

# Delta Communities in Action Webpage Tool Kit



## Community advocacy

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## 1. Advocating for Change

### Getting Started

Advocacy is an ever-evolving enterprise, often with many surprising turns. You cannot figure out everything ahead of time, but here are a few tips to consider as you move forward:

1. Think proactively
2. Be determined and innovative
3. Identify and leverage the spectrum of support
4. Assess what you can realistically accomplish
5. Develop a strategy
6. Take stock of the politics and political context
7. Know what you can—and can't—do as a nonprofit

### 1. Think proactively

Advocates often operate in a reactive mode. It's understandable: change is difficult, it takes a long time and tremendous persistence, and there are so many pressing issues facing the same communities and just a handful of advocates. The cycle is predictable: a high-profile incident occurs; people spring into action with little time to develop a plan, identify comprehensive reforms, or figure out how to be most strategic; a new policy may be adopted (which may or may not be implemented); the public spotlight shifts; and a few years later a similar incident occurs.

Despite the odds, there have been some amazing successes. Imagine what might be accomplished if—on the heels of responding to a recent incident, let's say—you took a step back, assessed the groundwork that was laid, figured out how it might be harnessed and built on in the future, determined what you're for, not just against, and developed a plan to get you there?

## **2. Be determined and innovative**

Change will not come easily; you may be met with resistance every step of the way. But you can be successful if you are in it for the long haul. Keep speaking out and develop the next generation of advocates who will build on your accomplishments.

Be flexible and creative, and be willing to try something new. Don't just go with what you know. Sometimes advocates get in the habit of doing what they have always done because it's familiar, even if they are not getting the results they want. Each situation is different; what was tried before may not work this time. Can you take a new view of an old problem? Recruit nontraditional allies to your side? Try a different mix of strategies?

### **3. Identify and leverage the spectrum of support**

Think broadly about whom you can draw on and what roles they can fill: organizers, academics, elected officials, faith leaders, people who have been involved and people who can become involved. Recognize that everyone potentially has a role to play, even though they will not all play the same role. Some people will show up at a protest; others, a news conference. Some will join the coalition; others will agree to submit a letter of support. Some will work behind the scenes; others will be out front. Welcome, respect, and coordinate all these roles to the extent possible to garner maximum support.

### **4. Assess what you can realistically accomplish**

Make an inventory of the resources that you can bring to bear. How much time do you have to give? What is your organization willing to dedicate? How many working partners can you bring to the table? What additional resources can you likely attract?

Choose an immediate, concrete, winnable issue that is an important step toward your ultimate goal. So while fundamental change is the ultimate goal, focus on the practical steps you can take to get there.

### **5. Develop a strategy**

An advocacy strategy is the road map that lays out where you are, where you want to go, and the resources, tools, and tactics you will use to get there. It will help keep you focused, organize your time, mark important deadlines and interim wins, and tell you when you may need to shift gears because something is not working.

One of the most important parts of effective advocacy is having a strategy: a clear vision of where you are and where you want to go, and a plausible plan of action for getting there.

#### **Five key questions can help show the way:**

- **What is Your**
- What change will actually solve the problem you are concerned about? Is it one which is also attainable? An advocacy objective needs to be compelling to get people interested in working for it. It also needs to be small enough to achieve at least part of your goal within a year or two, to keep people interested.
- **Who Do You Need to Move?**  
Who actually has the authority to give you what you want (city council, state legislature, the president)? Who else needs to be wooed to your side as a way of influencing those with authority (the media, other citizen groups, etc.)?
- **What Do They Need to Hear?**  
What advocacy message will move all those people and stakeholders in your direction? An effective advocacy message has two parts: an appeal on the merits (“This bill is important because...”) and an appeal to self-interest (“hundreds of voters want to know how you’ll vote”).

- **Who Do They Need to Hear It From?**

What messengers can you recruit who will be most persuasive? An advocacy campaign needs a mix of messengers: people who can speak from personal experience, people with recognized authority, and others who might have some special pull with the people you are targeting.

- **What Actions Will You Use to Make Your Point?**

Finally, what will you actually mobilize people to do in order to deliver the advocacy message? The options are many. You can lobby officials politely or protest in front of their office. You can get an article in the newspaper, you can hold a town meeting. Generally, the best actions are those requiring the least effort and confrontation, but which still get the job done.

## **6. Take stock of the politics and political context**

It is important to know what you are getting into. Who are the key players, and where do they stand? Who is already working on this issue or has in the past? Who is on your side? Who is really with you and will stand by your side when the pressure is on? Who is the opposition? Is it effective? Aggressive? How well organized? How well funded? Who are its allies and supporters? Is it well-connected? Who are the decision-makers? Who is undecided that you could possibly persuade to come your way? Is it an election year?

Don't confuse political with partisan; avoid playing party politics. If you make your issue a Republican, Democratic, Green, or other party issue, you will alienate potential supporters. Sometimes the one vote you need is on the other side of the aisle. On many issues you will find that you have friends and foes on both sides of the aisle.

## **7. Know what you can—and can't do—as a nonprofit**

Nonprofit organizations are often surprised by the extent to which they can play an advocacy role, most likely because people often equate advocacy with lobbying. Advocacy is more than just lobbying; it's about speaking out and making a case for something important. It may be writing an op-ed article for the local newspaper, holding a town hall meeting, conducting a survey about a problem in the community and announcing the results, or any number of activities that are perfectly appropriate for nonprofits to do.

## **2. Organizing and Coalition Building: Increasing Your Strength**

### **What Is It?**

Organizing is bringing people—and in coalition building, organizations—together to develop a collective vision for their community and achieve a common goal, to promote change that is more likely to be won if many stand up together instead of just a few. Throughout history, progress has not spontaneously occurred; it happens because people organize for change.

You can organize to have an effect in many different ways, from educating the public so people understand a problem and work together for an effective solution to influencing elections

through increasing voter registration and participation. The focus of this section is on organizing to exert public pressure on a decision-maker to take the actions you want: whether getting an elected official to introduce new laws, an agency head to adopt new or different regulations, or companies to change the way they do business.

It's worth noting that there are as many different styles of organizing as there are organizers. Volumes have been written on the topic. In this section, we attempt to capture the consistent themes, considerations, and challenges that cross these different styles.

### **Why Use It?**

Organizing builds power. Bringing large numbers of people to the table allows you to wield the kind of influence that other people have as a result of large campaign contributions or their position in the system. It alerts decision makers to the political consequences of their actions. It reminds elected officials that you can affect how long they stay in office or whether they advance to higher office. Also, the media are more likely to take notice when you can draw a crowd.

Organizing gives you staying power. To achieve and maintain reforms requires sustained effort. Few organizations have the staff and resources to accomplish this alone. Organizing identifies and develops the leaders, staff skills, and resources you need to sustain progress over the long haul.

Finally, organizing can produce real improvement in people's lives. Part of this, of course, is the tangible change that a joint effort achieves. Organizing also builds community through collective problem-solving and instills in people a sense of power to effect change. In that respect, the benefits are boundless.

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### **Do you have sufficient resources and capacity?**

A number of different costs and capacities can come into play with organizing. They include:

- Organizers. Who will take lead responsibility for coordinating the effort? Recruit others? Convene meetings? Manage conflicts? Follow up on next steps?
- Staff. Who can share the load so that the lead organizer is not overwhelmed and volunteers are not overtaxed?
- Volunteers. What's your record in recruiting volunteers?
- Research. Who can help get the facts about the problem and develop possible solutions?
- Materials. Do you have basic supplies? Access to photocopying for reproducing flyers and other written materials?
- Time. This is the biggest expense in an organizing effort—and there's never enough of it for the work that needs to be done.

## **3. Leading a Community Dialogue on Building a Healthy Community**

**What is a "dialogue" and why should your community host one?**

**Where can a dialogue occur?**

**Who can participate or host the dialogue?**

**What makes healthy people and a healthy community?**

**How do you host a dialogue?**

**How do you make your dialogue count?**

Growing a healthy community is a lifelong process -- one that requires constant nurturing and persistence. Everyone has a role to play in building a healthier, more vibrant community. The choices we make at home, work, school, play, and worship determine most what creates personal health and community vitality. To a great extent it's about how we spend our time, dollars, and talents. But it's also about how we create the settings in our communities that help bring positive change.

Healthy communities call for inspired leadership and action from every corner of our communities. Today, there's often a gulf between the conversations people have around the kitchen table and the conversations we have with our leaders. We see turf battles and fragmentation of efforts with more resources getting spent on the symptoms of deeper problems, and less on what generates health in the first place.

This section is about bringing together the voices and talents of communities. The information is intended to help generate ideas and relationships across lines that divide us. It is for community leaders of all types -- anyone who can start a conversation -- and offers a flexible approach that can be adapted to any group's objectives.

**What is a "dialogue" and why should your community host one?**

A "dialogue" is a community conversation that can take many forms. It can involve five people around a kitchen table, five hundred people in a large civic setting, or anything in between.

