

Job Title: Senior Tenant Organizer (Bilingual)

Supervisor: Director of Community Organizing

Hours: 35 hours per week; availability for weeknight & some weekend responsibilities required

Annual Salary: \$61,500, plus \$2,000 hiring bonus, full benefits; grant-funded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) contract from 7/1/23-6/1/24

Status: Full time, non-union, exempt status

Location: Somerville, MA

OVERVIEW:

The **Community Action Agency of Somerville**, known as **CAAS**, is changing lives for our community members who are furthest from opportunity. For over 40 years, we have been helping local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice. Our vision for Somerville is for a city where no one lives in poverty, where we support each other through strong community structures, and where the opportunity to thrive is a lived experience for every resident. We are proud to be a source of stability and support for our community. Our website: <https://www.caasomerville.org/>

WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:

The CAAS [Community Organizing & Advocacy program](#) is a key anchor in Somerville's local movement for housing justice. Our unique organizational structure allows us to support our tenants holistically, and our tenant leaders are those who are experiencing the affordable housing crisis first-hand. We are dedicated to empowering Somerville residents who are the most oppressed from accessing power: low-income residents, renters, people of color, immigrants and refugees, seniors, non-English speakers, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ folks, and others. Our campaigns have educated hundreds of tenants about their rights, won policy protections such as the Somerville Covid-19 eviction moratorium extension, and united and mobilized residents of all backgrounds under the vision that housing is a human right.

ABOUT THE SENIOR TENANT ORGANIZER ROLE:

The Senior Tenant Organizer will join a dynamic and highly collaborative team as the seventh bilingual staff member of the CAAS Organizing program. Reporting to the Director of Organizing, this new mid-level leadership position is key to overseeing and ensuring high-quality tenant outreach and housing stability advocacy, coordinating campaign strategy for tenants fighting displacement, and maintaining a steady and strategic presence within our community. This role has the opportunity to make an enormous impact for tenants in a rapidly gentrifying city.

GENERAL DUTIES:

1. Program Administration

- Supervise and mentor 1 staff Tenant Organizer and program interns.
- Oversee intake and progress on tenant advocacy casework and campaigns for staff to ensure high-quality and timely services.
- Collect data and prepare regular reports on tenant outreach and engagement, advocacy casework, campaigns, and other service provision as directed.

- Manage systems for tenant outreach, intake, casework and campaigns, and other internal program operations as directed.
2. Tenant Campaign Coordination and Oversight
- Assist tenants who are organizing their apartment building into a tenant union/association and/or campaigning against displacement due to rent increases, building sales, or other factors, including: conduct outreach and door knocking, organize and facilitate tenant meetings, research and identify targets, communications, coalition building, negotiation, strategy escalation, implementing tactics over the short and long term, and participate in evaluation.
 - Oversee and support staff in coordinating winning strategies for tenant unions and anti-displacement campaigns, while connecting to broader policy and structural goals to advance housing, racial, and economic justice.
 - Serve as the primary liaison with the CAAS Housing Advocacy Program (HAP) and external housing partners on tenant organizing campaigns.
 - Work with the Director to identify and pursue opportunities for strategic partnerships and alliances to move campaign goals forward, facilitating and attending partner and coalition meetings as needed.
 - Produce communications materials for campaigns such as press releases, email alerts, and social media messaging as needed.
3. Tenant Advocacy Casework and Oversight
- Assist individual households of tenants in meeting their complex housing stability and resource needs, including education about renters' rights, negotiating with owners and property management to obtain repairs and affordable rents, and other empowerment-oriented advocacy, triaging referrals as needed.
 - Oversee and support staff tenant advocacy casework, ensuring high quality and timely services.
 - Serve as the primary liaison with the CAAS Housing Advocacy Program (HAP), other CAAS programs, and external partners on tenant casework and referrals.
4. Tenant Outreach and Education
- Develop structure, curriculum, facilitation, and partners needed for an ongoing Somerville tenants' rights and organizing clinic, allowing the program to collectively educate, support, and empower more residents on a routine basis.
 - Oversee research, base building, and outreach activities to identify tenants in private, public, and inclusionary housing who are at-risk of displacement from Somerville or otherwise facing instability and would benefit from advocacy, organizing, or other agency services; will use traditional methods such as canvassing and workshops, public records such as court dockets and land use records, and social media tools like WhatsApp.
5. Leadership Development
- Train and inspire tenants from advocacy casework and organizing campaigns to remain engaged in CAAS Organizing programs and develop new skills as leaders.
 - Oversee regular canvassing, building sale research, and policy initiatives with the Eviction Response Network (our solidarity volunteer base) with the aims of preventing evictions and displacement upstream.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE:

