



The Leadership  
Conference

The Leadership  
Conference  
Education Fund



**CIVIL RIGHTS  
CORPS**

# Vision for Justice

**A New Paradigm for Public Safety**

**Companion Guide**

**2024**



# Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction and Acknowledgments</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Tool #1: SMARTIE Goals</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tool #2: Tully Message Box</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Tool #3: Power Mapping</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Tool #4: Checklist for 1:1s with Decision-makers</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Tool #5: Common Grassroots Organizing Tactics</b>	
<b>Canvassing</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Phone Banking</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Telephone Town Halls</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Tool #6: Digital Outreach</b>	
<b>Texting/SMS</b>	<b>19</b>

**Disclaimer:** Please note that the following tools are somewhat universal and can be used in a number of contexts and settings. However, the specific tools outlined in this companion guide are meant to accompany those referenced in the Vision for Justice toolkit. This is not an exhaustive list, and we encourage you to use all available tools and resources to advance the goals of your campaign.



# Introduction and Acknowledgments

---

This companion guide accompanies “Vision for Justice: A New Paradigm for Public Safety” — a comprehensive platform that provides actionable policies aimed at transforming our criminal-legal system and changing the way we approach public safety in this country.

Vision for Justice has been endorsed by more than 40 civil and human rights and social justice organizations — a number worth noting because of the breadth of reach it represents. The platform, initially released by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and Civil Rights Corps in September 2019 ahead of the 2020 election, has now been updated and re-released and presents 18 important planks addressing reforms like amending the pretrial process, public defense, prosecution, policing, and the criminalization of poverty.

Staff assistance on this companion guide was provided by Bree Spencer, who oversaw its development, and Cedric Lawson, who reviewed and edited. Additional staff assistance was provided by Reginald Belle, Sabina Dorville, Rachel Hooper, Shalonda Hunter, Patrick McNeil, and Chloé White. Dave Clarke oversaw the design.

Special thanks as well to former Leadership Conference staff — including Brandon Chapman, Sakira Cook, and Vanessa Gonzalez — for their wisdom and expertise.

We would like to thank The Campaign Workshop for their tremendous work in the conceptualization and drafting of this guide.

We also want to acknowledge the impact of volunteers on these and so many other projects. Volunteers connect the community directly with your campaign and deserve sincere gratitude for their time and efforts. We advise that any campaign make constant efforts to show appreciation for their volunteers. Budget should always be set aside for meals, family days, outings, etc. Ensure the space people come into is a space filled with joy — it must inspire people and remind them why they are there while also striving to accomplish the campaign’s goals. Lastly, we advise that volunteers be consistently recognized for their hard work and achievements. This is often easy to overlook, but it’s a well-needed breath of fresh air when working on these difficult issues.

Finally, always remember that the work that has brought you to this toolkit is likely difficult and slow. It’s also incredibly important and impactful for your community. Never forget that the change you are seeking is worth fighting for — not just for your current campaign or organization and for those you are working on behalf of, but for the community as a collective. We thank you for your efforts in the ongoing struggle for justice and progress in our nation. It matters.



# Tool #1

## Smartie Goals

### Setting Your Goals

---

Before embarking on any organizing campaign, it's important to have a clear understanding of what your concrete campaign goals are. This will go a long way to help generate an impactful message, build an effective strategy, and use your coalition's resources efficiently. The more specific your goals are, the better. Your message and strategy will only be as precise and concise as both your primary and secondary goals. This is more than just a brainstorming exercise, but a convenient list you'll create and have available any time someone asks: "How can I help?" Being able to point to specific action items is the best way to set your campaign up for success.

#### *Setting Primary Goals:*

Be sure that your primary goal is a SMARTIE goal:

1. **Strategic:** Reflects an important dimension of what your organization or coalition seeks to accomplish (i.e., programmatic or capacity-building priorities).
2. **Measurable:** Includes precise metrics to determine whether or not the goal has been met (i.e., by specific numbers or other clearly defined qualities).
3. **Ambitious:** Challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress (i.e., a "stretch" for the coalition).
4. **Realistic:** Not so challenging that your efforts could indicate a lack of forethought about resources, capacity, or execution. It also should be trackable and worth the time and energy to do so.
5. **Time-Bound:** Includes clear deadlines within a specific time frame (i.e., the next election).
6. **Inclusive:** Brings traditionally marginalized people — particularly those most impacted by your issue — into processes, activities, and decision- and policy-making procedures (i.e., sharing power).
7. **Equitable:** Seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, and/or oppression.

Check out this helpful [worksheet](#) from The Management Center to plan your SMARTIE goal.

When choosing your primary goal, it can be helpful to write out a short problem statement. This should be clear, simple, and no more than a couple sentences that outline precisely what the problem you want to address is and why it needs to be solved. Collectively creating a problem statement will ensure your team and your coalition are all in agreement about which specific problem will be solved by your organizing campaign.

Once you have your problem statement, it's a good idea to determine what exactly you need your proposed solution to do. For example, does your solution need to improve the lives of the impacted community? Does it need to shift power and influence from the oppressors to the oppressed? Does your team/coalition need to be excited to engage in this solution? These are just some of the solution selection criteria that will help you determine which path is the best one to take.

