texter onboardings
- On-demand coaching and trainings for state tables and partners

ORGS THAT USE IT:

State Voices owns and administers this tool.

PROS:

- Allows you to easily upload phone numbers using flat files
- VAN integration allows for easy uploading of lists and syncing contact data
- Ability to customize scripts and edit them without pausing the text campaign
- Ability to assign volunteers to communicate with supporters
- Accessible from any smartphone, tablet, or computer
- Custom stylings for each campaign
- Multiple administrators allowed for campaigns
- Integration with Mobilize
- Customizable texting hour settings
- Admin message review board for all organizational messages in order to filter by campaign, texter and to reassign texts to other texters

CONS:

- Not a turnkey solution, requires sufficient labor or resources to administer and support
- Requires an application hosting service, currently Spoke is only configured for Heroku
- Online storage service is highly recommended in deployment Amazon Web
- Only configured for Twilio Carrier Services

THRUTALK

WEBSITE:

getthru.io/thrutalk

CONTACT:

Sam Briggs, sam.briggs@getthru.io

COST:

5.5 ¢ per dial (roughly $16.50 per volunteer hour). Bulk pre-purchase discounts available.

MONTH OF DEMO:

February 2021

CREATED:

2016

PURPOSE:

Compliant Cell Dialer tool that includes cell phones with the ability to use as a patch-thru call option.

SUPPORT:

- 12 pm ET – 10 pm ET live chat hours, in addition to availability when calls are happening
- Trainings on specific aspects of the tool available
- Help center with videos and articles
- Ticketing system is available 9 am – 10 am EST: 2 hour window to resolve critical issues but usually faster

ORGS THAT USE IT:

A number of State Voices tables and partners signed contracts in 2020.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

TCN

PROS:

- Can dial cell phones: As more of the populations we work for move away from landlines being able to reach as many cell phones as possible is critical
- Offer dynamic scripts and can do script reviews
- Instant emails feature can send scripts and next steps to a person
- Can be embedded on a website for easier usability
- VAN integration: Currently one-way, meaning data can be pushed back into VAN, but loading lists to ThruTalk is a manual process
- Intuitive for users
- Ability to change the campaign/script while volunteers are calling
- Developed by field staff
- Device friendly
- Ability to do patch through calling
- Direct texting or sending an email from the phone call
- Tables/Partner staff don't have to click to approve each call
- Progressive values
- Willing to work with user certification (e.g. having users take a test before getting access)
- Open to customization: Most organizations use GetThru's iFrame code and embed directly on the existing site, which enables organizations to preserve their URLs and branding. You can also use custom logos on their regular login page

CONS:

- C3 fundraising may take longer than other types of calls due to legal restrictions
- Targeting is really important, because you're being charged by the dial
- Can be difficult to manage multiple accounts
- Scripts can be difficult to write for some users
- Limited reporting options in user interface
- Patch through feature: The admin would need to source all of the phone numbers that voters will be patched-through to

THRUTEXT

WEBSITE:

getthru.io/thrutext

CONTACT:

Jon Warnow, jon@getthru.io

COST:

8 ¢ per text. Bulk pre-purchase discounts available.

MONTH OF DEMO:

April 2019

CREATED:

2016

PURPOSE:

Peer to peer texting tool.

SUPPORT:

- 9 am – 10 pm ET support hours
- 24/7 help center and free staff trainings

ORGS THAT USE IT:

A number of State Voices tables and partners signed contracts in 2020.

SIMILAR TOOLS:

Hustle, Spoke

PROS:

- VAN Integration: Integration is two-way, meaning a list can be pulled from VAN into ThruText and data (Survey Questions, Activist Codes, Event RSVPs, etc.) can be pushed back to VAN
- Multiple types of SQ's
- Global Questions: Great for large campaigns in states
- Non-binary responses for SQs
- Option to add canned responses
- Can be used for short term campaigns, since there's no yearly contract requirement
- ThruText can be used on any phone, tablet, or computer using the web
- There's no need to download a native app
- No fee for incoming texts

CONS:

- 50k group limit
- Must pause campaigns if you want to make edits to text

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The critical role of digital tools is not singular to the novel coronavirus pandemic. To truly build a representative democracy, we must democratize data and meet voters where they are. Digital tools provide the resources we need to navigate the current organizing landscape and be ready for the future. Ultimately, any digital tool will be most effective if it is used within a thoughtful, intentional strategy.

Consider who your audience is, what accessibility looks like for them, what messages compel them to take action, and how you can take your audience along a ladder of engagement. Utilize this guide to help increase your organization's organizing capacity and build sustainable momentum and interaction for your efforts.

