

Quick Start Guide for New Campaign Coaches



Congratulations on becoming a new campaign coach for the NEA Campaign Lab! This guide is meant to guide you through the first two months of your new role.

Steps to Get Started

1. Attend an onboarding meeting with your mentor coach and Campaign Lab staff.
2. Work with a mentor coach to complete a 3-session coaching practicum.
3. After the practicum, you will schedule coaching calls with your lead two times per month going forward.
4. Your mentor coach will remain on call if you need assistance

The Role of Campaign Coach

Different organizations think about the role of a campaign coach differently. For the purposes of the NEA Campaign Lab, you are a thought partner for a campaign lead. You don't have to be an expert at all things campaigning, but you do need to have good active listening skills and be willing to learn what you don't know.

What is Campaign Coaching?	What is it not?
Using mostly questions, observations, personal stories, and sometimes advice to help campaign leads clarify their thoughts and figure out next steps to achieving their goals.	Being the technical expert that does all the talking. Always giving advice.
Helping campaign leads understand “what’s going on beneath the surface” of their problems so that they find a way forward.	Being a lead organizer. You are not responsible for the work of the campaign, including meetings or campaign plans (although you should help the lead think through being successful at those things).
Holding the campaign lead accountable for meeting their goals but also holding space for them to struggle productively in the work.	Acting as a therapist. Make space for the lead to voice their fears and frustrations but make sure to pivot at a certain point to figuring out what they can do to change their situation.
Encouraging campaign leads to keep going by reminding them of the good work they have done so far and the difference that their work is making.	Only listening to the campaign lead. Coaching sessions should have an agenda and outcomes that the coach has an active role in helping the lead achieve.

What does a typical campaign coaching meeting look like?

Use the sample agenda to plan your coaching sessions. Meetings should be about 1 hour.

Sample Coaching Meeting Agenda with Script

1. Check in. *“How are you?”*
2. Review agenda and decide on outcomes for the meeting. *“Here’s what I have in my notes to discuss today. Is there anything you want to add or change? What do you want to have figured out by the end of this meeting so I can make sure we focus our time there?”*

3. Important campaign updates. *“The last time we spoke, you told me the campaign was at the (___) stage. Has anything big changed since then?”*
4. Discuss key questions that will land the agreed upon outcomes. *
5. Secondary topics/challenges. *“What else feels urgent?”*
6. Next steps. *“Ok, what’s landed for you in this conversation? What next steps will you take to address the challenges we discussed today? And just confirming that our next meeting is ___.”*
7. Closing reflection. *“How is this going? What was most helpful about today?”*

*Majority of your time should be spent on this item. See sample coaching questions on page 5 for ideas on possible questions to ask during this segment.

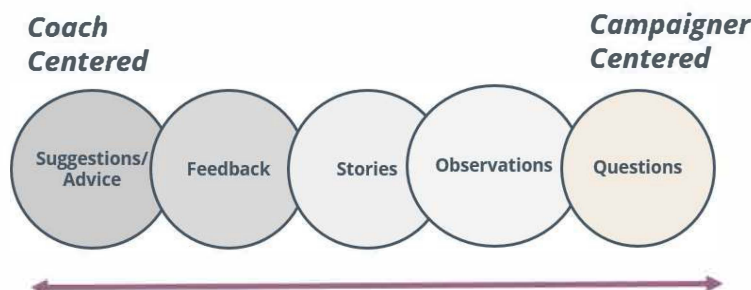
What Campaign Coaches Do- Diagnosis and Intervention

Campaign coaches listen to campaign leads and try to diagnose problems. Then, they intervene by offering support.

Most of the problems you will hear fall into three categories: motivational, strategic, or skills-based. The campaign lead is usually struggling with taking action (motivation), figuring out a path forward (strategic), or knowing how to do something (skills based). Identifying the category helps you to understand **what** the lead needs to hear as a response. For example, If they are struggling with doing one-on-one conversations, it’s important to find out enough information to know if they don’t know how to do one, or if they are avoiding getting them done because they are feeling anxious about talking to people they don’t know or aren’t friends with.

Once you figure out what the lead is struggling with, think about **how** you will help. Your interventions should be as “campaigner centered” as possible, meaning **your intervention should help the campaign lead come to their own answers.** To do that, questions are the most effective method, and advice is the least effective.

