

Community Organizing Manual

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Introduction

Organizing is a tool that can be utilized for accomplishing desired goals. An individual or a group of people can organize to get something done that is of importance to them. When organizing is carried out to its full capacity, it can prove to be advantageous for achieving goals. Organizing should be structured and planned in order for tasks to get carried out in an effective manner. Organizing should be viewed as a responsibility to anyone who has decided it should be used to help them reach their goals.

People who choose to organize must have the sentiment that it is beneficial to their cause in order for it to be an effective tool. A common goal or interest must be identified, as organizing is centered around a self-interest of the people. Once that self-interest is identified, change can begin to take place. Those directly affected by an issue will more easily come together to plan what they will do to change it. Well structured and planned organizing will make people feel more comfortable about taking the necessary steps for fighting for their cause. This will also lead to more participation among group and a sense of belonging that will be contributive to their devotion to the cause that they are challenging.

The concepts presented here are adapted from *Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists* (2001) by Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max. All references here are to this book. Bobo, Kendall, and Max take a Direct Action approach to organizing. This approach differs from other approaches in that is organizing done by the people with the problem, instead of an outside organization fighting on their behalf. This type of organizing empowers people by allowing them to make real, tangible improvements in their lives. In fact the three principles of direct action organizing are as follows: 1. Win real, immediate, concrete improvements on people's lives, 2. Give people a sense of their own power, and 3. Alter the relations of Power (p.11-12). The use of

power is very important in Direct Action Organizing, as it is the basis for your goals. This manual will provide a starting point from which you can learn to identify an issue and begin to organize in order to shift the existing power relations and begin to effect real, tangible change in your community. Good luck.

Organizing Basics

- *Organizing around an Issue*

An organization consists of a group united by a common interest or goal. When the specific goal is decided upon, it is the group's responsibility to plan and coordinate in order to reach it. Any group, small or large, wealthy or poor, can unite for a similar interest and use their organization to accomplish their goal. In direct action organizing, there is a difference between an issue and a problem (p.22). According to Bobo, "A problem is a broad area of concern. For example, unaffordable healthcare, pollution, racism, and unemployment are all problems. An issue is a solution of partial solution to a problem. National healthcare, green energy, affirmative actions, and a federal jobs program are all issues." Once you have defined a solution to the problem, then you have begun to define your issue.

- *Power and Ownership*

People with power and wealth are examples of the best organized; their power is evidence of their organization, and they have the ability to act and perform effectively. Power is exercised through control of resources. Ownership of factories and businesses maintains power over people's jobs and job security. Ownership of natural resources gives power to control prices, to ensure higher profits, to regulate supply and demand, and to make the necessities of life scarce. Power of these investments is reinforced by control of the political process, which is largely influenced by money.

- *Benefits of Organizing*

Organizing is an effective tool for reaching goals. It is a useful and practical way to complete a task and to get people to come together. Through organizations, people find self-respect and self-confidence, they use their skills and abilities, and they discover dignity. In addition, they learn to exert influence, to speak up for what they want, and to fight back against oppression.

Leadership

A leader is an individual who guides, influences, and directs others towards a certain goal to result.

A person becomes a leader when he/she feels there is a cause that needs to be addressed and decides to resume the responsibility of taking a major, vocal role in taking action towards the desired cause.

Responsibilities of a Leader

A leader must be knowledgeable to the full capability of the goal at hand and must be able to articulate what action can be taken to accomplish the goal. A leader should also be accessible to the other people in the organization as well as to the general public.

Ensure that there are open lines of communication, and encourage the group to put their all into fighting for the cause without letting the main focus be personal gain or wealth.

A leader should be a person of good morals and values. Honesty and trustworthiness are significant and integral characteristics of a leader. A leader must have an open mind and listen to the ideas of others rather than always focusing on what he or she wants. A leader must be brave and unafraid of possible attacks by people who are against the cause.

Leadership Skills

Being a leader involves making commitments to work with people on the cause for as long as it takes.

