Project Plan: Unionization Phases One and Two

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| About This Resource *This toolkit is part of a* [*resource collection*](https://www.managementcenter.org/collection/unionization/) *for leaders and managers preparing for a unionization process.*  This toolkit helps senior leaders plan the first two phases of unionization: 1) recognition and 2) preparing for bargaining. It contains:   * Sample language for **defining success** for the unionization process overall, and the first two phases specifically * Sample **project plans** for each phase (adapted from TMC’s [Project Plan Template & Sample](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/project-plan-sample/) tool)   Note that the streams in the project plan samples have no set timeline—but they *do* need to happen before bargaining begins. **Once the union announces its intention to seek recognition, management should tackle these areas of work as quickly as possible.**  If you’re not yet familiar with the phases of unionization, check out [Beyond Neutrality’s overview](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/unionization-basics-2) before you jump into this project plan. |

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| **Project:** | Phases One & Two of Unionization: recognition request up until bargaining begins |

**The unionization process will be a success if we:**

* Arrive at a Collective Bargaining Agreement that is satisfactory to both the union and management.
* Balance timeliness with care, intentionality, and thoroughness.
* Uphold our organizational values and the Beyond Neutrality approach throughout the process.
* Keep **[organization]**’s mission and vision at the forefront.

**Phase one (recognition) will be successful if we:**

* Arrive at a voluntary recognition agreement that is acceptable to the union and management.
* Train and educate managers and leaders on the unionization process.
* Secure a pro-union management-side attorney and consultant(s).
* Ground managers in the [Guiding Principles](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/four-guiding-principles-for-managers-during-unionization/).

**Phase two (preparing for bargaining) will be successful if we:**

* Are confident and ready to go on the first day of bargaining.
* Have a trained and prepared Management Bargaining Team (MBT), and all managers trained in what to expect in bargaining.
* Have communicated effectively and in good faith with the union.
* Have all the information we need about our policies, practices, and finances, and have identified similar organizations for comparison.

**We will coordinate and communicate along the way as follows:**

* The **[Senior Leadership / Executive Team]**, driven by the **[Chief of Staff / Managing Director / Executive Director]**, will own the initial tasks of each project plan until the MBT is established.
* The [MBT operating agreement](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/Management-Bargaining-Team-Operating-Agreement-Sample-MOCHA-1.pdf) will determine who is in the MBT, what their [individual roles and responsibilities will be](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/Management-Bargaining-Team-Sample-MOCHA.pdf), and how decisions will be made within that body. Note: no decisions made by the MBT are final; final decisions are made through the bargaining process.

# Project Plan Samples

*For the purposes of these samples, we used common placeholder titles for senior roles at nonprofit organizations. Your organization may use different titles, and/or senior leadership may choose a different person or people to own these various pieces of the project.*

## Phase One: Recognition Phase

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| **Area of Work**  *(“Stream”)* | **Steps** | **Due Date** | **Stakeholders / MOCHA** | **Status / Notes** |
| **Overall project management** | Manage ongoing coordination with the Senior Leadership Team. | Ongoing | **Owner:** Chief of Staff  **Helpers:** Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer |  |
| Establish [MOCHAs](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/assigning-responsibilities/) & [5Ws](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/delegation-worksheet/) for each Stream. | ASAP | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Set up management systems and structures** | [Secure pro-union attorney](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/651eeddc8d7ed372484d2e59/t/652fede7925aaf2b349163b0/1697639911116/BN+_+Hub+Resource+How+to+find+and+work+with+pro+union+atty.pdf) for advice on the Voluntary Recognition process. Secure consultant(s) for support with managing during the unionization process. | ASAP | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Support and training for managers** | Set up unionization training for managers. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Gather necessary information** | Speak to leaders from other recently [unionized organizations](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/External-Links-on-Unionization-Unionized-NFP-Orgs.pdf). | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| Read through [Beyond Neutrality Resource Hub](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/resources-1-1). | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Coordination with the union** | Communicate with all employees (including union) support for the rights of employees to unionize. | Before Voluntary Recognition | **Owner:** Chief of Staff  **Helpers:** Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer, attorney |  |
| Oversee the steps of [voluntary recognition](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/651eeddc8d7ed372484d2e59/t/652fef919d4aff05ccaa5353/1697640337260/BN+_+Hub+Resource+How+to+Respond+to+a+Recognition+Demand.pdf). | Before Voluntary Recognition | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |

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## Phase Two: Preparing for Bargaining

| **Area of Work**  *(“Stream”)* | **Steps** | **Due Date** | **Stakeholders / MOCHA** | **Status / Notes** |
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| **Overall project management** | Manage ongoing coordination with the Senior Leadership Team. | Ongoing | **Owner:** Chief of Staff  **Helpers:** Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer |  |
| Align and/or deconflict internal DEI work with bargaining. | Ongoing | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Set up management systems and structures** | Align Senior Leadership Team on unionization tasks roles, goals, and ongoing coordination. | ASAP | **Owner:** Chief of Staff  **Helpers:** Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer |  |
| Select MBT members. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| Convene MBT to review and finalize the [Operating Agreement](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/Management-Bargaining-Team-Operating-Agreement-Sample-MOCHA-1.pdf). | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Lead Negotiator  **Helpers**: Bargaining Team Members, Attorney, Consultant(s) |  |
| **Support and training for managers** | Support facilitation of unionization training for managers and schedule any follow-up sessions. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| Establish manager engagement plan and schedule manager meetings. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| **Gather necessary information** | Listen to input from managers and other non-unit staff. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| Review [contracts from other union organizations](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/External-Links-on-Unionization-Unionized-NFP-Orgs.pdf), ask peers for lessons learned. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: Chief of Staff  **Helpers**: Senior Leadership Team, senior managers |  |
| Compile internal policy, salary, and benefit information. | Before Bargaining Begins | **Owner**: TBD within MBT  **Helpers:**   * Financial Information: Chief Financial Officer * Benefits Information: Human Resources Director |  |
| Begin financial analysis and identify management priorities for spending. | Before Bargaining Begins |  |
| **Coordination with the union** | Furnish information requests. | Ongoing | **Owner:** TBD within Senior Leadership Team, then MBT once established  **Helpers:** Attorney, Management Bargaining Team Members |  |
| Send email to all staff announcing the recognition agreement and intent to bargain. | Ongoing | **Owner**: TBD within MBT  **Helpers**: Management and Union Bargaining Team Members, Attorney, Consultant(s) |  |
| Discuss handling of issues during status quo period, possibility of joint communication to all staff and/or joint training of bargaining committees, and a tentative timeline for bargaining to begin. | Before Bargaining begins | **Owner**: TBD within MBT  **Helpers**: Management and Union Bargaining Team Members, Attorney, Consultant(s) |  |
| Determine logistics for negotiations, including: ground rules, [bargaining style](https://www.beyondneutrality.org/s/BNR-I-WTK-I-Phase-Three-Bargaining-a-First-Contract.pdf), modes of communication, and bargaining schedule. | Closer to bargaining, but before it begins | **Owner**: TBD within MBT  **Helpers**: Management and Union Bargaining Team Members, Attorney, Consultant(s) |  |