This guide is a culmination of years of effort by the State Voices Data & Technology Department. Thank you to Valerie Weisler (Digital Training Manager) and Iridane Sanchez (Deputy Director West of Data & Technology) for writing this guide, Nick Marshall (Deputy Director of Data & Civic Engagement) for contributing, and to Angela Tombazzi (Director of Data & Technology) for overseeing the effort and providing final edits.

This guide wouldn't be possible without the insight and guidance from Alexis Anderson-Reed (Chief Executive Officer), Marissa Liebling (Director of Policy), Brandon Jessup (Deputy Director East of Data and Technology), Jordan DeLoach (Director of Communications), and Elena Langworthy (Senior Manager of Policy).

TECH GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS 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's simply a supplement or 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 2021 Tech Guide, like it's 2020 iteration, is geared towards technology and software, and office equipment that is optimal for working from home due to COVID-19. Future iterations of this Guide may adjust that lens to account for more traveling and office work.

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 were affordable. We also used a browser extension (priceblink) 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 are either free, have free trials or generous nonprofit discounts, or are 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 integrate 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.

ETHICAL BUYING

Before diving into a few points on ethical buying, we also 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.[1]"* 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.

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1. "About AmazonSmile." Amazon, 2010. https://smile.amazon.com/gp/chpf/about

Everything you need to know about computer hardware:
https://www.lifewire.com/computer-hardware-2625895

HARD-
WARE

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 other antivirus, AdBlock or uBlock Origin

HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A 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, 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.

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *PC:* **2020 Dell – Inspiron 15 3593**
  https://www.newegg.com/black-dell-inspiron-15-3593-i3593-7644blk-pus/p/1TS-000A-0BR52

  » 15.6" HD Touch Screen Laptop
  » Intel Core i7
  » 12GB Memory
  » 512GB SSD
  » Windows 10 in S Mode
  » Integrated Widescreen HD 720P Webcam

- *Mac:* **Apple MacBook Air**
  https://www.apple.com/shop/buy-mac/macbook-air/space-gray-apple-m1-chip-with-8%E2%80%91core-cpu-and-7%E2%80%91core-gpu-256gb

  » Apple M1 chip with 8-core CPU, 7-core GPU, and 16-core Neural Engine
  » 16GB unified memory
  » 512GB SSD storage
  » Retina display with True Tone
  » Backlit Magic Keyboard – US English
  » Touch ID
  » Force Touch trackpad
  » Two Thunderbolt / USB 4 ports

- *Economical Option:* **Chromebook**
  google.com/chromebook/device/google-pixelbook-go-8gb-128gb

  » 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 affordable 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.

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?

Your laptop screen is too small or you often run multiple programs at the same time.

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *24 inch:* **Dell UltraSharp 24 Monitor: U2419H**
  dell.com/en-us/work/shop/dell-ultrasharp-24-monitor-u2419h/apd/210-arcf
- *27 inch:* **BenQ 27 Inch IPS Monitor**
  smile.amazon.com/dp/B072XFFQ4K/amazon.com/dp/B072XFFQ4K
- *32 inch:* **Dell 32 Curved 4K UHD Monitor — S3221QS**
  dell.com/en-us/shop/dell-32-curved-4k-uhd-monitor-s3221qs/apd/210-axkm/

WEBCAM

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 trainings that require video

2021 RECOMMENDATION:

- **NexiGo N930AF FHD USB Web Camera**
  smile.amazon.com/AutoFocus-Microphone-NexiGo-Streaming-Compatible/dp/B08931JJLV

  » AutoFocus

  » 1080p Webcam

  » Stereo Microphone and Privacy Cover

  » Compatibility: PC, Mac

DOCKING STATION

RECOMMENDED SPECIFICATIONS:

- Compatible with Windows and Mac Operating Systems
- 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.

2021 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Dell 452-BCYT D6000**
  smile.amazon.com/Dell-452-BCYT-D6000-Universal-Black/dp/B071YTQBXM

  » Universal Dock
  » Compatibility: PC, Mac

HEADPHONES

RECOMMENDED SPECIFICATIONS:

- Bluetooth
- Noise-cancelling
- Built-in Microphone
- Long battery life
- Hands free 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.

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Top Recommendation:

- **Sony WH-1000XM3/B Wireless**
  newegg.com/black-sony-wh-1000xm3-b-headphone/p/0TH-000U-008U8

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

Economical Recommendation:

- **Anker Soundcore Life Q20 Hybrid Active Noise Cancelling Headphones**
  amazon.com/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

2021 RECOMMENDATION:

- **Inateck 1D USB Barcode Scanner with Intelligent Stand Wired**
  smile.amazon.com/dp/B07F5ZCRG5

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

You can find some great recommendations to improve your performance on these 2 sites:

- ithaca.edu/information-technology/home-internet/improving-performance
- reviews.org/internet-service/how-to-speed-internet-connection

WIFI MESH

- 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.