A community dialogue can help:

- EXPAND the base of constituencies and voices (i.e. youth, business, the faith community, grassroots leaders)
- REACH common ground -- integrate the workings of more formal institutions and partnerships with the leadership from neighborhoods and grassroots groups
- SURFACE common issues and the resources to address them -- help identify barriers to positive change and uncover innovative ideas
- SUSTAIN ongoing community discussion between the many groups and partnerships in a community
- BUILD the capacity of your group to act on its ideas
- LAUNCH new initiatives and strengthen the impact of existing community improvement partnerships
- FOCUS corporate and organizational investment towards community benefit -- align communities' policies and resource allocation with what creates health
- BREAK THROUGH community "turf wars" and connect fragmented resources -- build the public consensus and commitment necessary to generate action for better outcomes
- STIMULATE action and track progress for accountability
- GENERATE local media attention
- HELP leaders of all sectors to see their roles in building healthy, sustainable communities
- BE A PART -- vocal and visible -- of the nationwide healthy communities movement

**Where can a dialogue occur?**

- At school
- At kitchen tables
- In the workplace
- At community centers
- In neighborhoods
- In places of worship
- At service club meetings (i.e. Rotary, Lions, Junior League, sororities and fraternities)
- In meetings of existing partnerships
- In board rooms
- In the halls of government

**Who can participate or host the dialogue?**

Every citizen has a role to play in building community and creating health. The vitality of our communities and democracy relies upon the active participation of every person. Anyone can participate in a dialogue. Seek diversity! Reach across lines of race, culture, class, and locale to gather participants.

Anyone can convene and host a "healthy community" conversation:

- Neighborhood leaders
- Youth
- Business people
- Public health and medical care professionals
- Faith leaders
- Seniors
- Homemakers
- Educators
- Community organizers

### **What makes healthy people and a healthy community?**

What makes healthy people? Health is more than the absence of disease. It is an optimum state of well-being: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Health is wholeness. It includes a sense of belonging to community and experiencing control over your life.

Optimal health is a by-product of people realizing their potential and living in a community that works. "Community" can be everything from a neighborhood to a metropolitan region. It can be the workplace or a group of shared interests and faith. In the end, our "community" is where we are and who we are with.

What makes a healthy community? It's a place that is continually creating and improving its physical and social environments, and expanding the community resources that enable people to support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing themselves to their maximum potential.

A healthy community is not a perfect place, but it's a dynamic state of renewal and improvement. It builds a culture that supports healthy life choices and a high quality of life. It aligns its practices, policies, and resource allocation to sustain:

- Engaged citizenry
- Diversity
- Ethical behavior
- Courage
- Quality education systems
- Childhood development
- Vibrant economy
- Support networks
- Livable wages
- Voluntarism
- Adequate and affordable housing
- Accessible transportation
- Openness to change
- Responsiveness
- Innovation



- Patience
- Governance
- Dynamic faith
- Recreation
- Communities
- Culture
- Clean air
- Safe Water
- Continuous improvement
- Strong families
- Safe neighborhoods

### **How do you host a dialogue?**

There is no one best way to host a dialogue. It depends upon what you want to accomplish.

Tailor an approach that works best for your objectives, setting, participants, time, and capacity.

The following six scenarios are examples of the some types of dialogues.

#### ***Scenario 1 -Mature partnership or coalition***

This group's goal may be to focus and deepen their current work on health and quality -of-life issues. Or it may be to attract new and more diverse participants. They may want to reflect on and highlight learning or bring media attention to their efforts.

#### ***Scenario 2 -Mobilizing youth***

A youth group at school or in a club setting. This group might want to make sense of their community dynamics or address the pressures and support they find in the community. They may want to identify key issues and become active on something important to them and their future.

#### ***Scenario 3 -Faith group***

A church, mosque, or synagogue group. Faith leaders may want to engage the congregation in service to the neighborhood on a key issue. They may want to increase membership by taking action in the community.

#### ***Scenario 4 -Your kitchen table***

You might just want to invite a few neighbors over to enhance neighborhood cohesion or talk about a few rough issues. It could help build bridges across lines of race and class to work on something collaborative.

#### ***Scenario 5 - Community organization***

A membership organization or service club (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Lions, Rotary, neighborhood association, civil rights organization). An intact organization or group may want to identify opportunities for stimulating positive change in the community at a regularly

scheduled meeting. Maybe it's time to consider what's making leadership difficult on a key issue facing the community.

### **Scenario 6 -On campus**

At the college or university. Students, faculty, administrators, staff, and community residents get together to listen and learn from each other and discover some possible ways to work together.

Preparation will assist you in making your dialogue count. In the end it can help your group develop, focus, and act on the issues that are identified. It can take from two to five weeks to prepare for and complete a dialogue. A dialogue can last from one to three hours with anywhere from five to 500 people. It depends upon you scope and capacity. The following steps will help you prepare for your community dialogue. Of course, you should feel free to modify the steps to fit your purpose, group, and circumstances.

#### **Step 1: Prepare for your dialogue**

- **Build a Dialogue Team to host the event.** A team approach to convening a dialogue will help to build ownership and spread the tasks involved. The team can help you to define goals for the project. Identify a few people that you have worked with before and have credibility with -- and invite them to the dialogue.
- **Determine your own goals for the dialogue.** Your community may have some specific goals for the dialogue itself and the information received from it. The design of the dialogue session should reflect this. Your community might want to deepen existing work in the community or reflect on lessons learned. Your community may also want to start a new group to address community issues. Be creative in your design to ensure an unobtrusive blending with other local activity.
- **Determine the group of participants.** Who would you like to bring together to share ideas and opinions? To minimize the effort required for recruitment, you may find it easiest to partner with an existing group. This will allow you to use their network. You may also wish to bring in new voices to your group. Dialogue groups may be as small as five people or as large as 500 - it's just a matter of how your dialogue is designed, what you want to accomplish, and how much time you have. Most groups will include from 12 to 30 participants and last an hour and a half.
- **Select and prepare your facilitator.** Good facilitation is critical to a successful dialogue. You should enlist an experienced facilitator or someone who is a good listener and can inspire conversation while remaining neutral. Attributes of a good facilitator can be found on this web site. It is important for the facilitator to get comfortable with the Dialogue questions and determine how to best design the conversation.
- **Set a place, date, and time for your dialogue.** Choose a spot that is comfortable and accessible. Dialogues can be conveniently held in someone's home, a community center, place of worship, library, or private dining room of a local restaurant. Hospitals, schools, and businesses often have conference rooms or cafeterias where groups can meet. Keeping sites convenient to the participants is key. Determine the time period (from 1-3

hours). Be sure to give a minimum of two weeks' notice of your dialogue meeting. A reminder call 2 days before the event will help to increase attendance.

- **Create an inviting environment.** Seating arrangements are important in a smaller group. To assure strong interaction, place seats in a circle or in a "U" formation. Refreshments (or food for a breakfast or lunch meeting) are a welcome and appropriate sign of appreciation but are not absolutely necessary. Many times, local businesses are willing to donate refreshments for community meetings.

### **Step 3: Invite participants**

People are naturally attracted to people who speak from commitment and possibility. Trust yourself! People *want* to talk about what's possible in their communities. This is not like pulling teeth. Determine how to access your desired participants. Contact friends, co-workers, or specific community groups. Personal contact makes the difference! A telephone call with a follow-up letter or flier with the details is usually very effective. Don't worry if someone says no.

Remember, if you wish to have a specific number of people in your group, you may need to recruit 1 1/2 to 2 times as many. If you want a large group that involves many community constituencies, it may be wise to advertise the dialogue in newsletters or fliers placed where people gather: in coffee shops, grocery stores, gyms, day care centers, places of worship, community centers, or libraries.

### **Step 4: Plan to record your dialogue**

Designate a person the Dialogue Team to take notes and summarize important points. The recorder doesn't need to keep a word-by-word account of the conversation, but should summarize the group's views during their interaction. It's just as important to note areas of disagreement as consensus. Obtaining quotations and stories from participants is essential. The facilitator should plan to sit down with the recorder immediately after the dialogue to review the notes and prepare a summary.

### **Step 5: Conducting the dialogue**

- **Greet participants.** It is important for the facilitator to greet participants as they arrive to develop rapport prior to the dialogue. This will help put guests at ease and encourage them to speak up.
- **Introduction.** The facilitator should introduce herself or himself and thank the participants for attending. A brief introduction, stating the purpose of the dialogue and the importance of asking the community for their opinions should follow. If the group is small, the facilitator may ask each participant to introduce herself or himself.
- **Initiate the dialogue.** You should tailor the dialogue to your community's needs. Each question has been researched to determine its reliability; however, slight adjustments may be needed. If the group is large, the facilitator may wish to project the questions on overhead transparencies for all to see.

- **Engage the media and document the event.** Some groups will want to have local media present to report on the dialogue and its findings. You may also want to take a few photos or video clips of the event.

### **Step 6: Concluding the dialogue and next steps**

At the end of the dialogue, the facilitator can remind the group that simply taking the time to share ideas and personal values with fellow citizens is important. The group may consider some possible next steps but should not feel obliged to do something together. The group recorder may verbally summarize the dialogue and should then plan to send the notes to the participants.

For groups that want to do something more, here are a few possible next steps:

- The group may be excited about a particular idea it would like to take action on and agree to meet again to develop some action plans
- The group may decide to have a more in-depth conversation and involve some missing voices and perspectives from their neighborhood (or to involve their elected representatives and the local newspaper).
- The group may decide to have additional dialogues on other subjects of importance to them
- The group may share information about existing community efforts that could benefit from volunteers and additional leadership.