Maintain the organization in an orderly and structured fashion. Create strategies and tactics that can be successfully implemented. A leader should also regulate finances and arrange budgets for the group. Have and run purposeful meetings that help plan for engagement in action towards the goal.

Keep Open communication with the members of the organization, and establish relations with media and incorporate their role into strategies. Plan an effective training program and ensure everyone is trained properly.

You must be knowledgeable of various instruments and how to form useful coalitions with them. Political proficiency (knowing how to create campaigns and run for office positions) is important in a leader. You should clearly communicate values, goals, strategies, and tactics to the group.

Have a well supervised staff.

Leadership Issues

A leader must be powerful; however, the power should be wielded throughout the organization. As the leader, one has to put in as much time as needed to fulfill the tasks of being the leader. Continue to create goals that are attainable and fathomable. Have a trusted support system so that all the work is not put into the hands of the leader.

Leadership strategies might have to change as the organization continues to develop and progress. Keep open communication with other leaders to discuss issues and brainstorm on various topics.

A leader should attempt to avoid doing all the work on his or her own and have a team that can be relied on for assistance. Train other people to be leaders once the former leaders decide it's their time to step down. Ensure that new leaders are keeping the interests of the people in mind and that they will work to help these people.

Members

Members are the basis of your organization. Recruitment is the first step in getting to your issue. There is power in numbers. In order to give people a sense of their power, you need to get them involved in the action. Without people, your organization efforts will surely not be successful.

Recruitment of Members

Decide who is to be contacted: this is a strategic decision that needs to be made by the organization. You may want to start with people you know well.

There are several basic recruitment principles: (Bobo, p.112-114)

- Appeal to people's self-interest
- Recruit to an activity, not a business meeting
- Have an ongoing entry-level program for new people
- Offer childcare
- Keep the public visibility of the organization high

In order to set people at ease, be at ease yourself. Practice what you will say to people, use your own experience as a reference, and plan ahead the questions you will ask. Be familiar with the issues and organization, as well as how organizing works. As a recruiter, you must be prepared to sell your organization to potential new members.

What do you actually say to people?

Example of contact:

- Introduce yourself
- Ask if you can come in
- Talk about something you know they are interested in or find something in the home to talk about
- Talk to parents and children together
- Meet them on their level
- Know the subject and your own views on the subject

- Pay attention so you know when to listen and when to talk
- Discuss one thing at a time
- Let them talk and actually hear what they have to say
- Learn their feelings on the issues
- Look at them as you talk
- Explain things clearly
- Try to get them involved
- Let them know they're important to you and the community
- Let them come up with ideas and methods
- Ask questions so you know you're on the same level
- Compliment them on their thoughts, interest, and communication skills.
- Do not argue, curse, gossip, or put other members of the community down.
- Do not try to force them into thinking your way.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Answer the questions they ask as you talk.
- Never cut them off.
- Do not insult them.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- If you do not know the answer, get back to them or have them call you.
- Follow up.
- Take your time, keep your cool, and know your limits.
- Stay assertive and concise.
- Be yourself.
- Delegate responsibility.

Collecting Information and Getting Commitments

You want to know how the members feel about the issues and get a sense of what other things make them angry or concerned. Determine what their skills and abilities are and ask them who else you should be talking to.

Even in the first contact, try to motivate people to make some sort of commitment. By involving people from the start, we are beginning the process of developing new leaders and strengthening the organization.

At the same time, do not over-commit yourself or the organization.

Ending The Recruiting Contact

You should probably spend ten to thirty minutes with each person, making sure you are not wearing out your welcome. Keep your visit short so as not to start a pattern that will elevate their expectations.

Follow up with people in a way that they choose (telephone, letter, email, etc.) Maintain regular communication. Encourage people to seek you out with questions and ideas.

Keep short records of your contacts, perhaps in a file. Do not write anything that you would not want the individual or family to see.