The ideal candidate has direct experience organizing in a multiclass, multiracial, and multilingual movement setting, a track record of winning tenant campaigns, and an unwavering commitment to justice and building the leadership and power for marginalized communities in Somerville.

Professional background

- At least 3-5 years experience and proven success in tenant organizing, tenant advocacy and eviction defense, and/or housing justice work
- At least 1-2 years experience and proven success in supervising full-time staff
- Appreciation for the link between individual advocacy and community organizing
- Proven ability to build relationships with people of different socioeconomic classes, racial/ethnic identities, and languages other than English, particularly low-income residents and immigrants

Skills

- **Required:** Verbal and written fluency in English and another highly spoken language in Somerville, such as Spanish, Portuguese, or Haitian Creole
- **Required:** Proficiency with technology and ability to quickly learn database systems, such as Google Suite, Zoom, Canva, and public records such as housing court dockets and land use records
- Comprehensive knowledge of tenants' legal rights and eviction procedures, preferably in Massachusetts
- Advanced organizing skills such as power analysis, campaign strategy and escalation, and applied theories such as popular education, and proven experience coaching other leaders in these skills
- Experience organizing and facilitating community meetings; multilingual meetings a plus
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills
- Outstanding dedication to detail and independent accountability on multiple dynamic tasks
- Proven track record of positive collaboration in a small team setting

Personal characteristics

- Outstanding ability to manage personal time, prioritize tasks, and follow through, while remaining open, attuned, and responsive to the emergent needs of the program
- A demonstrated maturity and ability to remain grounded when navigating high-stress or sensitive situations
- A compassionate attitude, humility, and commitment to taking risks and refining strategies and approaches to organizing
- Extensive familiarity with the challenges faced by communities experiencing poverty and oppression, knowledge of the root systemic causes, and demonstrated commitment to deepening this understanding and analysis of intersectional oppressions

Highly Preferred (but not required) Qualifications

- Familiarity with the Massachusetts affordable housing crisis and players, current state legislative proposals, and policies on land use and zoning
- Experience working and navigating the intricacies of a nonprofit organization
- Experience writing press releases and building positive relationships with the media

LOCATION AND TRAVEL:

The Senior Tenant Organizer will work from the CAAS administrative office in Union Square, Somerville at least two business days per week, and have hybrid flexibility to also work from home other days of the week. Ability to travel to in person local meetings and events in the metropolitan area required, as well as availability for evening commitments and occasional weekend commitments (typically 2 weekend days per month).

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is occasionally required to stand; walk; sit; use hands to finger, handle, or feel; reach with hands and arms; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl and talk or hear. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

COMPENSATION:

This is a salaried, exempt position at \$61,500 per year. CAAS offers competitive compensation for this position plus a robust benefits package, which includes Blue Cross Blue Shield medical, dental and vision which begins the first of the following month of hire. We have a comprehensive retirement 403(b) plan through Mutual of America with eligibility to contribute on the date of hire. We also offer a free and confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which allows employees and their household members to contact professional counseling services, referrals for elder-care, mental health, legal planning and financial advice. Staff also receive paid professional development opportunities and a team of committed, collaborative colleagues.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:

No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be discriminated against by this program, including in employment, because of race, religion, sex, national origin, immigration status, cultural heritage, age, disability, sexual orientation, or marital status.

TO APPLY:

The review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled, with the ideal candidate beginning in early July 2023. CAAS may be able to assist eligible candidates with immigration-related work permits for work authorization in the U.S. **For best consideration, please submit a cover letter and resume (2-3 pages max) by Friday, June 23 to Michelle Shipp, Human Resources Manager at: mshipp@caasomerville.org**