- Our 2021 recommendation is the TP-Link Deco Mesh 3 pack: smile.amazon.com/TP-Link-Deco-Replacement-S4-3-Pack-dp-B084GTH5LL/dp/B084GTH5LL

UPGRADE YOUR INTERNET PACKAGE

- Call your current provider to make sure you have the best internet package available (there may be new deals), and that you have their most up-to-date equipment (ask if there would be a cost for this new router, etc. or if they would be covered under your current contract).

- You can compare providers here if you are considering making a change: reviews.org/internet-service/best-internet-service-providers

HOTSPOT

Find out how to use your cell phone as a hotspot from your phone provider if you don't already know how to. 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.

pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-turn-your-phone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot

OFFICE

CHAIR

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?

A good ergonomic chair is an investment that can save you from costly chiropractic visits down the road.

https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/killer-chairs-how-desk-jobs-ruin-your-health/

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Top Recommendation:

- **ErgoChair 2 Autonomous.ai**
  autonomous.ai/office-chairs/ergonomic-chair

Economical Recommendations:

- **MARKUS Office chair, Vissle dark gray**
  ikea.com/us/en/p/markus-office-chair-vissle-dark-gray-90289172
- **FlexFit Hyken Mesh Task Chair**
  staples.com/staples-hyken-technical-mesh-task-chair-silver-53293/product_24328579

High End Recommendations:

- **Herman Miller Aeron**
  store.hermanmiller.com/office/office-chairs/aeron-chair/2195348.html
- **Herman Miller Cosm**
  store.hermanmiller.com/office/office-chairs/cosm-chair/2515454.html

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

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Top Recommendation:

- **Vivo Monitor Riser Tabletop Sit to Stand Height Adjustable Standing Desk**
  smile.amazon.com/dp/B0784HWPN6

Economical Recommendation:

- **FlexiSpot AlcoveRiser Sit-To-Stand Desk Converter, 42"W, Black**
  flexispot.com/alcoveriser-standing-desk-converters-m7

SIT TO STAND FULL DESK
(NOT DESK RISER)

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

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

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Top Recommendation:

- **Jarvis Bamboo Standing Desk**
  https://www.fully.com/standing-desks/jarvis/jarvis-adjustable-height-desk-bamboo.html

Economical Recommendation:

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

High End Recommendation:

- **iMovR Lander Desk**
  https://www.imovr.com/lander-standing-desk.html

ANTI FATIGUE MAT

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.

2021 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Top Recommendation:

- **FlexiSpot Ergonomic Anti-Fatigue Mat**
  flexispot.com/standing-desk-accessories/cushion-and-mats/anti-fatigue-mats-dm

Economical Recommendation:

- **NewLife by GelPro Anti-Fatigue Designer Comfort Kitchen Floor Mat**
  smile.amazon.com/NewLife-GelPro-Anti-Fatigue-Resistant-Grasscloth/dp/B00MVYIAQ4

High End Recommendation:

- **Topo Comfort Mat by Ergodriven**
  smile.amazon.com/gp/product/B00V3TO9EK

WHAT IS THIS?

"Software is an intangible resource. Application software…is more about the user than the system itself. Application software is what you use to do work, access media, or play games. It's often installed on top of the operating system by computer manufacturers and may include music players, office suites, and photo editing apps. Users can also install compatible third-party software. Some examples of application software include Microsoft Word, Adobe Reader, Google Chrome, Netflix, and Spotify. There's anti-virus software too, at least for computer systems. Finally, apps are software. Windows 8 and 10 support apps, as do all smartphones and tablets.[2]"

SOFT-WARE

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2. Ballew, Joli. "What is Software?" Lifewire, March 7, 2020. https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-software-4153107

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 is a tool explicitly designed for preventing data loss and not for collaboration like syncing programs (like Google Drive.)

BACKBLAZE

Website: backblaze.com

Cost: $6/month or $60/year

- It's offsite backup, you will be charged for the bandwidth to download an entire computer's backup ($0.01/GB)
- They will send you a hard drive with all your files (up to 8TB) for $189 or a 256GB USB for $99. This refund is refundable if you return the hard drive within 30 days.

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Compatability: 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.
- Takes a day or more to perform the first back up
- Limited by download speed or by requesting a harddrive 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 available

Recommendation: Periodically check your back up by downloading some files to ensure it's working properly.

SIMILAR TOOLS: iCloud (Mac only), Carbonite, Google Drive, DropBox, OneDrive

DATA ENTRY VENDORS

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.

VIDADO

Website: vidado.ai

Cost: Custom, vidado.ai/contact-sales

Nonprofit Discount: Ask sales

Created: 2011

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
- The Vidado team is always ready to help
- Good Accuracy Rate: You can test out the accuracy by taking an "AI challenge" on their website.