Then you'll need to brainstorm all possible solutions that could solve the stated problem — and don't be afraid to get creative and think outside the box. List all possible solutions and relevant selection criteria in a chart like the one below so you can easily evaluate them as a team or coalition:

	<i>Improves Lives</i>	<i>Specific &amp; Measurable</i>	<i>Winnable</i>	<i>Shifts Power</i>	<i>Builds Our Coalition</i>	<i>Excites Us</i>
<b>Possible Solution A</b>						
<b>Possible Solution B</b>						

Place an "X" in each criteria column that the corresponding solution achieves.

Other solution criteria could include:

- Consistent with Values & Mission
- Combats Racial & Gender Inequity
- Unifies vs. Divides Coalition/Allies

Engaging in this exercise will ensure everyone is on the same page and will help to give you a clear and specific primary goal that your organizing efforts can aim to achieve.

Vague or broad goals like increasing an issue's visibility isn't enough. You must identify a concrete and actionable primary goal that moves us one step closer to a transformed criminal-legal system. Ultimately, this should be your loftiest big picture goal, one that is both specific and measurable. After all, it's important to know exactly what success looks like in order to help hold yourself, your team, and your coalition accountable throughout the campaign.



### *Setting Primary Goals:*

Achieving your primary goal may take a long time. And even if you don't win your organizing campaign, you don't want to walk away without any success. That's why it's critical you determine the secondary goals that will help ensure you're getting the most out of the resources you're investing in the campaign. Think of these as bonus points along the road to victory. The most effective secondary goals are specific outcomes you can use to motivate your team and supporters, as well as build momentum for the broader movement. Some examples of secondary goals include membership growth, email list growth, expanding your volunteer base, increased fundraising capacity, increased issue awareness, and improved relationships with decision-makers. All of these will not only help your current campaign, but they will help build power for subsequent efforts as well.

Because primary goals can often be difficult to achieve and the outcome won't always be in our favor, these secondary goals can be especially meaningful. Think about what you want to walk away with when the battle is over to ensure you're better prepared to win the next one. These can even be more tangible assets that will serve as an investment in your future campaigns. Reflective evaluation of your past efforts can also be a great way to help identify secondary goals for future efforts.

Determining your secondary goals will require clarity around your primary goal, strategy, and target audience: Who do you need to persuade or influence? Crafting your campaign message will be much easier once you know exactly what you're trying to accomplish, how you plan to do it, who you need to talk to, and what you need to talk to them about.





## Tool #2

# Tully Message Box

## The Message Box Exercise

---

The Tully message box is a simple tool that organizers have been using for years. It's an exercise that will give your team an idea of what would happen if you took control of the conversation around your issue, as well as what would happen if your opposition took control. There will be plenty of back-and-forth throughout your campaign, so this will help prepare you for that. This kind of ongoing dialogue of competing campaigns is built directly into the Tully message box exercise. After all, you don't have to be a highly experienced strategist to game out the message of your campaign.

- *Why use the Tully message box?* Simply put: It will save you time and money. The message box allows your campaign to put all likely messages in one place before spending any money on polling or research. This gives you the chance to see if you have enough information to craft an effective message or if you're missing components that need to be supplemented with paid messaging strategies.
- *Does it replace polling or opposition research?* The message box isn't necessarily a replacement for polls or opposition research, but it will help make your polling and research better by informing which questions you should focus on. Think of it as the homework you need to do before starting any polling or research.
- *What questions do we need to ask ourselves?* Use the template below to fill out every quadrant and craft your messaging.

**The Tully message box is a simple tool that organizers have been using for years.**

## Tully Message Box Template:

<p><b><i>What we say about us:</i></b></p> <p>All of your goals fall into this box. Think of this as the conversation you'd have if your opposition were silent. It's the message your campaign ultimately wants to get out.</p>	<p><b><i>What they say about us:</i></b></p> <p>Here is where you'll list all of your opponent's negative comments about your organization/group, which you are likely very familiar with.</p>
<p><b><i>What we say about them:</i></b></p> <p>It's most effective to complete this box with an eye toward what you would say publicly. While spirit and passion can certainly come in handy, it's not the most effective use of this box. And what comes out of it can be the start of a rapid response press release or tweet.</p>	<p><b><i>What they say about themselves:</i></b></p> <p>Finally, this is the box you can use to list your opponent's talking points and begin predicting their response(s) to your campaign. Putting yourself in the opposition's shoes will help you better understand the landscape.</p>

- ***Who should be in the room?*** The Tully message box is not a one-person job. The more people helping you work through this exercise, the more voices you'll have to create and define a robust message. Any time you're working on messaging, it's best to have a variety of perspectives.
- ***How long does it take?*** Don't rush it. An effective message can't be crafted in 20 minutes. Building a solid message box that will actually be helpful to your campaign can take several hours — but it's a worthwhile investment.
- ***Where do I start?*** Gather the people you trust and start with the first question. Make sure you're always being honest and maybe even a little harsh. This will help ensure you build the strongest message possible. This box can be tricky, so remember to be constructive and critical — factual, not snide.



