

SO, YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT RUNNING FOR OFFICE

A Step by Step Guide and
Workbook from She Should Run



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide and workbook was created to help the woman who is just starting to explore her curiosity around a future run for office. In it you'll find important questions to help guide you on your journey, as well as tips, things to be aware of, and links to dive deeper into certain topics. We hope that this guide will show you that you're already qualified and will help build your confidence toward a future run for office.

About She Should Run

She Should Run is a nonpartisan nonprofit working to dramatically increase the number of women considering a run for public office. We help every woman understand the importance of being equally represented in office, give her the opportunity to see herself there, demonstrate that she is qualified, and provide the pathways for her to take the first step.

If you're thinking about running for office, the first thing you should do is [join the She Should Run Community](#). The She Should Run Community is an online meeting place for women like you who are considering a future run for office. Within the Community, you can find tools and resources, including The Incubator, video content, a virtual member directory, and more.

Learn more about us at sheshouldrun.org.

I'M CONSIDERING IT

So you're thinking about running for office, but you're not ready to commit yet. Here are four things you need to figure out:

1. The Why: This is why you want to run.

- Know your values. Describe them here:

- Ask if your current elected officials represent your values.

- What is the problem you want to solve?

- Check out our [Develop Your Vision for Making an Impact lesson](#) in the Incubator for more help with determining your why.

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Your why needs to be extremely specific. You need to know what issues/problems you want to solve and why you're the best person to solve them.



2. The What: That's what office you want to run for.

- What are you passionate about? What makes your blood boil?

- What office addresses the problem you want to solve? *Ex: If you're passionate about mental health, your county board of supervisors oversees funding for your local mental health centers.*

- What does this job entail?

- Is it part time or full time?

- What does the salary entail, if any? Is it enough to support yourself and your family if the job requires you to be full-time?

- Is there a commute involved? *Ex: If you are a state representative, you may have to travel to your state capitol for certain parts of the year.*

- Check the residency requirements for the position you are interested in. Some localities require you to be a resident at least a year before you run for a certain position.

- Check out [our local office quiz](#).

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As an elected official, you can accomplish many things such as securing a new airport terminal or a new wastewater treatment plant for your community, develop affordable housing, improve the quality of education in a local school district, provide better street lighting for your neighborhood, and more.

3. The When: When you want to run. This could be based off a few things.

When is the position available? (i.e. when is the next election?)

Do you feel you are in a good position personally (family, work, etc) to run?

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Make sure you keep an eye on how your district may change after the 2020 census. Redistricting can have a huge impact on your future race.



4. The Who: This is based on a few different 'whos.'

Who is currently in that seat? Are they running for re-election, or vacating?

Who will you represent? What is important to them?

Who else is running?

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Sometimes like-minded people may run against each other for the same seat. If you see similar people running for the same seat, you may want to check if there's another position in the same race.



A stylized illustration of a woman with voluminous, wavy pink hair. She is shown in profile, facing right, with her eyes closed and a serene expression. She has a dark brown complexion and is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, top. The background is a solid dark color.

EXPLORING AND PREPARING

Once you know when you want to run for office, why you want to run, and what position you want to run for, here's what you need to know about a campaign:

- It involves public speaking and putting yourself out there.
- Fundraising. You have to do it, but thankfully, in most local elections, you don't have to raise a ton of money to run for office!
- Mobilization. You need to be able to recruit volunteers, donors, and supporters for your campaign to get your message out there for voters to hear.
- It takes time. You will sacrifice time on other things like hobbies, birthday parties, or vacations so you can campaign.

Get prepared with these activities.

- What fears do you have about running for office and how can you work on them now before you ever decide to run for office?

- Fundraising:** Practice fundraising now with our [Adopt a Fundraiser's Approach for Networking worksheet](#).
- Public Speaking:** Work on practicing sharing your story with others now before you have to share it on the campaign.
- Mobilization:** What does your current network look like? Do you want to expand it and add more political friends? More business friends?
- Confidence:** Don't feel qualified? You need a pep talk! Check out our [26 Reasons Women Don't Run For Office](#) and then explore how you can cultivate your leadership skills and potential with our Incubator courses.

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It's ideal to get the people closest within your own network to commit to making a donation before you launch. Then they can spread the word after you announce!



Questions you should ask before you decide to run:

Does your community know you? Have you been seen in your community as a leader?

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It's not necessary for every single person in your community to know you. If your values and vision for the community align with members of your community, then that's all that matters.

Do you know why you're the best person for the job? What sets you apart from your opponents?

Do you know your district inside and out?

What are the demographics?

What's the deal with the local businesses?

How is housing and healthcare?

How do people get around?

How is the quality of education in your district?

Where do people like to congregate and socialize?

What are the different ways people get involved with their community? Civic organizations, religious institutions, etc?

Do you know how your local government works?

Do you know how your community stays updated with what's going on?

Who are the key political players and parties in your town? What do people think of the current elected official if the position isn't vacant?

- Do you know the time commitment and legal qualifications (i.e. residency and age requirements, not resume requirements) of running for the position you want to run?
- Are your family and friends on board?
- Do you have a robust network of support for your candidacy?
- Are you prepared to take risks and maybe lose your race? Running for office takes resiliency.
- Do you need to notify your employer? Will you be quitting your job or how will you manage being an elected official and your current work?

As you explore what a run for office would mean for you, these questions are meant to be a starting place to consider all that goes into running for office and help you make the decision if running for office right now is right for you.

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Most local positions aren't full-time jobs and don't require you to quit your job to fulfill the duties of the position. Make sure you're aware of the time commitment for the position and if you aren't sure how to find that, we recommend reaching out to a current elected official.

Not ready to run?

Consider serving your community in other ways like:

- Serve on a local board or commission
- Volunteer for a local nonprofit organization
- Volunteer for or join a civic organization
- Volunteer for or join your local political party
- Volunteer for a candidate campaigning in your town

These other ways for serving the community are great first steps towards public leadership because they help build your name recognition in your community, help you become an expert on issues facing your community, build your confidence in yourself as a leader, puts you in line for a political appointment by allowing you to meet the key political players in your town, and give you public leadership experience before you ever run for office.



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