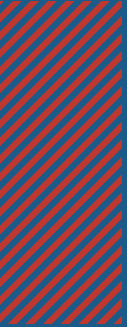




BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA

**Civics for
Change**
Know the system to
change the system



Why this topic?

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER TO UNDERSTAND HOW GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WORK IN ORDER TO EFFECT CHANGE.

THE FOCUS OF THIS TOPIC IS CONTACT WITH POLICY MAKERS.



WHO SHOULD USE THIS WORKBOOK?

TO BE ORGANIZED AND CREATE CHANGE, THE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER MUST KNOW HOW GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WORK, WHO THE PLAYERS ARE, AND WHAT TO SAY TO GET THEM TO LISTEN.

THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS WORKBOOK WALK YOU STEP-BY-STEP TO LEARN WHO YOUR POLICY MAKERS ARE, HOW TO TALK TO THEM, AND WHAT TO SAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WE HOPE ORGANIZERS WILL USE THIS KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE WITH THEIR GROUP AND PLAN PROJECTS THAT WILL WORK TO PRODUCE RESULTS. INDIVIDUALS PLANNING THEIR OWN ADVOCACY CAN USE THE TOOLS IN THIS WORKBOOK TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS WITH POLICYMAKERS.



THIS WORKBOOK WILL PROVIDE:

OVERVIEW OF THE BASICS

We will focus on the structure of government and who are the policy makers. We will then work on your primary resource "A Governmental Cheat Sheet".

IDENTIFY SPECIFIC ISSUES

You will identify 1-2-3 issues, campaigns, and causes, that motivate your organization to action.

HOW TO EFFECT CHANGE/ACTION

You will select and plan whom you should contact and what you should say.



OUR GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

CIVICS FOR EVERYONE

We recommend our session "Civics for Everyone" as a good refresher on the basics of our Constitution, our Government Structure, Elections, and State Government.

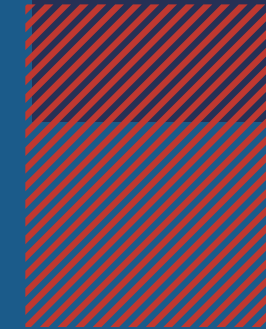
THREE BRANCHES

From that course, you will remember that the federal government structure and each state government's structure comprise: three separate and equal branches of government.

- The Legislative Branch, which makes the laws.
- The Executive Branch, which administers the laws. The executive branch includes the agencies that implement the laws.
- The Judicial Branch, which interprets the laws.

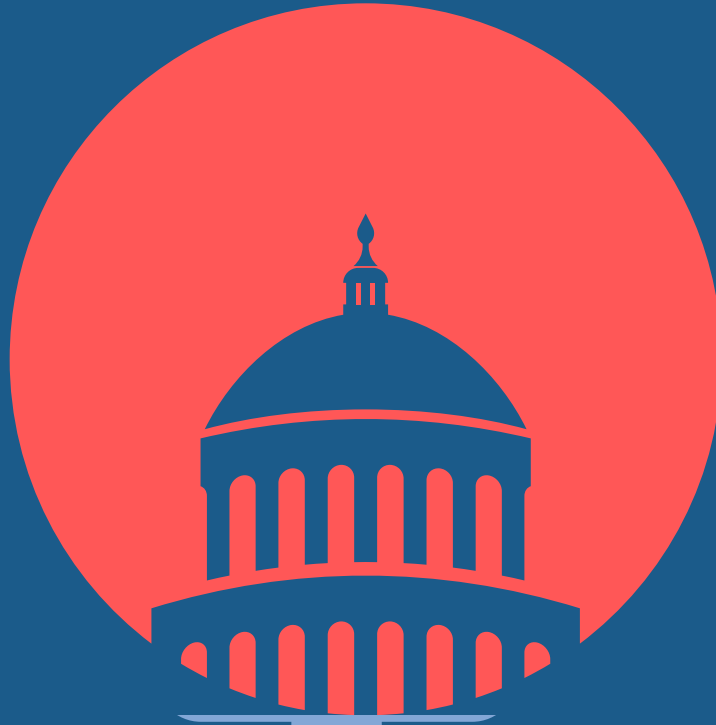
Your advocacy will focus on the Legislative Branch and/or Executive Branch. Monitoring the actions of the Judicial Bench is necessary to understand how laws are being interpreted and applied.

Here are the critical concepts to consider in the context of your advocacy.