## Tool #3

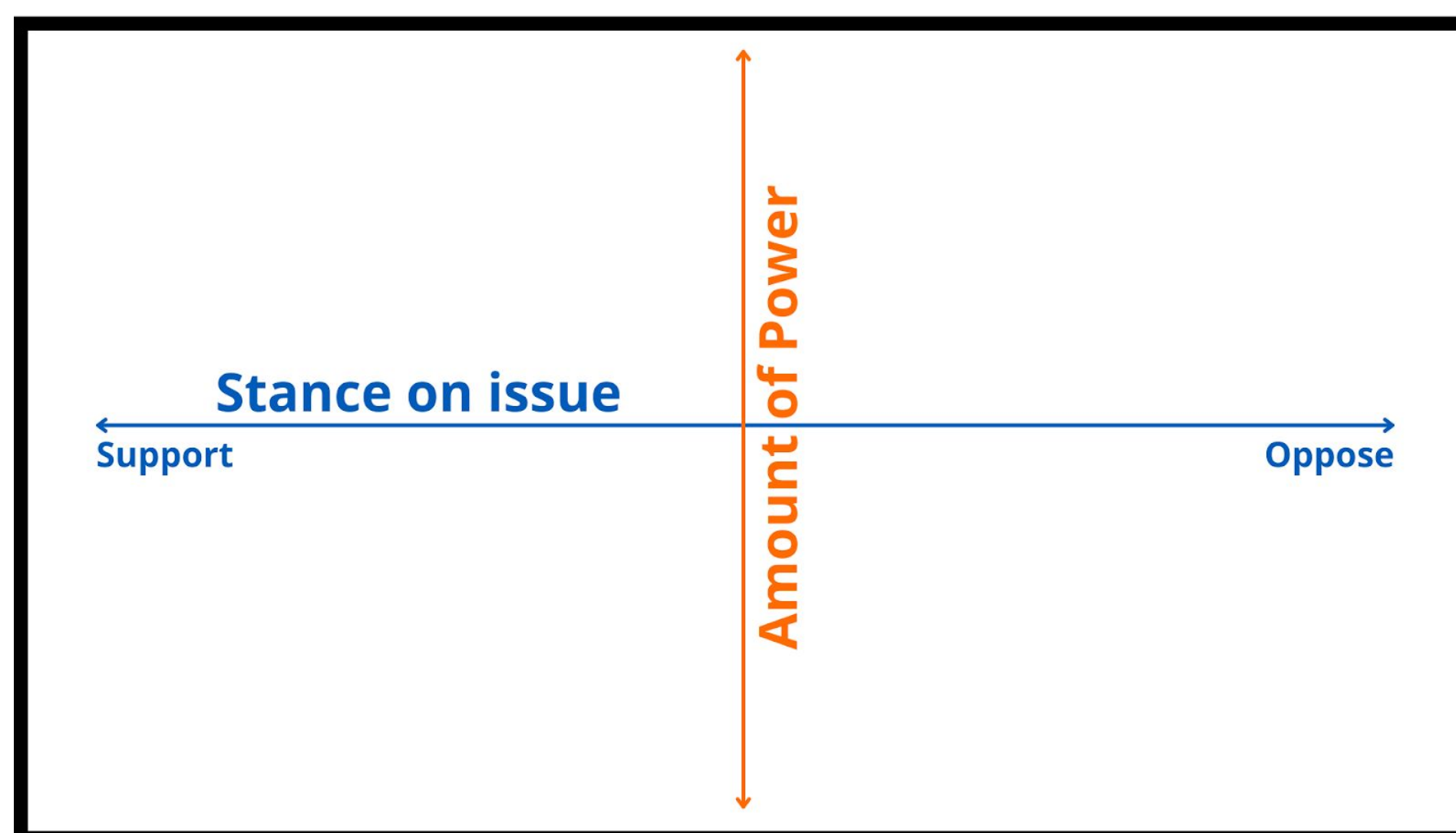
# Power Mapping

Power mapping is a great way to determine which decision-makers or influencers will be key to achieving your campaign goals. It's always helpful to map out exactly who has voting or decision-making power over the issue you're trying to address — *these campaign targets will be where you focus your resources.*

The origins of the power map are hard to pinpoint, but organizers have been using it for decades to run more effective campaigns. Ideally, your power map will help reveal connections and power dynamics between your targets, which allows you to create a more focused and efficient organizing campaign strategy.

It is critical to complete the power map **BEFORE** you plan out your strategy — including how resources are being spent. Using time, money, and people on the wrong targets often results in a failed campaign.

- **How do you get started?** Make sure your campaign goal(s) are measurable. If you know precisely what you're trying to accomplish and what success looks like, it'll be easier to determine who you'll need to help you get there. Also, do research prior to your landscape analysis, knowing this is a living document and will need to be updated whenever new information becomes available.



**VERTICAL AXIS** – Plot your targets based on the level of power they have to make a consequential decision on your issue.

