



Engaging the Community

Ideas & Lessons from
Community Organizing

Presentation Outline

- Background on Organizations
- Outreach & Mobilization
- Issue Identification & Needs Assessment
- Grassroots Driving Research
- Leadership Development
- Advocacy & Organizing

Community Voices Heard

- Founded in 1994
- Response to evolving national welfare reform debate
- Focus on bringing voices and perspectives of low-income women to the debate & policy-making table
- Commitment to having low-income people own & control the organization

CVH Mission

- Membership organization of low-income people working collectively to build the power of low-income families and communities.
- While founded by women receiving public assistance to impact the welfare system, we now focus more broadly on economic justice.
- We define this as multi-issue, including: welfare, workforce development, public housing, accountable development, etc.

Sample of CVH Wins

- Getting Governor Spitzer to sign the Shelter Allowance Bill, pulling in nearly \$50 million in additional resources to the NYC Housing Authority annually.
- Getting the state to contribute \$3.5 million in operating subsidies to the NYC Housing Authority, the first time the state contributed such operating subsidies in 10 years.
- Getting Mayor Bloomberg to create a new Deputy Mayor position to focus on Health & Human Services and a Commission to address poverty.
- Getting NYC to create a 20,000+ paid transitional jobs program for welfare recipients transitioning to work in place of unpaid WEP/ workfare.

CVH Strategies

- Community Organizing
- Leadership Development
- Public-Policy Work
- Direct-Action Issue Campaigns
- Civic Engagement
- Media & Messaging Work
- Coalition Building
- Public Education

CVH Operating Principles

- CVH believes that membership must have meaningful decision-making and control of organization & the work we do
- CVH believes that affected constituents must represent the organization to power
- CVH believes base-building is the foundation
- CVH sees leadership development of community leaders as core to our work
- CVH does not do for people what they can do for themselves
- CVH is about organizing, not service

FUREE

- Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE) is Brooklyn-based, multi-racial organization made up of mostly women of color.
- We are organizing low-income families to build power to change the system so that all people's work is valued and all of us have the right and economic means to decide and live out our own destinies.
- We use direct action, leadership development, community organizing and political education to win the changes our members seek. Our guiding principle is that those directly affected by the policies we are seeking to change should lead the organization.
- Our Board of Directors comes from our membership, and is elected each year at our Annual Convention by our members.

FUREE

- FUREE was founded in 2001
- While FUREE started out as a welfare rights organization, we understand welfare rights is connected to a broader struggle to create economic opportunity and eliminate poverty and racism.
- In response, FUREE is organizing low-income and working-class families to promote equality, improve economic conditions, and build community power to win systemic changes at the local, state and national level.

FUREE Accomplishments

- Won \$4.5 million in raises for family daycare providers
- Won State policy changes that saved hundreds of day care centers in around the City from being shut down.
- Held three large candidate forums with over 10 candidates from state and city races
- Built a coalition of residents, shoppers, small business owners, clergy and community organizations in Downtown Brooklyn and Fort Greene to fight gentrification.
- Knocked on thousands of doors to turn out voters in Fort Greene and Downtown Brooklyn.

Outreach & Mobilization

Meeting and getting contact information from a target constituency and then moving them to action.



Points of Entry

The first step for effective outreach is to pick the right places (“points of entry”) to meet your target constituency...

- **Public spaces**
 - parks, street corners, supermarkets, government offices, etc.
- **Organizational spaces**
 - social service delivery sites, religious institutions, etc.
- **Residential spaces**
 - public housing, Section 8 buildings, shelters, etc.

Tools for Effective Outreach

The next step is to figure out what tools you want to use to engage people and pull them in...

- Collective Action/ Activity
- Community Survey
- Voter Registration/ Pledge
- House Meeting
- Teach-In/ Workshop

The Rap

Then you want to figure out how you're going to talk to people (the rap)...

A rap has a number of different parts:

- **Introduction**
establish connection, introduce self and organization
- **Problem**
define problem, what they're going through
- **Solution/ Agitation**
propose an alternative/ push people a bit
- **Crunch**
ask them to do something: take a flier, sign a sheet, commit to a meeting, etc.

Outreach Tips

- Be clear in identifying points of entry
- Set goals for contacts
- Practice a rap; know what to ask
- Listen more than you talk – 80/20 rule
- Have materials to “credentialize”
- Get contact information
- Get a concrete commitment

Turnout Goals & Calls

After meeting people, you'll want to turn them out to something. Turnout has a mathematical component to it....

If you set your turnout goal to be 50 people, you'll need about:

- 800 individuals to attempt to contact
- 400 to be spoken with by phone
- 200 to say they're coming the week before
- 100 people to confirm the night before
- 50 should then show up!

Mobilization Timeline

To develop a timeline you need to decide on your turnout goal, how many calls you need to make according to that goal, and how many people will be making calls....

- **Mailing:** 3 weeks - 10 days prior
- **Begin Calls:** 2 weeks - 7 days prior
(Days determined by how many calls need to be made to reach your turnout goal and how many people you have to make calls)
- **Confirm:** Night before
(It is critical that all “yeses” get called back to confirm their attendance the night before!)
- **Event:** Actual day

Issue ID & Needs Assessment

Research & data collection process wherein collective issues of a given constituency are uncovered.



Ways to Identify Issues

You identify an issue by going out, talking to people, and asking questions....