THE GOVERNMENT

The Basics



Separate & Equal Branches

Legislative
Makes
the laws

Congress=
House & Senate

**Executive &
Administrative**
Interprets and
carries out the laws

**President &
Agencies**

Judicial
Resolves disputes
about the meaning
and administration
of laws

Courts





IDENTIFY

Identify the person, elected or appointed body, or agency who is responsible for the law affecting your members.

ADMINISTRATION

After the law is passed, focus on executive and administration agencies that administer the law(s).

JURISDICTION

Work within your jurisdiction. Legislative, executive and judicial actions are effective within specific jurisdiction. Policymakers in those jurisdictions will be the most responsive to your message/request.





TAKEAWAYS

Before you begin your advocacy around an issue, make sure you have the correct information.

- Is the issue addressed by legislation or the administration of a law or policy by the executive or administrative agencies that implement it?
- Who are the agencies or people with jurisdiction over that issue?
- How do your organization's members figure out who is THEIR representative?





TAKE ACTION!

Meet with the members of your organization (or your steering committee or group of friends) and fill out the following worksheets. Walking your members through this set-by-step approach will make everyone more confident and effective in reaching out about an issue or law.

Let's get started!!



GOVERNMENTAL WORKSHEETS

Take Action

Preparing your cheat sheet.

This sheet will help you identify the specifics about your area (jurisdiction) and will vary depending on the issue(s) you are addressing. Get started by filling in what you know and fill in the blanks later.

STEP 1

This worksheet asks you to complete basic information about the "Jurisdictions" in which you are operating. Are you working on state issues? County issues? City issues? School District/Board issues? Other districts? This step seems deceptively easy, do not skip it. Make sure your members can identify these jurisdictions for their homes.

STEP 2

This worksheet asks you to identify the elected (and appointed) policy makers who are responsible for laws and administration in your area. Each of your members may have a different U.S. Representative, State Senator, State Representative, Mayor, etc. Make sure your members know how to look up their policy makers.



Your Jurisdiction

Step

1

Preparing your cheat sheet.

This sheet will help you identify the specifics about your area (jurisdiction) and will vary depending on the issue(s) you are addressing. Get started by filling in what you know and fill in the blanks later.

State



County



City, Town, Village or
Unincorporated area



School District



Special Service
District
(i.e. sewer)



Take Action

Your Policymakers

Step

2

You can search online and find this information.

U.S. Senator (1)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Senator (2)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Governor

name, party, contact info.

State Senator

name, party, district, contact info.

State Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Mayor

contact information

County
Commissioners

contact information

City/Town Council

contact information

School Board
Member

contact information

Take Action

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION - BRAINSTORMING

Encourage your members to brainstorm around a variety of issues on this worksheet. You and your friends may want to get involved, but you are not sure what issues should be your focus. Use this worksheet to determine what issues are important to the group and how you would communicate with policy makers. After your brainstorming session, select those issues that your group wants to pursue.

See next page for brainstorming ideas...

Take Action



IDENTIFY IMPORTANT ISSUES

Ask about "bread & butter" issues. Ask about issues that affect them in the community. This is important training for members to learn how to express their concerns and connect them to their personal stories. Join our session "Unlock Your Political Power" to use your story to connect on these issues.

IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON THE ISSUE

Discuss what organizations will be allies. Will these organizations provide the support that you need? Organizations that are allies may have reliable resources that can be used in educating members on the facts. These organizations may have talking points that can be helpful in communicating with policymakers. Also be aware of organizations that oppose your position.

DESCRIBE YOUR ISSUES AND YOUR POSITION

use the skills that you have learned in our session "Say This, Not That" to practice how to communicate on these issues.

Issue Identification

Now is the time to identify the issues or campaigns that are motivating you to take action. This list will change, but it is a good exercise to plan your advocacy.

Write down two important issues in each category

Issues that affect you/your members in an immediate and practical way (examples: "The roads in my area are all broken and are causing damage to my car." "I want my son to get his COVID shot, but it is not available.")

- 1.
- 2.

Issues that affects the community in which your organization operates (examples: "I think school vouchers harm public schools" "I am concerned about homelessness in my area." "I am concerned about voting rights in federal elections.")

- 1.
- 2.

Are there organizations working on these issues?

What are some terms to use consistently and positively to describe your issue? Avoid repeating opponents' wording.

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER AND REACH OUT!

Use this worksheet to tie it all together and plan your advocacy. This worksheet makes use of all the information and work from steps 1-3. Plus this worksheet asks you to plan how you will deliver your message.

Use a separate worksheet for each issue or for each set of policy makers. Refer to the examples for suggestions on how to proceed. This worksheet will take time and effort, but planning is crucial for success.



