



Facilitator Guidebook for Organizational Strategic Planning

*Integrated with High Participation Local &
Centering Equity Assessment Frameworks*



Strategic planning looks beyond immediate campaigns to evaluate overall power, leadership pipelines, member engagement, financial sustainability, staff and volunteer capacity, partnerships, and systemic equity. Campaign plans must align with and advance the broader strategic direction established through organizational strategic planning.

What is the Difference Between Program or Campaign Planning and Organizational Strategic Planning?

All plans require that key decision-makers are part of the process. All planning processes begin with research about the current reality and a shared understanding of the desired future state. They identify goals, establish priorities, and lay out how people, time, money, and other resources will be deployed to achieve desired outcomes.

While these planning processes share common elements, they differ in scale, scope, and purpose:

- **Program or Campaign Planning:** Focuses on a specific initiative, project, campaign, or outcome. It answers questions such as: *What are we trying to accomplish? Who do we need to engage? What activities, tactics, timelines, and resources are required to achieve success?* Campaign and program plans are often shorter-term and designed to produce measurable results within a defined period.
- **Organizational Strategic Planning:** Larger in scope and longer in time horizon. Rather than focusing on a single campaign or program, it examines the organization as a whole and determines where the organization is headed, what it wants to become, and what capacities it must build to be successful. Strategic planning clarifies mission, vision, values, priorities, and long-term goals. It helps leaders make choices about where to invest resources, what work to prioritize, what opportunities to pursue, and what organizational changes are needed to achieve their desired future.

A Useful Distinction: Campaign and program plans help an organization decide how to win a particular fight, while strategic plans help an organization decide which fights to take on and how to build the power, capacity, and alignment needed to win over the long term.

For a local, strategic planning looks beyond immediate campaigns to evaluate overall power, leadership pipelines, member engagement, financial sustainability, staff and volunteer capacity, partnerships, and systemic equity. Campaign plans must align with and advance the broader strategic direction established through organizational strategic planning.

Facilitator's Discovery Process

Strategic planning meetings often succeed or fail before participants ever enter the room. The facilitator's job is to understand the organization's history, culture, power dynamics, opportunities, and challenges well enough to design a process that produces meaningful decisions.

What "Pre-Meeting" Steps Do You Need to Take?

Before developing an agenda, conduct interviews, gather documents, distribute pre-planning surveys, and clarify expectations with key leaders, staff, members, and stakeholders. At a minimum, seek answers to the following questions:

- **Organizational Purpose and Direction:** What is the organization's mission, vision, and core values? Is there a shared understanding among leaders, staff, and members? What does success look like over the next 3 to 5 years?
- **Current Strategic Position:** Is there a current strategic plan? What goals were achieved or missed, and what lessons were learned? What organizational strengths and weaknesses exist?
- **Participants and Decision-Making Authority:** Who will participate? Do they hold decision-making authority? Are power dynamics, historical conflicts, or underrepresented constituencies present?
- **Desired Outcomes:** What specific decisions need to be made? What level of specificity is expected?
- **Internal Organizational Health:** How healthy is the culture and level of trust? Are systems of communication and decision-making effective?
- **External Environment:** What external opportunities, threats, political/budgetary shifts, or demographic changes exist?
- **Member, Staff, and Stakeholder Voice:** What are members and staff saying in recent surveys or listening sessions? Whose voices are typically heard, and whose are missing?
- **Equity and Inclusion Considerations:** How well does the organization serve all constituencies? What patterns of participation suggest barriers to inclusion across race, class, gender, job classification, language group, or geography?
- **Readiness for Strategic Planning:** Why engage in planning now? Is there urgency for change, and are leaders prepared to prioritize resources based on outcomes?

Facilitator's Guiding Question: *"What is this organization trying to become, what stands in its way, what strengths can it build upon, and who needs to be part of creating the path forward?"*

Structuring the Strategic Planning Process

Stage 1: Building Community and Establishing Purpose

Objectives: Build trust and psychological safety, create working agreements, establish shared purpose, surface differing perspectives, and benchmark ground truth.

Facilitator's Role & Tools:

- Surfaces differences in experience, power, identity, and authority.
- Helps individuals connect personal motivations to organizational purpose.
- **Tools:** Wheel of Privilege, Leadership Styles Assessment, Centering Equity Tool, and the **High Participation Local Assessment**. Use the 13-category assessment to establish a baseline score (1.0–4.0 scale) across union operations.

Stage 2: Understanding the Current State & Capacity Gap Diagnosis

Objectives: Make meaning from data rather than just presenting information. Move beyond standard SWOT analysis by pairing data with capacity-gap mechanics.

Capacity-Gap Cascades (Integrated Framework):

When analyzing internal data (membership density, financial reports, organizing outcomes), help participants map low scores in core assessment categories directly to their root organizational consequences:

Foundational Capacity Area (Low Score)	Organizational Impact & Cascade Effect
Role of Union Leaders	Few new leaders available; leadership remains concentrated in a small core.
Communication Systems	Low member participation; information flow is bottlenecked.
Organizing Data	Poor targeting of resources; inability to identify engagement gaps.
Worksite Structures	Weak campaign execution; lack of immediate workplace response.
Centering Equity	Uneven participation and leadership across job types, shifts, and backgrounds.

Stage 3: Creating Future Vision & Establishing Benchmark Metrics

Objectives: Envision 3 to 5-year future states and establish concrete, non-vague targets for success.

Visioning and Benchmarks:

Use Affinity Wall processes for visioning. When translating vision into quantifiable strategic targets, incorporate the High Participation Local benchmarks where possible:

- **Supermajority Membership Density:** Reach >85% signed union membership across all job classifications (e.g., certified educators and classified support staff) and worksites.
- **Supermajority Member Participation:** Achieve >75% routine participation in member-to-member conversations, surveys, meetings, campaigns, and collective actions.
- **Worksite Leadership Coverage:** Establish a ratio of 1 trained building representative/steward per 15–20 members across 100% of worksites.
- **Multi-Demographic Equity Audit:** Evaluate all success metrics across demographic filters—job classification, shift time, race, gender, language group, and geography—to ensure outcomes do not reinforce existing disparities.

Beyond the core High Participation Local benchmarks, strategic goals across union and advocacy organizations frequently incorporate performance metrics across five primary operational areas:

1. Financial Sustainability & Resource Growth

- **PAC & Political Action Growth:** Target a specific percentage increase in voluntary member contributions to political action funds (e.g., a 15%–20% annual increase in PAC contributors).
- **Resource Realignment:** Percentage of annual budget reallocated directly to organizing, leadership development, and field infrastructure versus routine administrative overhead.

2. Organizing & New-Hire Onboarding

- **New-Hire Conversion Rate:** Percentage of newly hired employees signed as members within 30 days of district onboarding (e.g., 90%+ conversion rate).
- **Classified & Underrepresented Constituency Density:** Targeted growth percentage for historically underrepresented job classifications (e.g., increasing support personnel/classified staff participation by 25%).
- **Site Coverage:** Percentage of worksites with active, functioning Contract Action Teams (CAT) or building teams (e.g., placing CAT representatives in 90% of buildings).

3. Communications & Digital Reach

- **Digital Engagement:** Benchmark member open rates on core communication channels (e.g., 65%+ open rate on digital newsletters and a 30% increase in active portal engagement).
- **Rapid Response Capability:** Time required to deploy coordinated communications or calls-to-

action to local leadership (e.g., 100% outreach to affiliate leaders within 2 hours during crisis situations).

- **Public Perception & Media Reach:** Quantifiable growth in earned media coverage highlighting organizational priorities (e.g., a 15% increase in positive local press coverage).

