

Checklist for Creating a Dossier for Your Target

Why Strategic Research Matters

We don't organize in the dark. Every campaign—whether it's for better pay, safer schools, or stronger contracts—depends on knowing who holds the power and how they use it. Research isn't just about facts. It's about finding leverage. It's about understanding what makes our targets tick, and how we can make them move.

1. Institutional Power & Influence

- Identify who makes decisions: superintendents, school board chairs, department heads.
- Understand both formal authority and informal influence.
- Map out the decision-making structure.

2. Funding & Financial Ties

- Investigate program funding sources and partnerships.
- Look for private vendors, consultants, and foundations.
- Follow the money to uncover priorities and potential conflicts of interest.

3. Policy History & Public Statements

- Review past decisions and policy initiatives.
- Analyze public statements, interviews, and meeting minutes.
- Use this information to anticipate future actions and hold targets accountable.

4. Community Impact & Demographics

- Understand who is affected by decisions.
- Examine race, income, language, housing, and education data.
- Identify communities ready to mobilize.

5. Local Institutions & Networks

- Map out churches, schools, community centers, and advocacy groups.
- Identify allies and opponents.
- Build coalitions to amplify campaign power.

6. Personal Background & Affiliations

- Research the target's career history and affiliations.
- Look for motivations, loyalties, and potential vulnerabilities.
- Expose conflicts of interest and hidden agendas.

7. Local Intel & Relationships

- Talk to staff, union members, community leaders, and journalists.
- Gather informal insights and pressure points.
- Use relationships to fill in gaps and confirm findings.

Conclusion: Research as Resistance

This isn't just research—it's resistance. It's how we build campaigns that win. Let's commit to doing the work. Let's build dossiers that expose power and build people power. Because when we know our target, we know how to organize. And when we organize, we win.

Debrief Questions: Researching Local Decision-Makers

Reflection on the Process

- • What surprised you most about the information you uncovered?
- • Which section of the handout felt most useful or revealing?
- • Did you discover any gaps in your current understanding of local power structures?

Strategic Thinking

- • Based on your research, what leverage points can we use in our campaign?
- • How does this information change the way we think about our target?
- • What patterns or connections did you notice that could influence our strategy?

Relationship Building

- • Who in the community do we need to build stronger relationships with?
- • Are there any unexpected allies or opponents you identified?
- • What institutions or networks could help amplify our message?

Messaging & Mobilization

- • How can we use what we learned to shape our public messaging?
- • What stories or data points will resonate most with our base?
- • What organizing tactics feel most appropriate given what we now know?

Next Steps

- • What's one action we can take this week based on this research?
- • Who else needs to see or contribute to this dossier?
- • How will we keep this information updated and actionable?