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" type of work

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

Security: vidado.ai/privacy-notice

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

Recommendation: They are a good solution for organizations that have a lot of paper forms (i.e. Voter Registration Cards, pledge cards, etc.) that require data entry. In that case, there is a 1-month free trial period available that allows you test 200 paper forms.

SIMILAR TOOLS: There are MANY data entry vendors available but State Voices only has experience with this one.

DOCUMENT RETENTION

CONFLUENCE

Website: atlassian.com/software/confluence

Cost: atlassian.com/software/confluence/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: atlassian.com/software/views/community-license-request

Purpose: Confluence is a wiki-like product that allows for the joint editing on the creation of documents. Unlike other tools, such as Google Drive, it allows for simple organization and inter-document references that help facilitate institutional memory.

Pros:

- Ease of use
- Joint editing
- Ability to systematically organize documents

Cons:

- Likely results in some redundancy with Google Drive

Support: support.atlassian.com

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

Integrations: marketplace.atlassian.com/addons/app/confluence Notably: JIRA, Trello, Google Drive, Lucidchart

SIMILAR TOOLS: Google Drive, Notion

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

elearningindustry.com/the-best-learning-management-systems-top-list

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LITMOS

Website: litmos.com

Contact: Tyler Knop, tyler.knop@sap.com

Cost: litmos.com/litmos-pricing

Created: Bought by SAP in 2011

Purpose: Learning Management System (LMS), 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:

- SOC 2 Type 1 and Type 2 compliant.
- Open APIs.
- Free mobile app for any device (IOS/GooglePlay)
- Can bulk import users.
- Robust reporting options.
- Sleek, straightforward, and customizable tool.
- Platform offers boost questions, which are questions emailed to students after they take their training to ensure they retain learning.
- Ability to group attendees into cohorts and initiate communication with them inside the tool, which can be followed up with via your normal email address.

Cons:

- Cost can be prohibitive for some organizations.
- Doesn't allow you to release modules on a given date—only learning paths can be released this way. This results in a person being able to go through an entire learning path as quickly as they would like.

Support:

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

Orgs that use it: State Voices uses this tool for our Data Certification Program.

SIMILAR TOOLS: Google Classroom, Mindflash LMS, TalentLMS, Asentia LMS

LINK SHORTENERS[3]

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

blog.hootsuite.com/what-are-url-shorteners

BITLY

Website: bit.ly

Cost & Features:

- $35 a month. $348 if pay annually $29 a month

  » 1,500 Branded Links
  » 1 User Seat, 1 Free Custom Domain
  » Custom back half of bit.ly 1,500
  » Link History (30days)
  » Link Reporting (90days)

- Get a quote on pricing that could include the following features

  » 3,000 – 500,000+ Branded Links
  » 1 – 1,000+ User Seats
  » 1 – 100+ Custom Domains
  » Custom back half of bit.ly 3,000
  » QR Codes
  » Mobile Deep Links
  » Campaigns (group and manage links in bulk)
  » Track organic shares With Bitly, you can track engagement metrics on your content's organic shares (links other Bitly users create that point to your content). This gives you a clearer picture of how well your content is performing, even if you're not the one sharing it.
  » Link History (2 years)
  » Link Reporting (90 days)

T2M

Website: t2mio.com

Cost & Features:

- Standard: $9.99 a month

  » Total no. of short URLs: unlimited
  » Max short URLs each month: 5,000
  » Clicks/redirects per month: 25,000
  » Customize short URLs
  » Multiple short URLs pointing to one place
  » QR codes. Dynamic: you can download, also can edit and change link without changing QR code
  » No ads or delays
  » Timeline chart on clicks

- Pro: $29.99 a month

  » Everything Standard, plus:
  » Max short URLs each month: 25,000
  » Clicks/redirects per month: 125,000

- Premium: $89.99 a month

  » Everything Standard and Pro, plus:
  » Max short URLs each month: 100,000
  » Clicks/redirects per month: 250,000
  » Tag URLs as campaigns
  » Bulk import to campaigns
  » Export data per campaign

REBRANDLY

Website: rebrandly.com

Cost & Features:

- $29 a month starter

  » Unlimited shortened URL
  » Clicks tracked per month: 25,000. Then $1/mo each 1,000
  » Total Branded links: 5,000. Then $3/mo each 1,000
  » Custom reports per month: no
  » Link history
  » Link analytics
  » Editable destination URL
  » QR codes

- $69 a month pro

  » Everything Starter, Plus
  » Clicks tracked per month: 150,000. Then $1/mo each 1,000
  » Total Branded links: 15,000. Then $3/mo each 1,000
  » Custom reports per month: no
  » URL parameters

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3. Analysis conducted by Florida Civic Engagement Table

ONLINE DOCUMENT SIGNATURE COLLECTION

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

Printing documents that you have to sign and then scan back to someone can be a hassle. Instead, consider saving ink and paper by opting for an online document signature collection tool that can save you time.