4. Leading the Profession & Member Advocacy

- **Professional Development Turnout:** Percentage increase in member participation in sponsored professional learning programs, workshops, or micro-credentials (e.g., 25% turnout growth).
- **Policy Impact & Member Leadership:** Frequency of member-led policy proposals formally presented to governing bodies (e.g., presenting educator-led recommendations to the Board of Education twice annually).
- **Mentorship & Early-Career Retention:** Target satisfaction or retention rates within organizational mentorship programs designed to reduce early-career turnover (e.g., 90%+ participant satisfaction rating).

5. Coalition & Social Justice Advocacy

- **Active Community Partnerships:** Number of formal, active coalitions maintained with local civil rights, parent, and community organizations (e.g., establishing active working partnerships with at least 4–5 community allies).
- **Leadership Equity Training:** Completion metrics for internal diversity, equity, and restorative practice training across elected leadership, executive boards, and staff (e.g., 100% completion across all executive board members and local presidents).
- **Electoral & Mobilization Turnout:** Targeted turnout percentages for key advocacy actions (e.g., mobilizing 30%–35% of active membership for public budget hearings, lobby days, or voter turnout campaigns).

Stage 4: Strategic Choices & Operational Shift Model

Objectives: Force choices and align organizational priorities with real capacity. Recognize that strategic planning requires saying "no" to non-essential work.

The Servicing-to-Organizing Operational Shift:

Facilitate a structured **Start / Stop / Continue** exercise using the assessment's operational model :

Here is the complete **Servicing-to-Organizing Operational Shift** table with the **CONTINUE** column included, reflecting high-capacity core operations that must be sustained:

Category	STOP (Servicing Model / Low-Capacity)	START (Organizing Model / High-Capacity)	CONTINUE (Core Operations to Sustain)
Role of Staff & Officers	Acting as primary problem-solvers who directly handle routine workplace grievances.	Functioning as coaches, strategists, and trainers who build leadership capacity.	Providing strategic advice, leading political/coalition work, and handling complex legal/Level 2 issues.
Worksite Reps	Relying on reps to merely pass down flyers or relay top-down announcements.	Training reps to confidently resolve Level 1 issues, recruit, and organize coworkers.	Annual steward academies, regular worksite team check-ins, and building-level representation.
Communication	Relying solely on one-way email blasts or top-down newsletter updates.	Building active member-to-member communication networks in every building.	Regular digital newsletters and official policy/bargaining updates.
Data Usage	Treating data strictly as administrative records or roster lists.	Routinely analyzing data to target resources and identify participation gaps.	Maintaining accurate membership records, dues tracking, and contact lists.

Stage 5: Resource Alignment and Implementation Roadmap

Objectives: Keep conversations strategic rather than purely operational, while anchoring resource allocation to structural benchmarks.

Capacity Alignment Prompts:

For each strategic priority, the facilitator must ask:

- Who owns this priority, and what budget/resources are allocated?
- Does this resource allocation build **organizing infrastructure, worksite teams, and leadership pipelines**, or does it merely maintain administrative routine?
- What specific leadership development frameworks are required to achieve a 1:15–20 rep-to-member ratio in under-resourced sites?

Stage 6: Integration, Commitment, and Adoption

Objectives: Ensure internal consistency across priorities, goals, timelines, accountability owners, and rollout plans.

Plan Deliverables:

- **Strategic Priorities & Goals:** 3–5 focus areas with explicit quantifiable targets.
- **Implementation Roadmap:** Action steps, designated leads, resource requirements, and quarterly target timelines.
- **Member-Facing Rollout Plan:** Communication strategies designed to cascade the plan to rank-and-file members in primary languages spoken across the organization.

Stage 7: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Learning

Objectives: Maintain the strategic plan as a living document with continuous adaptation mechanisms.

Review & Assessment Schedule:

- **Quarterly Progress Audits:** Executive leadership and committee leads review key performance indicator metrics, organizing data, and field progress.
- **Annual Assembly Reporting:** Present progress reports to rank-and-file delegates and reassess priorities based on workplace or legislative shifts.
- **Re-Assessment Cycle:** Re-administer the **High Participation Local Assessment** and **Centering Equity Assessment** annually to track institutional progress along the 1–4 participation continuum.

Facilitator's Follow-On Process: Post-Planning Implementation & Adoption

A facilitator's responsibility extends well beyond the planning session. Next, establish your ongoing support model: will you drive the follow-on process directly, or coach an internal implementation committee to lead execution? While direct facilitation ensures momentum, intentionally equipping affiliate leaders to write, rollout, monitor, and adjust their own plan builds the institutional muscles characteristic of a High Participation Local.

Phase 1: Document Synthesis & Plan Finalization (Within 10 Business Days)

- **Consolidate & Structure Outcomes:** Translate workshop flipcharts, affinity wall groupings, and priority matrices into a clear, structured Strategic Plan document.
- **Verify Internal Consistency:** Audit the finalized draft to ensure goals map directly to the 3–5 strategic priorities, timelines are realistic, and designated leads are assigned.
- **Leadership Alignment Review:** Facilitate a brief follow-up session with executive leadership and board members to confirm shared ownership, clarify final wording, and ratify the adoption roadmap.

Phase 2: Member-Facing Cascade & Rollout Strategy (Weeks 2–4)

- **Develop Accessible Summaries:** Help the leadership team distill the multi-page plan into a clear 1-page summary flyer and digital presentation for general membership.
- **Multilingual & Multi-Constituency Access:** Ensure member-facing collateral is translated into key non-English languages spoken across the membership and tailored for different job classifications (e.g., certified staff, support personnel).
- **Worksite Representative Briefings:** Design and co-facilitate briefing toolkits for building stewards/representatives so they can lead site-level discussions with rank-and-file members.

Phase 3: Capacity-Building & Operational Shift Onboarding (Months 1–3)

- **Servicing-to-Organizing Transition Coaching:** Host targeted coaching sessions for staff, officers, and committee chairs to reinforce the **Start / Stop / Continue** operational model (shifting staff from direct problem-solvers to capacity coaches).
- **Steward Roster Audit & Launch:** Help organizing leads conduct an initial school-by-school/worksite gap audit to begin recruiting and training toward the **1:15–20 rep-to-member ratio** benchmark.
- **Data Tracking Alignment:** Assist operations/organizing leads in configuring internal database systems to regularly track supermajority participation metrics (>75% engagement target) and density metrics (>85% density target).

Phase 4: Quarterly Review Coaching & Progress Audits (Every 90 Days)

- **Quarterly Audit Facilitation:** Co-facilitate quarterly progress reviews with Executive Officers and Committee Leads to evaluate KPI metrics, field progress, and budget alignment.
- **Strategic Friction Resolution:** Use quarterly check-ins to force hard choices if non-priority projects begin creeping back into operations or if progress on key deliverables stalls.
- **Course Correction:** Help leadership adjust target timelines or reallocate resources in response

to external environmental shifts (e.g., unexpected legislative, budget, or employer changes).

Phase 5: Annual Re-Assessment & Adaptation Cycle (Month 12)

- **Annual Assembly Presentation:** Assist leaders in framing progress reports and success metrics for presentation to delegates at the annual membership conference.
- **Annual Self-Assessment Re-Test:** Re-administer the **High Participation Local Assessment** and **Centering Equity Assessment** to measure growth along the 1.0–4.0 scale across all 13 operational categories.
- **Multi-Demographic Equity Audit:** Analyze year-one participation data across job classifications, shift times, race, gender, language groups, and locations to identify remaining participation barriers before launching Year 2 priorities.



Strategic Planning Tools



Draft Surveys
Assessments
Indicators
Worksheets
Templates
Examples

Facilitator's Guide for Three Theories for Change Article

Pre-Reading Facilitator Prompt: Uncovering Our Implicit Theory of Change

Facilitator Framing:

Before we dive into reading about different 'Theories of Change,' take 3 to 5 minutes to reflect on how you believe real organizational and workplace power is built.