Possible Problems

The balance between pushing too hard and not hard enough is difficult to establish. If the person has no sense of why you are there, then the contact is a failure. Incorrect information can immediately turn a potential member off to the organization or to yourself.

It has been a good recruiting contact is both you and the person you talked to come away with a sense of accomplishment.

Issues

An issue is different from a problem. An issue is a carefully calculated potential solution to a problem. People usually feel very adamant about issues that have personal implications for their lives. People will come together to resolve issues that are of significance to them.

Discovering Issues

Conditions that affect people as a whole as well as individually should be considered when deciding what issues to choose. Sometimes issues choose us because people need to protect their basic rights and ways of living.

People want to support an issue that they believe in.

Communication can lead people to discuss issues that are important to them. Individual issues can sometimes be of concern to other people. You should attempt to specifically figure out that issues people are willing to fight for.

Participation is crucial for being able to pinpoint the issues that are of preference to people. Small group discussions can help in discovering what people care about.

Good Issues

Issues that pertain to the strategies of the organization are usually the ones to follow up on. The group should explore those issues that are of great concern and have a strong presence in the lives of many individuals and families.

Skills that people acquire while working on one issue can be used towards other issues. People must agree on what issues they want to confront and act as a united body when confronting those issues.

Guidelines for Choosing an Issue

The checklist provided below will help you choose an issue. Make sure your issue fulfills most of these criteria, and above all, make sure it is an attainable goal that will affect real, tangible change.

[add Checklist for Choosing an Issue here]

Dealing with Multiple Issues

You must keep in mind that an organization does have limits and should not overburden itself with too many issues. Narrowing your focus will allow you to make more tangible changes in one are, instead of stretching yourself too thin.

However, people should be willing to work towards more than one issue to ensure that each problem will be addressed. Only facing one issue can prove to be ineffective for an organization.

One advantage to taking on multiple issues is that you can attract the interest of a range of members. Members should understand that fighting for certain issues will lead to fighting for others as well.

Issues should always coincide with the main principles and strategies of the organization.

Influence of Opposition

At certain times the opposition gives you what you want before you have to take action on an issue. If goals are laid out in advance, then whatever the opposition gives to you can be fully evaluated.

MEETINGS

Meetings are a basic organizing tool. They share several purposes: to develop a sense of participation and solidarity, to make decisions, and to formulate strategies and tactics.

Meeting Planning

You should meet as early as possible. Make it clear from the beginning that people will have to work together as a group to get things done

There is no perfect formula to get people to the meeting. Have the meeting in a convenient place where people feel comfortable. The room should be about the same size as the group. The location should be seen as neutral or mutual. Alternate meeting places may be effective as well.

The group that is meeting should make the decision about when the meeting is held. Keep people's schedules in mind when planning a meeting. Don't have a meeting too late in the evening.

Most meetings will be scheduled for regular time and place with clear rules for calling special meetings; however, when there is no meeting scheduled, you can call one.

What Happens at a Meeting?

Information should be passed on to the members during the meeting. There should be some agreement on division of labor and acceptance of

responsibility. You should also try to build a sense of spirit while you build the organization.

Careful planning is key. You should think through what needs to happen at the meeting and then discuss these ideas with other members before the meeting.

An agenda is recommended because it will give the chairperson a tool for keeping the meeting moving smoothly.

The Chair of the Meeting

Different people can act as chair each meeting. The rotation of authority may make the members more comfortable rather than dictated to. Perhaps the group can hold small training sessions for members who are going to chair.

To help members feel comfortable, give people a clear sense of why they are there and what they are expected to do before the meeting. Greet people as they come in the door.

Keep the opening remarks short to get people to participate. It may be better to structure group discussions rather than just letting the discussion happen. In turn, calling on raised hands can encourage participation and everyone will get a chance to speak.

Plan in advance how you might handle side conversations and disruptions. Remember, if people are getting restless, they may be bored. You may need to take a break or change the subject at hand.