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#_Toc534813253

docusign.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

PASSWORD MANAGER

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You are having trouble creating and keeping track of your passwords, and/or have multiple passwords that need to be shared with multiple staff members securely

1PASSWORD

Website: 1password.com

Cost: 1password.com/teams/pricing

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

Created: 2005

Purpose: keep passwords secure; share passwords with team members securely

Pros:

• Helps you create strong, unique passwords

• Share passwords securely with staff or a team

• Receive alerts for compromised websites and vulnerable passwords

• 2-factor authentication

• Document storage

Cons:

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

Support: Articles, Forums, Email

Security: 1password.com/security

Integrations: Chrome/Firefox extensions, apps

Recommendation: They offer a very long free trial of their business account—it's worth testing it out with as many of your staff that are willing to try it.

LASTPASS

Website: lastpass.com

Cost: lastpass.com/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: Not available

Created: 2008

Purpose: Password management.

Pros:

• Well-known, popular product.

Cons:

• No non-profit discount

• Not as secure as 1Password

• Not much difference in paid versus regular version

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

Support: Help Center, User Manuals, Tutorials

Security: lastpass.com/security

Integrations: Mac, Windows, Linux, Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Internet Explorer, Opera, Microsoft Edge

Recommendation: Comparable to 1Password, but with a shorter free trial period

SIMILAR TOOLS: Okta

FREE BROWSER PASSWORD MANAGERS

GOOGLE PASSWORD MANAGER

Website: passwords.google.com

Cost: Free

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Purpose: Password Management within your browser

Pros:

- Automatically installed with Google Chrome
- Syncs passwords to your Google Account allowing for multi-device use as long as you sign in
- Automatically turned on when installing Google Chrome
- Encrypts all of your passwords in the Cloud
- Browser customizability (starting and logging into certain sites upon opening Chrome)

Cons:

- Not as powerful or secure as dedicated password managers
- Password generator isn't as customizable as dedicated password managers
- No cross-browser functionality
- No cross-application functionality
- No note or file storage capability

Support: Help Center, Manuals, Tutorials

Integrations: Any device with Chrome installed

Recommendation: Easy to get started but should explore more viable long-term solutions.

MOZILLA PASSWORD MANAGER

Website: support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/password-manager-remember-delete-edit-logins

Cost: Free

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Purpose: Password Management within your browser

Pros:

- Automatically installed with Mozilla Firefox
- Syncs passwords to your Firefox Account allowing for multi-device use as long as you sign in
- Automatically turned on when installing Mozilla Firefox
- Encrypts all of your passwords in the Cloud
- Browser customizability (starting and logging into certain sites upon opening Firefox)

Cons:

- Not as powerful or secure as dedicated password managers
- Password generator isn't as customizable as dedicated password managers
- No cross-browser functionality
- No cross-application functionality
- No note or file storage capability

Support: Help Center, Manuals, Tutorials

Security: support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/password-manager-remember-delete-edit-logins#w_protecting-your-passwords

Integrations: Any device with Firefox installed

Recommendation: Easy to get started but should explore more viable long-term solutions.

PC OPTIMIZATION

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

PC's become slower over time. There are many reasons for this, so there are also many solutions. This article takes you takes you through a series of steps for you to follow to optimize your PC's performance: https://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000179.htm

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CCLEANER

Website: ccleaner.com

Cost:

- CCleaner Free is free and includes Standard privacy protection and Standard cleaning.

- CCleaner Professional is $24.95 and includes the same features as CCleaner Free plus Complete PC Health Check, Updates apps to reduce security risks, Complete cleaning, Keeps your browsing history private, Detects and removes internet trackers, Keeps you from running out of space, and Priority customer support.

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Compatability: Windows / macOS / Android

Created: 2004

Purpose: CCleaner is a utility used to clean potentially unwanted files and invalid Windows Registry entries from a computer. It can delete potentially unwanted files left by certain programs, along with browsing history, cookies, recycle bin, memory dumps, file fragments, log files, system caches, application data, autocomplete form history, and various other data. The program includes a registry cleaner to locate and correct problems in the Windows registry.

Pros:

- It is one of the longest-established system cleaners

- Can help speed up your computer

- Easy to use

- Lots of features

- The free version may be enough for most people

Cons:

- Collects data on your computer, but that can be turned off

- Installation includes bundled antivirus software, but that can be turned off

Support: Online help center, documentation, community forum, and YouTube videos.

Recommendation: Try the free version first and run it periodically. It's always a good idea to backup your computer before making changes to the Windows registry.

