



COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ACTIVITY

What is community organizing?

Community organizing is working to build coalitions with different groups of stakeholders to work together in order to achieve a stated goal.

Why do we want to learn about it?

There is power in numbers. The more people actively work together the more will get done and this leads to faster and more effective change.

Here are 3 issues where we could use community organizing to achieve our goal.

Increasing the number of Advocacy Partners in DC would help us:

1. Convince DC public schools to provide children with disabilities access to effective, accessible academic instruction to prepare them for post secondary and/or meaningful, competitive careers.
2. Assure individuals with developmental disabilities safe, accessible, affordable housing close to public transportation.
3. Improve both paratransit and fixed-route transportation to make it affordable, reliable and convenient.

Do you think all of these topics have broad appeal and are achievable?

PICK THE TOPIC YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK ON FOR THIS ACTIVITY and form groups.

Within your group discuss these questions and follow the directions below.

Who else is interested in these goals?

These are possible partners and can be individuals and organizations

1-

2-

3-

4-

Develop 3 sentence statements for each issue:

- a) Name the issue, problem or what you want to change (be creative with this)
- b) Describe the issue, problem or what you want to change
- c) Describe the tangible and practical result(s) you want to achieve

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT HOW YOU ARE GOING TO ACHIEVE IT. JUST DISCUSS WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE FOR YOU AND OTHERS WHEN THE CHANGE HAS ACTUALLY OCCURRED.

Write the three issues you came up with on the flip chart.

On a Post-it note, write your name and put in on the chart of the issues you would most like to work on, the ones you think have the best chance for success.

Look over the issues that got the most post-it notes. Pick the one with the most and make sure the issue meets these criteria:

- Empower to Act (has some emotional charge to encourage action)
- Broad Support (for people without disabilities and policymakers, too)
- High Visibility (something the media will pay attention to, provides direct benefit to people)
- Concrete Results (result is tangible, practical and achievable)
- WinWin/LoseWin (advances your agenda and has broad appeal)
- Increase political power (increases your political leverage and/or support)
- Builds unity & solidarity (issue that unites people even if progress is slow or uneven)
- Can put a name and a face on the issue (personal stories)

Some other things to consider....

Will this:

1. Result in a real improvement in people's lives?
2. Help people to understand the power they have?
3. Give more power to the people?
4. Be worthwhile?
5. Be do-able and winnable?
6. Be widely felt?
7. Be deeply felt?
8. Be easy to understand?
9. Have a clear target?

10. Have a time frame that's workable for you?
11. Builds unity in your group?
12. Builds leadership?
13. Set you up for your next campaign?
14. Have a pocketbook angle?
15. Raise money?
16. Be consistent with your values and mission?

Do you all still agree that this is the issue most likely to succeed or do you want to switch to another issue? If you switch go back to the questions again.

PRESENT TO THE FULL GROUP

BACK TO SMALL GROUPS

Types of Goals

- Long-term (the biggest impact on the largest number of people)
- Intermediate (accomplishes a result that results in a desirable change)
- Short term (gets you the resources, support, and power you need to achieve intermediate goals)

Writing Goals: Setting Achievable Goals

Write at least one long-term goal for your issue that will have the biggest impact on the largest number of people. Write at least one intermediate goal for your issue that will result in a tangible, concrete result for a group of people.

Long Term Goal

Intermediate Goal

Short Term Goal

Who will be on your team, part of your campaign?

Recruiting Supporters: PEOPLE ARE POWER!

- 1) Identify who is already working on the issue, if anyone.
- 2) Decide whether to join their group or start your own campaign.
- 3) Identify your friends, allies, and supporters.

Constituents

1. Who owns the problem?
2. Who is most directly affected by the problem and will benefit most by the solution?
3. What do they gain by winning?
4. What do they risk by losing?
5. What other risks do they take by leading this campaign?
6. What power or authority do they have over the targets?
7. What groups do they belong to already?
8. Who can you among them could you identify as leaders and followers?
9. Who can you identify that may place their own personal agenda ahead of the needs of the group?
10. Who can you identify who may have competing interests or conflicts?
11. Who may not be able to withstand intense conflict, confrontation or scrutiny?
12. What are the collective strengths and weaknesses of the individuals as an organized community?

Allies

1. What other groups stand to benefit from your campaign?
2. What other groups have a similar constituency?
3. What other groups do your constituents belong to?
4. What groups are already engaged in campaign efforts that address your issue directly or indirectly?
5. What groups will support your issue?
6. What groups want something from you?
7. What groups have something you want?
8. What groups would you be comfortable working with?
9. What groups need you but don't know it?

Supporters (non-constituents)

1. Who cares about this issue enough to want to join or help the organization?
2. How wide is the appeal of your issue to the general public?

3. Who does your issue or story evoke an emotional response such as anger, outrage, and sympathy from?
4. What do they bring to the organization in the way people, resources, and support?
5. What can they take away, divert, or distract from the organization and the issue?
6. How can they be used or mobilized to support the issue?

Identifying Supporters:

Name 2 people to invite to work with you on your goal:

Why did you pick them?

Name 2 organizations to invite to work with you on your goal:

Why did you pick them?

Name 2 policymakers (if you don't know the name then list the position) to contact and ask to support your goals:

Why did you pick them?

EVALUATING YOUR OPPOSITION

1. Who are your opponents?
2. Who are those persons who will try to stop you from getting what you want?
3. Who are those persons who will stand to lose something?
4. What will your victory cost them?
5. What do you know about your opponents?
6. What are their strengths?
7. What are their weaknesses?
8. What kind of information can you gather about your opponents?
9. What kind of access do you have to your opponents?
10. What do they do that you can do better?
11. What do they do that you don't want to do?

Now, come up with a name for your campaign that will attract people to your cause and that will clearly identify your goals to the public, media and those who oppose you.

A good name must communicate what your campaign is about, why it is important and be memorable.

Now you are ready to get to work!