



Managing your campaign's steering committee

Here are some tips for managing your campaign's steering committee based on the experience of campaign directors:

1. Recruiting team members

Your governance team ideally would include 8-12 people who would regularly participate and contribute to the governance of your campaign. A diverse group (in terms of identity and organizing strategy) ensures that all relevant voices are heard and helps you steer the campaign and avoid mistakes. Core functions of this team are overall campaign direction, strategy, thought partnership & decision-making.

To make your team most effective, young people with lived experience need to be at the core of the team, along with community-based organizations in the communities most impacted by incarceration, family members, and other allies. (See Youth First's recommendations here under Step 2 under Tools & Templates: <https://www.nokidsinprison.org/take-action/start-a-campaign>).

Be sure to let folks know how much time is involved and what you expect as a member of the governance team. You could consider an agreement that spells out roles & expectations (See sample at the end of this document). Identify potential members and meet with them one-on-one or in a small group to build a solid relationship with them.

2. Communications

Create a google group for the whole group so that you can send regular emails to the group.

Create a list of each member with their contact information (eg name, title, organization, city, email, cell #, twitter handle, etc.)

Plan to email the group weekly and to encourage them to share information with the group regularly (so that all the emails aren't just coming from you).

Send text messages and/or call young people on your steering committee, especially in the beginning to get them used to participation on the committee.

Ask youth regularly if they have access to a phone, internet, and technology to be able to receive communications regarding steering committee meetings and documents. Work with them to make arrangements if needed.

3. Meetings

Schedule a regular in-person meeting (monthly or every other week) for 90 minutes based on everyone's availability.

Identify & secure a location for the meeting & have beverages (eg water, tea, coffee) & snacks at meetings (if possible).

Send out a calendar invite (including the location and a call-in number in case someone can't be there in person) so it's on everyone's calendar.

Start a running "agenda" on google docs and include that on the calendar invite so that everyone has the calendar and can contribute to the calendar.

The "agenda" should include standing items such as campaign updates, the campaign plan and upcoming events. The main bulk of the agenda should focus on strategy & decision-making on key questions, not on an endless list of report outs (use email for that). Every agenda should include next steps and an opportunity for all members to take on tasks.

Prepare ahead of time. Think about the key decisions that need to be made at the upcoming meeting. Write out the questions and be sure to include any supplemental materials.

Send out a reminder email 3 days before the meeting and invite the group to contribute agenda items.

Send out a final reminder the day before the meeting.

Take notes at the meeting (or assign someone on your team to take notes or share the notetaking by inviting folks to sign up to do this at one of the meetings).

Share the notes with a follow up note within a day or two of the meeting,

Keep the notes on google docs so that the team can see previous notes and you can share with folks when they can't find the notes.

Reach out to youth leaders in advance of the meeting to ensure that they are prepared to fully participate. Schedule a short 30 min prep call if necessary to go over the agenda and meeting materials.

4. Making Decisions Quickly and Collectively

It is important that your Campaign be nimble and be able to make major decisions, especially on strategy, when new developments / issues arise and on policy and financial issues, quickly. However, it is also important to include your governance team in making decisions for your campaign. If a decision needs to be made quickly, you should consider organizing an emergency governance team call to discuss the issue and make a collective decision with the governance team. You should seek to make decisions by consensus whenever possible.

If youth leaders are unable to be present for these emergency decisions because of school or other commitments, be sure to communicate to them the decisions that were made, the logic behind those decisions, and allow room for questions.

5. Staying in touch

Maintaining your relationships with your governance team is crucial to your campaign's success. In addition to your regular meetings with the group, it is often helpful for you to reach out to members by phone in advance of your regular meeting just to check in to see if they have anything they'd like to be on the agenda. Also, if you haven't heard from them or they've missed a meeting or two, it is helpful to call them just to check in to make sure they still want to participate.

Campaign Governance Team

Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities

The _____ Campaign Governance Team serves as the governance board.

Expectations:

1. Support the mission and values/principles of _____ Campaign.
2. Share _____ Campaign's commitment to center youth, families and impacted communities in the Campaign's decision-making process.
3. Observe the Campaign's consensus decision-making process.
4. Devote approximately 2 hours per week to the Campaign.
5. Participate on a monthly Governance Team meeting (and one additional call if needed).
6. Track tasks from meetings and follow up if needed.
7. Maintain open and honest communication with Campaign staff and other Governance Team members.

Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Provide strategic advice and guidance to the Campaign.
2. Contribute to regular campaign planning sessions and help implement strategies and activities laid out in the _____ Campaign Plan.
3. Facilitate relationships and connections with other community groups and stakeholders that may further the Campaign's work.
4. Attend _____ Campaign coalition meetings and events.
5. Help promote the _____ Campaign meetings, events and activities on social media, in your organization and with your networks.
6. Host community meetings or public forums, as needed.
7. Testify at Public Hearings and participate in press conferences and other public events.



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