Logistics

A regular meeting time helps people both remember the meeting and plan for it. Do not be afraid to cancel a meeting if there is no need to hold one. Having a social event in place of a cancelled meeting can help build the group's spirits. Each meeting should last about an hour or two. Setting a definite length in advance sets the expectations of the members and can be productive. It allows the group to work through the agenda without putting too much pressure on one person.

Refreshments are an inviting and appealing to get people to come to a meeting. They also serve as a good way to get people to begin conversing. Arrange the room in a way that puts everyone on the same level. You may arrange the chairs in a circle or semicircle for smaller meetings. Make sure there will be adequate seating for everyone.

The Meeting Itself

Start the meeting on time. Set the tone: efficient but not too serious. You want people to feel like they are a part of the group and that they are there for a reason. State the purpose, length, and expectations of the meeting. Use the agenda as a guide.

It is usually not necessary to keep minutes. They may be intimidating and you shouldn't write anything down that you wouldn't want your opponent to see. However, keep some kind of written record of the decisions made so people are

clear of what happened and who was involved. A good idea is to delegate a note taker who can record decisions and who agreed to do what during the meeting.

Use democratic decision making method. This means the opinion of the majority rules, but the opinion of the minority is respected. Consensus method can make people uncomfortable and put them on the spot if they disagree with the entire group. If people just talk, but will not come to a decision, break the group in to smaller sections and give each sections a specific assignment.

Limit the meetings to people who have a direct interest in what is happening there. Having orientations for newer members may help them catch up quickly and add their ideas and support sooner.

Meeting Evaluation

During the meeting, the leader should evaluate what is happening and move to change things that aren't working. For example, make sure everyone is included and that not one person or small group of people is making all the decisions. Additionally, make sure everyone understands what is going on.

Take a few minutes at the end to talk about the meeting itself. Follow up on the meeting with people individually after it breaks up. Explore what new ideas members had afterward and how the plan agreed on at the meeting is proceeding.

Summary

- Plan the meeting in advance.
- Talk with people before the meeting – what they'd like the

meeting to accomplish, what some of the issues are.

- Prepare an agenda and keep the agenda short.
- Keep the meeting short – 1 or 2 hrs at most.
- Start and end on time.
- Have a good chair.
- Let everyone talk.
- Keep meetings small.
- Provide child care.
- Use a convenient place that is comfortable and easy to get to.
- Keep it loose and friendly.
- Have refreshments.
- Ask questions.
- Divide responsibility and reach a decision.
- Write everything that happens down – the discussion will be easier to follow and the group will have a record.
- Follow up.
- Celebrate.

Strategy

Strategy is like a road map. It begins with the knowledge of where we are and where we want to go. Our starting point is our membership strengths, skills, abilities, financial position, and allies.

What's the difference between strategy and tactics? Strategy is the overall plan for how we are going to get where we are going. Tactics are the specific things we do to help get there.

Strategy Formulation

What makes a good strategy?

Good strategies:

- are best formed through open-minded thinking.
- are thought out well in advance.
- are built on the experience of people.
- involve people
- flexible and in-depth while staying rooted in reality
- based in people's culture to give people a sense of togetherness.

Member Involvement

Members and leaders should make the strategy in an organization. Being involved in the planning process helps

members learn to think about the long term. Membership involvement helps ensure that the strategy stays within the experience of members and will not violate their limits and values. It will also build a sense of ownership and motivate participation. Working together will foster community building within the group and will build group work skills among members. The division of labor ensures that both dreamers and managers are important, and delegations should be given with people's specific skills in mind. Remember, everyone has something valuable to bring to the table.

Strategy Evaluation

The group should have an ongoing process of strategy evaluation. If a strategy is reviewed regularly, the chances are better that you will see changes that need to be made before the group becomes dangerously close to a problem. Make a checklist of things that need to happen for the strategy to be successful. This way, you can gauge whether or not the strategy is working. Good strategies take into account the possibility of defeat as well as victory. If a strategy fails, a full evaluation is very important. Learning from mistakes saves valuable time and resources in the future.

