

Foundations

When was the first time you remember observing your community change for the better?

Key concept 1

Most of our country’s conversation is limited to national issues or elections that come around every two to four years. Too many urgent issues are caught up by gridlock in Washington—we have the opportunity to be effective organizers at the local level and make huge change locally.

Local organizing examples: Montgomery Bus Boycott; Chicago Little Village Coal Plants; South Carolina Buses

What makes you excited as you think about working at a local level?

Strategy metaphor: Greek helmsman

Key concept 2

Plans are nothing, planning is everything. Without a plan in place to execute—as well as clear, measurable, achievable, and realistic goals—change will likely not happen in your community. However, we have to be adaptable and nimble to the information we receive as we change our plans. The planning process sets you up to make good decisions and respond to development, but you will gain skills as you practice.

What do we mean by advocacy?

There are many different definitions of advocacy, so we have broken down advocacy into three categories that come up across definitions.

Cause: Advocacy is an active promotion of a cause or principle

Actions: Advocacy involves actions that lead to a selected goal

Community: Effective advocacy uses the strengths of community members

Key concept 3

Advocacy usually involves getting government, business, schools, or large institutions to correct an unfair or harmful situation affecting people in the community.

Essential Components of advocacy:

- 1) Understanding the Issue
- 2) Recognizing allies
- 3) Unpacking the landscape of the legislation
- 4) Developing a plan to make change with a clear finish line
- 5) Persevering and adapting through obstacles

Key concept 4

Problems vs. Issues. Problems and issues are different in advocacy work. Problems are broad areas of concern, whereas issues are a solution or partial solution to a problem

Think about what brought you into this work. How would you describe the problem your community is facing? How would you describe the issue you are working on?

PROBLEM:

ISSUE:

Indicators of good issues

- Result in the improvement of people's lives
- Make people aware of their own power
- Be winnable
- Be widely felt
- Be deeply felt
- Be easy to understand
- Have a clear decision maker
- Have a clear time frame
- Be consistent with your values and vision

In what ways do you want to narrow your issue? What challenges do you foresee?