



Empowering the Leaders of Tomorrow

ORGANIZING FOR YOUR CAUSE

Bringing about change in your community does not have to be a one-person job. It is beneficial to engage others who believe in your cause and want to participate in driving efforts forward. This simple guide lays out the basics of organizing for your cause.

Assemble a Team and Common Vision

Would a group or team help you better achieve change on your focal issue? Finding allies to join the work can be challenging at first, but great places to start include your classes at school, school clubs/groups, local library, and your local community center.

1. Assemble your team
2. Clarify your common vision, goals, and desired outcomes.
3. Create three (3) clear, catchy, and consistent key messages that you aim to spread at the start of the campaign.
4. Try to be as SMART (*specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and timely*) about creating your goals but stay hopeful. The better you start out, the better you will finish.

Assign Roles and Expectations

Set up organized roles for each member of your team and establish reliable practices for working together and completing tasks. Also, incorporate realistic timelines and expectations that everyone understands and agrees to. Ensure that every person understands their responsibilities and check in on them routinely to make sure they are moving along with their work—and, if they're facing obstacles, try to clear those obstacles as best as you can.

Strategy

All community change first requires building awareness and support. Efforts to drive community change are most effective when they capture the attention of (1) the public and (2) regional leadership. The key is to build partnerships that show widespread support for your proposed community change.

Below are approaches you can take to make sure your voice is heard in your community. Some approaches targeting the public and leadership can overlap, so be sure to factor that into your strategy.



Approaches Targeting the Public

- Social Media– connect with friends, family, community members, and the general public to promote to your cause/campaign
- Teach Ins – educational discussions with community members on specific issues and solutions to those issues.
- Marches and Rallies – large gatherings of people to show others how much support there is for certain causes.
- Community Meetings – get-togethers bringing stakeholders in a room for specific purposes.
- Public Voter Education – educate voters on specific issues ahead of elections so they are prepared to vote in favor of certain changes.

Approaches Targeting Regional Leadership

- Meetings with Elected Officials and Local Leaders – make an appointment with your allies to speak with your elected officials and local leaders.
- Budget Hearings – attend County-wide or local budget hearings to speak up about funding for your causes.
- Sign-On Letters and Petitions – express your issues and what you would like to change in a letter and get others to sign on to it to show support.
- Lobby Days – go to the NYS and/or U.S. Capitol to showcase your support to many elected officials and leaders at one time.
- Marches and Rallies – large gatherings of people to show elected officials and leaders how much support you have for your causes.
- Discussions with Leadership – invite elected officials and leaders to discussions focused on your causes.
- Public Events – go to places elected officials and leaders already are to speak with them about your causes.
- Electoral Advocacy – engage with candidates before elections to learn about what’s important to them and share what you learn with others, to shape elections in favor of your change.

Keys to Success

- 1) Be organized and proactive
- 2) Be as collaborative as possible
- 3) Be flexible and open to constructive criticism
- 4) Be practical and goal-oriented
- 5) Communicate a consistent, catchy, and simple message
- 6) Be specific and keep your efforts and meetings focused
- 7) Stay positive, accessible, and accountable
- 8) Don't give up if it gets difficult, especially if you believe in your cause
- 9) Don't be afraid to take chances
- 10) Be yourself – sincerity is one of the most powerful tools you have