SIMILAR TOOLS: CleanMyPC, Glary Utilities Pro, Treesize, WinZip System Utilities Suite, Advanced System Optimizer, WinUtilities Pro, east-tec Eraser, Zetcure Pro

PDF EDITOR

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

If you often need to fill out, edit or create PDF's

ADOBE PRO DC

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

Cost: $14.99/month with annual subscription

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

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

Support: User Guide, Tutorials, Chat Support

Security: adobe.com/security.html

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

Recommendation: Worth the cost if you often have to work with PDFs. We suggest the annual subscription to get a discounted rate.

REQUEST TICKETING SYSTEM

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

This is for keeping track of 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

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

Created: 2010

Purpose: Support ticket system

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

Support: Ticket!, Phone, Email

Security: SSL certificate enabled by default, Restrict login access outside of work by whitelisting only office network addresses for agents and employees, 2FA

Integrations: Zapier. Notably: Slack, Microsoft Office 365, Gmail, Chrome Extension, Freshdesk, Mobile app, Dropbox, GitHub

Recommendation: The free version is surprisingly robust, but larger teams will need the Premium version

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SIMILAR TOOLS: ZenDesk, Jira, Zoho Desk, HappyFox

SCHEDULING

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You are frustrated spending your time sending emails back and forth to schedule a single meeting, and would rather just send a link to someone to choose a time on your calendar that is available.

CALENDLY

Website: calendly.com

Cost: calendly.com/pages/pricing

Nonprofit Discount: 25%, calendly.com/billing/promotions/nonprofit

Purpose: Individual and Team scheduling options

Pros:

- Black-owned
- Access to multiple event types
- Group scheduling: you can allow people to schedule events with a variety of team combinations
- Integrations with Google Calendar, Zoom, Zapier

Cons:

- Free version only allows for one event type

Support: Resource Library, Help Center, Video Tutorials

Security: calendly.com/pages/security

Integrations: calendly.com/pages/integrations Notably: Zoom, Google Suite, Chrome & Firefox Extensions

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.

DOODLE

Website: doodle.com

Cost: doodle.com/premium

Created: 2007

Purpose: polls to schedule group meetings, individual scheduling

Pros:

- Free version gives you access to the best feature which is group scheduling,
- Integrations with Zoom, Slack
- "Choose final option" feature allows you to find the best scheduling date based on attendee submissions.

Cons:

- Calendar Booking isn't as fleshed out or useful as Calendly.

Support: Video Tutorials, Webinars, Whitepapers

Security: Premium Doodle plans include SSL encryption that secures the communication between your browser and our servers.

Integrations: doodle.com/en/integrations Notably: Zoom, Slack, Calendars

Recommendation: The free option works great for scheduling large events/meetings/calls. Syncing your calendar makes creating and filling out polls much quicker.

SIMILAR TOOLS: MixMax

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

SLACK

Website: slack.com

Contact: slack.com/get-started#

Cost: app.slack.com/plans/T50S486FR

Nonprofit Discount: Free for nonprofits via get.slack.help/hc/en-us/articles/204368833-Slack-for-Nonprofits

Created: 2014

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

Pros:

- Free for nonprofits
- Very easy to learn
- Easy to use Desktop and Phone Apps
- Used widely within the progressive community

Cons:

- Search functionality is less robust than it could be

Support: Online library and tips, webinars

Security: slack.com/resources/why-use-slack/slacks-enterprise-security-features

Integrations: slack.com/integrations Notably: 1Password, Asana, Google Suite, Dropbox, Zoom

Recommendation: If you are a nonprofit, it is completely worth the time to sign up for the free nonprofit standard plan. If not, try out the free version for your staff or team first, and if you like it, consider purchasing the standard plan.

SIMILAR TOOLS: blog.hubspot.com/marketing/slack-alternatives

TASK MANAGEMENT

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You are responsible for managing multiple projects and tasks at the same time, and have trouble keeping track of your responsibilities and/or the responsibilities of your fellow staff members.

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.

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

Integrations: asana.com/apps Notably: Slack, Tableau, Microsoft Office 365, Gmail, Chrome Extension, Freshdesk, Mobile app, Dropbox, GitHub

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

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

Recommendation: Notion does a lot of the functionality of Airtable, Asana, Trello, Jira, and Confluence but in one single tool. When looking at Notion, it would be advisable to review the whole functionality of the tool to ensure it meets your requirements for the varying aspects of the tool, not just to replace one of the aforementioned tools.

SIMILAR TOOLS: Trello, Airtable, Monday, Franz

VISUALIZATION AND REPORTING

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)

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
- Very affordable if you qualify for the nonprofit discount

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

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

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.

