

Green Party of the United States 2013 Strategic Plan Narrative

7/15/2013 Draft

Developed by the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG)

Starlene Rankin and Karen Young, Co-Chairs

Contents

Executive Summary	5
Methodology	5
Goals and Objectives	6
Goal 1: Increasing Membership and Diversity	7
Summary.....	8
Strengths.....	9
Weaknesses	9
Opportunities.....	9
Threats.....	10
Who Is A Member and Why Does It Matter?	10
Registered Greens as Members	11
Active Greens as Members	11
Membership and Dues	12
Objectives	12
Bring in more new members	12
Retain existing members.....	12
Recruit and retain members from groups who are currently under-represented in our party: primarily people of color and youth.	12
Define who is a member	12
Goal 2: Running And Electing More Candidates	13
Summary.....	14
Strengths.....	15
Weaknesses	15
Opportunities.....	16
Threats.....	16
Objectives	16
Develop coherent plan of action at all levels, for recruiting, developing, and supporting candidates.	17
Raise significant funds to support top candidates in key races across the country.	17
Track electoral activities and successes.	17

Develop campaign to support ballot access, proportional representation/IRV, and other electoral reforms at the national and state level.....	17
Goal 3: Achieving More Positive Awareness of the Party.....	18
Summary.....	19
External Communications	19
Internal Communications	19
Strengths.....	20
Weaknesses	20
Opportunities.....	21
Threats.....	21
OBJECTIVES.....	22
Increase awareness of the Green Party overall	22
Create a clear understanding of our mission and accomplishments	22
Stronger branding: more consistency, strong messaging and visuals, and more overall professionalism in communications	22
Combat negative attitudes about the Green Party and third parties in general	22
Create targeted communications for diverse groups.....	22
Improve internal communication about how things work, and reporting from various entities about what they are doing.....	22
Establish positive internal environment in line with our values.....	22
Goal 4: More Effective Issue Advocacy And Policy Development.....	23
Summary.....	24
Strengths.....	25
Opportunities.....	25
Weaknesses	26
Threats.....	27
Objectives	28
Two-Way Communication With A Broader Public	28
Articulating Positions More Strongly.....	28
Effectiveness in Issue Advocacy	28
Achievement of Policy Victories	28
How Must GPUS Structure Change?	29

Structure And Success	29
How We Get Work Done.....	30
Steering Committee	30
Paid Staff	31
Committees and Caucuses	31
National Committee.....	33
GPUS: Federation of States vs. National Membership Organization	34

Executive Summary

“The empowerment of a group as a whole requires planning. Without a plan, and a democratic process of creating it, an organization’s future is determined by dominant members inside and dominant pressures outside...

Planning does take time, but the resulting unity can save time in the long run, by avoiding continuing power struggles over issues that can be settled in the planning process.”

- *Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership*, Lakey, Lakey, Napier and Robinson

We are pleased to present this plan, and proud of the work that went into it. We believe in the Green Party and the essential role that we can play in moving a progressive political agenda. We know that what we seek to do isn’t easy. But throughout history we have seen organized people beat organized money.

The creation of this plan is the beginning, not the end, of our thinking strategically about how to build our party. We’ve laid out a mission and vision statement, an analysis of our situation, goals and objectives, and an action plan to tackle. The rest is up to you.

We hope every reader of this plan will offer, not only ideas to make it better or more complete, but your personal commitment to work to make it a reality. We must also commit to re-visiting the plan on a regular basis, to make any necessary adjustments. We can’t predict the future. We do know that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Methodology

The National Committee passed a proposal regarding development of a Strategic Plan on November 25, 2011. The Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG) first convened in January 2013, and has been working on this plan ever since.

We gathered input from several sources, including:

- A diverse committee of 21 SPWG members and advisors
- An online survey of 729 Green Party members and activists, from every state in the country
- An online survey of 85 leaders of Green state parties

- Interviews with 8 leaders of international Green Parties, as well as the US Libertarian party

Reports on these surveys and interviews will be available online as background material for members of the National Committee.

We created Mission and Vision Statements based on ideas that came up frequently in our member surveys, as well as definitions of Mission and Vision statements in a key organizational source book, *Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership*.¹ Briefly, the book summarizes these statements as such: “The *mission statement* is a focused statement of your organization’s present identity and reason for existing. The *vision* pictures where it wants to be in three to five years.”

We also created a SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis (aka SWOT Matrix) is a structured planning method used in many strategic plans. It is used to evaluate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats involved in a given venture. It involves specifying the objectives of the venture, and identifying the internal and external factors that are *favorable* and *unfavorable* to achieving that objective. The SWOT informs later steps such as action plans to achieve the objective. SWOT analysis groups key pieces of information into two main categories:

- Internal factors – the *strengths and weaknesses* internal to the organization
- External factors - the *opportunities and threats* presented by the environment external to the organization

Goals and Objectives

Our vision statement calls for the party, within a few years, to be achieving the following goals. The numbers assigned are rather arbitrary: they are all closely intertwined.

We have also outlined some structural issues that face our party, and make recommendations for bringing our structure more in line with our values and goals.

Goal 1: Increasing Membership and Diversity

Goal 2: Running And Electing More Candidates

Goal 3: Achieving More Positive Awareness of the Party

Goal 4: More Effective Issue Advocacy And Policy Development

The Objectives and Action Plan document contains specific action recommendations.

