



How to Organize a Youth-Led Grassroots Campaign

In today's society, it is often times young people who can bring about the most political change. However, many young people do not know how to mobilize the change they are aiming for. Here are a few suggestions on how to begin.

GETTING STARTED:

It is said that there is power in numbers. If there is not already a group in your community that is working for your cause, start one. There are bound to be others that agree with your views. Advertise your ideas in the local newspaper, place flyers around your area, etc. Include your contact information and a proposed meeting time and place.

When you finally meet with others that share your interests, begin defining your group's focus, so that there is always a clear understanding.

PLANNING YOUR CAMPAIGN:

Your group should meet specifically to put together a campaign. Remember, if it is not written down, it is not a plan. The following components should be identified, based on your group's issue focus:

- **Goals:** What are your long-term and short-term goals? What is your group trying to accomplish?
- **Strengths/Weaknesses:** If your group is new, there are probably a few limitations you will have to face. Don't let that stop you; the mere fact that you are a group of young people looking to make a difference is one of your strengths in and of itself. Who are your allies and your opponents? What will they or can they do to support or oppose your campaign? Discuss what kinds of resources your group may have or need.
- **Strategy:** Identify your targets. Who has the power to make your groups goals a reality? What tactics can your group use to influence that individual's decision? Could you get the rest of your community or the media involved in your campaign? How could your group use its strengths?
- **Timeline:** This is the time to take out your calendar, and begin marking dates. Put together a plan. Come up with deadlines to carry out each tactic.
- **Budgeting:** This may be one of the resources your allies can help you with. Decide on a campaign budget. If your group is in need of more money, hold a fundraising event (i.e., a carwash).

CARRYING OUT YOUR PLANS:

What about leadership roles within the group? Should there be a meeting facilitator to keep the group on task during meetings, a secretary to ensure the group's organization, a treasurer to keep track of the group's finances, and one or two campaign leaders to make sure each tactic is carried out? Be prepared to vote on these and other positions as well as job descriptions.

Remember that your group is comprised of volunteers. This means that each member can only put in a certain amount of effort. There may be times when a member does not carry out his or her responsibility, and the rest of the group will have to pick up the slack. In these situations, it is best to be understanding toward that group member. If this is a common occurrence with someone, he or she probably has too many responsibilities. You may want to re-examine the member's responsibilities or pull him/her aside to talk about the situation.

THE CAMPAIGN'S END:

- How did your group do? Was your group successful? Did you meet your goals? What could your group have done better? What did your group do well? Is your group interested in another campaign?
- Regardless of whether you won or lost your campaign, your group worked hard. Be sure to recognize your participants for their efforts!

For more information check out these sites: National Youth Service Day Toolkit: www.ysa.org/nysd/toolkit.pdf and Sierra Club planning matrix website: ohio.sierraclub.org/sprawl/appendixp.html

TOOLBOX