LUCIDCHART

Website: lucidchart.com

Cost: eviews.financesonline.com/p/lucidchart

Created: 2008

Purpose: Software application for whiteboard and workflow documentation

Pros:
- Cloud based
- Compatible with Microsoft, Google office applications

Cons:
- Many nonprofit staff don't use these types of applications

Support: Online knowledge base, community user support, live-support options for billing, licensing and product support

Security: Lucidchart claims no ownership over any document data, data is transferred between user devices and Lucidchart servers using up to 256-bit encryption

Integrations: Slack, Google, Microsoft and over 25 more integrations

Recommendation: Try the free trial and then the free account, and see if you miss the additional features. If so, get the individual account for 1 or 2 users, or the Team account for 3 or more users.

Similar Tools: Microsoft Vision

VISUALIZATION AND REPORTING *CONT.*

CARTO

Cost: Free for up to 3 maps, $199 per month for paid version https://carto.com/pricing/

Nonprofit pricing: Year long grants available (https://carto.com/grants/)

Created: 2012

Purpose: Online mapping

Pros:

- Extremely simple and easy to use
- Supports multiple types of maps, including point and choropleth maps
- Some spatial analysis
- API Access (public only for free version)

Cons:

- Paid version is expensive
- Not as flexible as other tools, like QGIS

Support: Online knowledge base, community user support, direct support for paid version

Security: Uses SSL, 2FA available, hosted on google cloud

Integrations: Free: Google Drive, dropbox Enterprise: PostgreSQL, SQL Server, Hive, BigQuery

Recommendation: Try the free version. 3 maps is enough for many organization's uses. Paid version may make sense if mapping is a significant part of your work

Similar Tools: QGIS, Periscope, ArcGIS

CIVIS PLATFORM

Website: civisanalytics.com

Contact: https://www.civisanalytics.com/get-in-touch

Cost: Contact Civis directly

Purpose: Civis Platform is a cloud based redshift database designed to easily incorporate with a variety of other tools, including a variety of SQL databases, Google Sheets, Tableau, Python and R API clients, Jupyter Notebook, Facebook, Google Analytics, Salesforce, and others. Data in Civis can be interacted with via SQL, Python, R, Javascript, R, and others.

Pros:

- Security, users, and tool integrations managed by Civis
- Scalable to demand
- Large number of easy to use integrations, several of which are built into the API
- Strong support and documentation

Cons:

- Requires in-house expertise in data management and data engineering

Support: Documentation and tickets

Security: validated by third parties in accordance with AICPA standards, SOC 2 Type II-certified and HIPAA-compliant.

Integrations: Google Sheets, Tableau, Python and R API clients, Jupyter Notebook, Facebook, Google Analytics, Salesforce, and others. Data in Civis can be interacted with via SQL, Python, R, Javascript, R, and others

VISUALIZATION AND REPORTING *CONT.*

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.

CANVA

Website: canva.com

Cost: canva.com/pricing

Nonprofit pricing: 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 an entire 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.

VPN (VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORK)

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

nordvpn.com/what-is-a-vpn-hero

NORDVPN

Website: nordvpn.com

Cost: nordvpn.com/pricing

Created: 2012

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

Pros:

• Affordable, easy to use, simple interface

• Large server selection with 59 countries and 5485 servers

• No log policy means that NordVPN won't collect or share your information when connected to one of their servers.

• 24/7 customer service support via chat or email

• While not work related—NordVPN is great for streaming Netflix from across the world!

Cons:

• Can interrupt video conferences when active, so need to turn off and on as needed

Support: Chatbot support, Tutorials, 24/7 Customer Support Center, FAQ

Security: "By default, NordVPN apps use AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) with 256 bit-keys—also used by the US government to secure classified information and by the NSA to protect national security data. NordVPN is based away from the EU and US jurisdictions and has no obligation to collect your personal information. That means we don't record, monitor, store, log or share anything you do. We can't provide any details about your internet activity even if you request that yourself."

Integrations: N/A

Recommendation: Consider a 1-year plan or more for significant cost-savings.

SIMILAR TOOLS: Norton

WRITING SUPPORT

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

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

GRAMMARLY

Website: grammarly.com

Cost: grammarly.com/plans

Nonprofit Discount: grammarly.com/nonprofits-ngos

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

Integrations: Microsoft Office, Chrome Extension

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.

VERSIONING TOOL

GITHUB

Website: github.com

Cost: Free, additional features cost $4/month

Nonprofit Discount: for nonpolitical organizations only

Compatibility: Mac, PC, apps for versioning, online

Created: 2008

Purpose: Software development tool for sharing and managing code incorporating Git version control.

Pros:

- Can be used for collaboration, issue tracking, and version control
- Widely adopted with many integrations
- Easy to limit access so only approved coders can make changes, and changes can be reviewed.
- Desktop apps make it easy to integrate into your coding workflow

Cons:

- Can be intimidating to start because the tool has so many features
- Some features such as requiring code review before committing still cost $4/month
- Public repositories are not secure, can be seen by anyone

Support: Online Community, Support Tickets

Security: SSL, 2FA, private code repositories

Integrations: github.com/features/integrations

Recommendation: Github is a really useful tool, with lots of useful features that are totally free.

