



# Creating Change in Your Community: Lead-Free NJ's Community Organizing Toolkit

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## Summary

This toolkit is intended to serve as an adaptable resource for Lead-Free NJ community members and Community Hubs, as well as other organizations working to effect change in their communities. It is meant to provide practical advice and guidance that can be applied not only to lead-free community engagement and policy advocacy, but to other issue areas as well.

The toolkit draws from many community organizing resources, academic sources, and lived experiences of organizers and other experts within New Jersey. It is our hope that this toolkit will assist you as you educate, research, listen, and mobilize your community to create lasting policy change.

For more information about Lead-Free NJ, as well as the important role that communities play in fighting to ensure that our children are free of lead poisoning and able to thrive in a lead-safe environment, please visit [www.leadfreenj.org](http://www.leadfreenj.org).

### **About Lead-Free NJ**

Lead Free NJ is an inclusive and equitable collaborative committed to ensuring that New Jersey's children are free from lead poisoning and that our environment is lead-safe by advocating for changes to state and local policy. The collaborative seeks to eliminate racial and economic inequities by focusing on legacy lead hazards in low-income communities and/or communities of color, while also fostering the conditions for children to be free from lead poisoning statewide.

### **About New Jersey Future**

Founded in 1987, New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible and equitable growth, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments to foster healthy, strong, resilient communities; protect natural lands and waterways; increase transportation choices beyond cars; provide access to safe, affordable, and aging-friendly neighborhoods; and fuel a strong economy for everyone. New Jersey Future does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance. Embracing differences and advancing fairness is central to New Jersey Future's mission and operations. New Jersey Future is firmly committed to pursuing greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through its programs, internal operations, and external communications.

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## Getting Started

### Choosing a Community-centered Campaign

What is our “why?” What is our “how?” What constitutes a “win?” These are all questions we must consider when choosing a campaign.

**The “why” is the reason we start.** Ultimately, the basis of all organizing originates from an emotional response to a situation. An action or force causes us to react. Our “why” is one of the most important factors in organizing, because when we lose sight of our goals, we can always return to our original motivations. When considering the “why” as it relates to Lead-Free NJ, the data is very clear regarding the effects of lead exposure on children and adults. Our “why” is to prevent this from happening to others by ensuring that exposure sources are remediated. We must remove or contain lead everywhere, regardless of its source.

**The second step in choosing a campaign involves the “how.”** The “how” is the strategy we implement in response to our “why.” It is important to always be adaptable and flexible as you approach the “how.” Countless organizations have failed and become irrelevant by not adapting their “how.” As an organizer, you know how to best organize your community. For example, you can determine if a social media approach, rather than a door-to-door, is best. But, as you develop, remember that you must not limit yourself to one set strategy. As an organizer, remember that the game changes every day, and sometimes you must pivot your organization to evolve and change as well.

**As you develop your “how,” you have to remember that winning means several different things.** Organizations love to win big policy changes or attract thousands of people to their rallies, but sometimes winning means educating a local resident about an issue they had no idea about before. Sometimes winning means providing a water filter for a family that is expecting a child. There are small wins and losses in organizing every day. The word “win” was intentionally used here, because just by choosing your “why” and “how,” you are already winning. Determine a realistic goal, but always remain aggressive. Dream more and demand more.

**Determine a realistic goal, but always remain aggressive. Dream more and demand more.**

### Building an Inclusive Community

**What does it mean to build a community?** What is a diverse community? What does an equitable community look like? Who does this issue affect? What does it mean to work in a community? What does an accountability process look like? These are all questions to consider when building an inclusive community.

The first step to organizing is making sure that everything is intentional, and the best way to do that is to understand what it means to build a community. There are different ways to organize community and to build community. This is just one example of how to do so. Oxford Languages defines “community” as “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common

attitudes, interests, and goals.”<sup>1</sup> Communities are not just based on region or locality, but on shared common interests, as well.