Possible Interventions



Other Important Campaign Lab Information

The Commitment (what you give)

- Remotely coach 1-2 participating Campaign Lab teams; coaching 1 team is a ~5-hour per month commitment; coaching 2 teams is a ~9-hour per month commitment.
- Engage in the following activities: coach local teams and team leads; plan, reflect on, and document coaching calls; participate in virtual trainings and workshops; participate in peer-to-peer problem-solving calls with other coaches; engage in follow-up check-ins with local teams between coaching sessions.
- An initial 12-month commitment, with the possibility of extending the commitment upon successful completion of an initial coaching cycle.

The Opportunity (what you receive)

- A stipend of \$1,100 for coaching 1 local team or \$1,800 for coaching 2 local teams for one year, with the option to extend. You must complete a coaching contract to receive your stipend. If you haven't received a contract, email Kyle Serrette at kserrette@nea.org.
- Foundational training in methods and tools for coaching campaigns.
- The opportunity to participate in a historic national campaign committed to promoting, protecting, and strengthening public education.

Link for Coaching Notes.

- Please document your coaching calls at this link- [Campaign Coach Notes – Fill out form](#)

All Call Meetings

You are expected to attend Campaign Lab All Call Meetings. All meetings are on zoom. If you haven't received a calendar invite with the zoom link, please email Amanda Kail at akail@nea.org. Remaining dates for 2026 are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| • June 23rd | • October 27th |
| • July 21st | • November 17th |
| • August 18 th | • December 8th |
| • September 22nd | |

The Seed Grant

Campaign leads can apply for a \$2500 Seed Grant once every twelve months. Applications are rolling, but funds are awarded three times per year: February, June, and November. It is important that the lead has a plan for how to use the funds for their campaign before they apply. Please encourage them to share their plans with you for feedback before submitting a request. The grant can be used for most common campaign expenses, such as printing costs, stickers, T-shirts, buttons, and food or other supplies for events or actions.

To apply for a seed grant, the lead submits a grant request at this [link](#). Campaign Lab staff review the request and meet with leads to suggest changes as needed. Once the request has been approved, the campaign lead will receive a link to put their grant directly into Blackbaud, the NEA grant system.

2026 Campaign Lab Trainings

Campaign Lab offers four in-person trainings for Campaign Lab Participants. Registration is limited, so you are encouraged to enroll early.

As a campaign coach, we HIGHLY recommend that you enroll in the Coaching Academy. This training covers coaching and campaigning fundamentals, as well as how to coach a lead through a campaign. Go to <https://www.nea.org/UD-Org-Support/campaign-academies> for information on the trainings and how to enroll.

Sample Coaching Questions

Questions for Sharpening Assessments

- How do you know that? What kind of evidence do you have?
- When have you seen that happen?
- What would have to happen to change that?
- If you say “yes” to this opportunity, what will you have to say “no” to in order to pull it off?

Questions for Getting Under the Surface

- You mentioned a challenge your team is dealing with. Let’s slow down a bit. What else might be going on here? What aspect is harder to talk about, but is also here?
- Sounds like (this person) has been challenging. If there were a challenge underneath this one dynamic, that might be a bigger pattern or question for us, what would it be?
- We’ve covered the urgent challenges rising to the surface this week. But I want to make sure to check in about “the bigger picture”. In the grand scheme of the campaign, what other things are important for us to spend time on?

Questions for Prioritizing

- Which of these things feels most urgent for us to figure out today?

Questions for Centering Equity

- Who is most directly impacted? Who has been left out? How can they be directly engaged? How do your demands center race, class, and gender justice?
- Who are the stakeholders most affected by the inequities? Are they involved in naming the issues and solutions? What kinds of active leadership roles could they take to advance the proposed solution?
- What inequities are you noticing or experiencing? What are the impacts on different groups? Who benefits most and who is hurt most?
- What institutions, policies, or practices are causing or contributing to the inequities? What social norms, popular myths, or cultural biases may be contributing?
- How did things get this way and are things worsening or improving?
- What solutions could address the root causes and eliminate the inequities? How would different racial groups be impacted by the proposed solutions?
- What strategies and actions could be used to advance the solutions?

Coaching Practicum



Campaign Coaches will work with a mentor coach for three coaching sessions in a gradual release model. The mentor coach will lead the first meeting, and the campaign coach will observe. The mentor coach and campaign coach will co-lead the second meeting, and the campaign coach will lead the third meeting, with the mentor coach observing.

The mentor coach and campaign coach will debrief after every meeting.

At the conclusion of the third meeting, the mentor coach will either recommend that the campaign coach is ready to continue coaching independently or that the campaign coach needs more support. The mentor coach and Campaign Lab staff will discuss and create further support as needed.