**HORIZONTAL AXIS** – Plot your targets based on the level at which they support or oppose your stance on the issue.

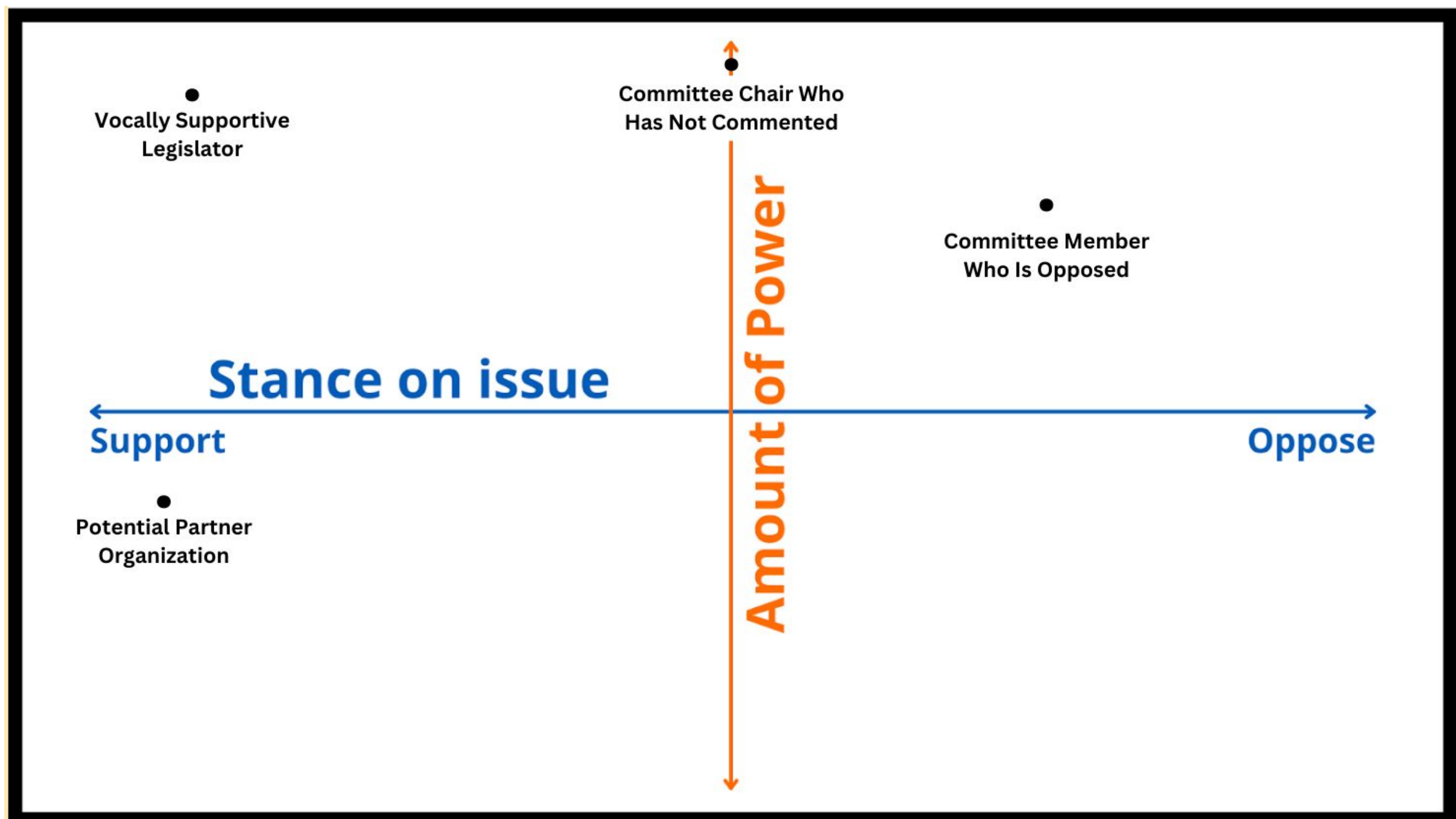
**The goal?** Move your targets **UP** the power axis and **LEFT** on the support axis.



- *How do you know who to map?* **Research. Research. Research.** Your targets will likely be (1) council members, assembly members, legislators, or committee members who can push forward and/or vote on your issue, or (2) voters and key constituencies who will decide your campaign's fate at the ballot box. You'll also want to list any institutions, organizations, and unions who are involved in the issue, noting the influential individuals who constitute them.
  - **Decision-makers** — You'll want to start by mapping out the targets who have actual decision-making power to determine the outcome (i.e., the people who can cast a vote). Determine their placement based on their level of power in determining the outcome, as well as their stance on the issue. Do they support you? Oppose you? Or are they neutral and/or undecided?
  - **Influencers** — Once all the decision-makers are mapped, you can now map people or organizations who have influence over them. They might not have the authority to make a decision themselves, but they'll have a meaningful relationship with someone who *does* have the authority to make a decision or who can rally the community to increase needed pressure.
- *How do you know who to target?* Once you have your decision-makers and key influencers outlined, note who your allies are and who your opposition is. Based on your map, determine which decision-makers are key to victory. *These will be your main campaign targets.* It's also a good idea to pay attention to whose support may waver and who on the other side might be persuadable. Based on your research, map out the relationships between the decision-makers themselves (i.e., long-time council members who have influence over other members), as well as between your influencers and the decision-makers (i.e., which council members your allies and opposition have influence over). Then, think through how much power each side currently possesses. The goal will be to (1) increase the power and support of your allies and (2) recruit additional support from the opposition. Use this information to help build your list of campaign targets. It can be a good idea to organize them and their districts into tiers of priority to help determine how much time, energy, and resources to invest in each. You'll want to pay special attention to people on key committees or in influential leadership positions. Be sure to collaborate on this list and its priority tiers with your team, lobbyist(s), and coalition members.



## Example Power Map



- **Vocally Supportive Legislator:** This is a person who consistently talks about your issue and who also has a large amount of power to help your organization or coalition accomplish its goal. Therefore, they are placed on your power map with high amounts of power and a high level of support.
- **Potential Partner Organization:** This is an organization who cares a lot about what your coalition or organization wants to accomplish, but they are in the middle of restructuring and have a limited capacity to assist. They have high levels of support, but a lower level of power.
- **Committee Member Who Is Opposed:** This is a person who sits on the committee your issue must go through to pass, but who has expressed opposition. They have medium levels of power and low levels of support.
- **Committee Chair Who Has Not Commented:** This is the chair of the committee that your organization or coalition's issue must go through. They have not commented on your issue. They have a very high level of power, but they are neutral in terms of support.



