Community Organizer's Guide

About this Guide

Many people in our society want to make the world a better place, but don't know where to start. We put together this "Community Organizer's Guide" as an introduction to the process of organizing for social change.

This guide is for people who want to:

*learn how to organize for social change
*get started quickly
*benefit from the experience of other organizers
*be more effective in their community organizing
*work for equality for *all* groups in society
*address the root causes of social, economic, and political injustice.

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About Community Organizing
Community organizing brings people together to create social change.

Why is community organizing so important? Because social change takes place, and is more effective, when people work together in an organized way. This gives us the power we need to achieve the changes we want.

There is more than one way to organize (see section on Strategies for Social Change). People choose the methods that make the most sense to them and seem most likely to achieve their goals.

Here are seven basic principles of organizing:

1) Nonviolence - Preventing or minimizing violence against ourselves, each other, our communities, and the environment.
2) Social Transformation - Identifying and addressing the root causes of problems and creating solutions that truly make things better for all groups in society.
3) Organizing - Offering people the opportunity and support to work with others on the problems they face.
4) Basic Needs - Putting basic human needs first.
5) Direct Democracy - Giving people the power to control their own lives, and maximizing their access to the decision-making processes that affect them.
6) Social Equality - Promoting participation and leadership for those who have experienced discrimination in society.
7) Building a Movement for Change - Taking every opportunity to include more people in creating social change, based on these principles.

Who can you organize? They can be people like yourself, or people different from you who share and experience the same problems or issues. They can have the same identity (African-Americans, women, working class, working in the same place, adolescents) or the same self-interests. They can be individuals who are not part of any group, or members of one organization, or people from many different groups.

In a true democracy, people would have a real voice in the decisions affecting their lives. Politics would be a dynamic, active, creative process in which people participated meaningfully. Governments and corporations would be directly accountable to the people they affect.

Unfortunately, many of us feel that we have no voice in governing our society and that a few powerful individuals and corporations have too much power and influence. We may be too busy to participate, we may lack information, or we may be discouraged. We may think that no one else feels the way we do. We worry about what other people will say if we act, or whether our prospects for "success" in our life will be threatened. Many of our cultures teach us that women should defer to men, that middle class and wealthy people know more than working class and lower income people, and that the people in charge are supposed to be white.   We are encouraged to sit in front of the TV, to trust the "experts," and once every few years to vote for candidates who at best seem to be the lesser of two evils.

Despite all these obstacles, people do act. The changes that have most improved peoples' lives in this century were not gifts given to us by "experts," but

the hard-won results of organizing by "ordinary" people. The 40-hour work week was not made by wealthy industrialists, but by union organizers sick of working 60 hour weeks for low wages; the vote -- and rights to property and abortion -- were not granted to women by men, but won by female activists over many decades of struggle. Similar victories have been won by people who are discriminated against because of their race or class, their physical abilities, their sexual orientation, or other factors.

Our history books often emphasize the "great men" who held positions of power and importance. In fact, history is made by all of us. Before civil rights activist Martin Luther King became known, there were countless Black leaders who stood against the oppression of the African-American community. The large-scale, glamorous victories stand on the shoulders of smaller victories, which we rarely hear about, and on the lessons of defeats learned by thousands of grassroots organizers.

When we act as individuals our actions may seem small and unimportant. But when we act collectively in our community - neighborhood, workplace, school, small town, county, state, bioregion, wherever our community exists - anything is possible.

Making the decision to participate in public life is no small thing. It demands commitment, sacrifice, and an openness to change. But the rewards are many: new skills, a sense of purpose, work that's enjoyable and meaningful, awareness of how our society operates, and a feeling of community that comes from working together with others for the vision of a better world.

As one organizer put it, "After I became an activist, I wasn't afraid of the world anymore."

Eight steps to organizing:
   1) Identify the issue,
   2) Get background information on the issue,
   3) Define goals,
   4) Plan strategies,
   5) Get support,
   6) Take action,
   7) Assess results, and
   8) Modify strategy and try again.

Starting a Group
Before starting a group, find out what's already going on in your community.

People organize groups every day to address problems as varied as toxic pollution, lack of civil rights protections, excessive military spending, denial of free speech, low minimum wages, and corrupt campaign financing.

But, before deciding to start a new group, it's helpful to find out if a group already exists with a similar purpose to what you have in mind. Check with activists in your area, see if there is a directory which lists progressive groups in your community or region, browse the web, review lists of organizations at the closest library, and look for posters on local bulletin boards.

If there are established organizations doing the work you want to do, it might be better to join that local group. Another option is to start a local chapter of a state or national organization. However, even if there are other like-minded organizations around, you may have a different set of priorities or wish to use different strategies.

Whatever the situation, it is helpful to talk to other grassroots organizers to learn what has already been done on the issue and what has and has not worked. After this background work, you may decide to start a group or local chapter.

The Initial Meeting
Start small, write a mission statement, brainstorm other potential members, plan a follow-up meeting.

To start a group, first arrange a meeting for a small group of people you know or who share your interests and concerns. This group needs to agree on the mission of the proposed organization. In a few sentences a mission statement should include: (1) what problem is being addressed and how it can be solved, and (2) who you represent, what you do, where you do it, why you do it, and how you do it. This statement can be reviewed and revised if the group decides it needs to update its focus, but it's helpful to have it broad enough so that it won't need to be changed very often.

Think about potential additional members of your group. Consider your community - is it urban, suburban, rural? Are the people primarily unemployed, working class, middle class, wealthy? What is the racial, religious, and ethnic make-up? Is it politically aware? Do the people living there feel a sense of community?

For the purposes of the organization, think about who the constituency is, that is, the individuals and groups who will most likely support the cause you are concerned about . Is it religious groups, educators, people on welfare, teens? Who shares an interest in the issue; how does the issue touch different peoples' lives? Who might we be forgetting to include that we don't normally interact with? Find out why each member of the initial group decided to come; it will help everyone understand the variety of reasons that get people involved. From this discussion, make a list of potential supporters and all the concerns you share with each one. This can help you to plan a more persuasive approach to people.

With a constituency and community in mind, plan a follow-up meeting that is open to the general public. Set a date, find a meeting location, and plan publicity. Members of the initial group should take responsibility for these tasks, plus decide who will facilitate the meeting, take notes, open and set up the room, write the agenda, bring refreshments, etc. You may wish to choose a working name for the first meeting and then let the larger group decide on a permanent name for the group.

Inform people of the open meeting at least two weeks in advance, through letters, postcards, newspaper announcements, or flyers. Begin creating a list of individuals and organizations who might support the new group and make sure they all receive a written notice. Follow this up with phone calls to your most likely or desired people, no more than a week before the meeting. This gives you an opportunity to explain the issues and take note of people's concerns. Childcare, as

well as carpooling or providing transportation, will make it easier for some people to attend and will increase the chances of a good turn-out.

A Real Life Story

A housing organization was unclear about the difference between providing services to tenants and organizing them. The staff thus did a little of both, considering them to be the same thing.

A man from a building to which an organizer had been assigned, came into the office. After being interviewed about his problem, he was advised to go to Legal Assistance and get a lawyer. The man said, "That's too much hassle," and he left. The organizer remarked, "See, that's why we can't ever get anything going in the building, nobody cares enough to do anything." The organizer didn't make the distinction between an individual problem requiring a lawyer, and a building-wide issue that could be addressed by organizing. More to the point, the organization as a whole made no such distinction because, in its underlying model, its function was neither clearly service nor clearly organizing. As long as it was "housing," they did it.

Had there been a clear *organizing* model, the staff member would not have made a referral. Instead, she would have gone back to the building with the man, talked to the other tenants, and seen who had the same problem. Even if the problem was an individual matter such as non-payment of rent, if many other people were also behind, the tenants might have tried to negotiate a payment plan in exchange for improved conditions. If legal action to improve building services was required, the action should have been brought by all the tenants, not one individual. If all else failed, then helping the man to get a lawyer would have been appropriate.

--Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max, Organizing for Social Change (P. 44). Reprinted with permission of Seven Locks Press.

Establishing the Group
Create a group structure, pick a name, divide up tasks, set up a financial and record-keeping system.

The purpose of the open meeting and follow-up meetings will be to establish the structure which will develop and carry out the goals of the organization. Based on the mission statement, you will want to set some specific tasks for the immediate future. In order to carry them out, you will need to decide on individuals or committees to work on a budget, fundraising, publicity, record-keeping, etc.

Groups often shy away from formal structure because it seems hierarchical, that is, promoting unequal power among the members; but structure is like the frame of a house which gives shape to a pile of lumber. You cannot build a lasting or useful organization without it. By having a clear structure, roles of responsibility and authority are mapped out. A group process is established as the approved way to make decisions and take actions. Any model will have strengths and weaknesses; however, if you don't put a structure of some sort in place, one will happen on its own that may not be according to the wishes of the group.

The group should settle on a name and may want to choose officers to carry out certain functions. One or more persons (Coordinator, President, Steering

Committee, or other title) should have the role of follow-up to be sure tasks are happening on time and deadlines are being met, and to coordinate the work among different committees. One central contact person is important, and having a back-up for them is always a good idea. A Clerk or Secretary may be responsible for maintaining the membership list and a Treasurer for overseeing the finances.

Knowing the interests, skills, and past experiences of group members can aid in deciding what these members do. Someone with past financial experience might be the treasurer, for example. Publicity for the group, heading up committees, and coordinating mailings or phone calling are all roles that, if possible, should be taken.

A Real Life Story

"In the spring of 1993, the Communications Workers of America were in the final stages of a five year effort to organize 1700 clerical and technical workers on the campus of Indiana University. Although nearly half the full-time staff qualified for food stamps and other forms of public assistance, a large share of workers were not responding. Organizers needed a creative way to juice up the energy of the election, appeal to disinterested workers, and turn out the vote in big numbers.

Their answer: Elvis Presley. Organizers hired a professional Elvis impersonator and rewrote a series of Elvis songs to carry the union message, including "Heartbreak Payroll" and the Vegas crooning song, "Now or Never," which became the theme of the campaign.

The pro-union Elvis was featured on billboards and radio ads and went along on work site visits. Workers who wouldn't look up from their desks in the past would chase him down the hall to sign their union literature. The campus was a buzz with "Elvis sightings." On election eve, he was also the featured guest at a huge get out the vote rally. The union won by a landslide, 1005 to 250."

--The Activist Cookbook: Creative Actions for a Fair Economy. Reprinted with permission of United for a Fair Economy--see www.ufenet.org

If the group receives and spends money, it needs a system of financial records which should be set up as soon as possible. If it decides to open a bank or credit union account, it is not necessary to incorporate as a non-profit organization. An individual member can use their own Social Security number to open an account, or the group can use an Employee Identification Number obtained from the Internal Revenue Service (see IRS Publication SS-4).

When a group's goals are expected to take a long time to accomplish, with small steps along the way, a more formal, written structure may be needed to keep the group on track over a long period. This could mean having a Board of Directors, with by-laws, paid staff, local chapters, or formal coalition-based models. Or it could mean a membership-at-large group with elected officers who hold regular meeting to pursue the group goals.

Some kind of an office may have to be established for central contact and information gathering, perhaps in someone's home or in a rented space. If the group is accumulating a lot of information, it will be necessary to develop a file system that makes sense, whether on paper or computer. Timelines and calendars posted on the walls can be helpful for reminding people of deadlines, meetings, and

events. Regular communication with potential and active group members is crucial in activating them and maintaining their involvement.

Encouraging Democratic Participation
Set up procedures to make sure all members are participating; encourage group diversity.

Since one of our goals as community organizers is to have all people participate in the decisions that effect them, all members should have the opportunity to participate in a group's decision-making process. The results of oppression in our society lead some people to dominate discussions and others to sit quietly. If a few people dominate the meeting, the facilitator and other members can use some of the following suggestions to help equalize the participation.
Agree that no one will speak twice until everyone has had the chance to speak once
Go around the room and invite every person to state an opinion on a key question
Alternate between men and women
Take an informal vote, or "straw poll," if necessary, to see how the group is feeling
Ask if people need a break
Break up into smaller groups and then report back to the whole group
Ask people from groups who don't usually get heard to speak first
   From time to time it's important for a group to ask who should be at the table, but isn't. And to *not* ask why they don't come, but ask instead what the group could do differently to make it a more welcoming place. Many people think that a lack of diversity can be addressed through outreach or encouragement, when really what a group needs to do is take a good hard look at itself.

Regular Meetings
Pick a good location and make sure you have all the materials you need.

Meeting as a group on a regular basis will strengthen your organization. Meetings provide an opportunity to discuss plans and needs. They should be both fun and productive.
The meeting site should take into account the needs of the members - is it physically accessible for older people and wheelchairs, centrally located and easy to find, comfortable and familiar for the constituency of the group, an adequate size? Is there a room for childcare, do you need a kitchen? If cost is a factor, many banks, libraries, churches, schools, union halls, and community centers have rooms that they allow non-profit groups to use for free or a small charge. If you meet at someone's home, be sure it's a large enough setting for the numbers expected and accessible for people who have difficulty moving around.
Materials needed for a meeting include an agenda, newsprint or flip chart and tape to hang paper on the wall, blackboard or easel, scrap paper, pens, markers, refreshments, and necessary documents or audiovisual aids such as graphs or pictures. A sign-in sheet for names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email is a good way to be sure you are keeping track of new members and building a mailing list.

Meeting Format and Agenda Setting
Divide up tasks, stay on time, make an effective agenda, and run the meeting in a way that works for people.

It is important to start and end meetings on time; people are more likely to come back to well organized meetings. If you haven't already done so, ask for volunteers for meeting tasks (see box). If people don't know each other, go around and give names and any other useful information but keep it brief and to the point.

Review the agenda at the beginning of the meeting to allow for additions, corrections, or clarification. A workable agenda is key to a good meeting and should be created by the group or a subcommittee, preferably at the end of the previous meeting. By planning ahead, you can advertise the main attraction of the meeting. Put the agenda items into categories such as business, new ideas, announcements, and discussion topics. Allow enough time for everything.

Begin with quick decisions and announcements; be careful that new items don't get in the way of major business. Keep the difficult issues for the longest part of the meeting and the easier, lighter items for the end when everyone is tired. Try to limit the meeting to no more than one and a half or two hours, leaving time to plan for the next meeting and divide up responsibilities.

Schedule in a ten or fifteen minute break if the meeting is more than an hour, or check with people after 45 minutes to see if they need a break. Have refreshments if possible. Ask the group to evaluate how they think the meeting went, what problems came up, what improvements could be made, what went well, and how the facilitator did.

Decision-Making and Group Process
Decide how the group will make decisions, such as majority rule or consensus.

A key task at this point is to agree on a decision-making process. The typical democratic model for decision making is a majority vote, but a divided vote on an issue may leave those on the losing end unhappy, which could cause a split in the group. Most groups who rely on voting use a two-thirds or three-quarters majority in order to be sure of strong support for their decisions. People who object strongly can be invited to develop an alternative plan for the group to consider later or to withdraw their objections.

Group decisions are strongest when *all* members of a group find them to be acceptable, a process known as consensus. Consensus relies on gathering viewpoints and information, engaging in discussion, and putting ideas together in a way that respects everyone and gives birth to new and better thinking. By dividing into small groups, if time is allowed, a group can reach total consensus or agreement, but it may take patience and sometimes additional meetings. Groups who have received training in consensus, whose members have practiced using it, and who have a high degree of trust are often the most successful in using consensus. (See books on consensus decision-making in the Resources section.)

Introducing Proposals for Action
Brainstorm ideas, discuss and evaluate them, check for agreement, and make a plan to carry them out.

Some proposals may come from individual members, a small group, or a committee. Some may be the result of a brainstorming session, where the group generates as many ideas as possible on actions to take, followed by intensive discussion and evaluation by the whole group or a subcommittee. It will save the group time if, when you introduce a proposal, you try to cover all of the questions or issues you think will come up. Then have the group talk about the proposal, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relation to your goals. If improvements to the proposal come up in the discussion and everyone agrees, change it as you go along.

Check for agreement among the members. If there is unanimous support, the proposal is approved. Then move on to planning the logistics, or details, of the action or event. If the support is not unanimous, people who object should be asked to state their concerns.

A consensus model requires the proposal to be modified until it is at least *acceptable* to everyone (no strong opposition), but your organization must decide how much support will be needed to approve proposals. We believe it is best to use at least the beginning stages of consensus for any proposal.

Meeting Tasks
In a new group, or one dealing with complicated issues, a **Facilitator** or **Chairperson** may be selected to make sure the group sticks to the agenda. The focus of a Chair or Facilitator is the *process* of the meeting, not the content. If the Facilitator has strong opinions about an agenda item someone else should take over the task while that topic is being discussed. One way to develop facilitation skills in the group is to provide regular training sessions and to rotate the role of facilitator so that many or all members can practice the skills. As more people become familiar with the job, it may not be necessary to have someone specifically appointed to the task. (See Resources section for information on meeting facilitation.)

A **Note taker** is responsible for writing up the minutes of the meeting and getting them out to the members, with the date and time of the next meeting clearly noted. The minutes should start with the date and name of the group and list the people attending. The note taker should ask the group to slow down or repeat certain points when necessary. Before a final agreement on any proposal, the note taker should go over it carefully with the group to make sure the minutes are accurate. Only major points and decisions need to be recorded, not every word spoken. Another way to keep the main points visible to all is to use a large newsprint pad. Someone other than the note taker may write things on the pad if it is a brainstorming session or a fast-paced discussion.

A **Timekeeper's** role is to signal when the time for a particular subject is up. It's a good idea to give the signal at least five minutes before the closing of the discussion and to allow enough time in the schedule for going over the time limit by a few minutes. If the group agrees, the time can be extended; something else can be taken off the agenda or the meeting can run longer.

Building a Group
Always reach out for new members!

   Once you have a core group you can do outreach on a much larger scale. It is essential to the success of any long-term campaign to continually involve new people who are interested in the group or issue, and to constantly reach out to potential supporters who might not be able to be directly involved right away.   The point is not to get everyone to a meeting but for them to become active members of your group. You want to develop a large base of supporters who can provide funds and be helpful as needed.
        Outreach and recruitment should be central to all of your group's events and activities. You should provide opportunities for people to become informed about an issue and to show support.   Often new people are curious about the group and need some extra encouragement before they decide to get more involved.

Building a Broad Support Base
Recruit one-to-one, follow-up consistently, encourage diverse leadership.

        The best way to recruit new members is one-to-one contact. After you talk to a potential member at an event, information table, or door-to-door, follow up with a phone call. Find out what they are interested in and give them easy ways to get involved. If you have envelopes to stuff, phone calls to make, posters to hang, a booth to staff, signatures to gather, etc. see these simple tasks as opportunities to involve newcomers. With a commitment to recruiting and nurturing new members, your group will have people who stick around to become leaders in the organization. You also have to continually recharge your group with new people and energy as old members leave. Long term members are less likely to burn out if responsibilities in an organization are delegated and rotated to newer people.
        Longer time members should also be encouraged to take on more responsibilities and leadership roles within the group. It is especially helpful to encourage women, working class and low income people, people of color, and others from groups experiencing oppression to become officers and spokespersons for the organization. Having many members with leadership experience means the group won't have to depend on just one or two people when crises arise or public action is needed. A diverse leadership also means the group will have a more flexible or creative response to such situations.

NOTE: The steps in building support are basically the same, no matter what size the group is to begin with: 1) do something that gets the attention of the community in which you are working, such as a rally, demonstration, educational event, or fundraiser; 2) keep track of those who show interest; and 3) follow up on your contacts and get them involved.

Keeping Track of Supporters
Maintain well-organized lists and stay in touch with members.

Gather all the names of people who have expressed interest in your activities and create a "master list." You may want to divide the list into four sections: 1) active members who come to meetings, 2) volunteers for specific tasks who do not attend meetings, 3) supporters who will come to events, and 4) donors to the group who are not otherwise active but who could join one of the first three categories if approached later. When people sign a list, you could ask what kind of involvement they are interested in so that you know who to call for what and which list to put them on.

Many groups maintain their membership list on a computer. This allows them to print out mailing labels and create lists sorted by various categories.

Other ways to keep people informed and involved include: sending out minutes or a newsletter to keep supporters involved and up-to-date; having social events for less active members who just want to support your issue; involving people in a long-term planning so that they can feel some "ownership" of the organization; and holding regular meetings at regular locations so that less-involved members can rely on your organization and know where to go if they want to get more involved.

Using Computer Technology
Find ways to use computers that enhance record-keeping and communication without excluding non-users or neglecting more direct contact.

As of the year 2000, over half of all households in the U.S. have computers. Computers can *contribute* to the problems we struggle to solve, such as the globalization of the economy. However, they can also allow activists and organizations to communicate with each other and to educate themselves and their members. A lack of access to computers may put some groups at a disadvantage in their peace, justice, and environmental work; organizers will be most effective when they can overcome this "digital divide."

While the uses of computers are changing almost daily, there are already many aspects of organizing where community organizers can use computer technology to their advantage. The most obvious use is word processing. Computers can save time and energy in producing well-written and easily readable statements, meeting notes, press releases, etc. They help make flyers, brochures, guides (like this one), and signs more effective through the use of page layout programs. Mailing lists are easier to set up and maintain when using a database program. Financial reports and budgets for future planning can be produced quickly and accurately with spread sheet programs.

Electronic mail (email) and the world wide web are becoming popular as well. Email allows people to quickly and cheaply send information to others via computer networks, saving paper and postage costs as well as time. Email can even be used for meetings, although we believe face-to-face meetings and even conference calls are more effective. The world wide web is a research tool allowing a person sitting at home or in an office or library to gain access to information from around the world. While some information is only available from books or other sources, more and more resources are available through the web.

Computers can't take the place of the personal contact and action that organizing requires, but it can contribute significantly to the information and reasoning people need to take action. Computer resource groups and technical support staff help activists and social change groups to use computers more effectively.

Funding An Organization
Make fundraising a regular part of the program, involve as many people in the group as possible, plan on more than one source of income, and keep good records.

Since money is so central to capitalism, people who work for progressive social change tend to have mixed feelings about it. As long as we live in a money-based economy, however, fundraising will be a necessary part of our organizing.

Raising money is ideally just another aspect of building and maintaining our organizations, a regular part of our outreach and program. Everyone involved with an organization should be seen as a potential fundraiser. As long as we remember that the people who believe in our mission *want* to support it, including with their dollars, it is just a question of deciding who will ask for that support, when they will ask for it, and how.

With that in mind, remember that your program should always come first. As noted elsewhere in this guide, your group needs to have a clear mission statement and a list of goals. Based on your program, the Treasurer, or a budget committee, needs to project as accurately as possible what the group's expenses will be, for things like postage, telephone calls, photocopying, program/event expenses, staff pay, and office rent. This will determine the amount of money to be raised.

Your group may want to have a fundraising committee. In many organizations, the board of directors serves that function. Larger groups may have fundraising as part of the job description of paid staff. In any case, an individual or sub-group needs to be responsible for coming up with a fundraising plan.

A good fundraising plan includes a number of different sources of income. An organization is more financially stable when it has more than one or two kinds of income to depend on. However, your most reliable funding source will always be your members or supporters.

A Real Life Story

A community organization that I worked with in Providence once undertook a two year campaign to open up membership in the United Way to more minority and non-traditional agencies. One result was that the group itself became a member agency!

We thought this was the ultimate victory! No more spaghetti suppers, no more grant writing, no more scratching around for free paper for the mimeo--easy street. When a big federal grant came down for anti-crime organizing, all other fundraising ground to a halt, everybody got a raise, the group bought a van and moved into a nice office.

The dark side soon surfaced, though. The highly motivated but formerly low paid staff started to get resistance from leadership when it came time to challenge the

real power brokers downtown--those folks are big in the United Way! We're going to be cutting our own throats! Leadership started to bid for the job openings, which now were much more lucrative--and those who didn't get hired felt that they had been put down unfairly, and stopped volunteering--if their fellow leader was going to get to take home all that money, well he could make the phone calls!

The final straw was the fight over the van. Who gets to drive it home at night--the new director of the anti-crime project or the president--the fight was vicious and bitter. The staff that thought they'd signed on for a crusade left in disgust, and the organization took a two year nosedive, leading to de-funding by the United Way and death.

The group thought they wanted respectability and acceptance, and were willing to pay any price to get them. In the end, they lost their power and they lost their integrity, and finally, they lost their very existence...

--Dave Beckwith, Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots (P. 13). Reprinted with permission.

Individual contributions from working and middle class people is the largest single source of charitable giving in the U.S. Any organization can accept gifts from supporters; if your donors want to be able to deduct their contributions on their income tax returns, you will need to either incorporate (through your state) and apply for tax exempt status from the federal Internal Revenue Service, or find a group who already has tax exempt status and would be willing to serve as a fiscal sponsor to accept tax deductible donations for your group. Regular mail appeals or telephone calls to your own list of supporters will be a basic part of your plan. Remember to always thank your donors and to provide recognition for them on a regular basis.

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Other sources of income include: passing the hat at meetings or events; selling literature; selling other educational or recreational items; charging fees for services you offer; holding events with entrance fees such as film showings, concerts, or peace fairs; garage sales; run, bike, dance or other "a-thons" for which people pledge individual participants; corporate donations; foundation grants; government grants, etc.

The fundraising plan should not only include the different sources of income you intend to go after, but how much you hope to raise from each source, when you intend to do it, and who will be responsible for it. It's best to lay your plan out on a calendar to be sure money comes in throughout the year; this will hopefully avoid cash flow problems.

Good record-keeping is key to carrying out successful fundraising. Neat and easy-to-understand budgets and finance reports, evaluations of your various fundraising strategies, and clear notes on donors will simplify the fundraising process and increase your supporters' trust in you. An annual report, summarizing your program accomplishments and financial situation, is a good way to keep the

people in your organization informed and aware of what their dollars are doing. See the Resources section for books on fundraising for community organizations.

Strategies for Social Change
Choose the kinds of actions that you think will best achieve your goals.

Strategies are the types of activities groups use to achieve their goals. Goals are the end products your group wants to achieve. Short term goals are things which you can do within a matter of weeks, such as responding to a hate crime or giving material aid to a country experiencing an earthquake or flood. Long term goals may take a long time to accomplish, such as include eliminating racism in your community or ending the military draft.

Groups use one or more kinds of strategies to achieve their goals. These include: (a) Education; (b) Elections, Legislation, and the Legal System, (c) Alternative Institutions; and (d) Direct Action.

Education
Use one or more of the many methods available for changing public attitudes.

Achieving a group's goals nearly always requires a change in public attitudes about a problem or how it can be solved. That's where education comes in. Some educational tactics we mention elsewhere in this guide include: tabling, demonstrations, film showings, forums, concerts (if the performance carries a message), postering, leafleting, press releases and press conferences, and media stories. Other possible educational strategies are: speeches or other presentations, study circles, training sessions, teach-ins, publishing educational materials, informational fairs, and canvassing. All of these bring new ideas or new points of view to the public with the hope of changing their thinking in some way.
@Speeches or other presentations may be made to the public, in schools or churches, with community organizations, on the radio or TV, or through a video. It helps to get a well-known name or "expert," or someone who can speak on a currently hot topic. Whenever possible try to arrange for a captive audience, such as at a church or in a classroom.
@Study circles are set up using written, audio or visual materials that are available on many current issues. They are usually a set number of sessions. Participants read about an issue and discuss it, often with someone assigned to facilitate the process.
@Training sessions prepare people for an event or to do things like public speaking or tabling or direct action. They may also teach a skill such as collecting and testing water samples.
@Conferences and teach-ins are organized on a particular topic or situation. They include many different workshops and presenters. Usually literature is available to pass out.
@Educational materials published by your group may include books, pamphlets, or reports with information not otherwise available or not easily accessible. It's

important to do press work about your publications and to have them available at events connected with the issue. Groups may also sell them as a way to raise funds.
@Informational fairs involve many groups coming together in one place around a particular event or time on the calendar (Earth Day, Labor Day or Indigenous People's Day) or around a particular theme. The groups have tables, literature, and resource people who can talk about their work. The fair may also have presentations, music, and children's programs.
@Canvassing is going door to door to talk with people. Bring materials about the group's issue and/or come prepared with questions to ask about it. In some cases groups also ask for financial support while canvassing.
@Arts and cultural presentations – such as music, theater, comedy, dance, and fine arts (painting, photography, cartoons, etc.) – can be very effective opportunities to change public views and policies. Their entertainment value makes them appear less threatening while having a subtle but effective influence on those who experience them.

Elections, Legislation, and the Legal System
Change laws and/or elect sympathetic people to public office; use the courts to challenge or uphold existing laws.

Law-making, initiatives, referenda, bond issues, constitutional amendments, and law suits may not only change public policy but public opinion as well. Changes in legislation may, for example, offer civil rights protections, adequate funding for important programs, or pollution controls that reduce environmental damage.

Electing people who are more sympathetic to or supportive of social change makes this process easier, whether they are candidates for the school board, union offices, town/city councils, the state legislature, or Congress. Our current governmental system puts much power in the hands of a few who are supposed to represent all the people. When those individuals primarily represent big business, or certain powerful people, or campaign contributors, they leave out those who need government protection the most. When social change groups throw their weight behind certain candidates, those who win are more likely to ally themselves with the group's issues and with what will benefit the whole community.

Finding candidates and political parties worth supporting has been a dilemma for decades within the organizing community. Some see the two traditional parties--Democrats and Republicans--as non-choices and have thrown their weight behind "third" parties such as the Greens, the Labor Party, the Socialist Party, and others. Simply getting access to the ballot has been a major struggle for most "third" parties. Other groups have ignored party labels and focused on individual candidates or on developing a party platform that candidates will agree to follow. This difference in electoral strategy has often caused separations within the organizing community and made coalition work more difficult.

Legislation can be an effective strategy for social change, whether or not it is enacted. Organizing around the law-making process can include: (1) drafting legislation; (2) lobbying; (3) getting out the vote; (4) public education around legislative issues; (5) using the media. If passed, legislation can change public attitudes about an issue, such as the civil rights laws passed in the 1960's.

Some states also allow initiatives and referenda, which means the public can initiate and gain a public vote on crucial legislation that states or cities won't address. This by-passes the representative system that some organizers distrust. A public policy question is written up, then enough petition signatures are collected to bring the question to a public vote. The initiative or referendum question, like the legislative process, provides opportunities for getting out the vote, public education, and media work. Bond issues and constitutional amendments can also, in some cases, be opportunities to organize.

Court challenges to existing laws, as well as other court cases, can dramatically influence public attitudes. Civil disobedience is one effective way to dramatize the wrongness of a particular law or government policy. Individual law suits and class action suits can offer legal protection to those who are being denied it, such as immigrants or disabled persons. Even the threat of legal action can sometimes change minds and policies. In each case, the legal system can be used by organizers as a tool to change public policies and opinion.

A Real Life Story

Maine's pro-choice organizations, women's groups, and other progressive organizations out-organized pro-life groups and religious conservatives in 1999 to handily defeat a referendum question which, if passed, would have banned "partial birth abortion" and threatened the legal right to abortion in the state.

One key to victory was early organizational preparation well before the November vote to insure that voters would support the "No on 1 Campaign." A strong and active steering committee was formed over a year in advance of the vote. Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE) lent the campaign an organizer for the long term to mobilize grassroots opposition to the referendum and begin phone banking. A Grassroots Network was formed early to do self education of volunteer organizers, who became speakers, coordinated letter-to-the-editor campaigns, recruited other activists, and worked on voter education and get-out-the-vote drives.

By Labor Day, PPNNE's Grassroots Network and supporters were already at work as "phone captains" coordinating nightly teams of volunteer phone bankers-- supervising volunteer callers, organizing calls sheets, supplying, and generating an atmosphere of camaraderie and intensity. By the election, volunteers had made over 32,000 Get Out the Vote phone calls, a time-consuming but effective way to insure success at the polls.

--Sarah Standiford, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England

Alternative Institutions
Instead of changing the existing system, create a new one!

Whatever the problem facing a community, part of the solution may be to create alternatives to the current systems of education, economics, technology, law and order, military defense, etc. Alternative institutions motivate people by giving them something to work *for*, not just *against*. Hopefully, over time, such alternatives will take the place of more oppressive systems. Look for groups or businesses in your community that may be engaged in the kinds of efforts listed below.

Education - Many people are creating alternatives to the current educational system, with projects such as homeschooling, private schools, and folk schools. With homeschooling, parents are teaching their children in their own home. Although many parents homeschool for fundamentalist religious reasons, there is a growing number of parents choosing to homeschool as an alternative to what they perceive as oppressive education. Often homeschoolers meet together to support one another and share resources. Some parents and children choose to form an alternative school to carry out the educational principles they believe in. When people get together to teach and learn from their own life experiences, it is called a folk school. For example, poor people may get together to share their insights about the economic system and learn from each other. People who do not have access to established educational institutions often use this model.

NOTE: Alternative institutions motivate people by giving them something to work FOR, not just AGAINST. For example:

*Economics - Cooperatives, barter networks, local money systems, direct marketing groups, and voluntary simplicity provide alternatives to "business as usual." Cooperatives are businesses that are owned and controlled either by the workers or the customers. A worker co-op may consist of farmers who decide to join together to market and sell food. A consumer co-op could be a food buying club or storefront food co-op. A credit union is an example of a consumer cooperative formed to provide financial services.
*Barter networks can meet basic needs outside of the usual money system by exchanging labor or goods directly with other people. Local money projects develop alternative currency and encourage its use in a particular geographic area, in order to support local businesses and workers. Direct marketing groups provide the opportunity to buy and sell goods directly with workers in a way that prevents their exploitation.
*Voluntary simplicity is a movement to consume less and live more lightly and sustainably on the earth. People who wish to live more simply often get together for mutual support, to share a piece of land or cars or farm machinery, or to educate others about the value of simple living.
*Appropriate technology - Scientists, engineers, technicians, business people and consumers have come together in many areas to develop technology that is sustainable for people and the earth. They work to produce the technology, to distribute it, and to promote it in the marketplace. Much of this alternative technology is in the area of energy. It enables many people to "get off the grid," meaning to disconnect from the usual electric power sources.
*Justice - People looking for alternatives to the criminal justice system have developed programs in mediation, conflict resolution, and restitution. Some groups in other countries have developed parallel police departments to meet the needs of groups not served well by the established police force, such as women or poor people. Places like battered women's shelters provide havens for victims of domestic violence who are not adequately protected by the legal system.
*Military defense - At least one organization in the U.S. has been working for years on civilian-based defense, an alternative to military defense. They promote the use of nonviolent methods of resistance to physical force and armed invasion. Other

groups may organize civilian exchanges between conflicting groups, send unarmed individuals to serve as observers and escorts in war zones, or organize material aid to the victims of violence, as ways to encourage nonviolent alternatives to military action.

Direct Action
Confront injustice directly, with actions that are either legal or illegal, as a way to focus public attention.

What is "direct action"? Direct action is defined by its confrontational, public, disruptive, nonviolent, and sometimes illegal nature. Activists have used direct action to create significant social change, such as the lunch counter occupations and the Montgomery bus boycott of the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam and Gulf War protests, and the American Indian Movement occupation of Wounded Knee. These actions have brought attention to injustice and led to the growth of progressive movements.

Direct action can sometimes build an organization and accomplish goals faster than any other tactic. It is most effective when it is carefully planned, when it focuses public attention on injustice in a compelling way, and when other avenues for change have been exhausted.

Some types of confrontational direct action include sit-ins, lock-downs, barrier or border crossings, and marches. Political and economic noncooperation actions ask the larger population to cease supporting "business as usual," with tactics such as war tax resistance, draft resistance, boycotts, strikes, and refusal to obey unjust laws. Street theater, skits, parades, puppets, and other creative public scenes draw attention to an issue, while demonstrations and protests cover everything from singing, chanting, speech making, and stopping traffic, to pouring blood on nuclear warships.

Before your group engages in direct action, carefully consider: Will an action help or hurt your cause? Will you have broad support? Can you convince others that it is necessary? Are you ready to handle the difficulties of your opposition striking back? Let everyone talk about their ideas, fears, and past experiences.

If your group still agrees that direct action is needed, then here are a few guidelines:
1) Figure out where you wish to focus public attention and highlight that aspect of the issue in your action.
2) Time your action for maximum effectiveness.
3) Compile facts on your opposition and your issue.
4) Know your legal rights and possible penalties.
5) Plan and prepare your action carefully
6) Network with other organizations who support your work and who may join your action.
7) Promote your action with the media.
8) Once you have organized a plan, stick to it!
9) Plan for problems that may arise.
10) Appoint people to specific follow-up tasks.

Public Events
Use public events as part of your strategy for change.

Public events are one way to educate people about a specific issue, state your opposition to a government or corporate policy, recruit new members, or raise money. While there are many kinds of events, such as the ones described below, they all demand the same general principles of planning.

Public Forums are an excellent way to get people talking about a specific issue. A panel of knowledgeable speakers each makes a 5-10 minute presentation on a topic, then takes questions from each other and the audience. You may want to invite people from all sides of an issue and, if one side refuses to come, leave an empty chair as a symbol of their lack of willingness to address the public. An experienced moderator is essential to run a panel of people who have strongly opposing views.

Film Showings are a great educational opportunity. Political documentaries or feature films with a socially-conscious theme can be shown on a VCR or at a sympathetic movie theater. Choose films that illustrate the goals of your group. The film could be used as a build-up to a larger action and/or as a fundraiser. Guest speakers can be invited to hold a discussion with the audience afterwards. Many groups give monthly film showings at regular times as an ongoing project to educate the community on a broad number of related subjects.

Benefit concerts are a good way to reach out to new groups but can be difficult to pull off as effective fundraisers. Try to get everything donated: performance space, sound equipment, bands/performers, food. Explain to club owners and musicians why the work that you are doing is important and why it needs funding. Be sure to schedule short and punchy political speeches during the show and make a pitch for money, but also remember that people are there to have fun. If you can, display a large banner on stage that advertises the name of your group and the issue you are raising money for.   Be sure to put up tables with information on the issue and your organization, as well as petitions, sign-up sheets, etc. You can also make money on the refreshments, especially if they are donated by members.

Pickets can be used to keep an issue in the news, pressure top-level administrators or CEO's, and reach out to people involved in a particular institution or business. Pickets are low-input, high return activities. All you need is a dozen or more people with signs and leaflets who are willing to walk in circles for an hour, two hours, or all day. If the number of picketers is expected to be small, schedule it for the busiest traffic hours for either pedestrians or cars and when you know the press can make it. Consult with town officials or experienced activists to find out the local laws that regulate picketing. Talk to passersby in a nonthreatening and informative manner. Work on a simple phrase or two that will get their attention ("have you heard about...?" "help stop ...."), and hand them some literature with a "please read this and think about it" or simply a thank-you.

Demonstrations can get considerable media attention, recruit new people, and empower those already involved in an issue. A large demonstration can make the powers-that-be very nervous and therefore more accountable to the public and your organization. All you need to organize a demonstration is a few people who

have something meaningful to say and a microphone or bullhorn. In most locations, you may need to get a permit; get one well in advance. Demonstrations work best if you can mix speeches with music and chants to loosen up the crowd ("What do we want?" "A livable wage!" "When do we want it?" "Now!"). You can schedule and advertise several speakers in advance, or you can have one speaker scheduled and follow with an open-microphone for others to speak. Remember to circulate a sign-up sheet for your mailing list and be sure to announce your next meeting more than once!

A Real Life Story

"In 1985, in Corvallis, Oregon, the Forest Service had reserved an auditorium for a huge Smokey the Bear birthday party for elementary school children. Earth First! decided to crash the party. They printed a leaflet (in big letters so a child could read it) saying that it was 10 times more likely that Smokey's favorite forest would be destroyed by logging than by a forest fire.

One Earth First! member dressed up in a Smokey the Bear costume (the Forest Service's own Smokey the Bear costume had been destroyed in the wash) and walked into the party. He was immediately surrounded by a sea of adoring kids and started giving out flyers.

The rangers tried to forcibly eject Smokey from the premises without letting on to the kids that anything was wrong, eventually knocking his costume head off. The next day it was logging, not careless use of matches, that dominated the front page of the paper."

--The Activist Cookbook: Creative Actions for a Fair Economy. Reprinted with permission of United for a Fair Economy--see www.ufenet.org

Tabling is helpful when you have something for passersby to do, such as sign a petition, send a postcard to their Congresspersons, buy a ticket for a fundraiser, write a letter, or sign up to work on a campaign. Always be sure to have a sign-up sheet available to build membership. Make the table attractive with posters and banners, and look at people as they walk by or say something to them to catch their attention. Try to table where there will be a large concentration of people and where you will be tolerated by surrounding stores, offices, etc. To develop recognition, display a banner with your organization's name, plus a sign and flyers advertising upcoming events. Tabling in the community will put you in touch with a wide range of people and views and expose people in the community to ideas they won't normally hear in the mainstream media.

7 Steps in Organizing an Event
It's a good idea to form a Planning Committee to coordinate the event and report back to the larger group. The rest of the membership can serve as worker-bees, ready, willing and able to pitch in for specific tasks. The first two of the following steps are especially important; don't skip them!
1) Review Goals: Be sure to select an event that moves the group toward its overall goals. Then set goals for the particular event; for attendance, impact, income, etc. This will give direction to your planning and help you evaluate the event.

2) Plan: Now that you have an idea and a set of goals, ask: Who is it for? Where will it be? When will it be? What will it cost? If necessary, rethink your goals.
3) Divide up responsibilities: Make a list of everything that needs to be done and by what date. Divide up responsibilities among members of the group: getting a rally permit, reserving rooms, making food, etc. Each Committee member should take responsibility for making sure that a group of specific tasks will be completed, either by doing them her or himself or, better yet, by encouraging others from the larger group to help. Back up responsibilities in case the original worker can't follow through, and decide on a process to keep track of how things are going.
4) Logistics and networking: Follow through on the list of responsibilities developed by the Planning Committee. Get other groups to endorse, co-sponsor or help organize the event in order to broaden the support for the issue.
5) Outreach/Publicity: Make sure your supporters and the public know about the event. See Publicity and Media suggestions elsewhere in this Guide.
6) Last minute preparation: Plan what needs to be done on the day of the event - calling the media, getting a microphone, doing setup/cleanup, providing a literature/donation/signup table, preparing food, etc. Be sure specific people are assigned to these tasks.
7) Evaluation: It is important for at least the Planning Committee to sit down and evaluate the event: What did we do right? What could we do better? This will pull your group together and allow you to improve your public events over time.

Publicity and Media
Carefully plan your publicity strategy to involve and impact as many people as possible.

        Effective publicity is essential to the success of any event or campaign. Since the power of community groups depends on *people*, getting the word out to the public is one of the most important things you can do. It requires a well-thought-out strategy based on the following guidelines:
#Simplicity: Keep your message short, understandable, and simple. People should get a good idea of what you're doing with just a brief description. Clarifying a message has the added benefit of clarifying your mission as well.
#Language: Don't use jargon, slogans, or acronyms without defining them. A complex issue should be explained in ways that everyone can understand.
#Positive Approach: Balance criticism with positive alternatives. Progressive groups are often criticized for over-emphasizing the negative.
#Repetition: Use several kinds of media - radio, TV, newspapers, internet, other organizations' newsletters, postering, etc. People should hear or read about your event at least *seven* times, so
#Reputation: Publicize your group as well as your event by taking every opportunity to list your group's name, a contact person, the time of your next meeting, and how people can get involved.

Publicity Ideas

Personal Contact and Word of Mouth - Personal contact is one of the best (and cheapest) means of publicity. Each of your members should be encouraged to bring at least a half dozen people to an event. Practice by telling each other, in three easy sentences, what the event is and what it is supposed to accomplish. This also helps in writing up calendar announcements, leaflets and poster language.

Posters - Keep it short, simple, loud, and eye-catching. Make your main message BIG-- people should be able to see it from 20 feet away. Make the rest of your text SHORT-- people should be able to read it in less than one minute. Use just one type of lettering and no more than two colors. Don't make it too crowded -- leave white space on the page. Clear and powerful pictures and graphics can really add to a poster. Don't forget to state the time, date, and place of the event. Include a telephone number for further information. Put up posters in areas where a lot of people hang out. Re-poster high traffic areas several times before an event.

Leaflets - Leaflets are good for publicizing an immediate and urgent event, like an emergency rally, and for distributing information to passersby at demonstrations, tablings, vigils, or actions. One person can distribute several hundred leaflets in an hour. Smile and be cheerfully unthreatening when handing them out and thank people who show an interest. Be ready for rejection, as many people will ignore you, or make unfriendly remarks. Do an internet version of the flyer to be sent out via email networks.

Rapid Response Networks - When you want to mobilize your supporters for an emergency action or lobbying effort, a phone and email tree is an extremely useful and efficient tool. You can start a rapid response committee and select a coordinator who is responsible for initiating the network. The coordinator organizes the information to be given out and contacts the committee members, who each have a list of people to notify. Keep the message to two or three sentences; if phoning, ask each person to write it down as you give it. If you can't reach the next person on the tree, go on down the list until you *do* reach someone. The last person on the network should contact the first person to make sure the circle has been completed. Email is less personal but allows you to contact a larger number of people quickly.

Using the Media
Use the media thoughtfully to increase the impact of your message.

The impact of any event or action your group plans can be greatly increased by media attention. Larger events can reach an audience of hundreds of thousands if covered by a TV station or daily paper. Media attention can put you in contact with people in your community working on similar issues.

One guideline is to spend 10% of your organizing time on attracting the press. You can form an on-going media committee or an ad hoc (short term) one to handle a specific event. A group often needs a well-spoken, informed spokesperson to make public statements and do radio or TV interviews. Although this role can be shared, it is best to use members who have been most active, who know the details of the issues thoroughly so that they can respond accurately to spontaneous questions, and who know the history of the group.

At your event, include a table marked "PRESS." Hand each reporter printed information and get their names so that you can find out later if they ran a story.

Tips on Media Access:
• Time your event for good media coverage - when some big story related to your cause is in the news, when TV crews have slow news days, or when newspapers aren't tied up with their final deadlines. Fridays and Mondays are not usually good for event coverage. Often "big name" reporters schedule their assignments as much as two weeks in advance.
• Keep an updated list of names, addresses, fax and telephone numbers, and email addresses of editors, reporters, and other contacts at newspapers, television stations, and radio stations, along with their usual deadlines. Lists of statewide media are often available through larger organizations that deal with the media on a regular basis.
• Include the Assignment Editor and City Desk for all local TV news stations (including cable) and daily newspapers. Include the News Editor at key publications, local weekly papers, and radio stations with news departments.   Also include the News Desk at the nearest offices of Associated Press (AP) and other press services. When talking to the AP or other press service reporter for your area, ask that the event be listed in the "day book," which is a list that other media refer to for scheduled events.
• Get the names of any journalists specifically assigned to cover your topic (environment, business, foreign affairs) or your geographic area.
•For calendar listings in print media, send announcements three weeks in advance to the Managing Editor, who makes the decisions about what goes in and what doesn't. Most television stations, except for cable TV stations, don't do calendar listings or Public Service Announcements (PSA's). Send announcements for radio or cable TV PSA's two or more weeks in advance of the event and follow it up in a couple of days to see when and how often they can run it. By making personal contact and impressing the station with the importance of the event, you may be invited to do a radio interview.

Press Advisories and Releases
Send press advisories well in advance and press releases just before an event.

Press Advisories are notices to the press about an upcoming event and should go out six to ten days in advance.   For weeklies, send your material two weeks in advance of the deadline. Always use the group's logo or letterhead and clearly list the name and telephone number of your contact person on the upper right corner. At the top of the page, write "To: News Assignment Desk and Photo Desk (if there is a photo opportunity). Beneath this write " Press Advisory " and "To Be Released for (date)," then write a brief statement of the coming event, key people involved, purpose, and contact persons, with telephone numbers for further information. Follow up with a phone call in 3 days - this will greatly increase your chances of getting coverage.
Press advisories are always followed by a Press Release just before the event. Use the same layout as for the Advisory, but under your logo write "FOR IMMEDIATE

RELEASE" with the date of the event under this. The first sentence should describe the whole event. The body of a press release should be written in clear, simple language, with short sentences. Remember that reporters may use the exact text of your release, so include your strongest facts or opinions. The usual length is one page. Anything about your event that ties in with local issues or relates to current news will attract attention.

Mail your press release to the Managing Editor, City Editor or Assignment Editor for each media outlet on the list so that it will arrive three or four business days before your event. In the case of weeklies, send it a week in advance of the deadline. Call the media two days before the event, weeklies two days before the deadline. Call each media outlet (except weeklies) on the day of the event in their first hour of business. If they don't know about the event, offer to fax them the press release (make sure you have access to a fax machine). Write down those you expect to come.

If possible, designate one person to follow up with reporters who seemed particularly receptive. It's important to make friends with the media and build good relationships over time.

Press Conferences
Time a press conference to coincide with a big event or story.