### **How do you make your dialogue count?**

To make your findings count, record them and use them locally. Ensure that the results of your conversations advance local action by getting the results out to participants and relevant organizations within ten days of the dialogue. Follow up with the group on its interests. Ask each participant to share what has been learned and to keep the conversation going. Remember that each of us contributes to community well being simply by participating in civic dialogue.

### **To sum it up**

Growing a healthy community is a lifelong process requiring constant nurturing and persistence. Everyone has a role to play in building a healthier, more vibrant community. A healthy community is an imperfect place in an ever-changing state that builds a culture supporting healthy life choices and a high quality of life. Leadership and action should come from every corner of our communities to lessen the gulf between conversations we have at the kitchen table and those we have with our leaders.

A community dialogue is aimed at bringing together the many voices and talents in our communities. A dialogue can take place in many kinds of places and forms from a group of five people in a home to five hundred in a public setting. Tailor your community dialogue so that it works for your objectives, setting, participants, time, and capacity. Make your findings count by recording and using them. Ensure that the results of your conversations advance local action by getting them out to participants and organizations within ten days of the dialogue. Follow up by asking participants to share what they learned -- this will keep the conversation going.

## 4. The Power of Collaborative Partnerships

Most of us want the same things from our communities. We want them to be safe from violence and illness; we want neighborhoods that are alive and that work well. And we would all like to have people who care for us and whom we trust.

But how do we develop a community like that? One belief is that communities are built when people work together on things that matter to them.

### **Some definitions: Community, health, partnerships, capacity**

By community, we mean a group of people who share a common place, experience, or interest. We often use this term for people who live in the same area: the same neighborhood, the same city or town, and even the same state or country.

But people may also consider themselves part of a community with others who have had similar experiences. For example, people may see themselves as part of a:

- An ethnic community (for example, the African-Canadian community, the Indo Canadian community, or the Ukrainian Canadian community)
- Religious community (for example, the Catholic community, the Hindu community, or the Muslim community)
- Community of people with disabilities (those with visual impairments, developmental disabilities, or mental illness)

Finally, a community may be formed of people interested in the same things. For example, we may talk about the business community, the labor community, or the child advocacy community.

**Community health** refers to the well-being of everyone in a community. It asks the question, "How healthy are all of the members of our community? Our children and adolescents? Older adults? The poor?"

**Collaborative partnerships** are alliances that are used to improve the health of a community. They encourage people to get together and make a difference. For example, an effort to improve education might involve school officials, teachers, business people, youth, and older adults. Because these partnerships bring people together from all parts of the community, their efforts often have the weight to be successful.

**Community capacity** refers to the ability of community members to make a difference over time and across different issues. Capacity isn't a one time thing; like learning to ride a bike, it's not something that disappears once you've experienced it. And like riding a bike, we get better the more we practice.

For example, if a member of your community is killed by a drunk driver, people might be really angry. For a few weeks -- or even a few months -- people might work together to stop people

from drinking and driving. But if that's all that happens if those efforts fade away, and people go back to what they see as their "normal lives" -- that's not building community capacity. It must be seen as a process, where people see working on community issues as a part of their "normal lives."

For example, a community that develops a successful collaboration for substance abuse might decide later that local childhood high school drop out rates are too high and decide to work effectively to reduce those rates. By translating what they learned while developing the substance abuse coalition (for example, ways to recruit members or to work with the media) they should be able to do a good job and effectively reduce high school dropout rates. A community has demonstrated strong community capacity when it can bring about community changes over time and across concerns.

### **The power of collaborative partnerships**

The belief, woven through the next few pages, is that collaborative partnerships are a powerful way to improve our communities. That is, to improve our communities, we must all work together to solve problems.

One reason for this is that issues that matter to local people, such as child health, academic success, or substance abuse, don't fit into neat categories. The things that make one issue likely to become a problem usually affect other things as well. Defining our problems as being connected to other issues (and people) helps us to see the many ways in which we are linked together.

### **Who should be involved?**

When developing these collaborative partnerships, who should be involved? First, it's important that the collaboration is as inclusive as possible. This means individuals from the different parts of the community for example, representatives from schools, business, and the government. It also means representatives from different levels for example, representatives from the neighborhood, the county, the state or province, and even the broader region or nation.

Key partners in a broad collaboration should include:

- Local members of community partnerships
- Support organizations
- Grant makers and governmental agencies

A closer look at partnerships

### **Regional and community partnerships**

The most obvious member in a collaborative effort will be the community or local partnerships themselves -- the groups of people who are working directly to change their communities. These groups, which are often nonprofit organizations, are found in almost any community.

It's important to realize that while these organizations will be part of a larger collaboration with funders and support organizations, they are also collaborative arrangements in their own right. That's because collaborative partnerships link organizations drawn from different parts of the community. For example, a community partnership to promote child health might include representatives from:

- The media
- The business community
- Area schools
- Civic and community organizations
- Youth organizations
- Local government
- Health organizations
- The faith community
- Financial institutions

People from each of these areas will be able to promote child health in important, unique ways. By working together, a very strong partnership will exist in the community.

## 5. A model for community change

**There are five basic parts to this model:**

1. Community context and planning
2. Community action and intervention
3. Community and system change
4. Risk and protective factors and widespread behavior change
5. Improving more distant outcomes (the long-term goals)

Before looking specifically at each of these parts, here are a couple of general ideas to keep in mind as we go through this model:

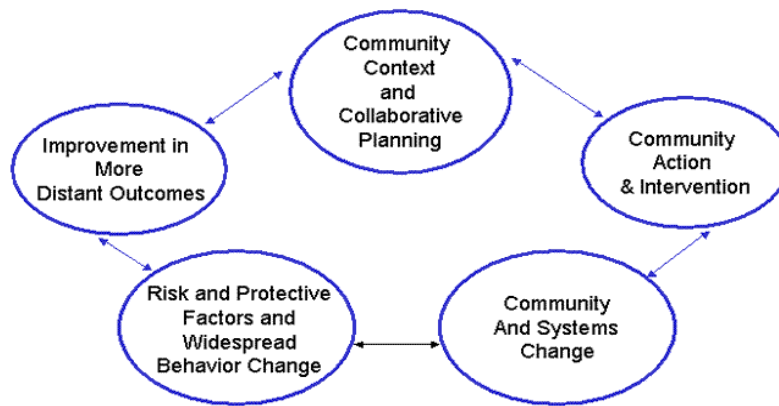
First, this model is meant to be *fluid* and *interactive*. For example, an understanding of the community context and planning should guide community action, which should affect community and system change, and so on.

Second, this model is meant to be a continuous cycle. For example, improvement in more distant outcomes, such as reduced rates of violence, should lead to a renewed cycle of planning and action for these or other issues that matter to members of the community.

The bottom line? There isn't a day when community work ends. In a healthy community, working together for the good of the community is a constant part of everyone's lives.

With these ideas in mind, let's look at the individual parts of this logic model or theory of action.

## *Work Group Logic Model: Our Theory of Change*



### **1. Community context and planning**

The first step is understanding the context in which people act. By the context, we mean people's experiences, their dreams for a better life, and what makes them do what they do. The context is influenced by many things, such as:

- People's hopes and expectations--for example, the belief that things can change
- Job and family demands
- Problems, especially poverty
- Strong and deep leadership--having a diverse team with the vision, competence, and persistence to shake mountains
- Adequate financial resources
- Approval (or resistance) from the community (or from those in authority) when people attempt to change things
- The broader political and social context

Within this context, people may come together to identify issues that matter to them, such as drug use, job opportunities, decent housing, or crime, to give just a few examples. They may then document the health or development of the community with *community-level indicators*, which are used to measure the extent of problems at the local level. For example, records of assaults at school are one community-level indicator of violence in the community; nighttime single-vehicle car crashes are often used as an indicator of the level of substance abuse in a community.

Later in the life of the community group, these can serve as benchmarks for detecting whether or not they are getting closer to their goals. For example, they can look at the level of violence and see if it has decreased since the partnership has been in existence.



With an understanding of the context, the group can move forward with planning. *Collaborative planning* is a critical and ongoing task of a successful organization. It brings together people and organizations with different experiences and resources. Together, they clarify or develop the group's vision, mission, objectives, strategies, and action steps. In doing so, they can bring about changes in the community.

## **2. Community action and intervention**

The planning process should be followed by action--going out and doing what was outlined. If the plan of action was thorough, this part should generally go fairly smoothly.

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hat's not to say there aren't bumps in the road. Sometimes, action runs into some pretty serious resistance. Even a relatively harmless effort to fix up low-income housing may be resisted by local officials, who delay needed construction permits.

Similarly, efforts by a community partnership to take money from law enforcement and put it into substance abuse prevention will probably be opposed by the police and their allies. This opposition might take many different forms. For example, the police might deny requests for information; others might cast doubt on the capability of members of the partnership to get the job done.

## **3. Community and system change**

The goal of the action plan is to bring about community and system changes. Bringing about these changes is an important step towards achieving your organizational goals.

By *community change*, we mean developing a new *program* (or modifying an existing one), bringing about a change in *policy*, or adjusting a *practice* related to the group's mission.