We all carry implicit assumptions about how change happens—whether it's through policy advocacy, workplace mobilization, community coalition-building, or leadership development[cite:]. As you read, consider the following reflection questions:

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions:

1. **Our Core Assumption:** Complete this sentence for our organization: *"To build power and achieve our mission, we must _____ by addressing _____."*
2. **Where Power Resides:** Do you believe our greatest leverage comes from influencing decision-makers at the top (policy/legal), building supermajority member participation at the worksite level, or mobilizing broader community coalitions?
3. **Reading Lens:** As you review the 3 theories of change in the article, ask yourself: *Which theory currently describes how our organization operates today, and which theory must we adopt if we want to become a high-capacity, power-building organization over the next 3 to 5 years?*

Facilitator Instructions for Use

- **Individual Reflection (3–5 mins):** Have participants write down brief notes on their own implicit assumptions before reading.
- **Post-Reading Pair Discussion (5–10 mins):** After reading, have participants pair up to compare which of the three theories aligned closest with their initial assumptions and where they saw points of divergence.
- **Bridge to Strategic Choices in Planning Process:** Use this exercise directly during **Stage 2** (*Understanding Current Reality*) or **Stage 4** (*Strategic Choices*) to help the group agree on a shared Theory of Change before setting strategic priorities.

Three Theories of Change

Organizing, Mobilizing, and Advocacy

BY ELENI SCHIRMER

Why have unions gotten so weak, and how can they strengthen? In her book *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (Oxford, 2016), labor organizer and strategist Jane McAlevey argues that a major factor in labor's decline has been that unions have abandoned the work of organizing, relying instead on the more superficial methods of building power, namely mobilizing and advocacy. What are these three different methods of union strength, and what path toward power does each build?

To organize is to build mass support and strength among ordinary people. Organizing draws its power from working people's biggest strength: our numbers. Working people may or may not see themselves as activists or politically active or even in political agreement, but through organizing, they come together to act in common cause. The work of organizing is systematic and rigorous: It requires connecting with every single worker in a shop, every educator in a building, every building in a district. At its core, it asks people to understand their own agency and to make choices about how they will exercise it. The work of organizing is difficult; ordinary people are seldom confronted by their own agency nor asked to make choices that recognize their own power. As McAlevey notes in her first book, *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell): My Decade Fighting for the Labor Movement* (Verso, 2012), a memoir of her organizing work: "In the normal course of human events, workers don't expect much from their jobs, government, or unions, because the reality is they don't get much. The job of the organizer is to fundamentally change this." The work of organizing is difficult, but as McAlevey argues, it is essential: There are no shortcuts.

Mobilizing, by contrast, activates an already-convinced membership. Mobilizing encourages those who already support a cause or a mission to take action to defend their belief—for example, by attending a protest, wearing a button, or signing a petition. Mobilizing is a very important step for building movements, but it is not the same thing as organizing. The crucial difference between mobilizing and organizing is that mobilizing relies on the actions of people who have already been brought on board; organizing is the work bringing ever more people on board, having a stake in the direction and outcomes of the actions (mobilizing can be an important component of organizing). McAlevey distinguishes mobilizing as



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relying on the participation of a “self-selecting” group—people who have chosen to participate in something due to personal preferences or beliefs, such as environmental protection groups, the ACLU, or Planned Parenthood. Organizing, by contrast, relies on “structure-based” groups, groups determined by a predefined, often structural, relationship, such as working for the same employer, living in the same housing complex, or attending the same place of worship. Membership in a structure-based group, unlike a self-selecting group, is not a result of personal

affinity. In a structure-based group, the number of possible members—and therefore people to organize—is finite and knowable: the number of workers in a firm, residents in a housing building, or members in a church, for example. Whereas mobilizing relies on participation from a self-selecting group, organizing builds high participation among all eligible individuals.

Advocacy is the work of creating change through the actions of professionals or technical experts—lobbyists, pollsters, lawyers, communication specialists, researchers. Advocacy relies on the expertise, status, and know-how of these groups of people to make change. Advocacy usually happens in a closed-door room; ordinary people play a small to nonexistent role in its efficacy. Advocacy has become a dominant strategy for unions and liberals. But its efficiency comes at a cost; it disables the masses of ordinary people who have a stake in the issues under scrutiny by advocates.

These three forms of making change do not exist in isolation; a successful campaign may very well rely on all three strategies. Yet organizing, McAlevey argues, is the most fundamental: The base of any campaign should come from its organizational capacity above all. Yet in reality, according to McAlevey, it's often the strategy most avoided or shortchanged. After all, it is often hard, slow work that requires building connections with mass numbers of people. As a result, it's often sidestepped for quicker grabs for power—mobilizing or advocating support, rather than organizing for it.

McAlevey's framework rests on a more fundamental argument about power. In an age of massive inequality, many see power as the province of the elite—the small, powerful minority who run the courts, the banks, and the media in the U.S. and around the world. From this perspective, forging change is the process of altering who occupies those powerful institutions: voting in new leaders, appointing new judges, securing better regulators who can safeguard the system with an eye toward fairness. In McAlevey's words, this belief is little more than replacing one set of elites with another, better set of elites. It relies on advocacy and, to a certain extent, mobilizing to get the job done.

Yet exclusively focusing on the undemocratic hyper-concentration of elites obscures the power of ordinary people. Ordinary people have two major forms of power: our numbers—there are more of us than them—and our ability to withhold our participation in a system that denies us fairness, dignity, and health: They need us to keep working. Organizing, especially organizing with an eye toward building strikes, activates both forms of power. Successful labor movements and social movements often use a combination of advocacy, mobilizing, and organizing. But as McAlevey argues, organizing is the most important of those tasks—yet often the most overlooked. Her work aims to bring the movement back into labor, and winning back into the movement. 📖

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	ADVOCACY	MOBILIZING	ORGANIZING
Theory of Power	Elite. Advocacy groups tend to seek one-time wins or narrow policy changes, often through courts or backroom negotiations that do not permanently alter the relations of power.	Primarily elites. Staff or activists set goals with low to medium concession costs or, more typically, set an ambitious goal and declare a win, even when the “win” has no, or only weak, enforcement provisions. Backroom, secret deal making by paid professionals is common.	Mass, inclusive, and collective. Organizing groups transform the power structure to favor constituents and diminish the power of their opposition. Specific campaigns fit into a larger power-building strategy. They prioritize power analysis, involve ordinary people in it, and decipher the often hidden relationship between economic, social, and political power. Settlement typically comes from mass negotiations with large numbers involved.
Strategy	Litigation; heavy spending on polling, advertising, and other paid media.	Campaigns, run by professional staff, or volunteer activists with no base of actual, measurable supporters, that prioritize frames and messaging over base power. Staff-selected “authentic messengers” represent the constituency to the media and policymakers, but they have little or no real say in strategy or running the campaign.	Recruitment and involvement of specific, large numbers of people whose power is derived from their ability to withdraw labor or other cooperation from those who rely on them. Majority strikes, sustained and strategic nonviolent direct action, electoral majorities. Frames matter, but the numbers involved are sufficiently compelling to create a significant earned media strategy. Mobilizing is seen as a tactic, not a strategy.
People Focus	None	Grassroots activists. People already committed to the cause, who show up over and over. When they burn out, new, also previously committed activists are recruited. And so on. Social media are over-relied on.	Organic leaders. The base is expanded through developing the skills of organic leaders who are key influencers of the constituency, and who can then, independent of staff, recruit new people never before involved. Individual, face-to-face interactions are key.

Reprinted with permission of Jane McAlevey from her book No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age (Oxford University Press, reprint edition: April 1, 2018).