¹ The book is out of print, but available in PDF here:
http://www.trainingforchange.org/grassroots_and_nonprofit_leadership

Goal 1: Increasing Membership and Diversity

What was the main reason you first got involved in the Green Party?

“A friend asked me to attend a meeting. I was frustrated by the lack of progressive Democratic politics in Indiana.”

“I was recruited by the Green Party to run for state legislator.”

“I have been looking for alternatives to the corporate sponsored Republican and Democratic parties.”

“Local was working to elect Greens to the county board, I volunteered for the campaign in 02.” -- SURVEY RESPONDENTS

What could be better about our meetings, activities, communications?

“Taking it out to the people whenever possible. Giving speeches/lectures. Social gatherings/fundraisers. Artist/musician sponsorship. Advertise. “

“Events and activities that bring people together to feel valued and that they count. Nourish their bodies and their minds!”

“Having issue related meetings on upcoming legislation - invite current legislators and have green party position representative do debate - - holding informational parties at clubs, grocery stores, start a ‘the green party is your party’ campaign. ”

“We need to spend more time building trust and community before we jump into issues. Without trust and community building, meetings turn into debates and discussions when what we really need is dialog.”

“I rarely hear about [meetings] and when I do, the announcement is always belated or at the last minute, which prevents me from planning for them.”

“We focus too much attention on small, trivial details during local and state meetings. Sometimes, the heated atmosphere tends to alienate newcomers. If it weren't for my patience and understanding, I would have been turned off immediately and would not have stayed with the party.”

“meetings closer to where I live” - SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Summary

As the saying goes, there are two things that provide power – money and people. As a political party that does not accept corporate contributions, the Green Party will likely never raise the kind of money that other parties do. As a people's party, we must instead become abundant in *people* – the human capital to get things done, whether it's getting people to vote Green, running candidates, promoting our policies and issues, or simply managing day-to-day party tasks.

We need to do a better job of:

- **bringing in new members, including youth and people of color**
- **retaining existing members**
- **defining who is a member**

We need to convert more disgruntled Democrats and independents, especially those who are politically active and experienced, into Greens. We need to recruit people with the skills we typically lack as a group, such as experienced organizers and fundraisers.

We also need to make a specific effort to **recruit and retain members from groups who are currently under-represented in our party**: primarily people of color and youth.

We have found that certain things work to bring **new members** into our party: recruiting people as candidates; recruiting people to work on campaigns; reaching out to potential members through events and tabling; inviting people to meetings.

Experienced organizers always make sure that new people are welcomed into meetings and events, that there is work for new people to do immediately, and that contact info is rigorously maintained. These are things that we have often struggled with.

Recruiting youth and people of color has also been a challenge. When people come in and don't see anyone who looks like them, they naturally question whether this is somewhere they belong. Also, African-Americans, in particular, often have deep ties to the Democratic Party both emotional and economic in nature, and in urban areas, many elected officials.

We have had an easier time attracting youth. One strategy we should consider is focusing first on young people of color, who have fewer ties to the current system.

Retaining existing members has been a challenge. The sheer difficulty of making real headway in our political system, as well as burnout from overwork, has gotten the better of some people over time. Too often a negative, non-welcoming, and non-effective culture has driven people away.

We need to develop specific, measurable goals and plans for increasing our membership and diversity, including retention, on all levels of the party.

Strengths

- Volunteers and potential new members, especially from the Jill Stein campaign, keep showing up
- New energy in the Green Party Youth Caucus/Young Greens. Many new members of this group have become active in the party.
- Party unity around running more candidates
- We are a place where new people can get involved and be doing real work quickly

Weaknesses

- Lack of organizing mindset. Most state parties, as well as GPUS, don't have an organizing plan, a dedicated organizing/member recruitment committee, or defined goals for increasing membership, either for general purposes or for increasing diversity.
- State parties also mentioned in our survey that they lack experienced organizers.
- Lack of commitment and accountability from members: not enough people to do the work, and work doesn't get done.
- Negative and non-welcoming culture.

Opportunities

- Greens have many opportunities to lead on issues where public opinion is far ahead of the political establishment, such as legalization of marijuana, national health care, and a living wage.
- People know our political system is broken and systemic changes are needed; frustration is widely and deeply felt.

Threats

- Political apathy and ignorance.
- Many politically active people are not willing to take the chance of helping the “greater evil” and hurting Democrats by supporting the Green Party. Some are also concerned about retaliation.
- Ballot access problems keep some states from fielding candidates.
- Perception as white “environmental” party hurts us with poor people/people of color.

Who Is A Member and Why Does It Matter?

Members of GPUS are state parties, not individuals.

This makes it extremely difficult for GPUS to effectively engage directly with individuals self-identifying as “Green,” particularly in the many communities across the country with no functioning local or state party.

We apportion “power” in GPUS, in terms of delegates to the National Committee, based in part on how many “members” state parties have. This has led to continuing and acrimonious debate, because there is no one standard that can be applied for membership across states.

We could make a decision at GPUS to move to a national membership structure, such as most international Green parties have, where people who pay dues to the national party are members. This idea is detailed more in the “structure” section.