Time Line

A time line is a plan of action that ties the specific steps to when they need to happen. This can help compare the steps of the strategy to other

organizational needs. If the time line shows long gaps, these are the times that members are most likely to get tired and drop out of the effort. You should create other activities as a part of the overall strategy to fill these gaps.

Strategy and Issues

It makes sense to start with a number of issues, develop a strategy for each one and by comparing those strategies, decide on which issues to focus on. Strategy should take into account both the long- and short-range goals of an organization. Developing strategies around a number of issues allows you to evaluate not only whether those issues are winnable but also how they relate into some other organizational questions.

Strategy of the Opposition

You should try to determine the counter strategy of the opposition before you develop your own. Reverse roles and try to anticipate what the other side will be thinking. Once the opposition's strategy is constructed, compare it with the strategy you were making. Adjust yours accordingly. Do not depend on secrecy for the success of your strategies. Allowing your strategy to be out in the open will ensure that it is strong and secure.

Strategy Chart

The Midwest Academy has developed many tools useful for successful organizing. One of their most widely used tools in the field is the Strategy Chart. The strategy chart should be filled out at the beginning of each new endeavor. It is very useful for organizing your ideas. Try filling it out on

your own, and then bring it before the group and allow your membership to brainstorm to fill in the chart. Either way, this chart will be invaluable in the formation of your successful strategies. It offers an organized way to think about the strategy, and also allows you to see where your strategy needs strengthening.

[insert Strategy Chart here]

Tactics

Tactics are the specific activities carried out by the organization as part of its strategy. Tactics should have a real effect on the opposition, involve members, and build the organization. One tactic must lead naturally to the next. Ordinarily, a group would start small and leave room to grow. In other words, after beginning with those tactics that require fewer resources and apply less pressure to the opposition, they would escalate both the pressure and the resources. Tactics can build a sense of solidarity. It is absolutely necessary they are decided on by members of the organization and remain within people's experience.

Use of Tactics

Use democratic method to decide on which tactics to use so that each member can exercise his or her right to vote. It is important to keep money in mind—boycotts and rent strikes can be enormously effective because they cut away economic underpinnings. You should use tactics that cloud the opposition's image and disrupt the orderly functioning of society. The group should use its own labor.

Decision on Tactics

About every tactic, you should ask, "How does this exercise real power?" You need to know where the tactic is aimed and what is likely to

influence the opposition. Keep the target of the tactic clearly in mind. Sometimes it's more effective to aim the tactic at an ally of the individual or institution from whom you are demanding the change. You need to define what decision you want, who is in a position to make that decision, and who is in a position to influence the decision maker.

Qualities of a Good Tactic

- Winnable.
- Affects a lot of people: the decision makers, the members.
- The members need to feel good about the tactic.
- Unites people. You need to look at how the tactic is going to affect you and your allies.
- Involves and includes people.
- Strongly supported.
- Simple and easily carried out.
- Builds the organization.
- Enjoyable and uplifting.

How can an organization tell if a tactic is successful? Choosing tactics also involves setting the specific goals by which we evaluate them. The group should get together after carrying out a tactic to evaluate it. The process of evaluating a tactic that has just been carried out should lead naturally into the next tactic. After assessing your current situation, and any

leeway gained by the last tactic, the next step should be logical.

Examples

- (1) Petitions – large numbers of people can circulate clearly worded proposals that people sign. Signatures will be collected person to person. Keep the originals and present copies. Save them for future contacts.
- (2) Writing Letters – Also a group activity that will get people involved.
- (3) Public Hearings – These are most effective when the organization sets timing and puts together agenda.
- (4) Exposés – Make an event of presenting the information.
- (5) Confrontations (also called Actions) – Make demands so that "yes" or "no" responses can be made. This can also act as a chance to vent anger.
- (6) Boycotts – These take an enormous amount of energy, yet occasionally, an informational picket line is enough.
- (7) Strikes – Sit-ins, lie-ins, and mass demonstrations are similar. They involve the risk of a violent counter-attack, arrest, or other retaliation.