Facilitator Notes for High Participation Local Assessment and Guide

A facilitator leading a strategic planning meeting would use the High Participation Local Guide as a diagnostic, benchmarking, and alignment framework. Rather than treating strategic planning as an abstract goal-setting exercise, this document shifts the focus toward building structural organizational capacity, expanding rank-and-file participation, and transitioning from a passive "servicing" model to an active, member-led "organizing" model.

Core Reasons to Use the Guide in Strategic Planning

- **Diagnostic Evaluation:** The Self-Assessment Tool provides a structured 1-to-4 rating scale across 11 key dimensions (e.g., Site Leaders, Data Systems, Strategic Planning, Structure Tests). Facilitators can use this to help the leadership team evaluate where the organization currently operates and establish an accurate baseline.
- **Consensus-Building & Uncovering Discrepancies:** Step 2 of the scoring process requires leadership to compare scores across different roles (e.g., comparing staff perceptions against rank-and-file building reps). Discussing gaps forces the team to look at hard evidence—such as data wall-charts—rather than subjective assumptions.
- **Identifying Structural Bottlenecks:** The guide outlines Foundational Capacity Drivers (Dimensions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 10). If these core dimensions score low, it highlights why broader campaigns fail, preventing the team from setting unrealistic goals without fixing underlying structural issues first.
- **Focusing Priority Actions:** Instead of attempting to fix everything at once, the framework guides the team to select no more than three strategic priority areas: The Bottleneck, The Multiplier, and The Campaign Catalyst.
- **Integrating Equity as an Organizing Methodology:** The framework incorporates an intentional equity lens into every step—asking who participates, who leads, who benefits, and what structural barriers exist—rather than treating equity as an isolated checklist item.
- **Actionable 12-Month Strategy:** The guide concludes with structured coaching prompts and a template to produce a clear, 12-month Strategic Roadmap with defined 90-day and 1-year benchmarks.



High Participation Local Guide

Introduction
Assessment Tool
Scoring Process
Coaching Guide



High Participation Locals Overview

Definition and Core Foundation

High Participation Locals are unions where leadership, responsibility, organizing skills, and decision-making are broadly distributed throughout the membership rather than concentrated in a small group of officers, staff, or activists. Moving a local from a passive "servicing model" to a member-led "organizing model" is a technical craft that restructures governance, staff roles, data systems, and campaign execution.

Members are active participants in building, exercising, and sustaining collective power. Grounded in 11 core structural dimensions, a high-participation local intentionally centers equity as an everyday organizing practice—identifying and removing barriers to participation, developing diverse leadership, and ensuring all members shape the union's strategic roadmap.

The 11 Dimensions of a High-Participation Local

- 1. School Site Leaders & Contract Action Teams:** Empowered campus representatives operate with local authority ("building swagger") in every worksite. They resolve Level 1 grievances directly with principals, map campuses, manage 10-to-1 Contract Action Teams (CATs) or Site Organizing Squads, and lead building-level governing councils.
- 2. The Union Staff Role:** Union field staff transition from direct grievance handlers and transactional problem-solvers into strategic coaches, capacity builders, and organizers of synchronized campaigns.
- 3. Valley Work (Non-Bargaining Lulls):** Locals utilize off-contract "valleys" as critical windows to enforce contract terms, run continuous skill-building workshops, cultivate social camaraderie, and build durable community alliances before crises strike.
- 4. Bargaining in High-Participation Locals:** Collective bargaining is transformed into an active organizing campaign. Locals deploy massive, representative, and silent bargaining teams, reject media blackouts for radical transparency, and center demands on "common good" community issues.
- 5. Being a President of a High-Participation Local:** Local presidents shift their focus from administrative crisis management to strategic coordination, geographic turf-walking, budget reallocation toward organizing capacity, and expanding multi-officer release teams.
- 6. How High-Participation Locals Use Data to Build Power:** Data management shifts from passive record-keeping to active campaign tracking. Locals decentralize data entry to site leaders, utilize mobile database systems (e.g., Action Builder, OrgDB) for digital wall-charting, and measure real-time engagement.
- 7. How High-Participation Locals Train Their Members:** Training relies on active organizing pedagogy, utilizing a "gradual release" model (moving from high-touch staff modeling to autonomous campaigns), the core "Skills to Win" curriculum, mobile site-based workshops, and intensive summer institutes.

8. Overcoming "Respectability Politics" and the Fear of Conflict: Leaders help members overcome the socialized aversion to conflict by rejecting quiet backroom handshakes and symbolic "moral victories" in favor of visible, majoritarian site actions that command real leverage.

9. Defensive Organizing & Anti-Authoritarian Protection: Permanent site-level communication trees and strike machinery are repurposed for rapid-response community defense, including ICE defense, protecting LGBTQ+ youth, and election protection.

10. The Strategic Plan—Guarding the Roadmap and Building Coherence: Unions eliminate reactive firefighting by co-creating a unified strategic plan. The president acts as gatekeeper to align all committees, budgets, and worksite visits around shared organizing goals.

11. Methodical Structure Tests: Unions deploy escalating, quantifiable workplace actions (e.g., hand petitions, button days, practice pickets, strike pledges) as mathematical "gates" to evaluate true member leverage and readiness before major campaign escalations.

Why High Participation Locals Matter Across the 11 Dimensions

- **Sustainable Union Power:** Distributing workload through a "choir model" of shared pacing prevents burnout, smooths leadership transitions, and ensures power never depends on a single officer or staff person.
- **Increased Member Ownership:** Members solve Level 1 workplace problems, chart campuses, and shape policy directly from assembly floors, transforming the union from an external service provider into an organization members run together.
- **Stronger Worksite Power:** Functional 1:10 site structures (CATs, UBCs) allow issues to be identified early and resolved directly with administrators using collective site actions.
- **Methodical Organizing Outcomes:** Combining active data tracking with structured 1:1 organizing conversations (80/20 listening rule) enables supermajority density, organic leader identification, mobile trainings, and self-directed, synchronized actions across sites.
- **Democratized Bargaining and Advocacy:** Open, representative bargaining teams and direct member updates backed by disciplined structure tests ensure locals command real leverage at the negotiating table.
- **Expanded Influence Beyond the Workplace:** Permanent community-labor alliances built around "common good" demands create mutual trust, allowing worksite networks to rapidly mobilize for community defense.

Core Beliefs of a High Participation Local

- **Success Metric:** Measured by how many members are organized, developed, connected, mapped, and prepared to exercise collective power together—not by staff problem-solving volume.
- **Equity & Access:** An everyday organizing methodology that systematically dismantles structural barriers to expand who participates, who leads, whose experiences are centered, and whose voices drive the strategic roadmap.
- **Action & Leverage:** Respectability politics and polite closed-door committee meetings are structural traps; real compliance occurs only when backed by majoritarian power and protected solidarity.

The Four Essential Outcomes of a High Participation Local

- 1. Supermajority Membership:** Membership density reaches high thresholds (80%–90%+) reflecting every worksite, shift, department, and job classification across the bargaining unit.
- 2. Supermajority Participation:** Members actively engage in 1:1 conversations, campaign actions, trainings, and escalating structure tests verified through active data tracking.
- 3. Leadership at Every Worksite:** Campus representatives operate with authority ("building swagger") and confidence, managing 1:10 CAT trees and local governance bodies across all sites.
- 4. Equitable Access to Power & Participation:** Structural barriers (meeting times, language, shift schedules) are systematically audited so all members have meaningful opportunities to contribute, lead, and shape the union's strategic roadmap.

