

10 Main Concepts of Community Organizing

1. **Power.** The ability to make something happen. The way to build power is by getting people to understand the source of their social or political problems, then devise solutions, strategize, take on leadership and move to action through campaigns that win concrete changes.
2. **Relationship building.** Organizing relies on two different kinds. One-on ones to find out a person's passions and to create a strong connection that is sustainable over time. The second is public relationships. Community power-building organizations exist to build members collective power not their personal social status. The result is a network of public relationships.
3. **Leadership development.** Must build a base of members. More people means more power. Guide members to see the roots of the problems. Get members to understand what organizing is. Get people involved. Develop that base of members to be leaders. Leaders learn by doing, for example recruiting new members, giving testimony, running meetings, developing strategies, making decisions, building the organization. Move members to action. Action fosters commitment. Builds strong organizations.
4. **Political education.** Political education is a form of training about issues as well as about social movements and history that you engage in both formally in workshop sessions and informally in daily or regular contact with members and leaders. Through political education, you communicate the analysis or worldview of the organization.
5. **Strategy.** Strategy is an overall approach to achieving objectives. It is the way or ways that a community power building organization uses its power to win what it wants. A campaign is a planned series of strategies and actions designed to achieve clear goals and objectives. Effective organizations are strategic in everything they do. They are always refining their power analysis and strategies. Research is an essential component before launching any campaign.
6. **Mobilization.** The essential process of moving people to action.

7. **Action.** A public showing of an organization's power, such as a march, lobbying meeting in the state capital, accountability session with elected officials, a press briefing. Actions take place during campaigns. In addition a person can take action as an individual to support a campaign or organization, such as signing a membership card or writing a letter to an elected representative. The group's goal is to move power holders with the number of people they represent.
8. **Winning.** Organizing focuses on winning. It results in positive, concrete change in people's lives. Community Organizations should run winnable, strategic campaigns. Campaigns deliver wins.
9. **Movement building.** In movement building, groups use their resources to engage in broader social justice activities that are not solely connected to winnable campaigns or the self interest of community members.
10. **Evaluation.** Evaluation is the process of assessing your actions and determining what worked, what didn't, and what you would do differently next time. Evaluation takes place after every substantive event, including a day of recruitment or a phone conversation with an ally. Frequent evaluation hones and builds the skills, standards and excellence of everyone in the organization. Sometimes organizers refer to an evaluation that follows a specific activity as "debriefing."

Adapted from Tools for Radical Democracy by Joan Minieri and Paul Getsos, Chardon Press, 2007