Negotiations

Negotiations involve conferring, discussing, or bargaining with the opposition to reach an agreement. In order to do this, the group needs a clearly defined position in which they know exactly what they are willing to accept. This can be an effective but very difficult process.

Negotiations often mean that the opposition is feeling the pressure and wants to settle. Therefore, you may hint at the tactics you are using to

accelerate the negotiation process. You must understand that some things cannot be compromised. It may help to "think like the opposition" as preparation for a negotiation.

Limits

A tactic should never be unacceptable to the members. Tactics should fit in line with the values and wishes of the group. In order to assure these things are taken into consideration, *you* must be sure to involve the members in all decision making.

Communication

Communication is essential to a cohesive, well-run organization. Communication builds knowledge, action, spirit, solidarity, and a sense of belonging to the organization.

Communication Strategy

A communication strategy enables an organization to get the right information to the right people at the right time. A *communication committee* can be responsible for a communication strategy that will attempt to cultivate the best form of communication: person-to-person contact.

Person-to-Person Contact

Person-to-Person contact is self-explanatory. Talking to people directly allows the communication to cover four basic important points:

- I am
- We are
- We do
- We want

Maintaining Communication

After establishing face-to-face contact, the challenge is maintaining and reinforcing initial communication. Effective methods for maintaining communication are:

- Telephone calls
- Staff meetings
- Small group meetings
- Letters/Memos
- Newsletters

Evaluating level of communication

Surveys are useful means of evaluation. A survey of the organization (all or select group of members) can unveil kinds of communication that work best. Also, an evaluation of organizational problems can determine if bad communication is the cause.

Training and Member Development

Organizations should view training as an integral and regular aspect of their work. Efficient organizations do not use training as responses to a crisis, but as preventive measures to ensure productivity. First, identifying the skills and knowledge that each leader, member, and staff person should have is helpful in setting up a training program. In addition to addressing specific needs, an organization should cover these areas: organizing skills, leadership roles, political education, and personal development.

Who needs training?

In general, staff members and organization leaders are the individuals that need the most training. The responsibilities associated with the positions of leader and staff member creates a delicate balance of power between staff and leaders. Therefore, acquiring the skills to maintain a healthy balance of power is a priority. Even though leaders and staff are the primary focus of a training program, an organization should have something for everyone.

Components of effective training

Training should address the goals and mission of the organization. Leaders, members, and staff of the organization should be the first options for individuals providing the training. The training coordinator should employ different strategies to

diversify the approach while maintaining consistent themes and priorities. These are a few options: formal sessions, lectures with question and answer sessions afterward, group work, and role-playing. Good training not only teaches skills, but also teaches and communicates an attitude by making people feel good about themselves as they are synthesizing their work. In addition, effective training communicates the values of the organization.

An effective training program does not suggest one way of doing things, avoids training that goes against principles of the organization, and avoids becoming stale. Training programs should be scheduled to improve and increase efficiency. Too-frequent trainings can prevent the completion of work and reduce productivity.

Role of leaders in a training program

The leaders of an organization have most of the skills. Therefore, an effective training program can best facilitate the communication of these skills to other members of the group. Training is a process of self-education and experience, in which leaders learn as much from each other as from trainers.

External training resources

An external training director can be a source of various diverse

training methods. An outside trainer can be used on a one-time or ongoing basis. For instance, a helpful training institute can offer a variety of training sessions and consulting by trainers with different skills and backgrounds. Keep in mind that a training director outside of the organization should not conduct the entire training program.

Training program structure

A training program can take various approaches, but this is an example of one structure:

- Welcome everyone and have them introduce themselves.
- Ask people for ideas on why grassroots fundraising is important.
- Ask everyone to brainstorm as many ideas for fundraising as they can.
- Break up into teams to discuss strategies and tactics.
- After a break, reconvene as an entire group.
- Present and discuss various ideas.