Key Takeaway: *A high-participation local builds power through super-majority participation, leadership through gradual-release development, and solidarity through equity. It succeeds because the local union has systematically aligned its governance, staff roles, data systems, strategic planning, and training infrastructure across all 11 core dimensions to empower everyday members to lead and exercise collective power together.*

High Participation Local Self-Assessment Tool

Rating Scale

- 1: Servicing Participation
- 2: Emerging Participation
- 3: Growing Participation
- 4: High Participation Local

1. School Site Leaders & Contract Action Teams			
How empowered and organized are school site member leaders and teams?			
1 (Servicing): Site leaders primarily relay information; equity and member access are not considered.	2 (Emerging): Site leaders occasionally assist with workplace concerns and begin recognizing participation gaps across underrepresented groups.	3 (Growing): Site leaders/CATs organize members, handle Level 1 grievances locally, build 10:1 communication networks, and intentionally recruit leaders from diverse job titles, classifications, and backgrounds.	4 (High): Site leaders confidently handle Level 1 concerns locally, manage active 1:10 CATs/Organizing Squads, and run building councils. Equity is embedded in leadership identification, ensuring rank-and-file teams reflect the full diversity of campus staff.

2. The Union Staff Role - Who owns the work—the staff or the members?			
1 (Servicing): Staff act as primary problem-solvers, handling individual grievances, organizing, and communications. Servicing and equity considerations are absent.	2 (Emerging): Staff begin involving member leaders in union work; training occurs occasionally with growing awareness of representational equity gaps.	3 (Growing): Staff regularly coach worksite leaders and support member-led campaigns, structurally separating individual representational servicing from field organizing.	4 (High): Staff function primarily as strategic coaches, capacity builders, and organizers. Staff train members to resolve Level 1 issues, analyze data through an equity lens, and build sustainable, member-driven systems across all job classifications.

3. Valley Work (Non-Bargaining Lulls)

How does the local stay active and build power during non-bargaining periods?

1 (Servicing): Union activity completely pauses between contracts; no ongoing workplace organizing or community connection exists.	2 (Emerging): Local occasionally offers workshops or events during lulls, with initial attempts to engage broader member groups.	3 (Growing): Local organizes around local site fights, contract enforcement, and continuous skill-building workshops during lulls while building relationships with community partners.	4 (High): Off-contract lulls are intentionally leveraged for site-level enforcement, needs assessments, continuous mobile training, and permanent, non-transactional community-labor alliances (e.g., racial, social, and economic justice partnerships).

4. Collective Bargaining in High-Participation Locals

How is collective bargaining structured and executed?

1 (Servicing): Bargaining is closed-door, secret, and handled by third parties or small isolated committees with strict ground rules.	2 (Emerging): Local shares occasional bargaining updates and surveys members on contract priorities.	3 (Growing): Local expands bargaining teams, uses plain-language proposals, and conducts site-level briefings to build member awareness.	4 (High): Bargaining is treated as an active organizing campaign with open, massive, representative bargaining teams (reflecting all job classifications/backgrounds), radical transparency, and community-centered "common good" demands.

5. Being a President of a High-Participation Local

How does the local president lead and distribute organizational power?

1 (Servicing): President acts as an administrative crisis manager, top-down decision-maker, and primary grievance handler.	2 (Emerging): President encourages participation but retains primary operational and political responsibilities.	3 (Growing): President guards the strategic plan, coordinates leadership teams, and reallocates resources toward organizing and member capacity.	4 (High): President focuses on strategic coordination, political diplomacy, geographic turf organizing, and budget reallocation. They actively delegate power, guard the strategic plan ("if it's not on the plan, it's not happening"), and foster a "choir model" of shared leadership pacing to prevent burnout.

6. How High-Participation Locals Use Data to Build Power

How are data systems utilized across the local?

1 (Servicing): Data management is purely administrative and passive (dues tracking, static lists).	2 (Emerging): Data is occasionally reviewed after campaigns to evaluate turnout.	3 (Growing): Data informs organizing decisions; site leaders begin tracking meeting attendance and petition signers.	4 (High): Data management is decentralized and active. Leaders analyze digital wall-charts (Action Builder/OrgDB) and run quantitative structure tests (e.g., physical paper petitions) as "gates" to evaluate supermajority campaign readiness and address engagement gaps across diverse subgroups.

7. How High-Participation Locals Train Their Members

How does the local build rank-and-file organizing capacity?

1 (Servicing): Training is non-existent, top-down, or limited to reading static policy documents.	2 (Emerging): Occasional ad-hoc trainings are offered for newly elected building reps.	3 (Growing): Local offers structured skill workshops (e.g., 1:1 conversations, charting) and reduces barriers through accessible meeting times.	4 (High): Local operates active, multi-tiered training pipelines (e.g., Summer Institutes, Member Organizer cohorts, "Skills to Win") using a "gradual release" model (from staff modeling to autonomous member execution) with mobile, on-site, and rotational workshops.

8. Overcoming "Respectability Politics" and the Fear of Conflict

How does the local navigate workplace conflict and authority?

1 (Servicing): Local relies on "respectability politics," assuming polite, closed-door labor-management meetings resolve disputes.	2 (Emerging): Growing awareness that quiet meetings yield limited results, but leaders hesitate to organize visible collective pressure.	3 (Growing): Worksite leaders occasionally organize collective site actions (e.g., petition deliveries, wear-red days) to enforce contract rights.	4 (High): Local actively rejects respectability traps and "moral victories," focusing on concrete demands backed by collective leverage. 1:10 CAT networks transform isolated fear into collective confidence and protected solidarity.

9. Defensive Organizing & Anti-Authoritarian Protection

How does the local respond to political, civil rights, and community threats?

1 (Servicing): Union does not respond to community or political crises outside standard contractual scope.	2 (Emerging): Local issues statements or attends community rallies during major political or civil rights crises.	3 (Growing): Local coordinate with community organizations on specific defense efforts (e.g., voter education, student safety).	4 (High): Local repurposes its site-level communication trees and strike infrastructure for rapid-response community defense (e.g., protecting immigrant families/ICE defense, supporting LGBTQ+ youth, and election protection).

10. The Strategic Plan—Guarding the Roadmap and Building Coherence

How does the local align its vision and prevent reactive firefighting?

1 (Servicing): Planning is non-existent; local operates in continuous reactive firefighting mode.	2 (Emerging): Annual goals exist but are regularly set aside when daily operational crises occur.	3 (Growing): A strategic plan guides major campaign cycles and budget allocations.	4 (High): A co-created, democratized strategic plan (distilled into a clear roadmap) drives all operations. The local distinguishes structure-building from issue campaigns, aligns annual launches around the roadmap, and systematically executes program-driven worksite visits.

11. Methodical Structure Tests—Measuring Member Readiness

How does the local evaluate member leverage before escalating campaigns?

1 (Servicing): Local relies on guesswork or assumptions, jumping into escalations without testing member readiness.	2 (Emerging): Local tracks basic participation metrics (e.g., online survey response counts).	3 (Growing): Local uses simple structure tests (e.g., button days, wear-red days) to gauge member engagement before major events.	4 (High): Local deploys an escalating sequence of quantifiable structure tests (e.g., 1:1 signed platform pledges, sticker days, strike vote pledges) with strict majoritarian thresholds (70–80%+ active participation) acting as mathematical "gates" to confirm supermajority readiness.
Total of All Dimensions			

High Participation Local Self-Assessment Scoring Process

The 4-Step Self-Assessment Scoring Process

Step 1: Individual Scoring & Evidence Gathering

- **Independent Evaluation:** Each leadership team participant independently scores the local from 1 to 4 on all 11 core dimensions .
- **Evidence Mandate:** For every rating assigned, participants must cite specific concrete evidence (ex. 'We reached 80% on the staffing petition,' 'Staff still handle Level 1 grievances at 60% of schools .