## Tool #4

# Checklist for 1:1s with Decision-Makers

## Checklist for One-on-One with Decision-makers

---

Here are some quick reminders that will benefit you as you meet with decision-makers:

- Make sure you research the decision-maker before the meeting, as well as their voting record on legislation pertaining to your issue. It will be important to provide volunteers with talking points and facts sheets so that they feel better prepared.
- Always have a pre-meeting with volunteers to role-play the interaction with the decision-maker. Practice lobbying by doing role plays, especially if this is the first time that volunteers will be in a setting like this.
- During preparation, establish ground rules for volunteers. A good practice is to have one spokesperson, a back-up spokesperson, and a designated note-taker. Anyone else is there for support.
- Make sure your ask is specific. The more specific the ask, the better equipped you will be to hold decision-makers accountable.
- Have a plan for if they say YES to your ask. What will the next step be to ensure follow up?
- Have a plan for if they say NO to your ask. Maybe your group couldn't get an official sign on of support, but what would be the next best thing? Have two or three options prepared.
- Thank them for their time. These meetings will serve as opportunities to engage in respectful, honest dialogue with decision-makers. Even if a decision-maker has not yet clarified their stance on an issue, it is possible they can be supporters in the future. It may even serve as an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings on both sides of the table. Look at these meetings as important milestones in relationship building that may benefit you in unpredictable ways moving forward.
- Be sure to have a "leave behind" that includes the best person to contact for questions along with any important information regarding the issue(s) at hand. The leave behind could be a one pager that has the key facts about your issue and the impact on the community — an extension of your conversation and a tool for advocacy.
- Always be sure to send a follow-up thank you note to the staff and the elected officials for their time, regardless of the meeting outcome. You want to be seen as having an open door for future collaboration.



# Common Grassroots Organizing Tactics

### Canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing is an incredibly effective and time-tested organizing strategy. Even just one good face-to-face conversation can be enough to make a real difference in your community. The power of this tool comes from the possibility of real engagement beyond a simple literature drop or rushed interaction on the sidewalk. Longer conversations are always better, giving you time to make a real connection with potential supporters. This will help you understand your target audience better, as well as make them feel like your campaign is interested in their ideas, concerns, and unique perspective.

If you can get real people to start talking to each other, it also helps break down the barriers to communication created by party affiliation, race, gender, or any other identity.

Door-to-door canvassing can be a great equalizer, helping your team ignite real, embodied change. No matter how brief, this exchange of ideas between two strangers can be more persuasive than even the most compelling TV ad or piece of mail.

It's also incredibly beneficial to engage people from the communities themselves to lead canvassing in those communities. This goes a long way toward making a campaign culturally competent, while at the same time serving as a leadership pipeline for people in the represented constituencies. This all contributes to building leadership from and within the communities you are engaging.

Here are some things to keep in mind when developing your canvassing strategy:

1. *Actually knock on doors.* Tools like [Catalist](#), [Grassroots Unwired](#), [NGP VAN](#), [SmartVAN](#), and [VoteBuilder](#) are great ways to help organize your canvassing efforts. The prospect of talking to strangers can be intimidating, but be sure to follow through on actually knocking on doors and having those real one-on-one conversations. To make a difference, you need to be canvassing on a regular basis.
2. *Keep safety at the forefront.* From COVID-19 protocol to making sure canvassers feel safe, there are a lot of factors at play. Maintaining a six-foot distance from doorways and providing the option to wear a mask can address COVID-19 concerns. Additionally, canvassers should always go out in pairs, at a minimum, and avoid canvassing past dusk. Remind canvassers to act in accordance with posted community guidelines and make sure there is always one “lead” during every shift who has everyone’s contact information and knows volunteer whereabouts.



3. *Targeting matters.* It's easy to underestimate the need to target your door-to-door communications. First of all, you don't want your hardworking volunteers or paid canvassers to be confronted with people who will be outright hostile to your campaign's goals. This is a waste of time, and it risks the loss of valuable people power if your canvassers become too anxious to come back for another door-knocking shift. You'll also want to make sure you're reaching low-information households who are often ignored by other campaigns. Intentionally engaging with the right people can be the difference between success and failure in a campaign.

4. *Have a plan.* You need to figure out exactly how many doors you'll have to knock on, when to knock on them, and how often to knock on them in order to achieve your goals. Then, once you have a plan, stick to it.

5. *A script can only get you so far.* You and your volunteers will need to think beyond your canvassing script. It's important to draw the voter in to have a real connection, so over-scripting and robotic recitation are not helpful. Have your canvassers personalize each interaction, take notes, collect email addresses, and follow up.

6. *No, really: follow up.* Whether it's a postcard, text message, or targeted digital ad, the follow-up matters as much as the initial contact. If you make a particularly good connection with someone, sending them a real, hand-written note can be incredibly effective. You want to help the memory of these conversations stick with potential supporters for as long as possible. A good connection at the door with timely follow-up is hard to forget.

7. *Volunteers matter.* Local canvassers will often be most comfortable at the door and will be able to speak to potential supporters as a fellow resident. After all, it's always easier to trust a stranger if they're your neighbor. Volunteers are also more likely to have pre-existing community relationships and knowledge they can leverage at the door.