SIMILAR TOOLS: GitLab, BitBucket, Azure DevOps

FREE DOWN-LOADS

ARCHIVING & COMPRESSION

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You need to share a large file or save space on your computer

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7ZIP (WINDOWS ONLY)

Website: 7-zip.org

Pros:

- Allows you to convert .rar files into zip files so you can open them in excel
- Compresses quickly
- Very lightweight
- Integrates with Windows Explorer

Cons:

- None

Support: FAQ

COMMAND LINE TOOLS

PARSONS

Website: github.com/move-coop/parsons

Cost: Free

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Compatibility: Mac or PC

Created: 2019

Purpose: It's a wrapper for Python to streamline integration of frequently used tools in the progressive community, such as NGPVAN, ActionNetwork, Twillio, AWS, and Civis.

Pros:

- Reduces the amount of code needed for connecting two systems
- There is a Docker image for each version, so it's quite easy to get up and running
- Progressive tool created by the Movement Cooperative for the progressive community
- Versatile, really easy to install

Cons:

- Still requires a background in python coding
- Integrations require access and knowledge of creating API keys
- Limited to available connectors or need to build your own
- Spoke and ThruTalk not currently supported
- Some integrations may not have all features of the API supported

Support: Parsons Slack channel, google group, online documentation

Security: Data is transferred using API, so security depends on the tool

Recommendation: Join the Parsons slack channel to get help with implementation

Similar Tools: You can use the direct API integrations for each tool. Otherwise, you would have to create your own wrappers.

CSVKIT

Website: github.com/wireservice/csvkit

Cost: Free

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Compatibility: Mac or PC

Created: 2012

Purpose: A simple command line tool for working with csv files.

Pros:

- Allows you to open and convert files too big to open in Excel
- Really simple to use
- Faster than opening files in Text Editor or Excel
- Edit files directly from command line

Cons:

- Command Line Interface could be intimidating
- Messy files containing nonASCII characters or weird encoding may return errors
- Fixed width files can be tricky to import

Support: Online documentation

Security: Nothing leaves your computer

Similar Tools: Python, AWK, text editors

PDF CREATOR

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You don't have a scanner at home but need to turn some paper documents into PDFs. Ex. receipts for reimbursements, documents that you've signed and need to be sent via email

ADOBE SCAN

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

Pros:

- Mobile app that can be downloaded to your Iphone or Android device
- Extremely easy to learn and use, no learning curve
- You can easily combine multiple documents or pieces of paper into a single PDF
- Easy to share the PDFs with your computer via email, GoogleDocs, etc.

Cons:

- Very limited in capabilities but does what it promises

Support: Video Guide

PDF READER

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

You don't have a PDF Editor and simply need to be able to view and sign PDFs from time to time.

ADOBE READER

Website: acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/acrobat/pdf-reader.html

Pros:

- View, Comment and Sign PDFs (as long as they aren't locked)
- Store files in Dropbox or Google Drive
- Also available as a mobile app

Cons:

- Very limited in capabilities but does what it promises

Support: helpx.adobe.com/reader/faq.html

SCREENSHOTS

SNIP AND SKETCH

Website: No website. Automatically installed in Windows computers

Cost: Free

Nonprofit Discount: N/A

Created: Only on Windows 10, Windows 7 and Windows 8.1.

Purpose: Can use it to screenshot and capture specific things on your screen. Also has the ability to highlight and write on screenshots

Pros:
- Fairly easy to use by just clicking new (which automatically clips the screenshot to your clipboard) and pressing ctrl+v to paste
- Great to use for making manuals or to quickly capture

Cons:
- Not available on all computers

Support: Microsoft offers a guide on how to use it

Recommendation: Great to use and pin to your Start taskbar

SIMILAR TOOLS: Screenshot (on Mac)

TEXT EDITORS

WHY MIGHT YOU NEED THIS?

Data Cleaning: removing messy formatting, standardization, etc.

NOTEPAD++ (WINDOWS ONLY)

Website: notepad-plus-plus.org/downloads

Pros:

- Easy to install
- Easy to learn and use

Cons:

- Freezes with large files
- Very slow find & replace

Support: User Manual, Documentation, User Community

TEXTMATE (MAC ONLY)

Website: macromates.com

Pros:

- Easy to install
- Easy to learn and use
- Integrates with scripting environments

Cons:

- Freezes with large files

Support: Chatroom, Email Support

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 and 2021 versions of State Voices' Nonprofit Tech Guide. Contributors and Editors include:

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