Let's look at the following examples:

- A "safe ride" program giving free rides so people don't need to travel alone in unsafe areas after dark (a new program)
- Policy changes such as stronger penalties for people who commit crimes using a weapon (a change in policy)
- New employment practices that allow workers flexible time to be with children after school (a change in practice)

System changes are similar to community changes, but take place on a broader level. A business might implement its child-friendly practices throughout its operations nationally. Another example is a change in grant making policy to award cash incentives to grantees that reach their objectives.

## **4. Risk and protective factors and widespread behavior change**

Our belief is that when these community and system changes occur, they should, taken together, change the environment in which a person behaves. This is sometimes referred to as increasing *protective factors* and/or decreasing the *risk factors* that community members face.

What are risk and protective factors? They are aspects of a person's environment or personal features that make it more likely (risk factors) or less likely (protective factors ) that she will develop a given problem. Often, risk and protective factors can be considered flip sides of the same coin. For example, if drugs are readily available in your community, then easy accessibility is a risk factor. If they are very difficult to find, then that lack of drugs is a protective factor. The intended effect of environmental change is widespread behavior change large numbers of people in the community engaging in behavior related to the group's objectives.

## 5. More distant outcomes

Improvements in more distant outcomes, such as reducing violence or increasing employment rates and family incomes, are the ultimate goals of collaborative partnerships. Our belief is that by reducing the risk factors (and enhancing the protective factors) for the issue you are trying to address, you will affect the bottom line. That's true whether your bottom line is lower rates of teen pregnancy, higher rates of immunization for small children, or any other topic.

As we discussed earlier in this section, data on community-level indicators can help you determine just how much progress you have made towards your ultimate goals. Information to see if efforts are working in different areas could even be organized together in an annual community "report card." This could let people throughout the community know how things are going, including information on community-level indicators, important community changes, and success stories.

Before we go on, it may be helpful to look again at this process as a whole. Remember, this process is an interactive and continuous cycle.

- The community context affects the organization's planning
- Guided by ongoing planning, the group generates community action and implements interventions
- Community action brings about community and system changes
- These community and system changes, taken together, decrease risk factors (and enhance protective factors)
- This environmental change should affect the behavior of a large number of people in a positive manner
- This widespread behavior change should effect the "bottom line"-- the community-level indicators of improvement in the organization's long-term goals

## 6. Strategic Thinking

The smartest and most effective activists think, plan, and act strategically. Inexperienced activists make the mistake of focusing only on stopping things.

Strategic action is necessary in situations where an opponent blocks the way to an objective. In such cases, smart activists use strategic thinking to identify where an opponent is vulnerable, and then try to figure out how to exploit that vulnerability. They also use strategic thinking to

solve problems before they happen, coolly examining the pros and cons of various moves in order to identify the best course of action.

## **Creating a Strategy**

### **Creating a strategy for a public interest campaign involves:**

- defining goals and intermediate and short-term objectives
- identifying opponents
- carrying out a SWOT analysis
- imagining and playing scenarios
- identifying primary and secondary targets
- identifying allies
- deciding what resources are required (salaries, expenses, other)
- devising tactics, and
- drawing up an action timetable.

Because this is a problem-solving process it is a loopy. In other words, you might define an objective up-front, but realize later that resources are inadequate to achieve this goal or that there is no clear target. This will mean looping back to redefine the objective.

### **Defining goals and objectives**

Your goals are the broad results you wish to achieve over the long term. Objectives are what you want to accomplish more immediately. Your objectives should follow naturally from your goals. They help you reach your goal. If the goal is winning the war, an objective might be winning a particular battle. If you lose sight of your goals and objectives, everything goes haywire. Consider a project to address the problems of global capitalism; it leads to a street protest, which brings about a police attack on protesters. A protracted inquiry into police brutality then sidetracks the whole project, obscuring the message of the protest and trumping its main objective.

### **Identifying opponents and obstacles**

What stands in the way of reaching your objective? Who can make the necessary changes? Who specifically do you need to influence? In many cases you will be trying, in some way, to bring about changes to government policy or legislation. You will want to avoid making incorrect assumptions about how government works, who is responsible, or what is the most effective route for bringing about change.

### **Carrying out a SWOT analysis**

It's easier to make choices after identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A SWOT analysis can be applied to a position, an idea, an individual, or an organization. Do a SWOT analysis for your group as well as for your target.

### **Imagining and playing scenarios**

Strategic thinking is often described as reflective dialogue about the future so that one can avoid pitfalls as well as take advantage of opportunities. One way to do this is by imagining how events will play out, then devising effective responses. Future scenarios may be framed as “what if” questions. Let’s say you are planning to hike up a mountain. The sun is shining, so you may prepare gear and clothing based on a default scenario that assumes an easy hike in fine weather. But your preparations will change if you consider “what if” questions. “What if fog makes it difficult to see?” “What if it snows?” “What if someone sprains their ankle?” Good scenarios require informed imagination. If it’s not informed, you can waste energy on the improbable. If it’s not fueled by imagination, you can be blindsided.

### **Identifying primary and secondary targets**

If your group cannot itself deliver a public good, you must be able to identify a decision maker or primary target who can. Campaigns directed at getting a target to do something usually require negotiation, campaigning, and confrontation. These tactics work best on people who are elected. Hired bureaucrats and appointed officials are more resistant.

You should also identify one or more secondary targets. These are people who will cooperate with you, who have some power over the primary target, Secondary targets might be regulatory officials, important customers, or politicians from a more senior level of government

### **Identifying allies**

If you can’t influence a decision maker on your own, are there others who can help? When groups with similar interests create strategic alliances, they are much more likely to achieve their goals. The tendency for groups to compete for funds and influence merely serves the opposition.

Allies may also be sympathetic insiders. Citizens need intelligence to make the right moves. The best intelligence comes from inside organizations that can influence the success of your project. Let’s suppose your goal is to change government policy. Reading government reports will provide some useful information. But talking to bureaucrats will provide additional, up-to-date information and a quick rundown on attitudes inside government. A sympathetic senior bureaucrat who understands your project can provide the most help. Finding such a person will help you make all the right moves.

### **Devising tactics**

Tactics are the action part of a strategy. Generating good tactical alternatives requires creative thinking. Choosing which ones to use requires a knowledge of what works in a particular context. It also requires some consideration of what will be good, interesting, or exciting for the group.

Does the key decision maker agree with your objectives and your solutions? If so, cooperative tactics make sense. Does the decision maker agree with your objectives but not your solutions?

If so, consider tactics focused on persuasion and negotiation. Does the decision maker completely disagree with both your objectives and your solutions? Then confrontation may be the only option.

Tactics differ in what they try to accomplish. They can aim to —

- win an objective by giving the other side something it wants (credit, votes, support),
- win an objective by depriving or threatening to deprive the other side of something it wants (credibility, respect, money, labor, employment),
- build public support in the media, or build the support of allies or secondary targets
- show a target the size and concern of your constituency, or
- build the morale of your group.

Most campaigns include many different kinds of tactics. To evaluate potential tactics, try to answer the following questions.

- Is the tactic focused on a primary or secondary target?
- Is it based on a thorough understanding of the target?
- Is the tactic in tune with other things that are happening?
- Does it demand action?
- Is your group comfortable with the tactic?
- If it is confrontational, has your group exhausted all options for cooperation and negotiation? Confrontation should be a last resort.

### **Drawing up a detailed action timetable**

Your timetable should be a multilevel chart with start and completion dates for everything you want to do, as well as start and completion dates for all significant external events such as voter registration. Strategies that involve winning something from a target usually begin with opening a line of communication with the target, and then move on to action meetings.

## **7. Mahatma Gandhi's methods for converting an opponent**

Conversion is the process by which an opponent comes around to embrace your objectives.

1. Refrain from violence and hostility
2. Attempt to obtain your opponent's trust through
  - Truthfulness
  - Openness about intentions
  - Chivalry (kindness if the other side experiences an unrelated difficulty)
  - Making behavior inoffensive without compromising the issue at hand
3. Refrain from humiliating an opponent.
4. Make visible sacrifices for one's cause. Ideally, make the suffering of the aggrieved visible.
5. Carry on constructive work. Address parts of the problem you can address. Make improvements where you can. Participate in activities regarded by everyone as benefitting everyone.

6. Maintain contact with the opponent. This is absolutely necessary if conversion is to succeed.
7. Demonstrate trust in the opponent.
8. Develop empathy, good will and patience toward the opponent.

## 8. Getting Noticed

If you want to expand the number of people who know what you are doing, you need to get noticed. And that usually means working with the media. Publicity has the added power of buoying up participants, bringing in more volunteers, nudging bureaucrats, unhinging politicians, and adding momentum to a grassroots initiative.

According to David Engwicht in *Reclaiming Our Cities and Towns*, empowerment comes from simple exposure. “Group members say, ‘Did you see we were in the news again. Isn’t it great? We are really starting to get places now.’”

Be careful if you are not used to dealing with the media. Many journalists look for stories rooted in conflict, error, and injustice. They may impose a confrontational agenda that can actually make it more difficult for you to resolve your issue.

### **Assemble a list of sympathetic journalists.**

If you have a positive community story, you may have trouble getting a reporter interested. One way around this is to cultivate a list of journalists who care about community building. Note their deadlines so you can call when the pressure is off.

### **Find the media professionals in your community.**

Seek help from the people in your community who work for newspapers, radio, and television stations. They can provide advice on what is newsworthy, how to get attention, and who to call. Most will not want to appear in the foreground, but in the background they will be invaluable.