Step 2: Peer Dialogue & Consensus Alignment

- **Group Comparison:** Compare individual scores across roles (ex. comparing how staff rate Dimension 2 vs. how rank-and-file building reps rate it.
- **Evidence Debrief:** Focus discussion on areas with a 2-point gap (e.g., one person scores a 2, another scores a 4). Resolve differences by examining data, wall-charts, and worksite realities.
- **Consensus Rating:** Agree upon a single baseline score (1–4) for each of the 11 dimensions for the local.

Step 3: Calculating Total Score & Organizational Readiness Level

Sum the agreed consensus scores across all 11 categories (Maximum Total Score: 44 Points). Match the total score to the corresponding Organizational Tier:

Score Range	Organizational Tier	Dominant Model	Strategic Priority
11 – 18	Tier 1: Servicing Local	Reactive / Third-Party Servicing	Rebuild steward/Member networks; basic 1:1 training.
19 – 27	Tier 2: Emerging Local	Transitioning / Hybrid Model	Implement wall-charts; launch basic structure tests.
28 – 36	Tier 3: Growing Local	Organizing / Member-Driven	Decentralize training; build rapid community defense.
37 – 44	Tier 4: High Participation Local	Supermajority Power Engine	Sustain choir pacing; guard strategic roadmap.

Step 4: Strategic Roadmap Integration

- **Identify Critical Anchors:** Pinpoint the 2–3 lowest-scoring dimensions that are bottlenecking the local's power (ex. strong bargaining team but zero data charting).

- **Targeted Action Plan:** Set 90-day and 1-year benchmarks to raise those specific categories by at least one level.
- **Roadmap Alignment:** Embed these growth goals directly into the local's Strategic Roadmap ('If it's not on the plan, it's not happening').

High Participation Local Self-Assessment Scoring Process

The 4-Step Self-Assessment Scoring Process

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- **Consensus Rating:** Agree upon a single baseline score (1–4) for each of the 11 dimensions for the local.

Step 3: Identify Organizational Strengths

Circle all categories scoring 3 (Growing) or 4 (High Participation). Discuss:

- **What are we doing well?** Which specific practices or structures created this success?
- **Systemic Roots:** What underlying systems (e.g., active wall-charts, 1:10 CAT networks, open bargaining) drove these scores?
- **Asset Leverage:** How can these high-performing assets accelerate growth in lower-scoring categories?
- **Replication:** Which specific organizing practices can be adapted across underperforming worksites or job classifications?

Step 4: Identify Priority Growth Areas

Highlight all categories scoring 1 (Servicing) or 2 (Emerging). Rather than attempting to fix everything at once, select no more than three strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1 (The Bottleneck):** The category currently placing the greatest structural limit on the local's growth (e.g., lacking site-level CATs).
- **Priority 2 (The Multiplier):** The category that will create the greatest immediate surge in member power if upgraded (e.g., shifting staff into strategic coaches).
- **Priority 3 (Campaign Catalyst):** The category most directly tied to upcoming contract negotiations or community defense campaigns.

Step 5: Analyze Foundational Capacity Drivers

Certain dimensions act as structural engines for the entire local union. When these core capacity drivers score low, progress across other dimensions becomes nearly impossible.

Weak Foundational Capacity Area	Direct Organizational Impact
Dimension 1: Site Leaders & CATs	Weak campaign execution, isolated members, and slow communication.
Dimension 2: Union Staff Role	Staff bottlenecking growth by acting as third-party problem-solvers.
Dimension 5: President's Leadership	Firefighting default; failure to guard the Strategic Roadmap.
Dimension 6: Data & Wall-Charting	Poor resource allocation, guesswork, and blind spots in member coverage.
Dimension 7: Member Training	Lack of rank-and-file confidence, leading to fear of conflict and authority.
Dimension 10: Strategic Roadmap	Constant reactive firefighting; loss of campaign coherence.

Step 6: Examine Equity Across All Dimensions

Equity is not a standalone item; it is a core organizing methodology embedded across every single assessment category. Review your scores using an intentional equity lens:

- **Who participates and who is missing?** Are night-shift custodians, ESPs, adjuncts, or rural staff participating at equal rates?
- **Who leads?** Does leadership reflect the full demographic, geographic, and occupational diversity of the membership?
- **Who benefits?** Do bargaining proposals and budget allocations address historically underrepresented groups?
- **What structural barriers exist?** Are meeting times, language access, childcare, or travel distances limiting involvement?

Step 7: Define Next-Level Incremental Actions

Organizing growth is built on deliberate step-by-step progress, not overnight perfection. Focus on moving up one level at a time:

Growth Arc: *Level 1 (Servicing) —► Level 2 (Emerging) —► Level 3 (Growing) —► Level 4 (High Participation)*

- **Moving from Level 1 to Level 2:** Ask, 'What single, low-barrier action will move us away from passive servicing toward basic member involvement?'
- **Moving from Level 2 to Level 3:** Ask, 'What formal systems (e.g., 1:10 CAT structures, regular wall-charting) must we establish to build member-driven capacity?'
- **Moving from Level 3 to Level 4:** Ask, 'How do we make this structure self-directed, sustainable, and fully embedded across every worksite?'

Part II: Interpretation Framework

Tier	Total Score	Operating Mindset & Style	Strategic Focus & Goal
Level 1: Servicing Local	11 – 18 Pts	'The union is a service provider.' Staff/officers solve problems; members are passive consumers.	Key Question: 'How can we help members?' Goal: Basic problem-solving.
Level 2: Emerging Local	19 – 27 Pts	'We need more volunteers.' Leadership wants involvement, but work stays in already activate core of people.	Key Question: 'How do we get people involved?' Goal: Event turnout.
Level 3: Growing Local	28 – 36 Pts	'Growth happens through organizing.' 1:10 CATs handle site issues; staff coach.	Key Question: 'How do we build power?' Goal: Developing leaders.
Level 4: High Participation	37 – 44 Pts	'Members ARE the union.' Supermajority participation; choir-model leadership.	Key Question: 'How do we win and transform?' Goal: Supermajority power.

Part III: The 11-Dimension Coaching Matrix

Use these targeted coaching prompts to guide leadership debriefs across each assessment dimension:

1. School Site Leaders & CATs (Dimension 1)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Do all worksites have an identified point person?
- **Level 2 → 3:** How are site leaders trained to handle Level 1 issues locally rather than calling staff?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Does every campus operate an active 1:10 CAT or Site Organizing Squad that reflects the building's full diversity?

2. Union Staff Role (Dimension 2)

- **Level 1 → 2:** What routine casework are staff performing that member leaders could learn to handle?
- **Level 2 → 3:** How are staff structurally separating individual representational servicing from field organizing?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Are staff spending 80%+ of their time coaching, training, and building long-term campaign strategy?

3. Valley Work / Non-Bargaining Lulls (Dimension 3)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Does union activity completely stop when the contract is signed?
- **Level 2 → 3:** What site enforcement, contract literacy workshops, or needs assessments occur during off-contract lulls?
- **Level 3 → 4:** How are non-bargaining periods intentionally leveraged for permanent, non-transactional community-labor alliances?

4. Collective Bargaining (Dimension 4)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Is bargaining closed-door and secret, or are members provided basic updates?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Has the local expanded its bargaining team and translated dense proposals into plain language?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Is bargaining run as an open, mass-representative campaign featuring silent observers and 'common good' demands?

5. President's Leadership & Delegation (Dimension 5)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Is the president acting as a daily crisis manager and primary grievance handler?
- **Level 2 → 3:** How is the president actively guarding the Strategic Roadmap ('If it's not on the plan, it's not happening')?
- **Level 3 → 4:** How effectively is the president delegating geographic turfs and fostering a 'choir model' of shared pacing?