Training program evaluation

One measure of success is participation. Low attendance implies ineffective training sessions. An organization can also measure the training program against the goals it originally intended to fulfill. Training is meant

to make your organization stronger and your tactics and strategies easier to fulfill. If this is not the case, you should reevaluate your training methods.

Money and Budget

During the initial stages, organizers are sometimes willing to assume direct costs. However, as the organization grows and costs increase, individuals cannot assume all costs. Therefore, the organization must create a financial plan to identify its financial needs and how it is going to fundraise.

Process of financial planning

Financial planning is one of the most important elements in organizing. It is essential to plan financially for the short and long run. It is also imperative to control the finances of your organization and not to allow money to control the organization and its members. A financial committee is responsible for developing and managing the budget, and deciding how to approach fundraising. The financial committee is also responsible for involving the other members of the organization in the planning process and helping these members understand the decisions being made.

Budget Preparation

A good starting point is to look at what the organization is already doing and spending. Make up a list of all the things the organization has already spent money on, such as the following:

- Staff
- Offices

- Travel
- Telephone
- Postage
- Printing
- Copying
- Fees
- Debt retirement

Financial records

An organization should keep records of all local, state, and federal laws regarding payroll taxes, social security, worker's compensation, unemployment insurance, and payroll deductions. Tedious records should also be kept of all receipts, monies spent, monies earned, taxes paid, and contributions received. An organization can get itself into a lot of financial trouble by not keeping adequate records and updated budgets.

Sources of Money

Inside sources – Funds can come from inside the organization: the contributions of members, and the dues they pay.

Outside sources – These monies come from outside the organization as grants from individuals and private foundations, from fundraising efforts, from religious organizations, and from the federal government.

The following is an incomplete list of how community organizations

can raise their own funds:

- Benefits
- Canvasses
- Movies
- Potlucks
- Raffles
- Auctions
- Lectures
- Cookbooks
- Dances
- Bus tours
- Luncheons
- Carnivals
- Concerts
- Dinner
- Marathons
- Telethons
- Businesses
- Festivals
- Calendars

Realize that money and people and organizations are inseparable. It is not simply how much money an organization has and what they do with it, but a question of how the organization sets its financial priorities. Finally, an organization should be aware of all available resources prior to spending money. A sufficient evaluation of the organization's resources can save money in the long run.

Coalitions

A coalition is a group of organizations uniting to work on a common issue. When one organization cannot accomplish its goals, it can join a coalition to consolidate power, influence, and resources. Grassroots organizations often benefit from joining with other organizations to achieve greater power at the city, state, and national levels.

Advantages and Disadvantages

A coalition has a greater likelihood of winning larger issues, and of helping an organization to develop alliances that can be useful later.

However, complicated negotiations and compromises can undermine the solidarity within an organization. Additionally, the largest organization within the coalition might get all of the credit for the entire group's efforts.

At the same time, one organization can get singled out for blame if the issue is not won.

Long Range Strategy

A coalition has a better chance of changing society on a wider scale. While small grassroots organizations can only handle simpler, localized goals, a coalition can help bring together all the organizations (neighborhood, statewide, unions, religious, minority) that can support a majority position.

Making Political Gains

Tactics

Change can come as a result of pressuring government and fighting for what you need. The first step is to decide who among elected and appointed officials and staff might support your position.

Examples

- Meeting with individuals
- Direct personal pressure
- Petitioning
- Packing a meeting
- Alliances
- Federal agencies
- Publicity campaigns
- Exposing

Negotiating

Negotiating with government officials requires a clear sense of what you want or need and public statements of support. If an official is not willing to make a commitment to you after a negotiating session, employ the same tactics used to pressure any individual or institution. Once they make a commitment, it is your responsibility to see that the commitment is kept.