Bringing it Together



WHO IS IN CHARGE

Step 4

For each issue identify the individual, group, or agency that has jurisdiction. Refer to your Governmental Cheat Sheet. Make sure your members know who should be contacted. Reach out to those who should be contacted. Reach out to those who are FOR and AGAINST your point of view.

IDENTIFY, FRAME & FORMULATE @ THE ORGANIZATION LEVEL

Develop your organization's summary of the issues and positions on the issue. What is your purpose? What are your goals? How will you achieve those goals as an advocacy organization? Compile information--facts, figures, status of legislation. You may work with other organizations to share resources.

IDENTIFY, FRAME, & FORMULATE FOR YOUR MEMBERS

Assist your members in developing communications that will connect with policy makers. Develop uniform and consistent explanations for the issue, suggest frames for the issues, and encourage personal stories.

Bringing it Together

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AMERICA



MY MESSAGE?

ASK EACH MEMBER TO CRAFT THEIR COMMUNICATION - BE POSITIVE

- Explain why you are concerned
- Identify the issue - "Good Roads", Fair Healthcare", "Better Schools"
- Frame the issue around your values "Hard Worker", "Family", Democracy"
- State how you are affected personally
- Ask for a specific action
- Include contact information and indicate you are a constituent.



WHERE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE @ THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Step

4

Bringing it Together

At the organizational level, make your presence known!

- Share brief policy statements with policy makers.
- Start talking to policymakers
- Look for opportunities to speak in person (town halls), send emails, and write letters.
- Help your members deliver their communications - email, letter, phone calls, personal meeting, Develop specific recommendations on where/how to communicate.

WHERE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE: FOR YOUR MEMBERS

- Consider all options for communicating to the policy maker
- Make phone calls - be prepared to speak to a "live" person or leave a voicemail. Before the call write down and rehearse what you will say.
- Send emails, letters and or postcard
- U.S. Senators and Representatives
- email forms on their websites
- Postcards delivered more quickly in D.C.
- Mail can be sent to district offices.
- Avoid form letters and postcards - or personalize them.
- Speak in-person - at public meetings, town halls.

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AMERICA



This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

We encourage you to use your own words, make it personal and keep the message simple. See the following pages for sample issues.

Who is in charge?

-
-

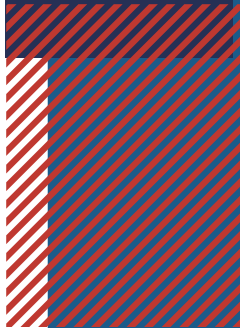
Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

-
-
-

My Message?

Where to "deliver" my message (phone call, letter, postcard, email, in-person, op-ed)

-
-
-



Issue #1 Bad Roads

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

Who is in charge? Mayor & City Council

- Mayor John Doe
- My City Council Member

Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Good roads help our community grow.
- I need good roads to get to work, school, and access to healthcare.
- Policy makers should address bad roads to help the community.

My Message?

I live at XXXX, I am one of your constituents,
The roads in my area, specifically XXXX street are in need of repair,
I am a hard worker trying to provide for my family. I rely on good roads to get to work so I can support my family. Bad roads have caused damage to my car and traffic makes me late to work. I really need my job and do not have extra money for repairs,
I ask that you take the steps necessary to get this problem fixed,
Thank you

Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted
- Write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)



Issue #2 School Vouchers

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

Who is in charge? Governor & Legislature

- Governor, Mary Smith
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
- My State Representative
- My State Senator

Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Consider reviewing information from advocacy groups that support your point of view, start with positive messages.

My Message?

- I am a longtime resident of XXXX (state). My address is XXXX, I am one of your constituents.
- I value public education because it helps people get ahead, I needed public education to go to college and get a good job. Our society relies on an educated workforce. I have X children and grandchildren and I want to make sure they have a good public education.
- I am concerned that school vouchers make it harder for our public schools to hire good teachers. I ask you to oppose legislation that would increase the use of vouchers. Thank you.

Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted



Issue #3 Voting Rights

Who is in charge?

Federal Voting Rights = Federal Legislation

- My 2 U.S. Senators
- My Congressperson (Representative)

Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Look at advocacy groups (i.e., Common Cause, League of Women Voters, Fair Fight, Let Them Vote) for talking points. Look for consistency and positive messages.

My Message?

