

COMMUNITY VOICE

HUMAN RESOURCES

Virginia Community Voice equips neighbors in marginalized communities to realize their vision for their neighborhood, and prepares institutions to respond effectively.

Community Voice is a four-stage process that increases neighborhood leadership over decisions affecting their community.

Within the Community Voice process, there are five distinct roles with unique responsibilities:

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

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COLLABORATION COORDINATOR

—

COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

—

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

—

WORKING GROUP MEMBER

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

DEFINED

A person whose job is to coordinate cooperative efforts and campaigning carried out by local residents to promote the interests of their community.

COMMUNITY VOICE APPROACH

A Community Voice Community Organizer identifies neighborhood leaders, forms trusting relationships, and builds networks. Through one-to-one conversations organizers learn what motivates and inspires a person, and what they want to see change in their community. Then they start to bring neighbors together, eventually forming a Steering Committee (see below for role of steering committee members).

Community organizers may start by meeting with long-time residents who are well-known, part of civic associations, faith groups, or other local organizations. However, a community organizer is not only seeking out established leaders, but is also looking for people who have great potential and leadership qualities who could be hired as Community Advocates.

Identifying neighborhood leaders is a critical step in the Community Voice process and one that may need to be revisited over time as neighbors transition or move, the organizing efforts scale, or neighborhood demographics change.

WE RECOMMEND THAT COMMUNITY VOICE OPERATE WITH AT LEAST ONE FULL-TIME COMMUNITY ORGANIZER.

IN ACTION @ RVA THRIVES

In Richmond, the Community Voice process has been led by seasoned community organizer, and the Virginia Community Voice Executive Director Lea Whitehurst-Gibson, whose experience over the past decade includes serving as Executive Director of Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Community (RISC) a grassroots

organization that unites more than 20 congregations for root-level justice. She is trained by the Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART) and has been successfully leading efforts to organize and hold leaders accountable around issues of housing, education, and jobs access in the City of Richmond and Henrico County for more than 10 years.

In Richmond, the Community Voice process has also been supported by the RVA Thrives Manager, Elaine Williams, who has experienced housing instability along the Jefferson Davis Corridor, is trained in macro social work at Virginia Commonwealth University, and has experience working in homeless services, serve as motivation for this work. Elaine was hired as an Advocate in the early stages of the Community Voice process to conduct community surveys and moved into a permanent organizing role, under the mentorship and training of the Virginia Community Voice Executive Director, Lea Whitehurst-Gibson.

[Lea's interview on community organizing and what it takes.→](#)

[Elaine's interview on community organizing and what it takes.→](#)

COLLABORATION COORDINATOR

CITY VOICE APPROACH

In the City Voice process, it's the role of the Collaboration Coordinator to understand the city's institutions so that neighborhood leaders can work with key decision-makers to craft equitable solutions. Decision-makers may include elected officials, local business owners and employers, nonprofit leaders, philanthropic funders, and city planners. In short, the Collaboration Coordinator seeks to connect neighbors with allies who have the influence and power to change the issues neighbors have prioritized for action.

WE RECOMMEND THAT CITY VOICE OPERATE WITH ONE FULL-TIME OR TWO PART-TIME COLLABORATION COORDINATORS.

IN ACTION @ RVA THRIVES

In Richmond, there are two Collaboration Coordinators: Nelson Reveley, a local minister, academic, and transportation activist who has worked with [Thriving Cities Group](#) for more than five years and Rodney Gaines, a local resident of the Davee Gardens neighborhood who also serves as a Community Advocate.

Nelson leveraged existing relationships with individuals and organizations throughout the City of Richmond to quickly build a network of potential partners for RVA Thrives. As he met with organizations across the city his goal was twofold: 1) to spread the word about RVA Thrives and 2) to identify resources that could be brought to the Jefferson Davis Corridor to support neighbors' efforts.

Rodney brings to this role an extensive personal and professional network built over the past 40 years as a southside resident, and as a small business owner. Rodney works with Nelson to identify job seekers, and bring them together with employers along the corridor who are seeking to hire locally as well as connect job seekers with employment service providers.



[Hear from Nelson about
the role of the Collaboration
Coordinator.→](#)

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

COMMUNITY VOICE APPROACH

Community Advocates live in the community where the organizing is taking place. The role of the Community Advocate is to assist community organizers weekly with designing and conducting community outreach.

WE RECOMMEND THAT COMMUNITY VOICE OPERATE WITH THREE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES.

IN ACTION @ RVA THRIVES

RVA Thrives currently has three Community Advocates who assist weekly with designing and conducting community outreach. We are looking to hire another Community Advocate who will focus directly on organizing and engaging Latinx communities along the Jefferson Davis Corridor.

RVA THRIVES COMMUNITY ADVOCATE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1 Engage in listening process.
 - a. Assist in the design, collection, documentation, and analysis of 75+ quality resident surveys in the Latinx communities along the Jefferson Davis Corridor.
 - b. Collect and document 15 interviews in the Latinx communities along the Jefferson Davis Corridor.
- 2 As issues of common concern or interest are heard from listening process, assist with identifying people to join an existing working group (job access, neighborhood beautification, and neighborhood safety) or form a new one of 4–8 community members ready to steer initiative around given issue.
- 3 Participate actively in training and regular RVA Thrives team meetings.
- 4 Serve as RVA Thrives presence at community events.

Timeline

15 hours/week | November 1, 2018–April 15, 2019. (Work may flexibly include some Saturdays and evenings) .

Stipend

\$7,500 (\$1250 per month)

Qualifications

The Community Advocate needs to be bilingual in Spanish and English, outgoing, passionate about the community, able to work well with diverse communities and groups, and able to work well independently as well as part of the team. The ideal candidate also preferably lives along or near the Jefferson Davis Corridor and readily uses the internet and email for communication and has formal community organizer training (not required but ideal).

STEERING COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY VOICE APPROACH

A Community Voice Steering Committee is made up of neighbors in the area where Community Voice is organizing, and as appropriate, other people who have a stake in the community such as local developers, faith group leaders, and employers. The Steering Committee acts in an advisory capacity to community organizers and community advocates, as well as the working groups. Over time, the Steering Committee takes on increasing levels of leadership over the Community Voice process, including facilitating meetings, and making decisions about personnel and budget. If another entity acts as fiscal sponsor for Community Voice, we recommend that it is clear from the start that the Steering Committee needs to have transparency into the operations of the Community Voice process, namely personnel and budget, and to the extent possible given the fiscal sponsor's governance policies, be empowered to make decisions about Community Voice operations. It may be appropriate for Community Voice to establish itself as an independent nonprofit and in this case, the Steering Committee will act as a formal board of directors with fiduciary responsibility and in accordance with IRS requirements for 501c3 nonprofits.

Steering Committee members who are residents of the community (not developers, employers or nonprofit members), receive a stipend for their participation.

WE RECOMMEND THAT COMMUNITY VOICE OPERATE WITH EIGHT TO TEN STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

IN ACTION @ RVA THRIVES

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to:

1 Identify Community Interest

Help identify key issues facing the Jefferson Davis Corridor community.

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Serve as a connecting reference for the project to others living and working along the corridor.

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Assist Community Advocates in collecting community surveys.

2 Develop Strategic Networks

Recruit at least 6 people from your community in at least one RVA Thrives community event over the course of the year.

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Identify at least three other neighbors (not direct relatives) who can rotate on the Steering Committee after you have served your term.

3 Craft Collaborative Project Proposals

Help identify collaborative projects to address the problems facing the corridor.

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Ensure respective communities know about RVA Thrives and Working Group solutions.

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Recruit at least one person from your community to join a Working Group.

4 Facilitate Community Feedback into Projects

Work with Community Advocates and staff to gather community feedback after community events.

Commitment

Attend 9 of the 11 Steering Committee Meetings over eleven months.

WORKING GROUP MEMBER

PURPOSE

The Working Group's purpose is to help shape solutions to the problem areas voted on by the Steering Committee. To work with the Steering Committee to connect the working groups to city wide initiatives that are effectively addressing those problem areas and to help inform and connect the communities along the Route 1 corridor to the solutions proposed by the working groups.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMELINE

Working Groups will ideally have 10 people on them (residents, as well as connected nonprofit reps, business reps, or government reps). The Working Groups will be led and driven by residents along the Corridor, but also be in deep connection to broader institutions, nonprofits, businesses, organizations, and programs relevant to their issue.

Working group members will receive an orientation and will meet regularly for a set period of time, or until a solution has been developed and proposal written.

Working Group member responsibilities are as follows:

- 1 Actively participate in one Working Group training
- 2 Actively participate in monthly meetings
- 3 Meet with potential allies and key decision makers as available and as needed
- 4 Attend at least 7 of the 9 Working Group Meetings

Locations, times, and dates of each Working Group's meetings will be determined based upon members availability. Working Group members who are residents along the corridor are eligible to receive a stipend.