Some states have partisan voter registration, and others don’t. Some state Green Parties have achieved “ballot status” or recognition from their state governments, thus allowing people to register as Green Party voters where partisan registration applies, and other state Green Parties have not achieved that status. Of course, the difficulty of achieving and maintaining ballot status varies greatly from state to state.

57% of states in our survey have seen their “ballot status” change over the life of their state party.

Whether states consider their members to be everyone who has registered Green, or just the people who are active in some way, whether volunteers, donors or both, has an impact on how they use their resources to grow their party. Also, parties need to have strategies for how to maintain or grow membership when/if their ballot status changes. These are the reasons that the question matters.

Registered Greens as Members

Where Green Party voter registration is applicable, individuals may select Green as their political affiliation when registering to vote. Green Parties may receive lists of these voters from the state government, but are typically very limited in their ability to actually contact those voters to get them engaged in the party. This is especially true because the contact information provided is usually only a street address, and mailings are expensive. Also, the information is often inaccurate and/or out of date.

These states often have larger “memberships,” but a very weak relationship to the majority of “members.” We have a couple of states over 20,000 registered Greens, a couple between 5 and 20,000, and most under 5,000. Typically only a small percentage of those registered Greens, in the single digits, are volunteers and/or donors. One can’t know exactly how many of them vote Green or when.

These states also tend to be places where registering as a Green requires a large sacrifice on the part of active voters, as they give up their ability to vote in Democratic primaries.

We need to have strategies for converting more registered Greens into active members and/or donors, recruiting other active members and/or voters, voter turnout, and dealing with the question of Democratic primaries.

Active Greens as Members

On the other hand, there are states where Green Party membership is more akin to joining an advocacy group or club. These tend to be states without formal party registration, with open primaries, and/or where the barriers to ballot access are extremely high. Joining the Green Party here is less significant in terms of political cost to members. These states tend to have a smaller number of “members,” but relatively stronger connections to them.

It is often, but not always, significantly more difficult to field candidates where a party does not have ballot status or partisan registration.

Where there is no formal registration or ballot access, states need to define members in another way, and need to develop organizing strategies beyond running candidates to have an impact on their state's political environment.

Membership and Dues

A separate, but related, question is that of dues. Every single international Green Party that we interviewed has annual dues for joining the national party, and in all cases had reduced rates for low-income individuals and students.

And many of them have significantly fewer "members" than many US states. For example, the Green Party of Pennsylvania (GPPA) has 17,000 "members" (registered Greens), but an annual operating budget of less than \$5,000.

The Green Party of the UK has fewer members (about 16,000). Yet their budget is much larger, enabling them to raise enough funds for four full-time staff people. They do this by collecting dues of about \$5 per month (£44 per year) per member.

We need to seriously consider the question of instituting individual dues-paying membership. In our survey, 44% of states said they had a sustaining donor program; however, only 28% (10 states) said they charged dues.

Objectives

Bring in more new members

Retain existing members

Recruit and retain members from groups who are currently under-represented in our party: primarily people of color and youth.

Define who is a member

Goal 2: Running And Electing More Candidates

“Organizing with the Green party, for very small but specific steps towards political change. gives me hope that there is a way to change the system.”

“We need genuine progressive alternatives at the voting booth, to stop the rightward pull of the Republicans and Democrats.”

“We can provide a counterbalance to the rightward drift of political dialogue/ viability. We can help hold Dems’ feet to the fire in that they can’t as easily dismiss labor/enviro/civil rights concerns if voters have a choice. “

“We provide a way for people to vote their conscience. This is not a small thing. It keeps some people from dismissing politics entirely - myself included.”

“The Green Party is the largest left-wing US political party, and is striving to redefine our nation's priorities and the way we practice democracy.”

“I first heard about the Green Party several years ago thanks to Jello Biafra but only became interested in participatory politics upon seeing Dr. Jill Stein's acceptance speech for presidential nominee. I'm deeply critical of politicians in general, but I found myself agreeing with every word of her speech.”

Why you got involved with the Green Party:

Jill Stein. Ralph Nader. Andrew Straw. David Cobb. Rich Whitney. Recruited to run as a candidate...

Fostering electoral competition to force climate change onto the state agenda

Clinton administration acting opposite of what workers needed and Ralph Nader proposing pro-worker policies

- Survey Respondents

Summary

- As a political party, **the Green Party plays a unique role in the movement** to realize a progressive agenda. Unlike issue-based groups, we not only advocate for policies, we put people in place who can actually enact those policies.
- **People are often drawn to the Green Party by the candidates we put forward.** They put faces and voices to what can be abstract ideas. Since they tend to be activists, small business owners and “regular people,” they provide a sharp contrast to the corporate-friendly, super-wealthy candidates of the other parties.
- Running and electing candidates gives us the opportunity to:
 - **Provide leadership in the broader public debate on issues**, especially where our stands reflect public opinion that is not shared by our current elected officials.
 - **Engage with average citizens and help them channel their frustration** into concrete action.
 - **Implement our policy agenda by governing.**
- There is **broad unity in the party** on both the need to run more candidates in general, and to run a Presidential ticket in particular.
- However, **our political system presents huge obstacles to our getting people elected, and to get support from people who are afraid of “spoiling.”** In order to make any real headway, we must get serious about supporting not just ballot access, but proportional representation and IRV, as well as other political reforms, such as public campaign financing and non partisan redistricting.
- **Running campaigns puts a tremendous strain on our financial and human resources.** We need to develop and execute stronger fundraising at all levels to support our electoral efforts.

- We need a **coherent plan of action and better communication at all levels** of the party, in order to recruit, develop and support more and stronger candidates and campaign workers, and learn from our experiences.

Strengths

- We have a few hard working and committed members around the country with experience in running for office, managing campaigns and governing.
- Our values and vision, not to mention our funding, provide a clear differentiation from Democrats and Republicans.
- Our Presidential campaigns have generated new media exposure, new members and volunteers, and new or expanded infrastructure. They have also given many Green Party locals an opportunity to gain electoral experience by working on that campaign at a time when there were no other local candidates. In some states, the Presidential ticket is crucial to achieving ballot status.
- Most states have some experience with viable candidates; over 60% of states reported that they have had at least one candidate achieve 25% of the vote or more.
- We currently have 133 officeholders nationwide. In 2012, Fred Smith was elected to the State Assembly in Arkansas and he is currently the highest level Green officeholder in the US. The most consistent electoral success has been in California, which also boasts the largest number of Greens in any state. Other notable Green electoral victories include five current members of the Fairfax, CA town council, three members of the Portland, ME City Council, and several city council members in major cities such as Minneapolis.

Weaknesses

- We don't have enough people with the skills and experience to run good campaigns, especially in terms of fundraising.
- We don't have an organizing mindset: we don't have systems to recruit and handle new volunteers, nor any program to increase diversity, especially in terms of recruiting candidates from the groups we don't already have in our ranks.

- The Stein/Honkala ticket of 2012 was arguably the most well-organized and serious effort of any prior Green Party Presidential campaign, yet it garnered only 0.3% of the vote nationwide. One could question the value of running Presidential campaigns vs. local campaigns with a greater chance of winning or being competitive.
- For most states, competitive campaigns are not the norm. Out of the over 700 Greens who responded to the GPUS Strategic Planning Survey, over 450 expressed a desire for the party to not just run more candidates, but at more winnable levels.

Opportunities

- We have the chance to lead on issues where public opinion is far ahead of the political establishment, such as legalization of marijuana, national health care, and a living wage.
- Local communities are ready for new leadership with their interests at heart, and the “spoiler” argument is much less of an issue in state and local elections.

Threats

- The winner-take-all system makes it difficult for us to get support from people who agree with us, and to achieve the vote totals necessary to win.
- Politically experienced and active people are particularly reluctant to commit, especially as candidates.
- Political apathy, ignorance, and low voter turnout.

Objectives

Develop coherent plan of action at all levels, for recruiting, developing, and supporting candidates.

Raise significant funds to support top candidates in key races across the country.

Track electoral activities and successes.

Develop campaign to support ballot access, proportional representation/IRV, and other electoral reforms at the national and state level.

Goal 3: Achieving More Positive Awareness of the Party

“In our overcommunicated society, the paradox is that nothing is more important than communication. With communication going for you, anything is possible. Without it, nothing is possible.” – Al Ries & Jack Trout, ***Positioning: The Battle For Your Mind***

“Most people think the greens are just a bunch of tree huggers. We have to get across the message that we are for people, not just planet. We must become more populist, local and community oriented, so we can do constructive things now, not later.” – *Survey Respondent*

“Put effort into the public image side. We have the heart, but often don’t look the part...whether that’s the personal appearance of candidates or the graphic design of our materials.” – *Survey Respondent*

“There needs to be a simple, unified, identity that speaks to the Party ideals. There has to be one set logo/logotype, small range of typefaces, and a clear and concise web layout for the Green Party website. People prefer strong visuals when searching the web, or reading an article. We need to be more visually oriented as a movement.” – *Survey Respondent*

“The use of internet technologies with such limited resources has been strong, but could be better. We need more cohesive visual "branding" and more succinct content that articulates a particular narrative that is hopeful and inspirational.” - *Survey Respondent*

“I like that it is not partisan rantings, and that they stick to facts, not bias, and that the Green Party on Facebook has been very welcoming. They have treated me like a friend.” – *Survey Respondent*

“I would like to see all Green representatives on Twitter so a solid network of national / local representatives and voters could be firmly cemented, enabling discourse, solidarity and sharing of news and ideas.” – *Survey Respondent*

Summary

GPUS has been around for more than ten years – still a short time – and other formations of the Green Party for much longer. Yet most Americans, at least according to political polls, don't even know we exist. Those who are aware of us don't necessarily have a clear sense of who we are. When we are covered in the media, we are often mocked and marginalized, when we're not being blamed for the election of George Bush.

Yet people do find us and become supporters. Many new people found us through positive coverage of Jill Stein's campaign from outlets including the *Bill Moyers Show* and *Democracy Now*, or through a survey on Facebook.

Our member survey found that one of the most valuable things that GPUS does for them is provide our national website. Another top service was networking with other Greens.

So the communications area of GPUS is very important, both internally and externally, to our success.

External Communications

Some goals we need to achieve are:

- Increase awareness of the Green Party overall
- Create a clear understanding of the Green Party's mission and accomplishments
- Stronger branding: more consistency, strong messaging and visuals, and overall professionalism in our communications
- Combat negative attitudes about the Green Party and third parties in general
- Create targeted communications for groups we need to recruit, including youth and people of color

Internal Communications

We also have challenges with our internal communications. They are both structural and spiritual.