For example, Lead-Free NJ works with three Community Hubs in Trenton, Newark, and Paterson, all of which are lead-impacted communities in New Jersey. These three Community Hubs can be broken down into hyper-local neighborhoods as well. There is a phrase in organizing that goes: *You have to meet the people where they are*. This is important because you must first understand a community in order to organize it. As organizers and organizations, major assumptions are often made about the community we are working with. Meeting people where they are means that, before launching a campaign or project, we understand the community’s position in terms of its knowledge, skills, and needs. As organizers for Lead-Free NJ, we must build the knowledge of community members about the dangers of lead from both environmental and health perspectives. Education is the way we begin to build the Lead-Free NJ community.

**There is a phrase in organizing that goes: *You have to meet the people where they are.***

**Another cornerstone for building community is trust.** Throw out any preconceived notions about your community and what organizers or organizations think is best for the community. Enter into a dialogue instead. This means starting a relationship and gradually fostering trust. Trust is hard to build, and this process happens over time. There is no “one size fits all” for building trust; it varies depending on the community. Some helpful tips are:

- Do not promise things that you, as an organizer or organization, cannot deliver.
- Be honest about timelines and goals.
- Be consistent.
- Listen more than you speak.

**All communities are diverse, but what does that mean?** It means that there is no single, quick-fix solution to meeting people where they are. Different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and levels of education mean that the intentionality of our actions matter—from the language on the printouts of materials to whether you canvass a neighborhood on a particular day of the week. As an organizer or organization, these things matter. To generate the traction you want on any issue, it is critical that you do your research about your community. For Lead-Free NJ Community Hubs, community profiles are available to serve as great starting points on demographics and lead issues in the community, but they do not offer the complete picture. Building trust and partnering with community members will help you understand your diverse community and get the work done through integrity and solidarity. As you gain more knowledge about your community, this will put you in the best position to mobilize that community.

Lastly, as an organization and organizer, it is important to remember that you will never know everything there is to know about a community, even if you live there. Every city block, street, and neighborhood is different. Knowing this is vital to the success of our work. Educating ourselves is just as important as educating the community.

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<sup>1</sup> *Community definition*. (n.d.). Lexico.com. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/community>

**Our work must be equitable.** The word “equitable” is sometimes used as a synonym for accessible, and while they are both important terms, they represent two different concepts. George Washington University explains that “equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.”<sup>2</sup>

Organizers and organizations must understand that each person has different circumstances, and we must allocate resources based on each person’s unique needs. When engaging in policy work this tends to be difficult, as legislation is often designed to meet the needs of the largest group. It is important to remember to focus on what commonalities communities share rather than their differences. Very specific needs may be present, and it may seem tough to approach the work with a sense of equity, but this is why dialogue and trust are crucial.

Intersectionality refers to the connection between all issues and demographics. For Lead-Free NJ, this means treating lead not just as an environmental issue, but as an issue that affects housing, mental health, economics, and more. Understanding the intersectionality of all issues allows organizations and organizers to tackle the problem from several different perspectives and offer several different solutions. A clear understanding of intersectionality allows for a more equitable community with diverse opinions and solutions.



## Developing Your Strategy

### Identifying Roadblocks

Who are the opponents? What is the level of community support for this issue? What are our resources? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses? These are all questions to consider when identifying roadblocks.

**Identifying roadblocks is important because it helps you develop your strategy.** In order to achieve wins, your organization must know who or what is the main roadblock to your goal. If you do not know who or what the main roadblock is, it will be much more difficult to achieve your goal. This assessment should be continuous and evolving as you frequently reassess current roadblocks.

Some questions to consider as you perform these assessments include: What are our organizational roadblocks in terms of strengths and weaknesses? What is keeping us, as an organization, from becoming stronger? Understanding the difference between these two questions allows for a more honest assessment. Constant evaluation can be beneficial, but too much evaluation can also hinder progress. It’s all about looking at your organization (or yourself, as an organizer) in a balanced and objective manner to push your limits to achieve more wins.

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<sup>2</sup>*Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference?* (2020, November 5). Resources.