### **Define your messages, then create your quotes.**

Don’t rush off to the media without a clear idea of what you want to accomplish. Create one or two messages — this is what you want people to remember. If you intend to air a problem, one of your messages should be a reasonable solution. Once you have your messages figured out, you need to turn them into quotable quotes.

### **Make actions newsworthy.**

To get media attention you need to tell a good story, with a human focus, about something that is happening now. The more creative, colorful, and humorous the story, the better coverage will be. Getting noticed is largely a matter of dramatizing issues.

### **Look for timing opportunities.**

Try to link your issue to breaking news or to a government report, an anniversary, or a special holiday. Linking helps to make old issues current. Good timing is the key to getting access to the

media. Books that focus on ways of getting noticed usually devote a lot of space to ways of quickly repackaging important messages so they incorporate or connect to news "hooks".

### **Write letters to the editor.**

Writing letters to the editors of community newspapers is an easy way to get publicity. Small papers will publish any reasonable letter that does not require a lot of fact checking. Draft and redraft letters so they are punchy and short. Check the length so your letter is at least as short as the average published letter. Common Cause, the largest citizens group in the US, did a study which showed that a letter to the editor was one of the most effective ways of influencing politicians.

### **Issue media advisories.**

Send out a media advisory on your group's letterhead if you have an upcoming event you wish to publicize.

At the top left put "Media Advisory" and the date. Next, create a strong newspaper-style headline that will interest an editor who has to shuffle through hundreds of media advisories and news releases every day. The first sentence of the copy should contain the most important or most interesting fact in your story.

The rest of the advisory should cover the essentials of who, what, where, when, and why. At the bottom put "For more information" and a contact name and phone number. Keep it to one page in length. You can also email media advisories, but avoid attachments ; emails with attachments may be junked automatically to avoid viruses.

For big events, send out a media advisory two days prior. Direct fax the assignment desk for TV, to the city desk for newspapers, and to the newsroom for radio. But be aware that faxes usually end up in the garbage. Faxing an advisory without any personal contact is usually a waste of time, unless you are sending it to small community papers. The best way to get the press to an event is to phone assignment editors, producers, and reporters one or two days in advance. If no one comes to cover your event, phone around and offer an interview after it is over.

### **Aim at TV.**

Some of the most effective citizens groups get TV coverage by staging events that provide action and good pictures. Greenpeace, for instance, gets attention by sending little rubber boats out to buzz around huge aircraft carriers.

Consider interviews at the location of the story. Use large colorful graphs and maps, or arrange to provide graphic evidence. Some groups also shoot their own broadcast-quality video or create video news releases to help control what is broadcast. Try to schedule actions before noon to allow reporters enough time to process material for the five o'clock news. Choose a spokesperson who comes across well on TV. Remember 70% of what is communicated on TV is communicated non-verbally through tone of voice, facial expression, body gestures, grooming and clothing.

**Practice your blurb.**

TV and radio news editors often cut quotes so they take only 10 seconds. Make sure you have one or two short sentences ready for reporters that carry your message. Don't say anything that would misrepresent your message if it was taken out of context. Practice what you want to say before the event. Your statement or a minor variation can be used in response to any question asked. No one will know the difference.

**Reframe stories on live radio.**

If you can get on a live radio show, you can actually shape the news because you won't be edited as you would be on TV or in the newspaper. To sound good, prepare a collection of quotable quotes that convey your message, and write them out to take with you to the interview. Offer an interview by cell phone from a location where something is happening. Radio reporters like to do interviews with "actuals" — background sounds that provide texture, immediacy, and the feeling of being there

**Don't rely on the media to educate.**

The mass media are good at entertaining and good at raising issues, but poor at providing detailed information that would help people understand issues. If you want to circulate detailed information, you will probably have to do it through newsletters, op-ed page features, projects with schools, conferences, workshops, and websites.

**Consider other media.**

Promote your event or issue in a leaflet delivered by volunteers by ad mail, or by direct mail. Leafleting can be combined with fundraising that will pay for the leaflet, the distribution, and project administration. You can also display messages on printed T-shirts, window signs, roof-rack car signs, stick-on car signs, posters,, notices in apartment building laundries, or church orders of service, email newsletters linked to web pages and the print or email newsletters of other groups.

**Try the direct approach first.** Before going to the media, consider phoning or writing those who have the power to put things right. If you have a city-related problem you are trying to address, contact city staff. If you get nowhere, call a city councilor.

## 9. Tactics for mobilizing and developing grass roots action

An advocacy campaign is nothing without support from some quarter. For most campaigns this means support from the ground up - broad community support - and so you'll need to engage in exercises that provide an opportunity for people to get involved. This will raise awareness of your issue and generate debate that you hope will influence decision-makers.

**The Tactics**

Even if you only need a small handful of people to do the work (as with lobbying, for example), you need the backing of large numbers to give your cause legitimacy. In grassroots campaigns, sheer numbers are often the most powerful tool you can evoke.



Tactics for mobilizing people are as limitless as the imagination. Try to be as creative as you can so that your operations stand out (this can also help to attract media attention).

Shock tactics may alienate people, or may affect them deeply. You'll need to be careful. On the other hand, fun tactics will often engage a wide variety of people.

Below is a list of the most common tactics employed by advocacy groups. Don't feel limited by what is here - they're just suggestions, don't be afraid to mix and match them. You will also probably employ different tactics at different stages of your campaign depending on your needs. It is rare that one tactic on its own will be effective.

- **Lobbying.** Lobbying is an attempt to influence the policy of an organization or policymaker. This can be a parliamentarian, a local councilor, a business, or perhaps even another community group. In the end you'll have to be able to show why your point of view should take primacy over the point of view of other stakeholders.
- **Fun Tactics.** Mobilization methods that fall under this category can be highly creative. They include things like street performances, art shows, and workshops (and these are often used at rallies to lift the people's mood and create enthusiasm). Humor plays a big part.
- **Petitions/Letter-writing.** Petitioning is a great non-confrontational method of engaging people. The effort required is minimal - it takes only a few seconds to put your name and address on a bit of paper - which increases your chances of getting people involved. It also engages people and gets them thinking about the issue. The petition can later be used in your lobbying exercises, or a sympathetic member of parliament can present it to parliament. Protest meetings are an ideal place to get signatures for a petition, but so is the local shopping centre or anywhere else where a large number of local residents congregate. Perhaps the hardest part of petitions is actually using them.

Remember, you need to be able to identify the signatories to a petition - and this means having at least an email address but preferably a physical address as well. Entirely too many petitions simply do not get enough details from the signatories and are rendered

useless. Anyone can make up 200 names from random suburbs and write them down. You need to be able to prove that these people actually exist.

Letter-writing requires a little more effort from participants than petitioning, but these campaigns tend to carry more weight than a simple petition. One way to get people involved in letter-writing is to write a standard letter (and even pay the postage, if your organization can afford it), and get people to sign it. However, standard letters are never as effective as a letter someone has written for themselves. One personal letter is probably worth 100 names on a petition. A good compromise position - combining the potential for critical mass afforded by the standard letter with the impact of a

personalized letter - is to provide some suggested points people can use in their letters. The lazy ones can cut and paste, the more creative ones can add their own personal touches.

- **Rallies and Marches.** A rally or march never occurs spontaneously. When the biggest protests in history occurred in opposition to the move to war in Iraq early in 2003 they happened because of months of intensive groundwork by countless community groups around the world. These sorts of events create a public display of sentiment and can show policymakers and members of the public that there is a high level of grassroots support for your issue (it's also worth noting, though, that they didn't prevent the war). A lot of publicity and planning needs to go into staging a rally. As well as creating enough public awareness to spur people to turn up, you need to inform police, organize speakers, organize sound systems and so on. Rallies and marches are a central part of modern advocacy, but are not something to be entered into lightly. Having families and a wide cross-section of the community involved can help lend further legitimacy to your event.
- **Web Page.** You **must** have a web page. This will be your first point of contact for many supporters, as well as for opponents and the press. The computer age has also ushered in a new form of activism with a huge variety of different tactics. All these tactics require varying degrees of technical knowledge, but they have the ability to reach a huge audience at the touch of a button and at a very low cost.
- **Ballot box.** No matter how undemocratic or how horrible a policy or action of a government or member of parliament can be, they are ultimately accountable at the ballot box. It is probably this that has the greatest influence on a government's policy and actions. Protesting at the ballot box can take a few different forms.

The simplest and most effective form of ballot box advocacy is to convince enough people that the issue is important enough to vote an elected official out of office - or at least to give them a good scare.

- **Public meetings.** Public meetings are a good way to put an idea on the table, to encourage the discussion of ideas, and to promote exposure to a diversity of opinions. Public meetings can involve an open microphone, where anyone can come up and talk, or you can have a panel of people (usually "experts") discussing the issue, or you can have a "learn-in" where you occupy a room or building and provide a discussion on the issue that you are protesting, or you can have a speaker, or you can organize any combination of the above.

Often the biggest hurdle to a campaign will be lack of public awareness, and public meetings can stimulate people to think about the issue. (Often, of course, most of the people who'll attend your meetings are already in favour of your opinion and will have a reasonable awareness of the issue.) The main aim of a public meeting should be to try to work towards a solution or offer some alternatives on the issue you are debating.