Our organizational structure is clunky and hard to understand. It can be difficult for members to find out what is happening. It can be very difficult, time consuming, and

draining to get things done and approved. It can also be difficult to impossible for new members to find the right place to plug in, or even to get a response from us at all.

We need both to streamline our structure, and to communicate about it much more clearly. We need to have much better two way communication with members, so that they know what is happening and how they can get involved, and also so they can hold leadership, such as committee chairs and the Steering Committee, accountable.

We have allowed a very negative culture to take root in the party, especially, but not only, on our national email list. The list is not useful for productive communication about the party's work, because there are so many irrelevant and off-topic messages being posted, and personal attacks, insults and long-running feuds are a constant feature.

We know that this environment has driven away many good people who really wanted to engage with the Green Party, and who we could ill afford to lose. It also takes a constant toll on the spirits of those who are working hard to build the party.

We need to establish an internal environment that is more in tune with our stated values and that helps us achieve our goals, rather than getting in the way.

Strengths

- A few hard working and committed members, especially in our existing communications infrastructure of the Media Committee and Outreach Committee.
- One of the few areas of the party where we have paid staff: a half-time Media Director and part-time contract Webmaster.
- Somewhat established positive images of the party: as a progressive alternative/challenge to the two parties, as a party that's independent of corporate interests, a party that's for the environment and sustainability, and as value-driven and ethical.
- Distinct values and vision that are radically different from the Democrats and Republicans, yet in many cases, popular among the majority of Americans.

Weaknesses

- Internal structure that doesn't work and is clunky and poorly understood. Many different entities are doing communications work but are not coordinated or working strategically. Internal communication about party business is weak.
- Management of paid staff by rotating cast of SC volunteers doesn't work.

- Lack of skills among members such as project management, fundraising, planning
- Lack of resources to create and maintain professional communications.

Opportunities

- Young Greens are joining the Green Party faster than any other age group. This group is often fluent in social media and other communications skills that the party needs.
- Local communities are ready for new leadership with their interests at heart.
- People know that our political system is broken and they are frustrated with the Democrats. These feelings are both widespread and deeply felt. They want an alternative.
- Interest in sustainability, environmental issues and Green products is on the rise.
- People on the lower levels of society are being hurt much more than others by the general economic collapse and government austerity. Some radical activism, such as among low wage workers, is bubbling up.

Threats

- The winner-take-all system creates the (not entirely incorrect) belief that even if Greens have better policy positions, supporting us just means electing the “greater” rather than the “lesser” of two evils. (What does Green stand for? Getting Republicans Elected Every November)
- Political apathy, ignorance, low voter turnout.
- Perception of the party as too white, too old, and more concerned with environmental conservation than environmental justice and other issues important to people of color

OBJECTIVES

Increase awareness of the Green Party overall

Create a clear understanding of our mission and accomplishments

Stronger branding: more consistency, strong messaging and visuals, and more overall professionalism in communications

Combat negative attitudes about the Green Party and third parties in general

Create targeted communications for diverse groups

Improve internal communication about how things work, and reporting from various entities about what they are doing

Establish positive internal environment in line with our values

Goal 4: More Effective Issue Advocacy And Policy Development

“Solid policies are a good basis to reach out to voters. Democracy is strengthened by the power of ideas, less by the idea of power.” – *Johan Hamels, Green Party of Canada*

“The most important work the Green Party does is advocate for smart and ethical public policy, while providing candidates who will vote for legislation which reflects those values.” – *Survey Respondent*

“Too much focus on environmental conservation as opposed to environmental justice and issues front and center to people of color” – *Survey Respondent*

“It should be possible for society to exist without destroying the environment and each other in the process. Greens have the vision to accomplish this.” – *Survey Respondent*

“I realized I was way far to the left of the Democratic party, took one of the tests to find out how far right or left I was and I was to the left of Jill Stein. So I started reading the info about the GP and found that it met my needs for a political party.” – *Survey Respondent*

Summary

As a political party, **our positions on issues define us** in relationship to other political parties. They are often what first attracts potential members to our party.

Many members say that they became involved with the party, or are committed to the party, because of our Ten Key Values, or some stance on a particular issue or set of issues that are important to them personally.

Our policy positions afford us a great opportunity to recruit many more members, especially people of color, youth and poor people, and to affect government for the better.

However, policy positions in and of themselves are not enough to achieve either of those goals. To take full advantage of them, we need to:

- **Actively engage members and the public in the policy process**
- **Articulate our positions more strongly**

We also need to demonstrate:

- **Effectiveness in issue advocacy**
- **Achievement of policy victories**

The party historically hasn't gotten too far past the step of articulating positions.

GPUS could help the party grow in this area through:

- More effective development of our national platform, involving members and the public more broadly
- More effective promotion of our national platform, including development of strategic campaign issue priorities, working with candidates on policy, and placing higher priority on issues important to people of color and youth
- Helping to coordinate organizing activity around the country on given issues, including participation in coalitions, and facilitating dialogue among Greens working on these issues.

- Providing informational and campaign materials for use by state and local parties and candidates
- Using national spokespeople to publicize our positions. Currently, Jill Stein and the Green Shadow Cabinet are operating as “unofficial” or “informal” spokespeople. We should formalize this relationship in the short term, and also work toward having spokespeople or party leaders as our public faces, including building the resources to put them on staff.