A press conference is a formal presentation of your case designed exclusively for the press. The key question to ask when deciding whether to have a press conference is, "Will reporters come?" You will be most successful if there is some other big event that you are responding to with a different point of view, or when a big story that has been brewing for weeks or months finally breaks, such as the results of a referendum. A press conference announcement only needs to be one page long, usually with the information about time, location, topic, participants, etc. spelled out in outline form. Make sure reporters receive it at least two days before the event. Make follow-up calls to key reporters immediately and on the morning of the event.

Research
Research gives us valuable information; getting that information can be very simple, or quite difficult.

Much of what we see in the media is written and controlled by those with money and power. How we perceive the world is largely determined by how the media present it. It is difficult to call attention to problems when the people responsible for them are able to control the discussions about them.

One essential tool of activists is research. Through research we can expose what's going on behind closed doors and pressure those in power. We can also build support for our cause by showing people the facts they wouldn't otherwise see.

Research can be as simple as going to the library for news reports, town offices for public records, state or federal agencies for studies, or browsing the web. You can get an amazing amount of information just by asking institutions for data.

Alternative press reports are some of the best sources for research in the media. By doing and publicizing such research, your movement can gain both confidence and members. Activists have used this information to win successful campaigns in the past.

Information is power, and being able to access information is an essential democratic right. However, getting it can be very difficult. People who benefit from withholding certain facts will often try to keep you from them, such as by ignoring your requests. Most people do not realize that they may be legally entitled to records and data through the Freedom of Information Act and other laws.

You may need to file Freedom of Information Act requests (FOIA's) to get certain documents. Filing FOIA's can be a long process but can have important results. For instance, you may find out how much money certain corporations are putting into research, what pesticides and chemicals are used on roadsides, what animal testing certain labs are doing, who are on the boards of the regulatory agencies, etc. There are several manuals that will help you understand the investigative process; see the Resources section for more information.

Campaigns, Coalition Building and Long-Range Planning

Campaigns
Clarify your goals and brainstorm strategies to create a campaign; discuss it, revise it, and evaluate it after it's done.

A campaign is a series of activities, or strategies, used to reach a group's goals. Campaigns are more likely to be successful if your entire group has an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. It is crucial that strategies and the means to accomplish them are consistent with your group's mission. Sometimes your first goal will be to simply bring the issue and the organization to the public eye, before any other campaigning can be effective. Other times a group forms around an issue that is already "hot" and the best strategy is to get to work immediately on ways to achieve a certain outcome. Clarifying the outcomes desired, the means to accomplish them, and the funds needed, are the first steps in developing a campaign.

You may wish to set aside a few hours to plan at a time other than your regular meeting. Using large newsprint and some markers, conduct a brainstorming session to identify your goals. Then come up with a list of strategies and tactics for achieving those goals. After you narrow down the list to a few goals, make a timeline. Include events beyond your control (holidays, election day, etc.), other actions and events you have planned, and all preparations and deadlines leading up to them. Adjust your timeline to make it realistic.

Pretend you are the opposition and hold a strategy session from their perspective. How would you effectively work against your own campaign? Identify weaknesses and adjust your own strategy accordingly. After the campaign, look back at your goals, tactics, and timeline and do a thorough group evaluation. Save this evaluation and review it when you plan a new campaign. Thinking and planning strategically can make the difference between ho-hum campaigns that get no

attention, and dynamic, creative campaigns that excite people, build your organization, and create real change.

Coalition-Building
Use coalition's to create the people-power needed to achieve certain goals. Evaluate whether or not particular coalitions will work for your group.

There are many advantages to achieving your group's goals through working with other organizations in a coalition. Often, a group's mission and goals can only be reached with the power of large numbers of people or organizations. A coalition can take several forms. One group can serve as the lead organization (setting policies, providing spokespeople) for the coalition, or all groups can participate equally, with decisions worked out together by group representatives.

Coalitions can speak with a voice much louder than any individual member group alone. They can develop long term connections and relationships which promote unity and prevent splits, as groups try to accomplish their other goals.

Coalitions may have disadvantages as well. Some member groups might benefit much more than others from the coalition. The coalition may not operate in a democratic way and may leave some groups out of the decision-making process. Member groups may lose control over the problem they are trying to solve by giving up power to others. This is a particular concern for groups of people who experience oppression and powerlessness in our society - women, people of color, working class or low income groups, youth, disabled people, etc. This should not discourage organizers from being involved in coalitions as long as these problems are addressed.

Long Range/Strategic Planning
Use a long range plan to more effectively reach goals that will take awhile to reach.

It's rare for a group to have only short term goals that are achieved quickly. Usually a group's mission is broad, with many goals, and it needs some time to reach them. In such cases, a long range plan can help to gradually build support for what you want. Ask an established group for a copy of its long range plan to see how one looks.

A long range/Strategic plan consists of five steps:
   (1)   Decide on or confirm the group's mission;
   (2)   Agree on what the group has done and is doing now;
   (3)   Identify medium and long term goals for the future (next year, 3 years, 5 years, longer);
   (4)   Decide on strategies and tactics (specific tools such as petitioning or lobbying) to achieve those goals;
   (5)   Make sure the plan is carried out. See the Resources section for a guide to long range planning.

It is best to hold a one-day (or longer) meeting or set aside time at several regular group meetings to create a long range plan, using a process like the 5-step one listed above. Break down the plan into goals (Goal 1, Goal 2...) or by the work each committee or sub-group of your organization will be doing. Often the goals and committee projects will go together.

Follow up (step 5) is crucial. The group can have a nicely written plan, but it is a recipe for failure if there is no one to oversee whether it is being followed or the goals being reached. Choose a person or committee to watch over the plan and set aside time at regular group meetings to measure actual success against your goals. Sometimes you may feel your group is spinning its wheels, but when you look back at the long range plan you may find a lot more success than you thought.

Maintaining a Group

Building Relationships
Personal relationships are the building blocks of organizations; good ones build strong organizations, not-so-good ones can destroy organizations. Incorporate strategies for working on personal growth, conflict resolution, and acceptance of diversity.

Community organizing is based on the idea that "a people united will never be defeated" (a popular chant in many grassroots groups). However, one of the biggest challenges for activists is knowing how to *keep* their groups united. Many issues in U.S. society make it difficult for people to come together and work effectively, such as economic injustice, racism, sexism, consumerism, etc. These difficulties may be disguised as personality conflicts, power struggles, financial conflicts, political and ideological conflicts, or blaming a single person for the problems of an organization.

A clear and effective group structure and decision-making process will be a big help in preventing and resolving difficulties. But in order to keep going for the long haul, groups also need consider how to build strong, long-lasting relationships among their members and supporters. We need to ask things like: Do we listen well to each other, with respect and caring? Are we aware of the ways we have been affected by the oppressions in our society and how we act them out with others? Can we take a stand for each other? Can we interrupt behavior that is hurtful to the cause without rejecting the person?

Unfortunately this can get distorted into a requirement that everyone follow the same, usually white, middle class, Protestant, standards of behavior. No getting excited, no waving your arms around, no getting loud. Listening with respect and caring doesn't necessarily mean people can't disagree vehemently with each other. Before a group comes up with ground rules, there needs to be lots of room for people to identify what makes them feel respected and safe.

Introducing your members to tools for personal growth, conflict resolution, and acceptance of diversity can be extremely effective in building a strong team. One-to-one relationships are considered the building blocks of any effective community organization. Individuals are more likely to say "yes" when asked for support and involvement if they are asked by someone they know and trust.

Members will stay involved in the group if they consider others in the group their friends; it is harder to leave a friendship than to leave a group.

The Long Haul
Take good care of your group and yourself, and have fun. This will help you keep going when your goals take awhile to accomplish.

It will take years to accomplish the mission and goals of most groups. Therefore, it is crucial for the organizers and leaders of successful groups to pass on their knowledge and skills to other members and to organize the group so that it will survive and grow even if the founders leave.

Some tips for groups:
*Maintain a core of people who keep the organization going. Core members should change over time, even if group founders are still active.
*Create an organizational structure that is written and works well over time. Ask other groups for copies of their by-laws, policies and procedures to see how they are organized.
*Plan regular education and training for members so they can take on leadership and more active roles with confidence.
*Establish dependable and ongoing funding for the group so it can continue in spite of ups and downs.
*Give support and appreciation to group members so they experience organizing as fun and worth continuing.

