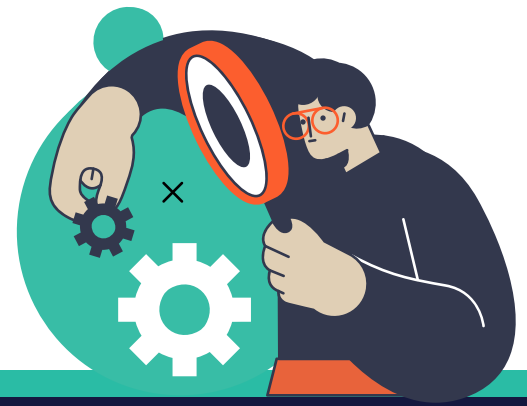


5 EVIDENCE-BASED INSIGHTS FOR BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL ADVOCACY POWER



Power can be measured by the extent to which a group can use its influence to get advocates to take action.

Organizational advocacy power is about your ability to influence the behavior of others inside and outside your organization. This tipsheet will walk you through 5 key evidence-based insights for building strong, durable organizational advocacy power so you can create an organizing culture that is rooted in volunteer retention, justice and equity, and a clear vision of the future you want realized.

1) INVEST IN THE RIGHT CRITICAL CAPACITIES TO BUILD MOVEMENTS

When building organizational advocacy power, focus on sociologist Zeynep Tufekci's **three key capacities**. These are: 1) Narrative Capacity, the ability of a movement to frame the story on its own terms; 2) Disruptive Capacity, the ability to interrupt regular operations of a system of authority or “way of doing business”; and 3) Electoral/Institutional Capacity, the ability to affect a politician's electability (or force institutional changes through avenues like ballot measures). Based on your organization's makeup and theory of change (more on that below), you may be predisposed to a particular type, but each is important and can offer levers for system change.

Try this: For Narrative Capacity, think about how you want to **frame the issue on your own terms**. For example, We Make the Future developed a strong **Race-Class Narrative**. As you are doing this work it is important to hone in on your personal and organizational reasons for engaging in advocacy to focus your Narrative Capacity. Check out the Lab's training on narrative power [here!](#)



2) CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDEPOSTS LIKE A VISION STATEMENT, A COMMUNITY POWER MAP, AND A PLAN FOR INTEGRATING EQUITY

Organizations need strong vision statements, not just mission statements. Organizations build power by creating bold visions of what is possible. Vision statements help signal to the public why you exist, who you are inviting along for the journey, and why their lives will be better because of the world you bring into fruition. Once you develop an initial vision, check it against frameworks like the Lab's **Integrating Equity** materials to ensure you are building power with those most affected by the issue in a just and equitable way. How can you identify who those are? Try a community power map!

Try this: Take the time to develop a community power map, a tool that can help you figure out your chain of connections to those most affected by your issue. You should make time for visioning to answer the question, “what is the world you are working to bring into being?” Last, you can operationalize equity by using tools and frameworks like the **Jemez Principles** to develop values of how you do work internally and with others.

3) DEVELOP A STRONG THEORY OF CHANGE AND STRATEGY THAT CLARIFIES WHY AND HOW YOU WILL WIN

Your **theory of change** should lay out *why* you will win and your **strategy** is *how* you will win. Both are indispensable because they are the foundation of how you will create just, equitable, powerful, and winnable campaigns. A theory of change is like the foundation of your social change "house" on which all other things lie atop. If you do not have a strong foundation, your house is going to be unstable. Maybe not right away, but the cracks and shoddy work will show eventually. You cannot chart what your strategic direction is without a clear understanding of what you are trying to change and how your organization or collective is poised to make that change. Your strategy allows you to test the assumptions that underlie your theory of change and allocate resources and make tough decisions about what you work on, and what you say no to. A clear strategy and theory of change can be strong recruitment and retention tools because they lay out both the organization's vision and how they are determined to overcome barriers to achieve it. Supporters are more likely to stay in and move up the **ladder of engagement** when an organization is clear about **their approach to power and their identity**.

Try this: After you develop (and make public) your theory of change and strategy, fold it into every campaign with strategic messaging. Oh, and **test them** with your base and other audiences. When thinking about your theory of change and strategy, ensure they speak to the values of your audience and that they have core components that draw people into your vision.

4) BE READY TO RESPOND TO KEY PIVOTAL EXTERNAL EVENTS TO SCALE YOUR WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

When thinking about scaling your work in an organization, consider the **Moyers Map** – a model for how movements navigate issues over time – and be ready to take advantage of different types of trigger events. Extreme weather events, pipeline spills, and other related news stories can **galvanize the public** and help you build power...if you are prepared to respond. You must develop a way to channel public interest towards your organization or coalition with strong messaging that attracts your newfound audience and clear calls to action.

Try this: Develop the leadership of organizers who are on the ground to be able to respond quickly to trigger events and effectively bring new people into the movement. Think about how a **relational organizing infrastructure** could be useful during these times.

5) STRATEGIC COALITIONS CAN BUILD MORE COLLECTIVE POWER

A coalition is a collection of diverse groups who join together their resources and power to produce a specific change that they are unable to bring about alone. **Coalitions are powerful** because they allow you to shift power dynamics in ways that are not possible alone. However, they can be fragile institutions without the **right principles** in place, which means it is extra important to establish clear lines of responsibility, leadership, and conflict resolution. Coalitions may include strange bedfellows and don't always require complete trust between members, but they do require **shared interests**.

Try this: As you create your coalition, take the time to **clearly articulate your goals** and the specific strengths and value-add of each organization. Build your coalition so that each organization is adding clout, reach, audience size, technology, relationships, etc. Coalition members should be forthcoming about what types of responsibilities are outside of their capabilities, what each can do and what is outside of their niche. This will make it easier to navigate different roles and make swift decisions!



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