8. *Paid canvassers can be effective.* You also have the option to hire well-trained paid canvassers instead of or in addition to volunteers. Although not as effective as someone who's personally invested in your issue with meaningful local knowledge, paid canvassers will still be able to get the job done. Plus, this option is often more scalable than a volunteer-only program. It's always a good idea to run a hybrid operation so you can get the best of both worlds: persuasive volunteers at the doors with professional organizers managing them. As you research vendors who provide this service, ensure that they incorporate values that align with yours — such as a fair and livable wage for their employees.

*Can canvassing replace other communication efforts?* Although you should spend a lot of time knocking doors, this tactic won't help you reach everyone you need to. A layered communications approach is always the key to success. Authentic face-to-face conversations need to be backed up with paid communications that have the same tone and messaging. Social media is also helpful, but you'll need to have a high volume of both paid and unpaid contact to make the impact you need to achieve your goals.



## Phone Banking

Traditional phone banks are becoming less effective as more people are ditching their landlines altogether. And while most people now have cell phones, federal law prohibits using any predictive dialer technology to call them. That means any cell phone you want to call must be hand-dialed. Another challenge? People change their cell phone numbers more often than they did in the past, so cell phone data on the voter file is not always up to date. There are, however, a lot of older people who still use their landline, and you may need a fast, easy way to reach them during your campaign.

The key is to know who you need to talk to and the best way to reach and communicate with them.

If you decide to do a phone bank — particularly when canvassing isn't possible — you must remember that some people hesitate to answer calls from numbers they don't recognize. There's also technology available, like [slybroadcast](#), that lets you automatically leave a voicemail without dialing first. An even better strategy can be hosting a telephone town hall, which will help you get a lot of people on the phone at one time. You can even get your supporters to opt into the call with event sign-up forms in advance, which will help boost participation and build up your email/phone list. Telephone town halls allow you to share more information about your campaign, and — more importantly — provide an opportunity for supporters to ask you their questions.

## Telephone Town Halls

Think of a telephone town hall (TTH) as a cross between a radio talk show, an in-person town hall, a meeting with decision-makers, and a conference call — all done from the comfort of your own home or office.

- *Why host a TTH?* It seems like everyone is looking for ways to engage their supporters — and *potential* supporters — in a fast and compelling way. Hosting a TTH is a great way to communicate with a larger swath of your target audience in a convenient but also intimate and personal way.
- *How do I recruit for TTHs?* You can recruit participants with an automated phone call, text message, or email that gets sent out to your list right before the event, reminding and encouraging them to hop on the line for an exciting, not-to-be-missed conversation with your campaign.
- *How well do TTHs work?* A well-planned and dynamic event with engaging speakers and lots of Q&A time can be an incredibly effective tactic. The main downside is that not everyone you recruit will actually join the TTH, but livestreaming the event via Facebook, YouTube, or Zoom can help reach the audience members who won't engage via phone.
- *Can you raise money with a TTH?* This depends on your audience, but many campaigns have seen success raising thousands of dollars by getting both new and current donors on the phone.
- *Who uses TTHs?* Elected officials are probably the most frequent users of TTHs, many of them use this tool as a constituent outreach and services tool. Many campaigns, nonprofits, and unions also use them.