- **Non-participation**

It may seem like a paradox, but non-participation can be a very powerful advocacy tool. Non-participation can take many forms. The most common form of non-participation is the boycott, but other forms can include not voting, not paying tax (or not paying the proportion of tax that goes towards the thing you are objecting to). Passive resistance may also fit into this category.

There are countless different methods you can employ in order to make a point. Whichever methods you choose will depend on what's appropriate for your cause and who your target audience is.

Seize upon any public event to promote your campaign or publicize future events through leaflets, merchandising, and collection of donations and signatures.

## 10. Identifying and using support networks

No matter how hard you try, you'll never get there on your own. Just about every successful advocacy campaign got there because of support from other organizations and members of the community. It's important to identify possible support networks and use them as best you can. Identifying Support Networks

Advocacy can produce some strange bedfellows. It can lead to feminists teaming up with Christian fundamentalists or progressive environmentalists joining forces with traditionally conservative anti-development groups.

When starting out, think about all the issues that fall under your campaign umbrella. Are there any residual effects that might excite another group? You might be campaigning against the environmental problems associated with certain developments, but your desired outcome might also mean that a group of concerned residents don't have their river views obscured - so there's room for networking.

When starting out on a campaign it's worthwhile putting feelers out to see what other organizations are out there and what they are doing. At very least you should be doing a Google search (and hopefully you'll be digging a little deeper than that).

Think outside the box a little on this one. If you're an environmental organizations concerned about toxins in the air you may have common ground with a health organization, and vice versa.

It's also important to identify the demographic that's going to be interested in your campaign. This is particularly important for highly localized campaigns. If you're campaigning to have traffic lights installed at a dangerous intersection, a letter drop in the surrounding neighbourhood blocks informing people of a public meeting could drum up significant support for the issue.

## **Using Support Networks**

Once you've identified a few organizations working in the same area, or even on the same campaign, get in contact and establish what's already being done. Is there a chance for collaboration, or even just getting a bit of a hand in some areas - using their member lists, sharing your resources, swapping contacts, endorsing a campaign, or actually forming an alliance?

There are many ways this can take place, all depending on the circumstances. Occasionally it does happen that you find yourselves running exactly the same campaign as another organization. There are three ways of dealing with this. First, you can abandon your own campaign and simply join up with the others who are running the campaign - this tends to happen if you're a loose organization formed for one specific purpose. The second scenario is

that you form a coalition and fight with a united front. The third option is for both of you to run your campaigns simultaneously. One choice is not automatically better than the other, and the one you choose will depend on your circumstances.

If you choose the third option and run simultaneous campaigns, it's in everyone's best interest to maintain a high level of communication. Often this means having someone sit in on the meetings of the other organization. It often also means that you should arrange for your tactics and approaches to differ, in order to fight the campaign from different angles.

Assuming, however, that you're the only organization running with this particular campaign and that you've made contact with like-minded organizations, there are several ways that they could help you.

**Chance for collaboration.** You could collaborate with them. In other words, you could encourage them to take on your issue as well, and fight alongside you. Clearly, the more people involved the better. However, collaborations must be dealt with carefully. (see Collaboration - Advantages and Disadvantages on this web site for more details).

**Utilizing their member lists.** One of the most useful ways your networks can help with your campaign is to spread the word for you. Every organization that's supporting your campaign will have a list of members that it regularly communicates with. They may let you mail or email to the list, they may take your letters and mail them, or they may just mention your campaign in their newsletter. Whatever the case may be, they're an excellent source of publicity. Moreover, the people on these lists are more likely to be sympathetic and to support your campaign.

**Sharing resources.** People or groups in your network will have resources that are unique to their own work, and you may need these resources if you're to be more efficient or more effective. Resources can be as simple as a bit of office space, a computer, or some software, or they could be services like access to a phone or the deployment of an employee with particular skills. Things like PA systems (and coffee machines) are also handy things to share around.

**Endorsing a campaign** Sometimes an endorsement can be just the thing to kick start a campaign. If your organization is relatively unknown and only just starting to create a stir, then people can get suspicious. If a larger and better known organization can endorse your campaign, it gives you both legitimacy and publicity - both of which are highly desirable.

**Related campaign.** Another thing that you might like to consider is a related campaign. You may be aware of an organization running a campaign that is, while not identical, related to your campaign, and it could be a good opportunity to bounce off each other and strengthen both campaigns.

## 11. Collaboration: Advantages and disadvantages

Establishing a collaboration not only strengthens your initiative, you're also demonstrating to the community, decision-makers and funders that other stakeholders recognize that there's a need for what you're doing. This can be a powerful asset.

### Advantages

The advantages of collaboration are many:

- In a healthy collaboration there's something in it for both parties, whether it's access to skills and resources or just working towards a common aim
- You'll have a broader reach, as all the organizations involved in the collaboration will have different networks and mailing lists to spread the word on - which means that more sectors of the community will hear about your campaign
- You'll gain access to new skills as the various organizations that have these skill sets come on board
- It's a good opportunity to widen your own networks
- If more organizations are involved you'll increase your own credibility
- More and more funding bodies like to see collaborations, so this will certainly work in your favour in grant applications - not to mention the fact that a wide range of costs for the campaign could then be shared
- The other organizations will be able to provide you with in-kind resources
- These sorts of collaborations tend to lead to ongoing relationships, which will help you with future campaigns

### Disadvantages

Collaborations are generally a good idea, for all the reasons mentioned above. However, there are some circumstances where you at least need to be careful and to put safeguards in place to overcome a few potential problems.

- Collaborations can mean that your campaign moves more slowly, because you need to get consensus or check with the other players regarding every decision - so make sure you have a good understanding of the levels of autonomy that you have.
- You'll be more restricted in what you can do. Certain tactics your group might follow, or positions that your group might ordinarily take, may not be agreed on by other members of your collaboration.

- In-fighting between parties may emerge, and few things could be more damaging to a cause. These squabbles often become public, but even if they don't people in the organization often finish up acting according to their own micro political agendas rather than on the basis of what's good for the campaign.

## 12. Setting the Boundaries: What You Will and Won't Do

You need to set boundaries and frameworks for your advocacy early in the initiative to avoid on-the-spot decision-making, inconsistency, and accusations of bias.

One way of doing this is to develop and publicize a 'charter of principles', which covers a range of things (from values to procedural issues) that will help to guide your group's decision-making process. These principles are often made public so that your organization can be held accountable for its actions and so that you will have a reference point when a decision or action is in dispute.

### Funding

Funding in the context of advocacy work is not so much about 'how' as 'who'. Who are you happy to accept money from, and who do you think it will be problematic to receive funding from? The primary concern here is independence (or, in some cases, the appearance of independence). This question should not only be answered in terms of who specifically you are or aren't happy to receive funding from, but also in terms of why. For example, you may be happy to receive government funding providing it doesn't affect your advocacy, but other groups will simply flatly refuse government money for fear of a real or perceived lack of independence. It's also important to remember that you want to keep your funding base as broad as possible, so try not to restrict too many avenues.

It's also worth considering if there are any funders that you closely align with that would be worth approaching for funding.

### Groups you'll engage with

This is a similar question to the one about funding, but the answer isn't always the same. Who will you engage with to further your cause? Are ideological issues a consideration, or past records? Will you engage with commercial corporations, for example? Will you engage with only *certain types* of corporations? What about religious groups? What about organizations that are doing good work now, but which have a tarnished past?

Your credibility could well be on the line, so you need to consider these issues carefully and draw up guidelines. Collaborations are often the key to advocacy, so it's important to have a clear idea of who you're happy to collaborate with.

### Who are you prepared to criticize?

Are you in a position where you can criticize funders, or groups you're engaged with? Is this important or necessary? Are there any organizations that you don't depend on for funding or collaboration, but could harm your operations if they're criticized?

### **Short-term or Long-term**

Some organizations are formed to achieve a specific aim - stopping a development, for example, or making genetic engineering illegal. It's a good idea to give some thought at the outset to what happens when you achieve this aim. Are you intending to launch an ongoing campaign, or will you dismantle it when you're done?

### **Structural or Single-issue**

Related to time constraints is the question of whether you decide to run a campaign about underlying structures or a single-issue campaign. Again, a decision on this early in the piece is important.

### **Who can speak for the organization? Can the organization speak for others?**

When you're working out who speaks for the organization, that's an issue of media marketing.

It's important to articulate who your group will speak for, and why. Firstly, is this advocacy 'for' or advocacy 'with'? If you're advocating for someone or something then it's probably legitimate for you to speak on their behalf. However, many organizations choose to advocate with - and in this case you must ask not only if you can speak on their behalf but also if they can speak on yours.

Other campaigns will involve coordinating a lot of other organizations, or providing an open space. If you're playing this facilitating role, then who exactly can you speak for?

These sorts of questions can become quite emotionally charged, so make sure you're clear about them right from the beginning.

## **13. Setting the Boundaries: What You Will and Won't Do**

You need to set boundaries and frameworks for your advocacy early in the initiative to avoid on-the-spot decision-making, inconsistency, and accusations of bias.

One way of doing this is to develop and publicize a 'charter of principles', which covers a range of things (from values to procedural issues) that will help to guide your group's decision-making process. These principles are often made public so that your organization can be held accountable for its actions and so that you will have a reference point when a decision or action is in dispute.