Meeting 1- "Getting to Know You"

The mentor coach will facilitate and take the lead in this meeting. The campaign coach will complete the observation notes during the meeting.

Goals:

- Get to know each other
- By the end of the second meeting, have enough clarity between coach and campaign lead to be able to identify a goal and what the lead wants as a focus of coaching.

AGENDA (with notes)

1. **Introductions**- what brought you to this work (being a campaign lead, being a campaign coach).
2. **Describe the campaign. What is the goal? Who is going to do the work to win the goal? How will you win?** Note- Often, the campaign lead will describe several problems such as having a hostile school board, low morale, high turnover, budget cuts, worker safety etc., but they won't have a concrete goal. The mentor coach will model asking questions to help the campaign lead clarify their answers.
3. **Where do you want to focus our coaching for now?** Note- if they aren't sure, offer this menu of options:
 - a. Building a team
 - b. Increasing participation in the campaign
 - c. Making a plan to win
 - d. Following up and tracking progress
 - e. Identifying and recruiting new leaders
 - f. How to pivot- your campaign is stalled or finished. Now what?
4. **Next Steps**- Set date/time for next meeting. The Campaign Lead's goal for the next meeting is to be able to answer both questions 2 and 3 if they haven't yet. If they have answered it, ask the Campaign Lead what they want to have accomplished by your next meeting so you can check in and begin the coaching process.

Debrief- At the conclusion of the meeting, the mentor coach and campaign coach should debrief and plan for the next meeting.

1. Review and discuss the observation notes from the coach.
2. Review and discuss the session based on the coaching rubric.
3. Create an agenda and divide up who will lead which part. You can use the sample agenda provided in this guide.

Meeting 2 – “Clarifying the Goal/Starting the Coaching Process”

The mentor coach and campaign coach will facilitate this meeting together based on the agenda they co-created after the last meeting. The following general coaching meeting agenda can be used going forward:

Sample Coaching Meeting Agenda

1. Check in
2. Review agenda and decide on outcomes for the meeting.
3. Important campaign updates.
4. **Discuss key questions that will land the agreed upon outcomes.***
5. “What else feels urgent?”- Secondary topics/challenges
6. Next steps
7. Closing reflection- How is this going? What was most helpful about today?

*Majority of your time should be spent on this item.

Debrief- Mentor coach and campaign coach use the coaching rubric to guide their debrief and will plan the agenda for the next meeting. Mentor coach will give feedback to campaign coach using the Coaching Rubric.

Meeting 3- “Coaching Launch”

The campaign coach will lead this whole meeting. The mentor coach will assess the campaign coach using the Coaching Rubric.

Debrief- Mentor coach and campaign coach use the Coaching Rubric to guide their conversation and plan the agenda for the next meeting. Mentor coach will give feedback to campaign coach using the Coaching Rubric.

Coaching Rubric- What Makes a Good Campaign Coach?

	Ineffective	Effective “The Sweet Spot”	Ineffective
Elicitive	Only offering advice	Leaning largely on asking questions, and sometimes providing suggestions	Only asking questions
Directive	“I set the agenda”	Staying flexible in providing guidance on how to focus your time together, collaborating to set and change agendas	“I only respond to what comes up naturally”
Transparency	Always leading with my observations and opinions.	Providing enough detail about your assessments so coachees have a sense of “what I’m thinking”	Never sharing my observations & opinions
Experience	“I’m the expert”	Offering stories about your experiences when appropriate, and what you’ve learned from them	“I know nothing”
Vulnerability	Only staying on the surface level	Balancing handling challenges identified by coachees with curiosity about “what else might be going on”	Always inviting coachees to reflect on deeper patterns
Taskiness	Meetings are all business.	Balancing authentically connecting with coachees with the need to “get to work”	Meetings are “all small talk”

Coaching Observations and Notes Template (For Use by Coach With Team Lead)

Use this template to record your observations, gut responses, and possible questions when you are meeting with your campaign lead.

My Observations

Team discouraged by getting a no from a secondary target they thought would be an easy yes.

My “Gut Response”

“Why is this such a big deal? Let’s move on!”

A Curiosity Underneath

“Is there something I’m missing about what it means to them?”

A Question I Could Ask

“It seems like this was a big disappointment for you all. I want to know more about how it landed for you. What felt ‘big’ about it to you?”

“And what would it take to feel like ‘we’re on the right track’ again?”

Additional Resources

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS)- [Free the Future](#)

<https://beautifultrouble.org/>

<https://practicalradicals.org/podcast-episodes/>

[Campaign Strategy Workbook](#)