Strengths

- **Distinct values and vision** from Democrats and Republicans
- **Strong unity around the national platform** as one of the valuable aspects of GPUS

Opportunities

- Greens have **many opportunities to lead on issues** where public opinion is far ahead of the political establishment, such as legalization of marijuana, national health care, no cuts in Social Security, and a living wage
- **Local communities are ready for new leadership** with their interests at heart
- **Networking with other organizations** who have similar goals

Several international Green Parties have developed processes for engaging the public in policy discussions, to great success. Engaging the public this way could really raise the public’s awareness of the party in general, build support for us based on our positions, and help us connect with community leaders on issues.

For example, in 2004, the Canadian party used a wiki tool, called a “Living Platform,” to develop their election platform. At that time they only had about 800 members. They invited the public to weigh in, and they received feedback from 80,000 supporters. This boosted public visibility and engaged tens of thousands of new people, and got the party enough votes to begin qualifying for public financing.

Most international Green Parties we interviewed also have a two-track system for developing policy. One track is “engaging members and the public,” involving as many people as possible and producing a large document about many issues. The other

track is “highlighting key issues,” in which party leadership and communications people develop a smaller document around key issues for a given election campaign season.

International Green Parties view coalition work as necessary, even when they encounter frustrations. They see value in showing up at protests with large numbers of visible Greens. They see recruiting opportunities. And of course, where Greens serve in government, they are part of coalitions with other parties and engage in daily dialogue with them around policy legislation.

Our relative lack of power compared to our international Green counterparts means we need to develop our own approach to participating in coalitions. When we do participate, we typically have little influence within the group. Too often the coalition winds up embracing vastly watered-down versions of the policy solutions we favor. Also, we often don’t get the visibility and credit for our work that we should.

However, we can’t achieve policy victories all by ourselves, so we need to find a way to work with others that helps us advance our goals.

The fact that other groups within coalitions also experience this marginalization is something that could work in our favor.

For example, in several recent coalitions around increasing the minimum wage, organizations of tipped restaurant workers did a lot to organize support. Yet when the chips were down, the coalitions allowed others to strip coverage of tipped workers, who work for a sub minimum wage, out of the bills.

If we could find a way to work with these types of groups to build power together, we could both grow our ranks and do more to move the needle on key issues, within or outside the traditional coalitions.

Weaknesses

- **Lack of an organizing mindset.** We tend to have an inward-focused conversation about political issues among ourselves, rather going out and talking with people about their problems and working with them to develop solutions.
- **We don’t prioritize issues** based on their importance to people we want to organize and bring into the party, or on their strategic political importance in general.
- We also haven’t done a good job of **engaging in coalitions** with like-minded people, with an eye toward getting results.
- **Weak internal systems around policy development and communications.**

- We have tried several methods to develop the platform, but the process often seems to devolve into acrimony and inaction.
- We don't have systems for packaging and promoting policy in digestible chunks, for use by the public, media, GP members and candidates.
- **Lengthy and convoluted decision making processes** prevent us from moving quickly when opportunities arise.
- **Lack of commitment among members**, which leads to not enough people to do the work, and extra stress on the few people who are doing the work.
- **Lack of fundraising infrastructure and skills** keeps us from having the resources needed on both policy development and organizing fronts. The European Green parties all have paid staff who work just on policy, but we do not.

Threats

- **The winner-take-all system** creates the (not entirely incorrect) belief that even if Greens have better policy positions, supporting us just means electing the “greater” rather than the “lesser” of two evils. (What does Green stand for? Getting Republicans Elected Every November)
- **Obstacles to electoral success often make it difficult or impossible for Greens to affect policy** by winning elections, running competitive campaigns, or even getting candidates on the ballot at all.
- **Politically experienced and active people are reluctant to commit to us:** as volunteers, as voters and as candidates. How does supporting Greens lead to policy victories? This “efficacy” issue is more important to politically experienced and active people than to political neophytes or those who prioritize non-electoral activities.

These threats go directly to our ability to be effective in advocating policy and achieving policy victories.

We need to:

- **Combat the winner-take-all** system by educating people about its failures, and actively working for alternatives (IRV and proportional representation, as well as other electoral reforms). We can get allies on these issues who won't necessarily vote for Greens or join the party.

- **Engage in effective non-electoral advocacy**, particularly in states where it is difficult or impossible to get on the ballot. In the West, initiatives or referendums can be effective ways to build and demonstrate support for issues, to engage people and government directly and sometimes directly enact policy. Agitating for the right people or policies with regulatory agencies, government-appointed boards or commissions is another. Testifying at hearings is another; there are certainly others.
- **Actively recruit politically active and experienced people.** If we present a more professional image (especially with candidates) and make a real contribution within coalitions, as well as having our own issue campaigns and activities, we will have a better chance of attracting some of these colleagues, especially the rank and file members.
- We probably won't turn them into activists or get candidate endorsements from them overnight. We need a plan to build from lower to higher levels of support, have measurable goals and track our progress.

Objectives

Two-Way Communication With A Broader Public

Articulating Positions More Strongly

Effectiveness in Issue Advocacy

Achievement of Policy Victories

How Must GPUS Structure Change?

Many of us experience deep frustration with the structure and systems of GPUS.