<https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/#:%7E:text=Equity%20recognizes%20that%20each%20person,to%20reach%20an%20equal%20outcome.&text=The%20equitable%20solution%2C%20however%2C%20allocates,positive%20outcomes%20for%20both%20individuals.>

What resources do we have available and what resources do we need to secure in order to achieve our goal?

**One big roadblock to consider is a lack of community support.** Organizations do not start movements, but they can definitely join them and make a difference. Community support is key for any campaign. Nonprofits and grassroots organizations sometimes make the mistake of becoming the voice of the community, but people should be the most important part of any movement. All the work and campaigns must be done in partnership with the community. The community decides when an issue is over, or whether to continue fighting.

### **Power Mapping and Recognizing Allies**

What is the objective? Who are the decision-makers? Who influences them? What are the direct and indirect connections between the target and other influencers? These are all questions to consider when power mapping.

A helpful power mapping chart and diagrams can be found at:

<https://www.organizingforpower.org/tools/>

**Allies also need to be included on your power map.** An organization is nothing without people, and people power is often underrated. Find partners in the unlikeliest of places and remember that all struggles are interconnected! In doing so, you can find alignment with most other organizations if you correlate your struggles effectively enough. The importance of reciprocity cannot be downplayed; every organization can benefit from working together as a community. All organizing can be summed up as relational, and forming stronger relationships makes each organization stronger.

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## **Tactics**

### **Writing Letters to Elected Officials**

With which level(s) of government should you interact? How should you contact them? Whom should you contact? What office should you contact? Why does it matter to you? What is your organization affiliation? What is the reason for contact? What is the name and status of the bill, if there is one? What would be their reasons for taking action? What are our shared interests? These are all questions to consider when writing letters to elected officials.

**Writing letters to elected officials is a tactic that is seldomly employed, but it should be incorporated into any campaign.** If the officials themselves don't read the letters, chances are that someone in their office will. Letters are important, because they establish a paper trail. Before you begin drafting a letter, consider its purpose. You may be writing a letter as a thank you after a meeting, or you may be writing a letter to call out an official for a lack of action after a meeting. These factors are important to consider before you start typing or putting pen to paper.

Planning is always important. How does this letter help the overall campaign? Think of this as your written elevator pitch, so be concise and impactful. Be very straightforward with the purpose of your letter from the start and request a specific action. Example language might read: "I'm writing to you today to request that you support/oppose..." Any story telling or supporting details should follow. If someone has to sift through your letter to figure out what it's about and what to do with it, your letter will inevitably end up in a staffer's "look at when I have time" folder (which, of course, they never do) in a dark corner of their desk.

Your approach to writing these letters should mirror your approach to meetings with elected officials: tell a story and offer a solution. Make sure to provide as many details as possible, while remaining brief. Although this may seem contradictory, maintaining this balance is critical.

**Lastly, as with many other tactics, persistence and support from allies are crucial.** After reading a letter from one small organization, decision-makers rarely change course and decide on an action that they haven't already planned to take. This is more true for higher offices, simply because these elected officials have more constituents, more opinions to balance, and more requests that come their way. But, if they receive 100 similar letters from various organizations and individuals, and if you all refuse to back down until you see the desired action, it makes your request hard to ignore. This often results in securing at least a meeting, at which you'll have another chance to state your case.

*Note:* When coordinating letter-writing campaigns, ensure that all (or most) of the individuals writing to the elected official are, in fact, their constituents. For example, if you are targeting a New Jersey legislator from Legislative District 10—which covers shore towns like Brick, Point Pleasant, and Seaside Heights—do not have 90% of your letters coming from supporters that reside in Paterson, miles and miles away. It is common practice for elected officials to forward (or trash) correspondence sent to them from individuals who do not reside in their districts, or organizations or companies that are not located within their jurisdiction to their representatives. Elected officials are even more likely to respond in this way if the correspondence is related to an issue that would be more convenient for them to avoid addressing. If your organization is well-known and respected, you have more of a chance of receiving a reply, but don't bet on it. Garner the appropriate support to show the elected official that this is a problem they should care about because their constituents, who have the power to vote them out of office, care.