### **Funding**

Funding in the context of advocacy work is not so much about 'how' as 'who'. Who are you happy to accept money from, and who do you think it will be problematic to receive funding from? The primary concern here is independence (or, in some cases, the appearance of independence). This question should not only be answered in terms of who specifically you are or aren't happy to receive funding from, but also in terms of why. For example, you may be happy to receive government funding providing it doesn't affect your advocacy, but other

groups will simply flatly refuse government money for fear of a real or perceived lack of independence. It's also important to remember that you want to keep your funding base as broad as possible, so try not to restrict too many avenues.

It's also worth considering if there are any funders that you closely align with that would be worth approaching for funding.

### **Groups you'll engage with**

This is a similar question to the one about funding, but the answer isn't always the same. Who will you engage with to further your cause? Are ideological issues a consideration, or past records? Will you engage with commercial corporations, for example? Will you engage with only *certain types* of corporations? What about religious groups? What about organizations that are doing good work now, but which have a tarnished past?

Your credibility could well be on the line, so you need to consider these issues carefully and draw up guidelines. Collaborations are often the key to advocacy, so it's important to have a clear idea of who you're happy to collaborate with.

### **Who are you prepared to criticize?**

Are you in a position where you can criticize funders, or groups you're engaged with? Is this important or necessary? Are there any organizations that you don't depend on for funding or collaboration, but could harm your operations if they're criticized?

### **Short-term or Long-term**

Some organizations are formed to achieve a specific aim - stopping a development, for example, or making genetic engineering illegal. It's a good idea to give some thought at the outset to what happens when you achieve this aim. Are you intending to launch an ongoing campaign, or will you dismantle it when you're done?

### **Structural or Single-issue**

Related to time constraints is the question of whether you decide to run a campaign about underlying structures or a single-issue campaign. Again, a decision on this early in the piece is important.

### **Who can speak for the organization? Can the organization speak for others?**

When you're working out who speaks for the organization, that's an issue of media marketing.

It's important to articulate who your group will speak for, and why. Firstly, is this advocacy 'for' or advocacy 'with'? If you're advocating for someone or something then it's probably legitimate for you to speak on their behalf. However, many organizations choose to advocate with - and in this case you must ask not only if you can speak on their behalf but also if they can speak on yours.



Other campaigns will involve coordinating a lot of other organizations, or providing an open space. If you're playing this facilitating role, then who exactly can you speak for?

These sorts of questions can become quite emotionally charged, so make sure you're clear about them right from the beginning.

## 14. Mobilizing the Community

Community mobilization is the process whereby members of a community identify a need, rally support and work towards an outcome for the benefit or development of the greater community. It is one of the greatest and most powerful tools of a community organization or movement to be able to bring people together to lobby, to advocate, to protest on behalf of a community or cause.

It is all about rallying support within a community and getting concerned individuals, institutions, non-government organizations, government bodies, and media outlets behind the cause. Or if not behind it, to at least get them to take up the discussion and start the debate.

When community mobilization works it is a very empowering exercise. You only have to look at the massive changes that have occurred over the past 50 years in terms of the women's movement, disability movement, indigenous rights movement to mention just a couple of examples to see how perceptions have changed, attitudes have changed, votes have changed, priorities have changed and - eventually - legislation or practice has changed.

All of that was because enough members of the community were mobilized to support change. Some people say that by assisting a community to organize an advocacy group or organization that fights for the rights of its constituents that you actually achieve two goals. You help that community to do something about a wrong or issue that it wishes to right and cope with or deal with some wrong that it wishes to right, and also contribute to the strengthening of the community by assisting more people to become more engaged.

### Steps involved

Some campaigns grow like weeds. In fact most campaigns start off as a small seed and grow and grow. For many community organizations it is difficult to do anything than work like mad to keep pace with what has been started and try and steer the movement in the right direction and ensure it doesn't get diverted. However, where possible, it is worth trying to keep a detailed account of your actions. Both progress and setbacks should be recorded so that next time you actually have some structure to your campaign.

That way you can actually work out the initiatives that garnered support, those that lost you support and the key relationships and partnerships that were integral in taking your case to a greater audience. It is a way of taking the learning and using it the next time you need to bring the community together behind a common cause.

There are many things that you need to consider in mobilizing support. Once you have identified a need, the process you need to go through to achieve your goals may become obvious; however, here is a rough guide to help add some structure to the process of mobilizing a community.

**Step one:**

An individual or a group identifies a need within the community (crime prevention, health issues, human rights issues, a road closure, heritage issues, issues of discrimination or access, the need for a new community centre etc).

**Step two:**

The individual or individuals who have identified the need or problem then contact key community people and supporters who are prepared to join the campaign to see that community need is met. It's important to form a group that is representative of your community (not necessarily the geographic community but it can be a community of like-minded people or people joined by a common interest). Be clear about what you are aiming to do and your goals and the main messages that you will be using to sell your position.

Also before you go too far, establish an action plan as to how you intend to achieve your goals. What is it you need to do. The campaign may not flow strictly according to the plan but at least you have some structure setting out what needs to be done.

**Step three:**

Spread the message and reach as many members of the community as possible to advocate your position. This step can take in seeking support from government, business, non-government organizations or funding bodies and media outlets. It can take in staging a public event, function, photo opportunity, protest or demonstration. It could be establishing a website, it could be setting up an email campaign, passing around a petition, letter dropping the local community, lobbying governments (Federal, provincial and local) and approaching other similarly-minded community organizations.

**Step four:**

By this stage a coalition (either from within your direct community or extending into other communities or interest areas) will have formed and stronger partnerships struck between different groups and influential supporters within the community. As each new person comes on board, they should be briefed about what the group (or coalition) is hoping to achieve and how, why, and where this is to be done.

Engaging the wider community is usually paramount in achieving any lasting success. This can be done by:

- holding public meetings
- advertising in local papers
- utilizing free community announcements through media outlets
- a strong media campaign aimed at getting ongoing coverage about your issue/group
- targeting radio programs, offering a spokesperson to be a guest.
- promotional lunches, special events

- letterbox drops, telephone calls
- Internet discussion groups
- addressing other groups

**Step five:**

The resources available to the community to achieve these goals should be identified and assessed. Goals should be modified and clarified as the group progresses and gains more information about the cause. To sustain momentum, keep the public informed and continue to gather information to ensure community members are involved in the problem-solving process.

This can be done through:

- Regular public meetings
- Polls and surveys
- Interviews
- Observation
- Internet feedback
- Identify previous research and data on the issue and use this in conjunction with your own findings from the community consultation process.

**Step six:**

Refine your action plan to achieve your goal. Continue to expand your group, coalition, and partnerships. Ensure that your support continues to grow and that there is a wide consensus among your own community for what you are doing, for the actions you choose to take to achieve your goals.

Not everyone is going to agree with you - and the debate may well become heated - but try to treat with respect dissenting views even if you don't agree with them. Don't necessarily dismiss all of them out of hand. See if there is some ground you can give that would increase the level of support you can call on or bring into the fold those holding a dissenting view.

The specifics of your action plan will obviously be different in every case, and will be shaped by your principles, the community need, and the input from your partners. Such a plan might involve reaching your goals through, for example,

- Lobbying government for legislative change
- Raising funds to build a community facility
- Holding a specific day to achieve a result, e.g. Clean Up Australia Day
- Taking your cause to court, etc.

**Step seven:**

Implement the plan, assess the outcomes, report your findings, and then (with your partners and with the feedback from the community) tease out what further action needs to take place. Community support for any further action needs to be confirmed now that the community has had a chance to see how the proposal worked out in practice. The whole point of community mobilization, after all, is to enlist the whole community in working to achieve the desired

outcome: when development occurs with the support of the whole community, the outcomes are more sustainable and the community's sense of cohesion and identity is enhanced.

## 15. Consultative Processes

Whether it is a political decision, a government decision, a business decision or a decision by a community organization, one of the biggest complaints by those affected often comes down to the fact that they were not consulted and had no chance to have their input.

For Community Leaders, it is a delicate process to run the fine line between ensuring there is adequate and good quality consultation that does seek out all the relevant information, views and concerns on which balanced, informed decisions can be made but that the process doesn't get bogged down and lead to a situation where there is plenty of consultation but no decision-making.

Running a genuine consultative process is often more work initially. The chances of enacting the changes you want, or achieving your goals in the community, are going to be improved if the relevant stakeholders (and as many other interested people as possible) have been consulted or involved in the decision-making process. It is only where the community feels empowered or has ownership of the changes is it likely to succeed.

This is true on both the small and the large scale. The United Nations, and the Environmental Protection Agency both use consultative processes to reach major decisions. Similarly, your local soccer club would most likely seek public consultation with its neighbours prior to installing night lights around a sport field.

Just as it does not make sense to initiate a youth program without youth involvement, it does not make sense to make major decisions for a community without consulting the people who make up that community.

### When do you consult?

In general terms, the larger the decision, the greater the need for consultation (and where there's any doubt which end of the spectrum you are then it's better to err on the side of consultation). It's particularly important

- When major decisions need to be embraced by a particular community.
- When consultation is required by law (getting a building permits, for example, getting a liquor license, changing your hours of operation)
- When the aim is to educate or change behaviour
- When you need public support to carry it through
- When you are seeking different opinions and collective input to reach an effective solution
- When you want to motivate people and inspire action
- When you want other groups or organizations in the community to take up or back your position

Basically, you should consult whenever you are taking a decision that is likely to impact on other people.