6. Data Systems & Wall-Charting (Dimension 6)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Is data management purely administrative (dues tracking)?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Are site leaders logging meeting attendance, petition signatures, and member assessments?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Are leaders analyzing decentralized digital wall-charts (Action Builder/OrgDB) to evaluate campaign readiness?

7. Member Training Pipelines (Dimension 7)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Is training non-existent or limited to reading static policy documents?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Does the local offer structured skill workshops (1:1 conversations, charting) at accessible times?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Does the local operate multi-tiered pipelines ('Skills to Win', Member Organizers) using a 'gradual release' model?

8. Overcoming Respectability Politics (Dimension 8)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Does the local rely on quiet, closed-door labor-management meetings to resolve disputes?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Are worksite leaders organizing visible site actions (wear-red days, petition deliveries) to enforce rights?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Has the local actively rejected respectability traps, using 1:10 CAT networks to turn isolated fear into protected collective leverage?

9. Defensive Organizing & Anti-Authoritarian Protection (Dimension 9)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Does the local ignore community or political crises outside standard contract terms?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Does the local coordinate defense efforts with community organizations around major crises?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Has the local repurposed its site communication trees and strike machinery for rapid-response community defense (ICE defense, LGBTQ+ youth, election protection)?

10. Strategic Planning & Coherence (Dimension 10)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Is the local operating in continuous reactive firefighting mode?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Does a strategic plan guide major campaign cycles and budget reallocations?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Does a democratized Strategic Roadmap drive all operations, distinguishing structure-building from issue campaigns?

11. Methodical Structure Tests (Dimension 11)

- **Level 1 → 2:** Does the local rely on guesswork before escalating campaigns?
- **Level 2 → 3:** Are simple structure tests (button days, wear-red days) used to gauge member readiness?
- **Level 3 → 4:** Does the local deploy an escalating sequence of quantifiable tests (signed pledges, practice pickets) with strict majoritarian threshold gates (70–80%+)?

Part IV: Reflection & Organizational Action Plan**1. The Grand Coaching Question**

Core Reflection: *What would need to be true for twice as many members to take meaningful responsibility for the success of this union?*

2. Key Outcome Measures (Tracking Matrix)**Internal Power Measures**

- **Supermajority Density:** 80%+ member density across all worksites and job classifications.
- **Supermajority Engagement:** 70%+ participation in structure tests and campaign actions.
- **CAT Coverage:** Active 1:10 member-to-leader communication trees in every building.
- **Representative Leadership:** Leaders matching member diversity across race, gender, classification, and shift.

External Power Measures

- **Durable Coalitions:** Permanent, non-transactional community-labor partnerships.
- **Common Good Bargaining:** Campaigns centered on community, racial, and economic justice demands.
- **Rapid Response:** Repurposed strike machinery capable of mobilizing rapid community defense within 48 hours.

3. Growth Snapshot (12-Month Action Plan)

Complete these four strategic statements at the conclusion of the self-assessment retreat:

1. Our greatest organizational strengths are:

2. Our most significant capacity bottlenecks are:

3. The emerging rank-and-file leaders we must intentionally develop are:

4. The three highest-impact priority actions we will execute in the next 12 months are:

• Priority Action 1:

• Priority Action 2:

• Priority Action 3:

Step 3: Calculating Total Score & Organizational Readiness Level

Sum the agreed consensus scores across all 11 categories (Maximum Total Score: 44 Points). Match the total score to the corresponding Organizational Tier:

Score Range	Organizational Tier	Dominant Model	Strategic Priority
11 – 18	Tier 1: Servicing Local	Reactive / Third-Party Servicing	Rebuild steward/CAT network; basic 1:1 training [cite: 1, 4].
19 – 27	Tier 2: Emerging Local	Transitioning / Hybrid Model	Implement wall-charts; launch basic structure tests [cite: 1, 4].
28 – 36	Tier 3: Growing Local	Organizing / Member-Driven	Decentralize training; build rapid community defense [cite: 1, 4].
37 – 44	Tier 4: High Participation Local	Supermajority Power Engine	Sustain choir pacing; guard strategic roadmap [cite: 1, 4].

Step 4: Strategic Roadmap Integration

- **Identify Critical Anchors:** Pinpoint the 2–3 lowest-scoring dimensions that are bottlenecking the local's power (ex. strong bargaining team but zero data charting).
- **Targeted Action Plan:** Set 90-day and 1-year benchmarks to raise those specific categories by at least one level.
- **Roadmap Alignment:** Embed these growth goals directly into the local's Strategic Roadmap ('If it's not on the plan, it's not happening').

Coaching Questions for Building a High Participation Local

The purpose of these coaching questions is not simply to improve assessment scores. The goal is to help local leaders identify how to build broader participation, stronger worksite structures, deeper leadership development, and greater collective power. A high participation local develops members, distributes responsibility, removes barriers to engagement, and creates conditions where members increasingly own the work of the union.

1. School Site Leaders & Contract Action Teams

- How are building representatives currently handling Level 1 grievances, and what training or mindset shifts are needed to help them resolve workplace issues directly with their principals rather than referring them to union staff?
- Does every school building have a functional Contract Action Team (CAT) or Site Organizing Squad operating on a 1-to-10 ratio, and how do you monitor communication coverage across grade levels and departments?
- **Equity Focus:** How intentionally are you identifying organic leaders across all job classifications, shift schedules, races, and linguistic backgrounds to ensure your building leadership reflects the full diversity of campus staff?

2. The Union Staff Role

- How much of your field staff's time is spent solving individual member issues versus coaching rank-and-file members to lead their own site campaigns?
- Which staff habits or systems currently help develop independent member leadership, and which reinforce member dependency on staff?
- What structural boundaries can you put in place—such as dedicated servicing roles versus field organizers—to protect staff capacity for long-term building organizing?
- **Equity Focus:** How are staff trained to analyze grievance trends and data through an equity lens to identify systemic workplace inequities across job titles or underrepresented groups?

3. Valley Work (Non-Bargaining Lulls)

- When a contract campaign ends, how does the local maintain site structure and redirect CATs toward local contract enforcement and daily workplace issues?
- What continuous, mobile training opportunities (such as bringing workshops directly to school lunchrooms or libraries) are offered during lulls to build ongoing rank-and-file literacy?
- **Equity Focus:** How are you utilizing non-bargaining "valleys" to invest in non-transactional, permanent alliances with local civil rights, racial justice, and immigrant rights organizations before a crisis occurs?

4. Collective Bargaining in High-Participation Locals

- What steps are you taking to reject closed-door ground rules and build radical transparency (e.g., plain-language proposals, site observer programs, post-session video debriefs)?
- How are parent, student, and community priorities integrated directly into your contract platform to fight for "common good" demands alongside standard educator needs?

- **Equity Focus:** How does your bargaining structure ensure that historically marginalized job classifications (such as ESPs, classified staff, or temporary workers) have direct, proportional representation and decision-making power at the table?

5. Being a President of a High-Participation Local

- As president, what administrative or Level 1 representational tasks can you delegate so you can focus on strategic coordination, political diplomacy, and geographic turf visits?
- How strictly are you acting as the "gatekeeper" of the strategic plan to ensure that unaligned requests or passive expenditures do not derail core organizing priorities?
- Are officers and executive board members primarily measured by what they personally accomplish, or by the new leaders they develop?
- **Equity Focus:** How are you actively disrupting historical patterns of leadership succession to mentor, recruit, and share organizational power with members from underrepresented social and job groups?

6. How High-Participation Locals Use Data to Build Power

- How decentralized is your data collection—can building reps and CAT leads update site mapping and turnout metrics directly in real time?
- How are quantitative structure-test results evaluated as mathematical "gates" to confirm supermajority readiness before escalating to a higher-stakes action?
- **Equity Focus:** When reviewing digital wall-charts (such as Action Builder or OrgDB), how do you disaggregate participation data to spot engagement gaps across specific job titles, worksites, or demographic groups?