Our rules are lengthy and byzantine. Many rules are unenforceable, and are not enforced, or widely ignored and hacked. The structure is hard to understand and doesn't seem to work for us.

We believe the rules need to be vastly streamlined and simplified. Rather than try to cover every situation imaginable, they need to be more general. They also need to make it easier to empower the best players, and stop disruptive individuals from getting in the way.

We also must consider whether being a federation of state parties is working well to grow GPUS and/or state parties, or if another structure might work better.

Changing the structure is necessary, but not sufficient to making this party something we can all be proud to be part of. Ultimately this party is made up of people. It is our level of commitment as people, and our willingness to act in a way that's productive and cooperative, that will make or break our Green Party.

Too often, the default seems to be "no response" when members receive emails or calls from people working on GPUS projects. We could all accomplish much more, if members would simply pledge to answer emails and calls when they come.

Structure And Success

We see that other Green Parties around the world have far more success: in political power, membership, and financial resources.

Even though the other Green Parties operate under quite different conditions than we do, there are certain aspects of their operations that many have in common, that may be instructive in helping us better align our structures with our goals and meet with greater success.

Our success depends on prioritizing fundraising much more than we have in the past. Other Green Parties have far more access to public financing than we do. Many also get government funds for their electeds' staff and infrastructure.

Historically most of our members, including SC and NC members, have not been willing or able to prioritize this work. We all need to step up, at minimum, as donors. And GPUS must prioritize recruiting new members with the skill and interest to help move us forward in fundraising, and put them to work.

How We Get Work Done

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, according to our rules, holds a critical, central function in doing and overseeing the party's work. Yet the way it is currently structured too often results in work getting done poorly, or not at all. The party needs to come up with solutions to this problem sooner rather than later.

According to our bylaws, the Steering Committee is supposed to, among other things:

1. Oversee the primary day-to-day business and operations
2. Oversee paid personnel, including staff and contractors
3. Administer GPUS fundraising and expenditures, and review recommendations by the Treasurer and Finance Committee on financial matters
4. Support committees to enable quality, accurate and effective committee work

These are all management and leadership functions. Effectively doing this work would require a significant time commitment from SC members.

These SC functions are especially critical because we have no Executive Director on staff. No staff person is charged with any management or oversight whatsoever.

Yet we elect people to the SC without regard to their management or leadership experience or track record, or to their time commitment. We have no accountability standards once people are elected. Elections are primarily popularity contests.

Historically, some SC members have committed a great deal of time to the task, while others have committed almost nothing. Our process also does not lend itself to ensuring diversity in leadership ranks.

In the past, SC members had more accountability. For example, they would be suspended if they missed a certain number of meetings. Also, some SC members were designated as spokespeople, which is something many Greens in our survey said is a high priority.

From the outside, it may look like things are working. Those who are involved in the actual day to day work of the party, however, know well how much is falling through the cracks, and how much pressure is put on those few people who are actively working.

Action Items:

- The Steering Committee should define work portfolios, time commitments, goals for the year, and accountability for its members. Work portfolio assignments should be based on experience as much as possible.
- A Nominating Committee should be created, which will recruit and vet SC candidates based on defined criteria and considering the value of diversity. Most boards have nominating committees.
- An orientation and/or training session should be held after the election each year.

Paid Staff

We currently have three paid staff, two full time (Office Manager and Fundraising Director) and one part time (Media Director), as well as one part time contractor (webmaster). A large proportion of GPUS revenue goes to pay for staff.

Because we haven't developed a good management system, our staff typically performs their work with little meaningful guidance, supervision, or accountability of any kind, and little to no coordination among them.

The staff gets conflicting demands from too many different quarters. GPUS cannot hold staff accountable for performance against their job descriptions and the organization's priorities. We need to do a better job of managing paid staff and contractors.

Action Items:

- The new SC should choose someone with management experience to oversee staff and provide regular reports to the SC.
- The Personnel Committee and/or the staff supervisor needs to create job descriptions, goals and evaluation systems.
- Ultimately, GPUS must raise sufficient funds to hire an Executive Director with management experience to oversee staff.

Committees and Caucuses

GPUS has approximately twenty standing committees and also forms ad hoc working groups from time to time. We also have several caucuses including the Youth Caucus (also known as Young Greens), the Black Caucus, the Lavender Caucus and the Women's Caucus.

These groups are critical, both for general party work such as Fundraising and Finance, and for political work such as elections (the Coordinated Campaign Committee) and issue advocacy (Platform, Eco-Action). This is especially true because our staff is so small. We must prioritize making them more functional and improving communication.

There is little to no reporting done by committees or caucuses, and the party in general is often in the dark about what they do. The purpose or goal of caucuses is not defined in our bylaws. Yet, since their core constituencies are under-represented in the party, bringing new members in to be more active in the party should be a key component of their mission.

We do know many committees struggle to maintain leadership and a core of members, and to accomplish meaningful work.

Committee Chairs do not necessarily have the project management or leadership experience needed. Bitter conflicts have often erupted on committees, in some cases, decimating them and leaving them dead for years.

Rules and procedures governing committees are often extremely lengthy and convoluted, and give more weight to disruptive members and outsiders than to committee members trying to do the work.

The process of accrediting caucuses requires certain standards, such as 100 members nationwide, that may need to be revised to make it easier and faster for the party to bring in important new members.