Because many goals of politics do not coincide with the goals of people's organizations, because campaigns are either won or lost, and because corruption is not uncommon, community and neighborhood organizations tend not to play a major role in electoral politics. When they do, an organization decides to support a candidate through negotiation and an analysis of key issues in the campaign.

Electoral Campaigns

An electoral strategy that focuses on issues and is centered around a continuing strategy to influence government is the most effective and beneficial. People's organizations can contribute to electoral campaigns through grassroots fundraising, volunteering, and grassroots door to door campaigning. In choosing local, state, or national elections, it must be taken into account the size and power of the people's organization.

Possible Difficulties

In electoral politics there is a tendency to put too much of the organization's resources into winning elections, and not enough into building and maintaining the organization itself. Other problems can arise because politics creates strange groupings of issues, and because an electoral coalition combines many groups, some of which might be difficult to deal with. At the same time, one of the few possible counter forces to corporate power is government. If a people's organization decides to run their own candidates, they also need to develop strategies to ensure that the candidates will continue to be accountable to the organization

Using and Dealing with the Media

Media is public forms of communication (newspapers, radio, and television). Using the media for external communication is a basic organizing skill. Media must be part of a well planned, prepared strategy.

Advantages of media use

Media coverage can help deliver information about an organization to individuals who are not yet members, and spark recruitment and involvement. For the members in the organization, good media coverage can build spirit, unity, and self-confidence. Seeing the faces and hearing the voices of members in the organization allows for good publicity and a positive reflection of the organization.

Media Strategy

The first step is to establish a media committee. The media committee is responsible for creating a strategy that will address:

- Building and maintaining media contacts
- Preparing news releases
- Deciding when to use and not use the media
- Addressing media problems
- Preparing for media engagements

- Assigning the organization's contact people

Building Media contacts

Get to know the reporters – read, watch, or listen to the news for several weeks. Also, contact people in other organizations to find out whom they deal with. Next, research and gather as much information about the people and individuals you wish to meet. Afterwards, make appointments and visit these people. Tell these individuals who you are with, and explain the basics about your organization, its goals and mission.

Formulating a news release

News releases are the basic tool used to get media coverage for an organization.

News releases must contain details about when the event will or has occurred, comprehensive background information, and enough information to create a descriptive, educating news story. The media are the people who can inform you on the most optimal timing for a news release. The media will tell you how much advance notice they prefer to have on events they decide to cover. For the most part, 48 hours is enough time for a television station to schedule their crews for coverage.

Other types of media coverage besides the news

- Human interest stories – 5 or 10 minute spots about events, people or organizations
- Talk shows
- Public appearance
- Public service announcements
- Documentaries

Media Problems

The two main problems with dealing with the media are *bad coverage* and *no coverage*. Examples of bad media coverage are a misquote in an article or a misrepresentation of your organization on television or radio. In the case of a misquote, the organization might want to consider a correction notice. However, correction notices are usually only an inch long and buried in the newspaper. It is important that whoever is dealing with the media and giving interviews is clear, concise, and consistent with facts. To prevent other problems, an organization and its media committee should go through a strategy planning process where it treats the media like any other target. During the strategy planning process, analyze structure, strengths, and weaknesses of media organizations. Remember, television stations, radio stations, and newspapers are managed and directed like any other organization.

Always be careful when dealing with the media. The media is a very powerful thing.

Exclusion of the media

In some instances it is necessary to exclude the media. Never tell anything to a member of the media that you would not want to see made public in print. It is often not a good idea to have someone from the media sit in on a membership meeting, a planning meeting, a committee meeting, or a strategy meeting.

Individuals who communicate with the media

Who is going to speak to the media must be carefully decided in advance. Prior to speaking with the media, individual leaders should not represent their organizations, unless they have been asked to do so. Also, individual leaders should not make statements reflecting on the organization's policy, unless the policy has been officially decided on.

Most importantly, leaders must be trained on how to talk to the media, as well as how not to talk to the media. Face-to-face contact, small groups, and committee meetings can provide practice and preparation for media contact.