### **Lobbying Decision-makers**

Is my story compelling and impactful? Does it relate to current issues? How does it provide the decision-maker with a "hero opportunity?" How does it allow the decision-maker to improve their visibility? How does this avoid conflict? Can this be seen as an appropriate investment of taxpayer money? Who are the decision-makers? These are all questions to consider when lobbying decision-makers.

**Elected officials and decision-makers frequently experience time constraints.** Most of what happens when meeting an elected official involves preparation. Since all organizing is based on relationships, consider whether you have any relationships that you can leverage to lobby elected officials. Is your elevator pitch down pat and is your story compelling and impactful? It should explain to your audience why they should care and should go beyond the

fact that you are their constituent. Help the elected official understand the consequences of not caring about your campaign at a local, statewide, and even national level.

**It is also very important to put yourself in the decision-maker's shoes.** Knowing what they care about, how their different constituencies might react based on the action you are requesting, and which voices might be the loudest are all helpful in determining your lobbying approach. This way, you can anticipate their response and frame your pitch in a way that also satisfies their interests.

A meeting with elected officials will always serve as a test of knowledge. This is why you must come with a solution and a semi-tangible way of making that solution a reality. It is one thing to approach an official with a problem, but approaching an elected official with a solution is even more appealing. That way, all they have to do is sign on the dotted line. Elected officials always want to look good, and what is better than looking good and doing the right thing?

### **Organizing a Legislative Campaign**

What research is available about the problem? How can we codify solutions? Can we support an already active bill? Do we need to build a coalition and find allies? What kind of campaign are we building? Do we need to lobby decision-makers? These are all questions to consider when organizing a legislative campaign.

Legislative campaigns are very different from advocacy campaigns. The goal of a legislative campaign is to pass legislation that resolves the issue or problem. It ensures that community members can hold officials and stakeholders accountable to a state or federal law or a local ordinance. The “why” here is coupled with a direct solution that an elected official can adopt.

**Allies are invaluable.** The power mapping you did earlier in building your campaign will serve as an important tool, because it will help you know who to focus on as you determine the best partners for helping you achieve your goal. Building a coalition is almost always the best way to win a legislative campaign. A simple definition of a coalition is: multiple organizations or organizers joining forces to accomplish one goal. Coalitions often share resources and help maintain momentum. This joining of forces allows for a sustained fight and the application of different pressure points to support one campaign. As you work on a legislative campaign together, you will collectively build both public and legislative support to pass legislation.

When working with a coalition, you must consider the politics of all participating groups, not just your organization. Some organizations will want to push harder than others. Some organizations have their own individual goals in mind. These issues often hinder the work of coalitions; however, it is important to remember that it is not the differences that matter, but where the organizations align. Not every organization is going to have the same political viewpoint, and not every group is going to agree on the “how” or the strategy. As you identify allies, make sure that there are set expectations for everyone in the coalition and that there is a process to make decisions and resolve conflicts. The more work that is put into processes and structures, the easier things will be throughout the course of the campaign.

**Think about longevity—will the campaign ever end?** This is something your coalition must determine. As you think about longevity, consider the fact that your opponent may wage a war of attrition,<sup>3</sup> seeking to drain your coalition of energy, drive, and resources. Sometimes, an opponent that has more resources will try to drag out a conflict or fight until the coalition's resources are drained or people burn out from the constant struggle. When you properly organize your legislative campaign, you set in place structures that will endure as long as necessary.

### **Organizing a Petition Drive**

Who is receiving the petition? What are your demands? What is the timeline for completion of demands? Can you be more specific? What does outreach look like? What language is your petition in? These are all questions to consider when organizing a petition drive.

Petition drives are another useful tactic. They seldom work as effectively as intended and are very labor-intensive, but that does not mean that they should not be utilized. It just means that you must understand the work it takes before you decide to implement this tactic. Petitions are useful when they are focused. It is important to consider who is receiving the petition. This will determine where you seek signatures and helps decide how you go about securing signatures. Additionally, the demands you present to the elected official or decision-maker must be clear and concise.