Action Items:

- The SC needs to prioritize key committees for help, in addition to improving committee support in general.
- The SC and/or Nominating Committee should take a role in recruiting and training committee chairs.
- Committees must report, and actively recruit new members, more often. We should create a system to direct new volunteers to state parties and/or national committees, depending on interest and availability.
- Bylaws related to committees need to be streamlined, and create more accountability for members and chairs.
- The status and purpose of caucuses needs to be examined, with an eye to improving the recruitment of new, under-represented members, as well as assessing how caucuses represent their constituencies within the party.

National Committee

The National Committee consists of up to 150 members from the various state parties and caucuses. Each state/caucus has at least one vote. Its main activity is discussing and voting on proposals, mostly by states and mostly related to internal matters of party governance. There are some proposals revolving around endorsements of various issue campaigns or rallies and the like.

As presently constituted, the National Committee doesn't work well either to govern GPUS, or to share information or resources among states. It needs to be streamlined and improved, if it remains.

Most other Green Parties we talked to don't really have a governing entity like the NC. They may have groups of representatives from various regions or states, but their purpose is generally to work on policy and platform issues. The day-to-day workings of the party are done by staff and committees, more analogous to our SC and national committees.

This makes more sense organizationally. The NC is asked to weigh in on many matters, like approving members of the Finance Committee, about which its members have little or no relevant knowledge. Meanwhile, important work is not getting done.

It can be hard to know how many of the 150 slots are filled at any given time. We know some states have difficulty finding people to serve. It is clear that voting participation is generally low. Most proposals gather somewhere around 60 to 80 votes.

While we don't have any consistent measurement on other participation scales, it seems clear that many NC members also don't serve, or don't serve actively, on committees, nor do they donate to the national party.

The NC listserves are dominated by a small group of posters, often with negative personal attacks that have little or no relevance to the topic at hand. This group floods the listserv with postings, sometimes dozens in a day from a single person. It is more difficult to follow a given conversation than it would be in a forum format.

Many people have been driven from the party by this negative and non-productive environment. The listserv is most NC members' first introduction to the national party, and unless they join committees or attend the ANM, their only experience of GPUS.

Action Items:

- Institute a forum system of communication and strict moderation policies so that negative behavior is not allowed. Create some group or committee to provide timely and useful forum topics for discussion and information sharing.
- Streamline our bylaws so that the National Committee is more involved with platform and policy issues, and less with day-to-day operational issues, leaving those to the staff and committees most involved.

GPUS: Federation of States vs. National Membership Organization

Under our current structure, the people who participate in and do the work of GPUS are not members. State parties are members. However, state parties have few responsibilities to GPUS, and those outlined in our bylaws are often ignored. For example, state parties are required to share their donor lists with the national party once a year (and vice versa), but this does not happen.

With states not required to do any reporting, it is only through informal relationships and random information being posted on our website or in Green Pages, that Greens know anything about what state parties are doing around the country.

There were no doubt sincere reasons why this structure was chosen back in 2001. However, today's reality is that it has led to regular and acrimonious debates over how to apportion state delegates to the National Committee, more than it has led to any sustained or successful effort to build either state parties or GPUS. We need to consider whether becoming a national membership organization would better serve us.

We know there are many Greens working hard to build their state parties, and many success stories at the local and state level with both elections and issue advocacy. However, it's also true that in spite of these efforts, many of our state parties are weak. Here are some troubling statistics:

- Prospective volunteers and GPUS staff and volunteers alike often have trouble getting a response from state party officials, including NC members.
- Often there is no state party or no local party close to where the prospective volunteer lives, or any organized way for a volunteer to plug into a state party.
- Most state parties, according to our survey, have annual budgets less than \$5,000. Only five are raising more than \$10,000 a year, and none more than \$25,000.

- As of July 6, 2013, ten state party websites have not been updated in 2013, including two with broken links on the GPUS website.
- Two affiliated state party websites describe themselves with a different party name – not the Green Party.

GPUS cannot control what happens at the state party level. At the same time, what happens at the state level should not control what happens at GPUS. In order to grow the Green Party overall, we need to engage people directly, not just through state parties.

Almost all the other Green Parties we spoke to have individual dues-paying membership in their national party. State and local parties also exist, but in most cases, they are structurally independent.

With national membership, we could have national issue campaigns that members could plug into even if there was no local or state party near them, and such campaigns could have more coordination and consistency. We could also engage more people more directly with our Presidential campaigns and with general party work. State and local parties could continue doing what they're doing, with some support and cooperation from the national party.

Other Green Parties use their national structure to run coordinated federal-level campaigns, as well as organizing their federal-level elected officials. In winner-take-all countries, they used this structure to focus on one key contest that was winnable, and got into Parliament with that strategy. That would not make sense for us at this point.

We are a long way from being able to seriously contest any Congressional election. All the current annual revenue from the national party plus all our state parties' revenue combined would not be enough to run one serious Congressional campaign. In 2012, the average winning Senate campaign spent \$10 million; House campaigns spent \$1.7 million. Collectively we don't raise even a third of a House campaign budget in a year.

We need to develop an election strategy and overall strategy that will allow us to build up to achieving representation in Congress at some point. But we need to spend years building up to that.

Action Item: We need to explore whether a national membership structure, like what most Green Parties have, would serve us better to grow the party overall.