### **How do you do this effectively?**

Before you embark on a consultative process you need to have

- an idea of the scale of the project (what resources and how much time have you set aside to do this?)
- clearly stated aims and objectives for the consultation (what do you need to know? What (and whom) do you need to ask to find this out?)
- a genuine desire to learn from the process so that you can address any concerns, take into account any constructive suggestions and improve any weaknesses in your argument, plan or position.

These factors will determine everything else -- how widely you will consult, who you will consult, why you need to consult and the time frame in which you wish to work.

The consultation process can range from a single and simple meeting with relevant stakeholders to a more complex process to a long-term on-going consultative process involving more time, careful preparation, and a way of dealing with many conflicting views.

The process of consultation requires a series of decision procedures.

- Appoint a co-coordinator
- Decide how often you will consult various interest groups/interested parties.
- Determine the resources that will be required to undertake the process
- Set a timeline for when you hope to achieve certain results
- Consider all methods of consultation: private/closed meetings, public meetings, online surveys, telephone surveys, interviews, focus groups.
- Identify and contact stakeholders and interest groups.
- Establish relationships with stakeholders
- Ensure you have a process to deal with various opinions so you will be able to reach agreement.
- Ensure there is a central contact person to answer enquiries.
- Ensure there is follow up after any consultation and that those who participate know where to access final results/findings

It is a good idea to look around for community activists or community members who have been involved with managing a consultative process or community mobilization project before. They have great networks and can offer valuable advice.

### **Don't forget to research your issue**

No matter what the issue and no matter how original you think your initiative is, there is usually a chance that someone, somewhere has tried it (or something similar) before - so before you engage in consultation look at some of the issues, concerns and challenges faced in other areas.

This is likely to provide valuable clues as to community opinion, or might give you an insight into the issue itself and how it has played out in the past.

### **What if they say the wrong thing?**

For people to embrace change and new decisions, it helps if they have had the opportunity to be involved in the process. For you to get the most from the consultation process, it helps if you have been willing to listen with a sincere wish to listen, to learn, and to share. This process is not necessarily painless.

However good your initial idea, the consultation process might end up in your proposal being changed, improved, enhanced, diluted in some way to take in the suggested changes and to provide the ability for a wider part of the community to have some ownership over the concept. Or maybe it stays the same and there are refinements in the implementation which arise out of consultation.

The process of empowering the community necessarily involves having less power yourself. If you go into a consultation procedure in good faith (and it's pretty much a waste of time to do anything else) then you are saying that you are prepared to compromise or take on board legitimate suggestions and concerns. If the consultation shows definitively that the community does not want what you're offering, think long and hard before proceeding down a track that doesn't have any wider community support

### **How can I use consultation to build my organization?**

The plus about the consultation process is that the work you have put in to make sure that the community supports your project is also an advantage in applying for grants and raising funds. Grant makers want to know that you have the support of the community; a consultative process provides absolute assurance that anybody who needed to be heard has been heard.

People you come into contact with during the consultation process are also good prospects for recruitment as members or sympathizers. Take the opportunity to build your own networks.

## **16. Visioning Exercises**

Guided visioning exercises have become popular in many fields as a way of defining and achieving a desirable future. Recent studies have shown that we are more likely to reach an objective if we can see it, and can imagine the steps to reach it. Visioning has become a familiar technique in sports. High-jumpers, for instance, regularly take the time to imagine themselves going through the steps of jumping higher than they have ever jumped before. Citizens can use visioning to create images that can help to guide change in the city

In a typical visioning exercise a facilitator asks participants to close their eyes and imagine they are walking through their neighbourhood as it should be fifteen years into the future. What do they see? What do the buildings look like? Where do people gather? How do they make decisions? What are they eating? Where are they working? How are they travelling? What is happening on the street? Where is the centre of the neighbourhood? How does greenspace

and water fit into the picture? What do you see when you walk around after dark? People record their visions in written or pictorial form; in diagrams, sketches, models, photographic montages, and in written briefs. Sometimes a professional illustrator helps turn mental images into drawings of the city that people can extend and modify. Many places use visioning techniques to arrive at a number of alternative futures for the city. Residents are then asked to indicate their preference for their favorite.

Sometimes visioning can lead to poor results because people can't want they don't know. After World War II, Londoners were simply asked what kind of housing they wanted. The results, based on their responses, were dreadful both from the point of view of residents, as well as architects and planners. Because people "can't want what they don't know" governments need to present a range of options each with a list of pros and cons. Once this has been done satisfactorily, people can then be asked, "What do you want?"

## 17. Getting People

One of the main on-going activities of any grassroots organization is getting more people involved. This is not easy; most people don't like the idea of being "roped into" doing community work in their spare time. Current Canadian statistics suggest that the heavy emphasis on the individual by modern commercial culture has driven participation rates below 5% for most community activities. If that sounds low, remember a few people committed to a single course of action can achieve amazing results

### **Ask members to invite others**

Eighty per cent of volunteers doing community work said they began because they were asked by a friend, a family member, or a neighbour.

### **Go to where people are**

Instead of trying to get people to come to you, try going to them. Go to the meetings of other groups, and to places and events where people gather. This is particularly important for involving ethnic groups, youth groups, seniors, and others who may not come to you.

### **Look for ways to collect names, addresses, phone numbers**

Have sign-in sheets at your meetings and events. At events organized by others, ask people to add their name, address, email address and phone number to petitions and requests-for-information. In return, hand out an issue sheet, or an explanation of how your group is attempting to address an issue.

### **Try to include those who are under-represented**

Minority language groups, low-income residents, the disabled, the elderly and youth all tend to be under-represented in neighbourhood groups. In some cases not participating is a matter of choice - most transient youth choose not to take part. In other cases, English language competence poses a formidable barrier to participation. In still other cases, people get overlooked. This can happen to the disabled and the elderly, even though they have proven invaluable as active citizens. Here are some ways to include the under-represented:

- Go to people in the group you are trying to reach and ask how they would like to be approached.
- Address **their** issues.
- Think about who you know who knows someone in the group you are trying to reach. Use your connections.
- Identify a group as people you want to work with, not as a target group you want to bring "on side". Treat people as people first.
- Organize projects that focus on kids. Parents of different ethnic backgrounds, and income levels will meet one another while accompanying their children.

### **Do surveys**

Surveys are a good way to stay in touch, increase participation, and bring in new members. They show your group is willing to respond to a broad base of others, not just those who tend to participate in community activities.

### **Create detailed membership lists**

Create membership lists with places for entering name, address, day and evening phone and fax numbers, priorities for local improvement, occupation, personal interests, special skills, times available, what the person would be willing to do, and what the person would not be willing to do. Consider using a computer to update lists and sort people by address, priority, and interests. With such a computer database you can easily bring together people who belong together. Membership lists can also form the basis of a telephone tree, a system for getting messages out to large numbers of people.

### **Generate newsletters and leaflets**

Newsletters keep group members in touch. Because most neighbourhood groups deliver to all residents whether members or not, a newsletter helps attract new people.

## **18. Keeping People**

People join community groups to meet people, to have fun, to learn new skills, to pursue an interest, and to link their lives to some higher purpose. They leave if they don't find what they are looking for.

Citizens groups need to ask themselves more often: What benefits do we provide? At what cost to members? How can we increase the benefits and decrease the costs? Here are a some ideas on where to begin.

### **Stay in touch with one another.**

Regular contact is vital. Face to face is best. If you have to meet, getting together in someone's house is better than meeting in a hall.

### **Welcome newcomers.**

Introduce them to members of your group. Consider appointing greeters for large meetings and events. Call new contacts to invite them to events, or to pass on information.



Help people find a place in the organization. The most appealing approach is to say, "Tell us the things you like to do and do well and we will find a way to use those talents." The next most appealing is to say: "Here are the jobs we have, but how you get them done is up to you."

Invite newcomers to assume leadership roles. If the same people run everything, newcomers feel excluded.

### **Pay attention to group process**

Most volunteer groups do not give adequate attention to how they work together. Decision-making methods are not determined explicitly nor are roles, or healthy behaviors. Some groups make process a topic of discussion by appointing a process watcher

### **Discuss the group contract**

Set aside occasions when members describe what they expect of the group and what the group can expect of them in terms of time and responsibilities. This information should become part of your membership lists.

### **Act more, meet less**

The great majority of people detest meetings; too many are the Black Death of community groups. By comparison, activities like tree-planting draw large numbers of people of all ages.

### **Keep time demands modest**

Most people lead busy lives. Don't ask them to come to meetings if they don't need to be there. Keep expanding the number of active members to ensure everyone does a little, and no one does too much. Work out realistic time commitments for projects.

### **Provide social time and activities**

Endless work drives people away. Schedule social time at the beginning and end of meetings. Turn routine tasks into social events; for example, stuff envelopes while sharing pizza. Some groups form a social committee to plan parties, dinners, and trips.

### **Provide skills training**

Provide skill-building workshops and on-the-job training. Simply pairing experienced and inexperienced people will improve the skills of new members. Training in leadership, group facilitating and conflict resolution are important enough to warrant special weekend workshops.