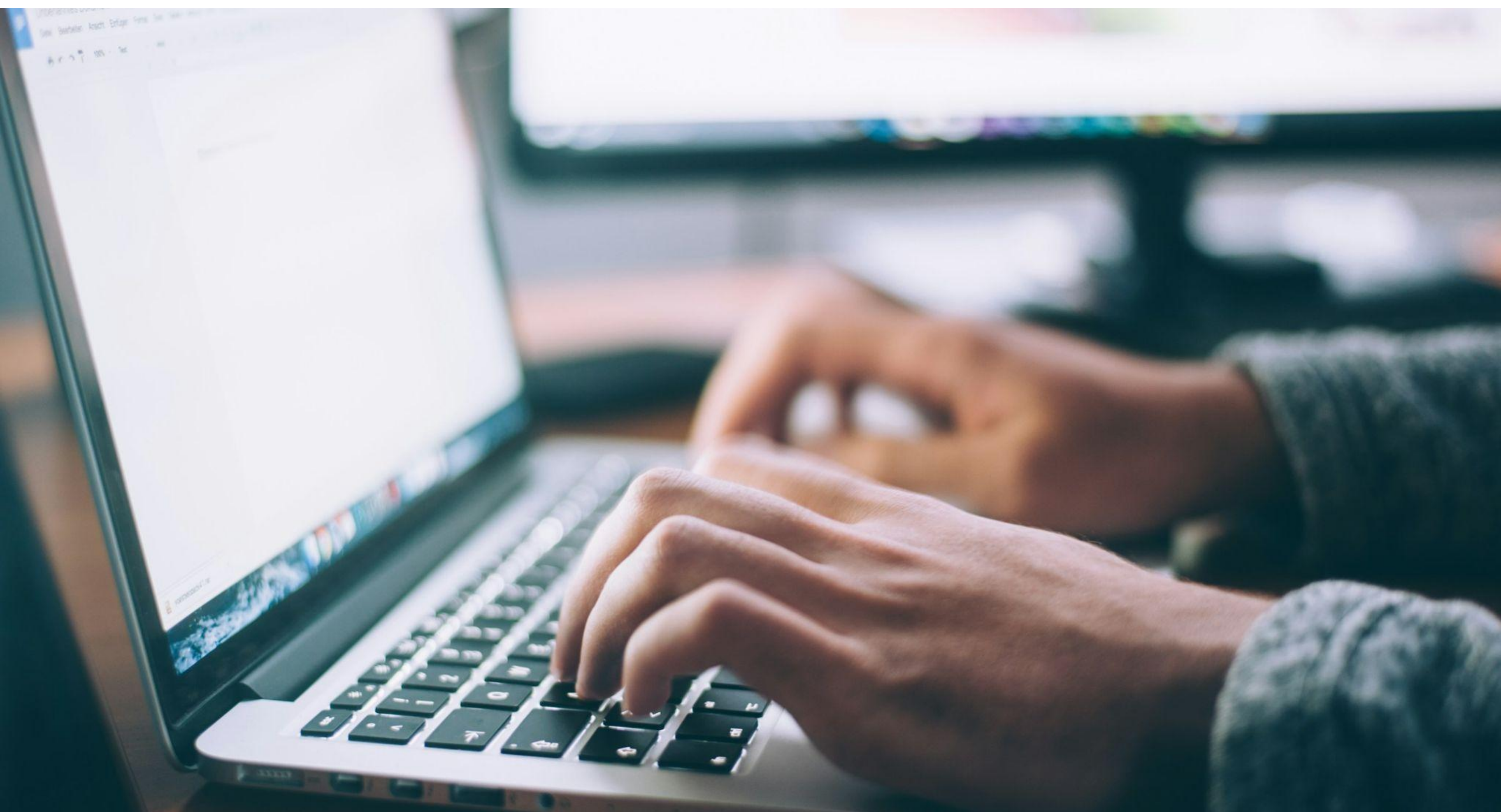


## Formula for Successful TTHs:

1. **Have a strategy.** Make sure you have a specific and strategic reason to use this tactic, focusing on how TTHs can help achieve both your primary and secondary goals.
2. **Have a hook.** People need a good reason for getting on the call. Choose a time-sensitive topic, secure a well-known speaker, and/or promise “insider” campaign updates if you want to ensure your event will be as engaging as it needs to be to attract and maintain the focus of your target audience.
3. **Test your hook.** You can use social media and email to test what hooks your supporters are most responsive to and use that data to inform your TTH strategy:
  - “What topic are you most interested in learning more about?”
  - “Which of these speakers would you be most excited to hear from?”
  - “What kind of campaign updates are you looking for right now?”
4. **Deliver your message.** Make sure you reiterate a clear and concise core message throughout the event to ensure participants walk away from your TTH with a very specific and relevant takeaway to share with their friends and family afterwards.
5. **Build a good list.** The quality of your list (i.e., correct phone numbers and responsive supporters) matters a great deal if you want to see high participation. You need to pay attention to who is and who isn’t joining your events, and you must constantly recruit new supporters who are specifically interested in engaging with your campaign in this way.
6. **Know your budget.** How much can you spend to make this event a success? The cost of an event can vary depending on how many phone numbers you expect to dial out to and how many people actually join the event, as well as how much you invest in event promotion leading up to the TTH. The more you promote, the more likely you’ll see higher participation numbers.
7. **Have a promotion plan.** A TTH is not something you can do successfully without significant promotion. You need a real plan to promote your event in advance and to get participants excited and ready to show up for the call. This can look like:
  - *Live and Automated Calls:* Have your volunteers call and personally invite potential participants. You can also send out autocalls or leave voicemails with all the relevant event details to encourage your target audience to mark their calendars.
  - *Digital Ads:* Advertising on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram can also help boost participation — especially if you link to a digital sign-up page. This is also a great way to have both new and existing supporters opt in to texts and calls from the campaign directly to their cell phones.



- **Search Ads:** Running search ads around your topic can also work well, in addition to being a relatively cheap promotion tactic.
- **Direct Mail:** If you decide to mail invitations to your TTH, make sure you have scheduled enough time for the mail to be delivered on time. This advance planning also helps you layer other communication tactics on top of your direct mail strategy. Mail always stands out and can make a lasting impression with your campaign message even if recipients don't end up participating in your event.
- **Email:** Email is one of the best tools for getting supporters to take action, especially if it's as simple as signing a petition or RSVPing to an event. In fact, email is so ubiquitous that it often gets overlooked. But building a robust email list to promote your TTHs can boost participation for your events.
- **Texting/SMS:** Inviting and reminding your supporters of an upcoming TTH event via text is a simple and high-impact way to boost participation. Never underestimate the importance of texting dial-in information or a link to join your event five minutes before it starts. In fact, TTHs are a great pretext to begin securing cell phone opt-ins for future campaign communication needs.





8. **Focus on timing.** Depending on the date of your TTH, you'll want to work from the time of the event backwards to schedule communications. Don't rush to do a TTH without the right amount of time for promotion.
9. **Use a high-quality moderator.** Not only do you need a team in charge of logistics leading up to and throughout the TTH, but you also need a confident and engaging moderator who will keep the conversation moving throughout the call.
10. **Draft a script or outline for the event.** Don't just wing it. Make sure you know exactly who is responsible for saying what and when. Be prepared to answer tough questions from the audience.
11. **Respond to the right questions.** Develop a precise system for screening questions and selecting which callers are brought live on air. TTHs give your team a bit more control over the conversation than an in-person town hall, though you still want to try and achieve a more spontaneous tone.
12. **Include a call to action.** Make sure you ask participants to take some sort of action during or immediately following the TTH. You need to be very explicit about what they can do *right now* to get involved with the campaign and to help advance your issue.
13. **Collect data from participants.** A TTH is a great occasion to collect and/or update your supporters' data to use for event follow-up, future engagement efforts, fundraising, and other organizing needs. After all, you can't mobilize your supporters unless you know where and how to reach them.
14. **Don't forget about reporting.** Make sure your TTH consultant or vendor supplies you with detailed reporting on the event. You're going to want to track who joined the call, for how long, and if they took any action (poll, donation, question, etc.).

