

Behind the Scenes of GGI: The Ins and Outs of a Youth-Led Nonprofit

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The Greater Good Initiative is best known for its compelling advocacy work and comprehensive policy proposals, covering everything from menstrual equity for incarcerated individuals to tax relief for agricultural industries. But how does our organization run the way it does? How have we managed to accrue over 120 organization members in the past year? How do we forge partnerships and run digital campaigns to disseminate our work? In charge of addressing these foundational questions is the strategy department, ceaselessly working behind the scenes to get GGI's work the visibility it merits. While the advocacy department meets with legislators and stakeholders, the strategy department is responsible for reaching out to the general public — ensuring that our policies are centered around those most vulnerable. The strategy team works to connect our policies to the communities directly impacted by them and the general public and media, thereby increasing our traction and credibility. Churning the cogs that operate the machine of our organization involves a great deal of work, and we hope that this article sheds light on this aspect.

Social Media

Our social media team maintains our organization's presence across four different platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These platforms are our most important tool in directly engaging and interacting with the general public and our supporters. We create easily digestible graphics using tools such as Canva outlining our policy plans to the public and promoting events such as our partnerships, fundraisers, and panels. The social media team is also integral to developing our brand as an organization; using a standardized set of fonts, colors, and our logo ensures all content created by our organization is recognizable. This is integral to creating an outward-facing professional persona and sustaining movement-building for our policies.

Website Development

GGI also uses a wide variety of digital tools to maintain engagement and professionalism. We use search engine optimizations to give GGI policies greater visibility and forge connections with a wide array of organizations to cross-promote our content. Our website is designed to be user-friendly and revamped and updated quarterly to reflect the organization's evolution — with new policy proposals and advocacy campaigns being released each month. Two particular facets of online engagement are the newsletter and blog. The newsletter is released periodically, notifying subscribers of organizational updates and changes to vertical stratification. The blog is an avenue for partner organizations to spotlight their work. It also serves as a platform for GGI fellows and directors alike, to share their views on current affairs or global policy through op-eds and journalistic pieces. This gives them the chance to explore and educate others on the issues they are passionate about. Ultimately, strategy's job is to ensure that our overall web presence resonates with the message that GGI has built itself on — youth engagement in sustainable public policy.

Media Outreach

One of the newest additions to the organization's strategy operations is an established media outreach team tasked with obtaining press coverage for the organization's policies. Collaborating with all policy and advocacy teams, the media team crafts press releases and op-eds advocating for our organization's policies and the necessity of youth voices in government. As one of our founders, Tarina Ahuja, likes to say, young people are not the leaders of tomorrow but the leaders of today. The media team's work is essential to proving that young people's ideas are direct, practical, and should be taken seriously.

Partnerships

Our partnerships team works to identify organizations with similar missions and connect with them for social media cross-promotion and joint advocacy work. We have worked with Hopes and Seams to design and sell homemade, responsibly sourced masks — donating half of the proceeds to a charity of our choice. We have also worked with Little Friends for Peace, a nonprofit organization centered around conflict resolution and social justice, for our Time for 9 Toolkit Launch. The Time for 9 Toolkit is a public health policy and advocacy campaign that seeks to address the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. As part of this effort, members of the GGI team built school supply kits for youth with incarcerated family members, thereby extending our commitments to activism and service. Our environmental policy and advocacy teams also worked to build GGI a custom UCapture sign-up code. UCapture is a green technology platform that gets affiliated companies to donate a portion of consumer purchase price to offset carbon emissions.

During our town halls and panels, we've also got the opportunity to hear from a wide range of legislators, community organizers, school board officials, and activists. We have previously worked with Civitas, a nonprofit based in St Louis, Missouri, that provides civic engagement and political awareness opportunities to youth to promote

organizational affairs. As a member of Future Coalition, we are connected to a plethora of other organizations, through which we have both acquired and shared resources. We are a recent founding member of the COVID-19 Community Corps (a project of the US Department of Health and Human Services), where we guide the public to get vaccinated. Ultimately, much of our partnership work is based on not only centering the voices of the people and issues that are most vulnerable but also involving other youth-led/community serving organizations within our mission.

Development

Our development team is tasked with managing the organizational structure of GGI and ensuring that all teams have access to the resources they need to succeed. Our Director of Development oversees finances for the organizations, managing all fundraising and budgeting efforts necessary for sustaining the organization's work into the future. The Chief of Staff is primarily responsible for managing internal staff operations, including scheduling meetings, reviewing fellowship applications, and onboarding new fellows into the organization. Without our development directors, the day-to-day operations of a nonprofit organization would be incredibly more challenging.

Youth-led organizations like GGI are essential to giving young people a hands-on opportunity to learn the skills they need to succeed in the professional world. Our policy teams are learning how to write their own public policies; our advocacy teams are learning how to interact and create change within the governmental system of the U.S; our strategy teams are developing the skills they need to sustain organizations so they can keep making change. GGI stands out from other youth organizations because of our commitment to bringing together a network of students from across the country passionate about creating positive change through policy. A common sentiment among our members is that we've all formed friendships and found mentors we likely wouldn't have if we hadn't joined GGI. To us, GGI is not only a learning space; it is also a community.