There are also other factors that must be considered. For example, if it's a petition for an official ordinance, then there are rules and regulations you must follow in order to submit it to the city clerk's office. Another factor is time, which is always of the essence. How long will the petition drive last? If it is a ballot petition, there are deadlines that must be taken into account in order to make it on the ballot. For example, in Newark, NJ a ballot petition must get a certain amount of signatures in order to make it on to the ballot before an upcoming election. Each municipality has its own set of standards and rules.

People power is another factor. People on the ground are the most important part of any petition drive, and the more people you have in public places, the better. Finally, location is another factor in determining signatures. You have to think about where the people will be and be there yourself. Grocery stores are one example of a location that has always seemed to work before COVID-19.

### **Public Demonstrations**

What does your planning look like? What do you want to accomplish? Whom are you trying to reach? What do you want to happen? What is your outreach plan? What do your logistics look like prior, during, and after? What is your communications plan? These are all questions to consider when organizing a public demonstration.

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<sup>3</sup> "Attrition warfare is the term used to describe the sustained process of wearing down an opponent so as to force their physical collapse through continuous losses in personnel, equipment and supplies or to wear them down to such an extent that their will to fight collapses" Murray, Nicholas: Attrition Warfare , in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2016-01-13. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10802.

Direct actions are broken down into two categories: arrestable and non-arrestable. This toolkit will only discuss non-arrestable actions. The term “non-arrestable actions” generally refers to non-violent protests, such as rallies or marches. Before you begin planning an action, think about the purpose of the action, as well as how radical and bold you want to be. This will help as you consider the biggest concern with every action: safety. As an organizer of an action, you must be able to guarantee people’s safety as much as possible. No one wants to attend an action that they think might be unsafe. Being as prepared as possible is crucial, and no one should call for an action without taking safety seriously.

**Outreach is important, especially in the neighborhoods in which we are going to march. The importance of this type of canvassing cannot be overstated.** The community should always be a partner, and community support is essential to any action. There is a distinction that should be recognized between hosting an event in a centralized area, such as city hall, or a less prominent location, like a small park. In the case of the latter, canvassing becomes less important, but it is still vital. A central location is an area that people often utilize for protests. It means that there needs to be less community outreach than if you were protesting in a neighborhood, or if your march went through back roads where there are houses and schools. You do not want your action to be a nuisance or to disrupt people’s daily lives. You want community support. You should promote your action with flyers, so that the community members know what is going on and can plan accordingly.

**Logistics often poses a formidable challenge for new organizers.** Locations and routes are vital, because they speak to safety. Be intentional when deciding where you want to rally or march, know the location intimately, and understand all the potential problems that each location presents. When you are protesting, it is important to remember to control the action as much as possible, but understand that there will also be things outside your control.

For example, during a George Floyd protest, there was an opposition protest for which organizers were not prepared. This caused a major disruption, and the organizers decided to end the protest early in the interest of everyone’s safety.

There are several things that people need to consider when planning for an action:

**Supplies.** It is important to provide food and snacks for attendees. It is important that, during a rally or march, people stay hydrated, especially in the hotter months. Depending on how long your action is going to take, it is important to do your best to meet the needs of the folks you are bringing out. Providing yellow vests to designated marshals and leaders during the action is always helpful. Walkie-talkies are a great tool for quick communications during an action. Sound systems and bull horns are another item that are sometimes forgotten until the last minute, but if people cannot hear the speeches, it creates a lot of issues. Chant lists are another supply that people discount, but when marching or protesting you want to have clear and concise messaging. Knowing bathroom locations is helpful, especially since porta johns are expensive.