- U.S. Senators
 - I am a long term resident in our state. I have voted in every election since I was allowed to. Voting rights are the foundation of our democracy.
 - I believe in fairness and that means that everyone should vote, therefore polls should be open for longer hours and more days so more people can vote without taking off work.
 - I urge you to support the For the People Act to protect voting rights.
- Congressman (Representative) - YOUR representative
 - (if support) Thank you for supporting the For the People Act, I hope you will continue to work for voting rights.
 - (if no support) I am sorry you voted to oppose the For the People Act. I believe in fairness. The Act will protect fair elections. Please reconsider your opposition.

Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/ postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention officials by name)
- Attend a town hall, speak if public testimony is permitted



TIPS FOR THE "PRO"

Tips

If you are an experienced organizer, consider these suggestions to take your advocacy to the next level.

- As an organization, look for ways to raise your profile in the community so policy makers will recognize your purpose. Participate in a community discussion. Sign up for town halls. Try other outlets, reporters, media, including social media.
- Write an op-ed for a local paper, trade publication, or blog. Mention policymakers by name. Check out our grab-n-go on op-ed writing.
- Take advantage of the off-season. For example, if the state legislation is not in season, encourage your members to write legislators to let them know what general issues matter - i.e. education.
- We focus a lot of effort and energy in opposing legislation or policies. BUT it is important to express support for the policies that you favor. Encourage members to write policymakers to thank them for supporting an issues and to encourage them to continue to do so. Express support for a good policy regardless of the policymaker's party affiliation.



TIPS FOR THE "PRO" CONT'D

Tips

If you are an experienced organizer, consider these suggestions to take your advocacy to the next level.

- Always encourage your members to stay positive and state "what they are for" versus against. Never repeat a negative statement or an opponent's argument.
- It doesn't always have to be about Washington D.C. Focus on state and local issues.
- It's not "one and done". Develop a plan for repeat contacts.
- Check with your members on the contact that they have made and what is (or is not) working.
- The worksheets take time and effort. As a leader, help your members keep working through the steps. The results are worth it.



TIPS FOR THE "NEWBIE"

Tips

This workbook is aimed at an experienced grassroots organizer or advocate. How can a newcomer make use of these materials?

- Check out our Real Talk Training sessions
- Start small
- Ask your partner, good friend, sibling to tackle this workbook with you. A 2 or 3 person team can have a real impact.
- Work through the Governmental Cheat Sheet together. Check the internet or call the library to track down the information that you need. Fill in the information that is most relevant to you. It is ok to leave blanks.
- Brainstorm about issues. Focus on the issues that are "close to home", the issues that affect you and your family and friends. Pick no more than 2 issues that are important to your team.
- What organizations are already working on the issues? Sign up for their Facebook page and join their email list. These organizations can help you understand the facts around the issue, who are the key policymakers, and what are some good talking points. Be aware of the opposition.



TIPS FOR THE "NEWBIE" CONT'D

- Take Action - Make two contacts on each of your issues - letters, postcards, emails, phone calls. Look at the examples for suggested approaches. Make sure that the team is contacting the right policy maker and that your communication is personal and positive. Don't forget these guidelines.
 - Explain why you are concerned
 - Identify the issue - "Good Roads", "fair Healthcare", "Better Schools"
 - Frame the issue around your values "Hard Worker", "Family", "Democracy"
 - State how you are affected personally
 - Ask for a specific action
 - Include contact information and indicate you are constituent.

Keep track of your successes and keep taking action!

Keep expanding as you learn more about how to communicate your issues to policy makers.

OTHER AVAILABLE TOOLS

AVAILABLE AT
WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM

TEAM SERIES

Build your grassroots team with Grassroots Organizing for Change.. And learn effective messaging with Say This, Not That, And take it to the next level and organizing the people around you with our Local Leaders and Precinct Chair training.

CIVICS SERIES

Know the system to fix the system. Get the basics with Civics 101, then learn to use civics for effective organizing with Civics for Change.

POWER SERIES

Your political superpower is talking with people you know. Put that power to use with our courses to get organized and having effective conversations that empower you, your community, and the campaigns and causes that are important to you.

TEAM RESOURCES

Links and tools of the trade to run a successful grassroots group or campaign.

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA LEADERSHIP TEAM



JENNY OKAMOTO

Director, Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

CAZ MARGENAU

Director, Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

TERRY MUMFORD

Associate, Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

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Remember this

**THE SECRET OF CHANGE
IS TO FOCUS ALL YOUR
ENERGY NOT ON
FIGHTING THE OLD BUT
ON BUILDING THE NEW.**

- DAN MILLMAN

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Next Steps

Check out additional courses, resources, and activities at www.buildingbridgesforamerica.com

Share this resource and invite others to effect change with you.

EMAIL

buildingbridges4america@gmail.com

WEBSITE

WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM