



The Leadership  
Conference  
Education Fund

# GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS & ADVOCACY

## SECTION 1: SETTING GOALS





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The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization that builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States.

Access this material online at [http://www.civilrights.org/action\\_center/toolkit](http://www.civilrights.org/action_center/toolkit).



## The Leadership Conference Education Fund

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Dear Friend:

This toolkit was put together with you in mind. Its purpose is to educate, equip, encourage, and empower you to make change.

Our goal is to provide you with the basic structure and strategies needed to plan and carry out an effective grassroots public education or advocacy campaign. It's possible to write an entire book on each of the areas covered in this toolkit—in fact, many have been written. But you don't have to read half a dozen books to put together a smart campaign.

What you need to do is establish your goals, create a strategy, make a step-by-step plan, and mobilize the people, partners, and resources to make it all achievable. This toolkit is meant to be a concise guide to accomplishing that. And we include plenty of suggested resources if you want more in-depth information.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund provide leadership and coordination to coalition efforts and support the work of national and local partners by providing strategic and

technical assistance, preparing materials, offering training, and identifying resources to support coalition efforts. Information on training for grassroots advocacy is provided by The Leadership Conference; information relating to education and coalition building is provided by The Education Fund.



We believe in the power of coalitions to bring people together for a common purpose. History shows that change can be made when diverse voices unite around a shared goal. We hope you will consider us your partners in making needed change happen. You can learn more about our work at <http://www.civilrights.org>. You can also reach The Leadership Conference field staff at 202-466-3315 or at [grassroots@civilrights.org](mailto:grassroots@civilrights.org).

Have fun!

Ellen Buchman  
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# The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Field Department

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Field Department (the field team) provides grassroots consultation, advocacy coordination, support, and assistance to national, state, and local organizations regarding field campaigns around important civil and human rights issues. The team is based in Washington, D.C., with a satellite office in Atlanta, Georgia.

## Overview of National, State, and Local Work

Nationally, the field team convenes and provides field outreach and guidance to the coalition's more than 200 national civil and human rights organizations on a broad range of issues. With that focus, the field team provides field outreach and advocacy, and public education campaign guidance, on a broad range of issues.

For example, through national coalition efforts, the field team has played a role in implementation of field campaigns for legislative victories, including: the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, and the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010.

Further, when resources permit, the field team works in collaboration with local organizations to conduct national direct-service, public outreach campaigns such as the Digital Television Transition (DTV) campaign or the 2010 Census education campaign.

The field team also works throughout the country with local organizations to provide assistance and support to local coalitions' work in their communities. This support includes field outreach and advocacy,

and public education campaign guidance. The team collaborates with leaders in states including: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Texas. As just one example, in Nebraska, the field team has worked with coalitions to preserve equal opportunity, as well as judicial nominations and immigration reform education.

In concert with The Leadership Conference's policy and communications departments, the field team works proactively to create rapid response mechanisms on important federal civil and human rights issues with national coalitions in Washington D.C., and state and local coalitions in key states.

## Support Provided to National and State Coalition Members

The field department is proud to offer an array of services to both national and local partners to help support their work. These services include:

- Strategic Campaign Development, Guidance, and Execution (when applicable)
- Webinars, National Conference Calls, and Legislative Updates
- Legislative Email Action Alerts
- Trainings and Workshops on Coalition-Building, Community Outreach, Grassroots Advocacy, and Key Civil and Human Rights Issues
- Media Readiness Training (in conjunction with the Communications Department)
- Educational Material Development, Grassroots Toolkit, Resource Guides, and Fact Sheets
- Support in Organizing Press Briefings, Lobby Days, and Coalition Convenings



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# SETTING GOALS

The first step of any campaign is setting goals and identifying benchmarks toward achieving those goals. Once you know your destination you can begin to create a road map for getting there.

Sometimes this is easy. Some educational or advocacy campaigns can have a straightforward goal with clear steps to achieving it, such as getting a bill passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. Other campaigns might start with more general goals, such as educating the public about a certain issue or attracting media attention to an organization or campaign.

## SMART Goals

Having explicit goals makes it easier to map out a strategy and to explain your campaign to potential supporters. One approach to setting and clarifying your goals is to use the acronym SMART. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed.

### **Specific**

Being specific has several advantages. First, a specific goal makes it easier to determine the precise steps needed to achieve it. In addition, a specific goal is more measurable.

For example, “raising awareness” of an issue or “educating the public” about your organization are not very specific. Think about what would have to happen for you to consider the campaign a success. Even if you think your goal is obvious, try making it as specific as possible. Rather than “making public officials more accountable in our state,” identify what you need to accomplish to make that a reality: for example, “The creation of a new office of ethics and accountability that meets these four standards . . .”

### **Measurable**

Having measurable goals can help you recruit, retain, and motivate volunteers; evaluate your progress; and keep your campaign team on the same page. Clear and measurable goals can also help you raise funds for your campaign. Many funders want to be able to verify that their funds are being put to work successfully.

Some goals are easier to measure than others. If you’re focused on changing a law or regulation, it’s easy to know whether or not you’re successful. If you’re carrying out a public education campaign on an issue, you’ll need to create some qualitative and quantitative measures of success. Do you want to speak to a dozen new potential coalition partners? Have a volunteer leader featured in the local paper? Give media training to 20 local leaders? Earn a certain number of mentions in specific media outlets? Double traffic to your website?

Some information is readily available. You can count increased traffic to your website, or the number of responses to an email. You can count the number of people who attend an educational forum or rally or who take part in an organized effort to educate lawmakers about an issue or piece of legislation.

You may be able to get other kinds of information with a little more work. Your campaign might benefit from access to data collected by public agencies. For example, if you are building support for a focused effort to reduce dropout rates in communities of color, you could demonstrate the need for your campaign by getting graduation rates for high schools from areas with different economic and demographic profiles and publicizing any clear disparities.

### **Achievable**

Campaign goals must be achievable. A goal that feels achievable with hard work can motivate activists to sacrifice time and energy to help you accomplish it. A goal that seems unattainable or unbelievable may have the opposite effect; donors and volunteers are less likely to invest in what feels like an impossible quest.

Ask yourself if it is possible to accomplish the specific goals you are setting.

- Are there legal barriers to the change you want to make?
- Are your goals achievable given the political or cultural climate?
- Have others accomplished similar goals?

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### **Realistic**

A realistic goal and an achievable goal may sound like the same thing, and there's some overlap. But deciding whether your goal is realistic is less about the external environment and more about self-assessment. Among the kinds of questions you should ask:

- What kind of financial resources will the campaign require?
- Do you know where the money will come from? Can you identify likely sources of funding?
- Do your coalition partners have enough staff and volunteers to do what is needed?
- What are the competing demands for your time and energy? Will this campaign have a high enough priority to keep your coalition partners engaged?
- Are you likely to get support from influential community leaders?

### **Timed**

Set deadlines. Assigning a time frame to your ultimate goal and to the major steps in your action plan will help you budget your time and money, and will give you a way to hold people accountable for responsibilities they have taken. You may not always make your deadlines, but having a timeline provides a valuable structure for the campaign.

### **Getting SMART**

Here's an example of a goal that is noble, but not SMART:

*To ensure that schools collect and report data on high school dropout rates so that we can better evaluate disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes.*

That may be a good way to describe the mission or purpose of an educational coalition, but the goal isn't specific or measurable enough to build a campaign around. Here's one way to make that a SMART goal:

*To add a provision to the pending education bill before the end of this legislative session that would require high schools and state education departments to collect and report data on dropout rates that will permit comparisons between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.*

This is specific, measurable, and time-framed. It's at least theoretically achievable, as long as the legislature is still in session. Figuring out if it's realistically achievable requires an honest assessment of your situation and resources.

With SMART goals in hand you are ready to think through your strategy and come up with an action plan. That plan will probably include a number of intermediate goals or objectives that will be stepping stones to your ultimate goal. Keep thinking SMART with each step you take.



## **obtain data to set goals and evaluate progress**

*You may set a goal that requires you to collect some data. For example, say you want to increase public support for immigration reform in your state by 20 percentage points over the next two years. You need to know where you stand at the beginning of the campaign. If there's no publicly available polling data, you might be able to partner with a polling unit at a university. You may also be able add a few questions to another survey, which would cost far less than commissioning your own poll.*

*If you're looking for government data, you may be required to fill out a written request under the federal Freedom of Information Act or your state's open records or "right to know" law. Information on using the federal FOIA is available from the First Amendment Center.*