- Door-knocking/ 1-on-1 conversations
- Town Hall meetings/ forums
- Surveys or questionnaires
- Stakeholder/ individual meetings
- Small group meetings/ house meetings
- Census/ other community info
- Networking with REAL community leaders

Questions for IDing an Issue

- **Problem:** What is going on?
- **Solution:** How can it be fixed?
- **Win-ability:** How can we get it fixed?
Do we have enough power?
- **Target:** Who can fix it?
- **Constituents:** To whom does it matter?
- **Goal:** What do we ultimately hope to achieve?
- **Issue:** Based on answering these questions, what might be the policy or administrative change we should pursue?

Sample Phone Survey

An issue ID call includes the following parts...

- Identify yourself and why you're calling.
- Ask open questions to engage in a conversation about the problem/ situation/ program.
- Find out specifically what the person's problems/ concerns are now.
- Ask general, open-ended questions to see what's important to the person.
- Assess what's most resonant.
- Determine the person's interest in moving to action.
- Establish a next step.

Grassroots-Driven Research

Research that is inspired by and guided by those that have a personal stake in its outcome.



Why do Grassroots Research?

- To probe deeper into issues that the community is concerned about
- To build leadership and skills through community engagement in research
- To build legitimacy around known community concerns (through statistical significance)
- To create a buzz around a topic with a release (media bias for reports)
- To utilize in conjunction with other strategies in order to win a campaign

Continuum of Approach

- **Participatory-Action Research**

Fully directed and owned by subjects of research or population impacted by research topic. Subjects are experts - doing the research, the analysis, etc.

- **Grassroots-Driven Research**

Guided and influenced by subjects of research or population impacted by research topic. Subjects initiate project, help formulate questions, and then give feedback to research team.

- **Advocate-Driven Research**

Fully owned and directed by outside “experts” known for their quantitative and/ or qualitative research expertise or academic experience and credentials.

Leadership Development

Strategic & deliberate effort to educate and train individuals to strengthen their skills so they can apply these to the work of the organization.



Leadership Development

- **Assess Leadership Potential:**
 - one-on-one meetings
- **Provide Trainings to Build Skills:**
 - policy background
 - policy making process
 - speaking to the media
 - analyzing power
- **Offer Opportunities for Leadership:**
 - Facilitating meetings
 - Public speaking
 - Writing letters
 - Meeting with decision-makers
 - Represent the organization with others



Families United for Racial & Economic Equality Leadership Development Tracking Sheet

MEMBER NAME:									
DATE OF CONTACT:									
5 POTENTIAL MEMBER		4 GENERAL MEMBER		3 ACTIVE MEMBER		2 LEADER		1 ADVANCED LEADER	
ACTIVITY	DONE	ACTIVITY	DONE	ACTIVITY	DONE	ACTIVITY	DONE	ACTIVITY	DONE
Shows interest in FUREE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pays dues	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifies as a FUREE member	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thinks organizationally not individually	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completes PE series (when available)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wants to be involved in FUREE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends NMO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participates in meetings & other organizational activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recruits at least 5 members every 6 months (at least 2 are youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaches at least 1 FIRE class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commits to attend NMO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends 1 FUREE meeting or event	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participates in actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graduates/commits to graduate from FIRE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Represents FUREE with ally organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commits to attend a FUREE event or meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifies with mission and vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shows conflict resolution skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaches 1 member how to teach FIRE (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attends a mtg/event/NMO	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Completes outreach/phone bank training	<input type="checkbox"/>	Respects others and is respected by others	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shows potential to lead organizing committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Participates in outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhibits values & actions that do not oppress any group based on race, sex/gender, class, sexual orientation, immigrant status, language, age, religion/spirituality, differently able-ness	<input type="checkbox"/>	From every 5 new members recruited, develops 1 member as a leader	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Turns 2 or more people out to event/action	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends organizational retreat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-leads or steers a direct action	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Recruits 1 member to FUREE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knows who FUREE's allies are	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commits to one campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Attends FIRE (when sessions are available)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends meetings of allies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends one long-term planning meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Helps with research	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends site visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-Chairs organization committee (i.e. Friends of FUREE, leadership retreat committee, campaign committee, newsletter/communications committee)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Media work (article, interview with reporter, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attends and participates in a campaign strategy meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can articulate FUREE's vision/mission in campaigns independently (without prep)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Completes one of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Teaches FIRE session <input type="checkbox"/> Grassroots fundraising <input type="checkbox"/> Attends media training and does media work <input type="checkbox"/> Attends public speaking training and speaks publicly (i.e. hearing) <input type="checkbox"/> Attends meeting facilitation training and facilitates a meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Participates in advanced media outreach Outreaches to elected officials/ policy makers Leads target/negotiation meetings & follows up accordingly	<input type="checkbox"/>

How Many Contacts to Find a Leader?

- 400 contacts (names & numbers)
- 100 who express interest
- 30 who attend a meeting or action
- 10 who come back again and again
- 3 engage in leadership-development
- 1 continues to develop as leader

Advocacy & Organizing

Promoting concrete changes in policies or programs - either for others (advocacy) or as a collective for a group one is a part of (organizing).



Components of a Campaign

- **Goal**: big picture you want to achieve
- **Demand**: specific program/ policy you want
- **Message**: problem, issue, solution
- **Target**: person who can give you what you want
- **Strategy**: methods for putting power in motion
- **Action**: events done to move decision makers

Actions that Engage Community

- Candidate Forums
- Press Conferences
- Legislative Visits
- Rallies/ Protests/ Demonstrations
- Postcard/ Letter/ Phone Call Campaigns
- Speak Outs

Good Books on Organizing

- ***Tools for a Radical Democracy***
 - By Joan Minieri & Paul Getsos
- ***Stir It Up***
 - By Rinku Sen
- ***Organizing for Social Change***
 - By Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall & Steve Max
- ***Rules for Radicals***
 - By Saul Alinsky