



Community and Stakeholder Engagement for RCO's
Extension Learning May 2022

Tools for Community Organizing

Hello! This month I want to give you additional tools around community organizing. One resource that is very helpful is the Resident Action Project's Toolkit for Organizing. While this toolkit is focused on housing advocacy, the tools of organizing discussed are applicable to other subjects including recovery. Let's take a minute to get an overview of the toolkit.

The first section you will come to is [Community Organizing 101](#). Here you will read about basic concepts/terms that are fundamental to organizing and steps to take a plan and take action.

[Community Meetings](#) are similar to some of the meetings we discussed last month such as public forums and community conversations. In organizing, these meetings are used to discuss potential actions and strategies to address community issues.

[One on Ones](#) are a great tool to build meaningful relationships with your base and potential members. It allows you to share more about your cause and mission and how potential members could be involved.

[Canvassing](#) involves knocking on doors and personally inviting people to be apart of your cause. Check on the link to learn about 10 steps to organize a canvass.

[Tabling](#) allows you to go to where potential prospective members are to give them information about your cause and efforts. Click the link to learn more about how to plan and execute a tabling event.

[Social Media](#) is a great online organizing tool. You can use social media to outreach, organize events, take action online and engage in one on ones and meetings. Click on the link to learn more about how to use social media in your organizing efforts.



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Organizing Tactics & Campaign Planning

The ReAmp Network is a midwestern network of over 130 nonprofits and foundations with a mission to increase collaboration and implement strategies to develop climate change solutions in the Midwest. In their work, they utilize organizing principles and have produced several resources that highlight organizing tactics and campaign planning. Let's take a look at a couple of these resources.

Their [Grassroots Tactics Planning Guide](#) is a great a resource for people wanting to better understand organizing tactics in order to build movement toward change in their community. It contains descriptions of over 20 tactics for organizing and is a great learning tool. Take a look at the manual to read about these tactics and to hear success stories of communities that have utilized some of these strategies! And while ReAmp's focus is on climate change and energy policy, the tactics of organizing are the same and are applicable to other disciplines and community issues.

A second great resource from ReAmp is [The Art of Campaign Planning Guide](#). In this guide, you will learn how to develop a successful issue campaign. An issue campaign is an organized effort to inform others of your issue and to mobilize their support. This guide includes industry best practices on issue campaign planning so that you can build a strong campaign.

As you browse through these resources, consider which tactics are a good fit for your work and which are not. Not every tactic is a good fit for every community. And if you are not at the place of organizing right now in your work, bookmark these resources so that you can return to them later.



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Engaged Communities

Hello! Now let's take a minute to listen to a TedTalk titled "[Social Change Needs Engaged Communities, Not Heroes](#)" (14 min, 9 sec). I love this talk because it really focuses on the power of community. A lot of times we look at people who are leading change in their community and we think that they are unique or have special qualities about them that allow them to lead and be as successful as they are. But this is not necessarily the case. These are ordinary people who were able to do extraordinary things because of the community that surrounded them. This TedTalk really highlights this. The speaker points out how much good people can do when they engage and connect with their community versus waiting on a superhero to save the day.

He gives a number of examples of ordinary people doing great things. Such as small group of people reducing crime in El Salvador through a night run that mobilized over 500 people and another example where parents held public school officials accountable to providing equitable education for their children.

As you watch this talk, consider the following questions:

- What organizing tactics were utilized? Were you surprised by how small actions led to big changes?
- How successful were the efforts?
- What was the background of those who participated in creating change?
- Which tactics will fit well with your community?

After viewing the talk, I hope you notice the following key takeaways:

1. Ownership – communities identify their issue, name it and decide the action that is to be taken to advocate for change. They take ownership of the change process and take the lead in deciding how they will go about it.



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Building a Base – The Power of our Stories

Another concept I want to take a deeper dive into this month is building a base. How do we get people to join us in our efforts? Let's take a minute to listen to a TedTalk titled "[Inspiring Social Change through Community Organizing](#)" (13 min, 59 sec).

This talk is great because it really highlights the power of our stories. The speaker asserts that we give our time to efforts that are meaningful to us. And to know what is meaningful to someone, we have to know their story. Doing this work will help build a network of people who are passionate about the work, committed and willing to join the movement.

I think peers are great examples of the power of a story. Individuals with lived experience who support others who are in recovery or not yet in recovery are a huge asset to behavioral health efforts. The power of your stories allows others to connect with you in a way that they feel heard and interested in what you have to say.

As you listen to the talk, consider the following questions:

- What is your story?
- When is the last time you asked someone to share their story?
- Have there been times in your life when you have seen the power of someone sharing their story? What happened as a result?

I also want to point out that while this talk focuses on stories, and elevates them over surveys, surveys are also a good tool to engage people in our efforts. They serve a different purpose such as allowing people who aren't able to attend a meeting to still participate and voice their thoughts, and they allow us to see trends across community members quickly as well. Don't think of surveys vs. stories, think of them as surveys *and* stories.



2. Challenge the norm – When a community selects the activity it wants to engage in, it should be an activity that fits with the community, but it should also challenge the norm. This can be challenging a perception or the status quo or more, but the actions should challenge a contributing factor to the problem.
3. Use the tools that are already available in your own community – when you are looking for action to take, consider tools that are already available in your community. Usually this is impactful because everyone is already familiar with these tools and can easily understand and relate. This makes it easier for people to get on board with your efforts.