## Roles

<b>Marshals:</b>	The role of a marshal is to make sure the parade route is being followed and to maintain order during the march.
<b>Police Liaison:</b>	It is important to designate at least one police liaison so that they can communicate with the police. Normally, when you are applying for a permit, the police will automatically show up to your event. It is important to decide who will communicate with the police. This point of contact should always be identified ahead of time.
<b>Press Liaison:</b>	Messaging is always important during a protest or rally. It is important to make sure that you have a press liaison in your camp, so that one person who knows how to convey the message can convey it to any members of the media that attend.
<b>Security:</b>	Security is important and plays a different role than the marshals. The security team is responsible for safety and to make sure that no one is hurt. Security should always know all the details of the plan and rally and make sure that they are constantly communicating with the organizers and the marshals. It is the responsibility of security to keep eyes on everything and everyone, keeping in mind that a successful event is one where no one is hurt and everything goes smoothly.
<b>Chant Leaders:</b>	This position is usually overlooked, but it can make or break an action. Who you select depends on the energy and atmosphere you wish to generate, but it's important to have designated leaders who can yell consistently and have rhythm. Chant leaders should effectively lead community members as they convey what the group wants in unison.
<b>Point Person or Action Team:</b>	There should always be a chain of command to ensure that everyone is following their directions. This person (or team) is especially helpful in the event that something goes wrong, because they will know the overall plan and how to mitigate issues that arise.
<b>Communications:</b>	Communications in this section means several things. Everything about the action requires some sort of communication, so it is important to be intentional at every step.

The “why” of your action must be communicated by the location you choose, as well as the location’s historical significance. Social media and traditional media messaging before, during, and after the action require detailed communications planning. Any effective action is like your favorite song: It has a distinct cadence, moments at which the energy rises and falls, and lyrics that demand attention. It’s likely that one of these moments sold you to the song. Your action needs to build up to that moment as you are planning and executing it.

On the day of the action, having liaisons ready with talking points and demands is crucial to your overall communications strategy. Chant lists are critical, because chants convey your message to anyone listening. Speakers can also make or break any action. Those closest to the mission should be the ones speaking. It is always effective to utilize a mix of local community members and well-known speakers, but don't import others when you already have capable advocates in your community. If it's a statewide issue, look for advocates that have a history of great work in the community so that they can impart their lived experiences. Lastly, consider your communications with attendees after the event. Always follow up and provide people with action steps afterwards. Every good action leads to more good actions.



## Using Media to Get Your Message Out

Social media and traditional media are two important communications tools for any campaign. Social media refers to online technologies that allow users to share and discuss content online. Such platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, Snapchat, and TikTok. Traditional media refers to print (i.e. newspapers and magazines) and broadcast (i.e. radio and television) news, as well as online versions of these.

### Social Media

What is your focus? How can you grab attention? How can you make your work interactive? Are you showcasing your work? How can you evaluate where your supporters are online? Are you developing content and managing systems? Are you posting compelling content? How often are you posting? Are you liking or following related organizations or government offices? These are all questions to consider regarding social media.

**When used correctly, social media is an excellent tool and resource.** If your organization wants to become and remain relevant, it must utilize social media. The most important thing to remember is that each social media platform offers different capabilities and audiences.

There is a difference between running a social media campaign and running a social media account. A campaign usually supports a single purpose or event, while a social media account consistently posts content that is aligned with its overall goal. Some helpful tips as you keep this distinction in mind include the following:

- 1) Protect your brand and be consistent.
- 2) Focus your mission and expand it over time.
- 3) Grab attention! Because there is so much noise on these platforms, you must make it a point to stand out.
- 4) Be engaging and interactive. There are so many different things you can do with social media platforms to drive engagement, and it is important not to limit yourself.

- 5) Focus on incorporating actions into your social media strategy. Don't just inform people about the problem; give them steps they can take to be part of the solution. People want to see the work now more than ever.

As previously mentioned, organizers and organizations have to meet the people where they are. The same is true for social media. Your organization would be doing itself and its supporters a disservice by trying to build a presence on every platform while only devoting the time to understand and effectively engage on one of them. It may be more worthwhile to focus your efforts on those with whom you are familiar and expand when you have the capacity to do so. As you think about which platforms to choose, you should think about your target audience as well. In other words, your choice of platform, as well as the content you produce, should depend upon the demographic characteristics of your primary audience. If your audience is not on the platform you are comfortable with, think outside of your own expertise. Find an expert or a volunteer that prefers that platform and have them run that particular social media site.

