LIFE CYCLE OF AN ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN

CREDIT: University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

A core value in community organizing is intentionality:

the idea that every step is purposeful and connected to larger goals of building powerto change systems.

The Lifecycle of an Organizing Campaign is a tool for organizers and leaders to see the steps in pulling together a successful campaign. At first glance, it may seem like a lot of work (it often is!). The purpose of this tool is for people to see that each step in their organizing is connected to future steps.

Key Terms

BASE BUILDING
The process of organizing people by building relationships based on shared interests.

ISSUE
A solution to shared problem that has a clear target (decision maker) and demand.

POWER ANALYSIS
Strategy designed to understand and built power around a particular issue in order to achieve victory.

ACTION
Use of various tactics (phone calls, letters, rallies, press conferences, etc) by the base to put pressure on the target.

DECISION MAKING
Process of deliberation and negotiation between your base and a particular target related that leads to a “final” decision.

EVALUATION
Capturing lessons, tensions and gut reactions to the outcome of a campaign. Evaluation shouldn’t only happen at the “end” of a campaign, but constantly throughout the campaign, focusing on what went well, what to improve and next steps.

Using the Lifecycle

1. **IT IS A CYCLE, NOT A STRAIGHT LINE**
You can never have too many people in your base. No single issue will end injustice or change a system completely. Power Analysis should adapt to changing organizing and political realities. No decision is final. Evaluation never ends.

2. **MOMENTUM IS CRITICAL, AVOID SHORTCUTS**
To keep people involved, don’t let the campaign become stagnant, but skipping phases or moving too quickly can be harmful. For example, a group can do a really thorough analysis of an issue, but if that issue isn’t a priority to the base, then the issue won’t attract the support necessary to win. Alternatively, one can build a large base, but if there is no action, power and change will be limited.

3. **LEADERSHIP IS EVERYTHING**
Being clear about how you develop community leadership throughout the campaign is arguably just as important (if not more important) than the outcome of the campaign itself. Victories will need to be defended, and new issues are sure to arise. Having strong leadership in your community will position you well for future campaigns.

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