

## *Three tips for* **Plugging People In**

*Bringing in new members or volunteers is essential to any local group that wants to grow in size and capacity. However, attracting or recruiting new people to your group is only the first step. Getting them to stick around can be a much bigger challenge. The good news is that there are tried and true methods you can use to plug new members and volunteers into tasks and roles that will build their investment and leadership in the group, and will increase what your group is capable of achieving.*

### **1. Schedule one-on-one welcome interviews.**

When someone says they're interested in finding out more or getting involved in your group, don't just invite them to come to your next meeting. Even the most welcoming and inclusive groups tend to develop their own meeting culture that can unintentionally make new folks feel like outsiders. To increase your new volunteer retention rates, schedule one-on-one intake interviews with new folks before they come to a group meeting. Get to know the person. Ask them about what attracted them to the group, what kinds of tasks they enjoy or are good at, and how much time they have. Then tell them more about the purpose of the group and discuss with them what their involvement could look like. While this level of orientation requires more time in the short-term, it saves time in the long-term. People tend to plug into the work faster and stick around longer. It may make sense for a few members of your group to take on orienting new folks as an ongoing role.

### **2. Accommodate multiple levels of participation.**

In short, some people can give a lot of time, and some can give a little. Organizers with more time on their hands should avoid projecting this as an expectation onto others. A foolproof way to drive new folks away from your group is to consistently ask them to give more time than they are able. Instead learn what kind of time commitment is realistic and sustainable for them. Help them plug into tasks and roles that suit their availability. Check in with them about how it's going. Are they feeling overextended, or would they like to take on more? Take responsibility for helping new folks avoid over-commitment and burnout.

### **3. Make people feel valued and appreciated.**

If you want to inspire people to stick with your group for the long haul, you'll need to make them feel valued and appreciated. It's basic. People like to be around people who respect them, and who are nice! If social movement groups want to compete with the myriad of options for people's free time, then we have to treat each other well and take care of each other. Notice and acknowledge new folks' contributions, however small. Make time to check in with them outside of meetings. Ask their opinions often: What did they think about the meeting (or the event or the action)? Bounce your ideas off of them and ask for their feedback.