



## Community Action Agency of Somerville

CAAS helps local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice.

**Job Title:** Tenant Organizer (Bilingual)

**Supervisor:** Senior Tenant Organizer

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

**Annual Salary:** \$50,000, plus \$2,000 hiring bonus, full benefits; grant-funded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) contract beginning 7/1/23-6/1/24

**Status:** Full time, union, non-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 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, and people with disabilities. Our campaigns have educated hundreds of tenants about their rights, won policy protections such as the Somerville local eviction moratorium extension during the Covid-19 pandemic, and united and mobilized residents of all backgrounds under the vision that housing is a human right.

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### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER ROLE:

The Community Organizer will join a dynamic and highly collaborative team as the sixth bilingual staff member of the CAAS Organizing program. Reporting to the Senior Tenant Organizer, this position is key to carrying out tenant outreach and education, housing stability advocacy, and campaigns for tenants fighting displacement and forming tenant unions. This role has the opportunity to make an enormous impact for tenants in a rapidly gentrifying city.

### GENERAL DUTIES:

1. Tenant Outreach and Education: Research and identify opportunities to engage tenants in public, private, and inclusionary housing who may be at risk of displacement from Somerville or facing housing instability, and would benefit from tenants' rights education, advocacy, organizing, or other CAAS services. Conduct base-building and recruitment activities by door-knocking, making phone calls, canvassing, making flyers and graphics, outreach at community events and public places, and using online or social media tools. Assist in the planning, outreach, and facilitation for an ongoing Somerville renters' rights and organizing clinic to collectively educate, support, and empower more residents on a routine basis.

2. Tenant Advocacy Casework: Assist individual households of tenants in meeting their complex housing stability and resource needs, including education about renters' rights, advocacy to obtain repairs and affordable rents, and other empowerment-oriented advocacy, coordinating referrals for other services as needed. Maintain a caseload of 5-7 households depending on complexity. Collect data and prepare reports on outreach and service provision as directed.
  3. Tenant Organizing Campaigns: 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. Maintain a caseload of 2-3 buildings depending on complexity. Work alongside the Senior Tenant Organizer and tenant leaders to create a winning campaign, including: conduct outreach and door knocking, organize and facilitate tenant meetings, research and identify targets, develop messaging and communications, build coalitions, plan and escalate strategy, negotiate with targets, reinforce tenants' vision and morale, implement tactics over the short and long term, and participate in evaluation.
  4. 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. Organize and conduct one-on-one and small group meetings to build relationships with potential tenant leaders who have not traditionally had access to power (low-income residents, renters, people of color, immigrants and non-English speakers, seniors, people with disabilities). Participate in regular canvassing and building sale research with the Eviction Response Network (our solidarity volunteer base) with the aims of preventing evictions and displacement upstream.
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#### **THE IDEAL CANDIDATE:**

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

#### *Professional background*

- Minimum Associate's Degree
- At least 1-2 years experience in tenant advocacy, community organizing, community outreach work; equivalent lived experience and/or deeply committed volunteer experience will also be considered
- Proven ability to build relationships with people of different backgrounds, particularly across socioeconomic classes, racial/ethnic identities, and languages other than English

#### *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
- Fundamental organizing skills such as active listening, storytelling, 1:1s and relationship building, and research
- Experience organizing and facilitating community meetings; multilingual meetings a plus
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills
- Proven track record of positive collaboration in a small team setting
- Proven dedication to detail and ability to following through on multiple dynamic tasks
- Proven ability to problem solve creatively and take initiative independently

*Personal characteristics*

- Familiarity with the challenges faced by communities experiencing poverty and oppression, knowledge of the root systemic causes, and willingness to deepen this understanding and analysis of intersectional oppressions
- A spirited attitude to constantly learn, experiment, and refine approaches to organizing

*Preferred (but not required) Qualifications*

- Familiarity with the Massachusetts housing crisis and housing justice movement
  - Successful experience working with low-income and/or immigrant communities
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**LOCATION AND TRAVEL:**

The Community Organizer will work from the CAAS administrative office in Union Square, Somerville at least 2 business days per week, and have hybrid flexibility to also work from home certain 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, non-exempt position at \$50,000 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 as soon as possible. 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 pages max) by Friday, June 23 to Michelle Shipp, Human Resources Manager at: [mshipp@caasomerville.org](mailto:mshipp@caasomerville.org)**