Some tips for individual organizers:
*Find ways to take care of yourself and have others give you the support you need, financially, emotionally, and physically, to keep going.
*Have a sense of humor and make sure organizing is something to enjoy. Remember the feminist proverb: "She who laughs, lasts."
*Get paid to do organizing or find a source of financial support which will allow you to volunteer your time as an organizer.
Organizing can be a joy as well as challenging, hard work. The more organizers can find the fun in organizing, the easier it is to keep on keeping on!

A Final Real Life Story

I started organizing with an all business attitude that looked at a meeting as being over when the gavel fell, and at the hanging out and laughing and drinking coffee afterwards as a distraction and a waste of time. I missed the community part of community organizing.

These people were building a community, and sharing their fears, their hopes and their vision of the future over a beer at the club after the action was just as important as the planning meeting. I learned that meals and birthdays and Christmas parties and the summer picnic are organizing too. I learned that the posters that got made in the office with pizza and pop by the gang of volunteers we could scare up on a Friday night were far more important to the organization than the same posters made separately in peoples' homes.

I learned that using humor to embarrass a public official brought a feeling of power to folks that straight, serious conversation about our rights and their responsibilities could never come close to. I learned the power of FUN! and I vowed to try to make organizing at least as much fun as TV...

--Dave Beckwith, Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots (P. 15). Reprinted with permission.

Resources

This list is by no means all inclusive (and only includes resources up to the year 2000). Many of the resources given here will list other valuable resources. (If there are letters in parentheses after the name of a resource, it means the resource is available from a group listed in the organizations section.)

Organizing (General):
Alinsky, Saul. Reveille for Radicals, Random House, 1989.
Alinsky, Saul. Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals, Random House, 1989.
Anner, John. Beyond Identity Politics, Chardon Press, 3781 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94611, (888) 458-8588, chardon@chardonpress.com, 1996.
Beckwith, Dave, and Cristina Lopez. Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots (booklet), Center for Community Change, (202) 342-0594.
Bobo, Kim, Steve Max and Jackie Kendall. Organizing for Social Change; A Manual for Activists in the 1990's, Seven Locks Press, (800) 354-5348, 1996.
Center for Campus Organizing. Campus Organizing Guide, 1995. (CCO)
Cohen, Cathy, Kathleen Jones, and Joan Tronto. Women Transforming Politics, NYU Press, 1997.
Coover, Virginia, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser, Christopher Moore. Resource Manual for A Living Revolution, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, PA.
Delgado, Gary. Beyond the Politics of Place, Chardon Press (see address above), 1994.
Dingerson, Leigh, and Sarah Hay. Co/Motion: Guide to Youth-Led Social Change, 1998. (WRL)
Hedemann, Ed, ed. War Resisters League Organizer's Manual, 1986. (WRL)
Kahn, Si. How People Get Power, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 1994.
Kahn, Si. Organizing: A Guide for Grassroots Leaders, NASW, 1991.
Naples, Nancy. Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing across Race, Class, and Gender, Routeledge Press, 1997.
Pick, Maritza. How to Save Your Neighborhood, City, or Town: The Sierra Club Guide to Community Organizing, Sierra Club, 1993.
Salomon, Larry. Roots of Justice; Stories of Organizing in Communities of Color, Chardon Press (see above), 1998.
Shaw, Randy. The Activist's Handbook: A Primer for the 1990's and Beyond, 1996. (WRL)
Staples, Lee. Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing, Praeger, 1984.

Consensus, Conflict Resolution & Diversity
Butler, CT Lawrence, and Amy Rothstein. On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking, Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1991. (CLD)
Center for Conflict Resolution. Building United Judgment, 1981. Fellowship for Intentional Community, (540) 894-5126.
Gastil, John. Democracy in Small Groups: Participation, Decision-making and Communication, New Society Publishers, 1993. (CLD)
Kaner, Sam. Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, New Society Publishers, 1996. (CLD)
Kritek, Phyllis Beck. Negotiating at an Uneven Table: A Practical Approach to Working with Difference and Diversity, Jossey-Bass Publishers.
Scott, Jon and Eileen Flanigan. Achieving Consensus, Crisp Publications Inc., 1996. (CLD)

Direct Action
War Resisters League and Donnelly/Colt. A Handbook for Nonviolent Action, 1989. (WRL)
United for a Fair Economy. The Activist Cookbook: Creative Actions for a Fair Economy, 1997, UFE, (617) 423-2148, stw@stw.org, www.ufenet.org

Alternative Institutions
Co-op America. National Green Pages; A Directory of Products and Services for People and the Planet. Co-op America, 1612 K St., NW, #600, Washington, DC, 20006, (202) 872-5307, www.greenpages.org.

Long-Range Planning
Bryson, John. Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement, Jossey-Bass, 1995. (CLD)
Nadler, Cerald, and Shozo Hibino. Breakthrough Thinking: The Seven Principles of Creative Problem Solving, 2nd Edition, Prima Publishing.
Peace Development Fund (PDF). Thinking Strategically: A Primer on Long-Range Strategic Planning for Grassroots Peace &Justice Groups. PDF, PO Box 1280, Amherst, MA 01004, (413)256-8306, PDF@PEACEFUND.ORG

Media & Publicity
Benton Communications Foundation. Strategic Communication for Non-Profits, 1990. BCF, 1710 Rhode Island Ave. NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20036, (202)857-7829.
Bonk, Kathy, Henry Griggs, and Emily Tynes. Jossey-Bass Guide to Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-By-Step Guide to Working with the Media.
Brigham, Nancy. How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers, F&W Publications, 1991. (CLD)
Ryan, Charlotte. Prime-Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing, South End Press, Cambridge, MA.
Salzman, Jason. Making the News: A Guide for Nonprofits and Activists, Westview Press.

Research

American Civil Liberties Union. Step-by Step Guide to Using the Freedom of Information Act. ACLU, 125 Broad St., New York, NY 10004, (212)549-2500, www.aclu.org.

Weinberg, Steve. The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995. (Available from Investigative Reporters and Editors, 26A Walter Williams Hall, UMC School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211.

Fundraising

Graham, Christine. Keep the Money Coming: A Step-By-Step Strategic Guide to Annual Fundraising, Pineapple Press, 1992. (CLD)

Grassroots Fundraising Journal (6 issues/year). Chardon Press, 3781 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94611, (888) 458-8588, chardon@chardonpress.com.

Klein, Kim. Fundraising for Social Change, Chardon Press, 1996. Chardon Press (see above).

Robinson, Andy. Grassroots Grants: An Activist's Guide to Proposal Writing, Saltus Press, 1994. (CLD)

Organizations (Some publish their own magazines or newsletters)

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), 2101 S. Main St., Little Rock, AR 72206, (501) 376-2528, aracorn@acorn.org.

ADAPT (disability rights organizing), 201 S. Cherokee, Denver, CO 80223, (303) 733-9324. adaptden@plinet.com, www.adapt.org.

AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, 815 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20006, (800) 848-3021, www.aflcio.org.

Center for Campus Organizing (CCO), 165 Friend St. #1, Boston, MA 02114, (617) 725-2886, cco@igc.org, www.cco.org.

Center for Community Change, 1000 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20007, (202) 342-0594, www.communitychange.org.

Center for Living Democracy (CLD), PO Box 8187, Brattleboro, VT 05304-8187, (802) 254-1234, info@livingdemocracy.org, www.livingdemocracy.org.

Center for Third World Organizing, 1218 E. 21st St., Oakland, CA 94606, (510) 533-7583, ctwo@ctwo.org, www.ctwo.org.

Highlander Research and Education Center, 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, TN 37820, (423) 933-3443, hrec@igc.org, www.hrec.org.

Industrial Areas Foundation, 220 W. Kinzie, 5th Floor, Chicago, IL 60610, (312) 245-9211.

Midwest Academy, 28 E. Jackson Blvd, Ste 605, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 427-2114, mwacademy1@aol.com. www.midwestacademy.com.

National Organizers Alliance, 715 G St. SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202) 543-6603, noa@igc.org, www.noacentral.org.

Southern Empowerment Project, 343 Ellis Ave., Maryville, TN 37804, (423) 984-6500, souempow@bellsouth.net, www.southernempowerment.org.

Southwest Research and Information Center, PO Box 4524, Albuquerque, NM 87106, (505) 346-1455, WorkbookEd@aol.com, www.SRIC.org.

War Resisters League (WRL), 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012, (212) 228-0450, wrl@igc.org, www.nonviolence.org/wrl.