It is important to not downplay the thought that goes into developing content and managing platforms. It is very difficult to consistently develop good content. Content should focus not only on capturing the action of your organization, but doing it in a way in which it reaches the most people and has the most impact. If you have a team and systems in place to help identify and express what you are trying to communicate, producing content will be significantly easier.

**Cultivating followers is different for every platform and campaign.** Like and follow related organizations to see the content they are producing and how you can differentiate yourself. Posting frequently helps, but do not spam your audience, as this will only deter people from engaging with your content. Over time—and with close monitoring—you will figure out how much is *too* much.

### **Traditional Media**

Are you maintaining all the contacts you made? Do you have a growing media list? Are you developing a relationship with media contacts? These are all questions to consider with traditional media.

It is important to always keep an updated database of your current media contacts, as well as anyone who has worked with your organization in the past. It is important to develop such a list, because these databases are worth their weight in gold. When you need to push out a press release or attract the media to an event, you will rely on this list. Typically, you can develop a media list by doing a few Google searches. Another way to add press to your list is to see who is writing relevant articles online and emailing them directly to see if they are a viable connection to utilize now or in the future. Again, the foundation to all organizing is relationships! You want to maintain positive relationships with press contacts, because you always want to protect the organization's brand and be able to mobilize the media when necessary, either for your work or for another project that needs more attention.

## Writing to the Editor

Why are you picking this particular outlet? How will you contact them? Whom will you contact? How will you sway public opinion? Who is your audience? What is the value of this letter? These are all questions to consider when writing to the editor.

To get a letter to the editor published, you must first pick a news outlet that you have a good relationship with to publish your story. Certain outlets are appropriate for certain stories, so make sure you know why you've chosen a particular outlet and whom to contact. Then, think about how you will convey your message. Swaying public opinion involves a lot of work, and conveying messaging through an op-ed is nothing short of art. Similar to direct actions, you should also treat an op-ed like a song. It is a complete story with highs and lows and unexpected turns, but it uses concise, pointed language. Remembering who your audience is goes a long way as you work to construct your letter. Knowing the value of the letter, as well as why you are writing it, also helps craft the narrative. It is always best to approach all writing with an outline.



## Fundraising

### Fundraising

Why, how, and where should I fundraise? These are all questions to consider when fundraising.

**Fundraising is important for long-term sustainability**, as campaigns can be costly (both physically and financially). Having a clear vision at the outset helps people understand why you need the money. Is your cause justified? It is a question that will constantly be under scrutiny when requesting donations or grants. Most organizations generally utilize crowdfunding methods, such as GoFundMe or grantseeking, to secure funding. These methods have their pros and cons, and as an organization, you have to decide what is best for you at any particular time. The best course of action may include both methods at different times. Grant funding is built on relationships and good grant writers. Most grants are very specific, but there are some that are more flexible and may allow your organization to do a variety of work or partner with all kinds of organizations. It is also easier to know where to go to ask for resources when you know your audience.

**Make sure you are pouring money back into the organization and purchasing products that help fund your needs.** For example, purchase a t-shirt machine instead of outsourcing t-shirts to a vendor. As with most other steps in this toolkit, it is important to be as intentional with your fundraising as you are with other aspects of organizing. This is how you will achieve your organization's financial goals.

## Resources

[Democrats for American Campaign Academy Manual](#) - A collection of work to help you make change in your community, elect leaders that reflect progressive values, and maybe even run for office, yourself.

[The Art Of Listening: Social Media Toolkit For Nonprofits](#) - A resource to help strengthen advocacy and organizing work for organizations by providing tips and best practices for crafting an intentional social media strategy.

[The Community Tool Box](#) - A service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas that provides guidance for taking action, teaching, and training others in organizing for community development.

[Tools for Campaign Planning](#) - A helpful power mapping tool that provides charts and diagrams to get organizers started.