#### **TTH Buying Guide:**

**Pricing:** The cost of a TTH is usually based on the volume of outbound calls made to recruit participants, as well as how many people participated in the call and for how long. These costs can vary greatly by vendor, so keep in mind that *everything* is negotiable. Be clear about what you're willing to pay: Know your budget and stick to it.

**Quality:** The quality of the call can vary greatly, as well as how hands-on or hands-off a particular vendor/consultant is going to be. At the end of the day, the software you run the event on is just as important as the moderator you recruit. Make sure you get references and hire someone you can trust.

**Selection:** The best way to find a good TTH vendor or consultant is to ask for recommendations from other organizers. Compare notes, compare pricing, and ask for illustrative anecdotes to assess whether the fit is right for your needs.



## Tool #6

# Digital Outreach

### Texting/SMS

SMS (Short Message Service) text messages are a personal mode of communication that can help ensure your supporters read your message. And as more and more people depend on cell phones as their primary mode of communication, it is increasingly important for your campaign to incorporate texting strategies into your organizing work. After all, you want to meet people where they are — and right in their pocket is just about as close as you can get.

Note: For internal communications, you may consider using services like WhatsApp, which is a free app offering encrypted messaging that makes your team's internal communications more secure.

Here are a few reasons to incorporate SMS organizing into your overall campaign strategy:

1. [People still pay attention to texts.](#) Even if they don't always respond, people are still paying attention to and reading their texts. Organizing emails, on the other hand, have gotten easier to ignore. SMS programs have much higher open rates than most other forms of communication and are more likely to see higher response rates than email. Texts can even include links to take action that will spark immediate engagement with your audience. You can also text your supporters a patch-through call number/link that will instantly generate a conversation between them and a targeted decision-maker.
2. [More and more households are ditching their landlines.](#) When a supporter provides a telephone number, it will very likely be their cell phone number. In fact, many people now live in cell phone-only households. Building a cell phone organizing list will take time and money, but your existing supporter list will likely already have some cell phone numbers on it to start with. Just be sure to secure an explicit opt-in before you begin texting regular action alerts.
3. [Cell phones make organizing tasks easy to complete.](#) If you text supporters a link to simply click and immediately take action, you'll see higher conversion rates than with other modes of communication. People are more likely to contact decision-makers on your behalf if you make it as easy and convenient as possible. Short asks with links that are easy to copy and paste are a great way to prompt people to both take action and re-share your content with their own networks.



- **What can texting be used for? SMS** is an incredibly flexible tool that can be adapted to achieve many different campaign goals:
  - **SMS petitions.** Most of your supporters will be willing to add their name to a petition, so texting them a link to a mobile-optimized petition page can make this tactic particularly successful.
  - **Click-to-call.** Patch through calls are an important organizing strategy that can easily be done via text. Simply send your supporters a click-to-call link that will immediately connect them to your target decision-makers. You can even set up toll-free patch lines that will give them pre-recorded instructions and key message points to remember before having a live, one-on-one conversation with a decision-maker.
  - **Event recruitment and reminders.** Getting people to show up — in person or online — is always a challenge. But texting sign-up pages and day-of reminders to your supporters are a great way to increase participation.
  - **Fundraising.** You can follow up any action taken by your supporters with a quick fundraising ask to try and move them one step deeper into your advocacy funnel. Fundraising texts are especially successful when used strategically around key events and deadlines to help maximize your efforts.
  - **User-generated content (UGC).** Sending out links to UGC tools can make it easier for your supporters to create a video or social media post sharing their personal story or your campaign message with their own network. This can help expand your campaign's reach within specific demographics and even certain geographic areas.
- **How do I run an SMS program?** Broadcast texting is a great way to send your message to multiple supporters all at once. Assuming your list has opted in, there will be an increased level of trust between your supporters and the campaign. This higher level of buy-in makes these mass-messages more effective than they would be to a list of strangers. Peer-to-peer texting is when you have volunteers manually text your supporters. This is a deeper level of connection and can be a more engaging and personalized strategy to persuade and recruit. Relational organizing, on the other hand, is when your volunteers and supporters agree to text their own networks and harness the power of their own personal relationships for the campaign.
- **What rules govern texting programs?** Texting is certainly the Swiss Army Knife of organizing today — but you need to be careful. Some of the strictest communications regulations govern political SMS, and different kinds of texting (i.e., broadcast vs. peer-to-peer) will have their own rules about disclaimers, opt-in requirements, etc. Be sure to check with an attorney before beginning any texting program to ensure your campaign is compliant. Understanding what you can and cannot do with your cell phone list is key.





The Leadership  
Conference  
The Leadership  
Conference  
Education Fund



**CIVIL RIGHTS  
CORPS**



**1620 L Street NW, Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20036**



**(202) 466-3434**



**[www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org)**



**@civilrightsorg**



**@civilandhumanrights**



**@civilrightsorg**



**Pod for the Cause**

Copyright © 2024  
The Leadership Conference  
on Civil and Human Rights  
All Rights Reserved