7. How High-Participation Locals Train Their Members

- How does your training program move leaders through a deliberate "gradual release" model—from staff co-leading early actions to rank-and-file members running fully autonomous campaigns?
- What structured, core skill-building frameworks (such as Structured Organizing Conversations and 1:1 listening rules) are standard across all leadership cohorts?
- **Equity Focus:** How do specific logistics—such as meeting times, childcare responsibilities, language accessibility, shift schedules, or transportation—affect who can access training, and what assumptions are we making about who is available to lead?

8. Overcoming "Respectability Politics" and the Fear of Conflict

- Where is the local defaulting to "respectability politics"—hoping closed-door administrative meetings will solve systemic issues—rather than building visible workplace leverage?
- How do site leaders frame collective actions to ensure the local isn't settling for symbolic "moral victories," but instead forcing concrete policy or resource changes?
- **Equity Focus:** How do your 1:10 CAT networks build collective protection for vulnerable workers (such as non-tenured staff or immigrant educators) who face disproportionate retaliation when challenging authority?

9. Defensive Organizing & Anti-Authoritarian Protection

- How ready is your site-level CAT communication network to mobilize rapidly in defense of community, student, or civil rights threats outside standard contract issues?
- How is the local utilizing scenario planning or tabletop exercises with community coalition partners to prepare for broader political or legal crises?
- **Equity Focus:** What concrete rapid-response protocols (such as ICE defense networks, safe-space protections for LGBTQ+ youth, or sanctuary school policies) exist to protect the most vulnerable members of your school community?

10. The Strategic Plan—Guarding the Roadmap and Building Coherence

- Does the local have a clear, co-created strategic plan distilled into an accessible roadmap that every leader and site rep understands?
- How clearly does your leadership team distinguish between internal structure-building campaigns (building capacity) and external issue campaigns (expending leverage)?
- What sustainable organizing systems need to be built within this strategic plan, rather than relying on the heroic effort of individual leaders?
- **Equity Focus:** How were members most impacted by structural inequities involved in co-creating the strategic plan, and how is equity used as a lens to evaluate resource allocation in that roadmap?

11. Methodical Structure Tests—Measuring Member Readiness

- What escalating sequence of structure tests (e.g., platform pledges, dress/button days, face-to-face vote commitments) do you require before moving to high-stakes escalations?
- Why does the local prioritize physical paper petitions and 1:1 face-to-face organizing conversations over passive online forms or surveys?
- **Equity Focus:** When evaluating whether a structure test meets your majoritarian threshold (e.g., 70%–80%+ active participation), how do you ensure that threshold is met across *all* job classifications and buildings, rather than driven primarily by privileged or high-density sites?

Coaching Strategic Thinking (12-Month Action Plan)

Coaches are supporting teams in the completion of these four strategic statements at the conclusion of the self-assessment retreat:

1. Our greatest organizational strengths are:**2. Our most significant capacity bottlenecks are:****3. The emerging rank-and-file leaders we must intentionally develop are:****4. The three highest-impact priority actions we will execute in the next 12 months are:****• Priority Action 1:****• Priority Action 2:****• Priority Action 3:**

Possible Member Survey Questions Pre-Strategic Planning

Your Experience & Connection

- **1.** Why is being a member of this organization important to you, and what makes you feel most connected to our shared work?
- **2.** When you think about the next 3 to 5 years, what would "success" look like for you and your fellow members?

Current Reality: Strengths & Challenges

- **3.** What is one thing our organization does really well that we should protect and build upon?
- **4.** What is the single biggest barrier, challenge, or frustration you experience in your daily work or as a member?

Future Priorities & Workload

- **5.** What top 2–3 issues or priorities should leadership focus on during this upcoming strategic planning process?
- **6.** Is there any current event, task, or program that takes up significant time/resources but doesn't feel impactful or worth continuing?

Equity, Inclusion & Representation

- **7.** How well do you feel our organization listens to and represents members like you across different job types, backgrounds, and locations?
- **8.** Whose voices or perspectives do you feel are currently missing from union conversations, and how can we better include them?

Sample Pre Meeting Survey Questions for Planning Team

To prepare local participants effectively for a strategic planning process, pre-planning survey questions should focus on baseline alignment, situational awareness, future vision, and operational readiness.

Foundational & Purpose Alignment

- In your view, what is the core purpose or mission of our group?
- What are the core values that currently guide our decision-making and behaviors?
- Where do you see the biggest gap between what we say our mission is and how we operate day-to-day?

Situational Assessment (SWOT)

- **Strengths:** What are 2–3 things our organization or group does exceptionally well compared to others?
- **Weaknesses:** What internal processes, resource constraints, or habits currently slow down our progress?
- **Opportunities:** What emerging external trends, unmet community/market needs, or potential partnerships should we capitalize on?
- **Threats:** What external challenges, risks, or changes (e.g., funding, regulatory, demographic) present the greatest risk to our future?

Future Vision & Strategic Priorities

- If you stepped away for three to five years and returned, what major positive transformation would you hope to see in the organization?
- What top 3 strategic goals or priorities should receive the most time, energy, and resources over the next planning cycle?
- What current program, service, or activity should we consider changing, scaling back, or discontinuing to free up capacity?

Process & Engagement Readiness

- What specific outcomes or decisions do you hope we achieve by the end of this strategic planning process?
- What potential barriers or "elephants in the room" could prevent us from having an open, candid, and productive planning session?
- How would you rate your confidence in our organization's ability to successfully execute a new strategic plan (1 to 10), and why?

Member Engagement & Organizing Strength

- What are the top 2–3 workplace issues (e.g., workload, compensation, working conditions, safety) currently creating the most friction for members in your local?
- How would you rate member participation and engagement in your local right now, and what is the primary barrier to getting more members active?
- Where do you see the greatest opportunity to organize and build power among non-members or disengaged bargaining units in your district?

Bargaining, Advocacy & District Relations

- Looking ahead to upcoming contract negotiations, what single issue must our union take a uncompromising stand on?
- How effective is your local's current relationship with the district leadership and school board, and where do we need to shift our strategy?
- What state or local legislative/policy changes are posing the biggest threat to public education and school employees in your area?

Affiliate Support & Capacity

- What support, training, or resources from the parent/state union do you rely on most, and where is the support currently falling short?

- What administrative, legal, or communication challenges consume the majority of your time as a local leader?
- What leadership development strategies do you currently use to recruit and mentor the next generation of local stewards and officers?

Future Vision & Strategic Alignment

- In 3 to 5 years, what major win or transformation would make local leaders and members feel that our union is stronger than ever?
- If our union had to prioritize only three strategic initiatives over the next planning cycle, what should they be?
- What traditional practice or approach in our union operations should we stop doing to free up capacity for higher-impact work?

Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice

- What systemic inequities or disparities currently exist within our school district (e.g., resource distribution, disciplinary policies, staffing retention) that our union must address?
- How well does our local leadership and steward structure reflect the demographic diversity (race, gender, language, role) of the members we represent?
- What specific barriers prevent underrepresented or marginalized member groups from fully participating in union activities and leadership roles?
- How can our bargaining strategy and contract proposals actively advance racial, economic, and social justice for both public school employees and the students/families we serve?
- What partnerships with community organizations or social justice allies should we build or strengthen to support equitable public education in our region?

Developing Shared Expectations and Agreements

Review your current community agreements and expectations – these are often referred to as norms or expectations for participation.

Ask yourself the following questions:

What is missing that would support your ability to achieve your purpose and uphold your values?

How do the current agreements support your ability in carrying out your purposes? Those of the organization?

How do the current agreements align with your core values? Those of the organization?

How are you held accountable to these agreements? Your purpose? Your core values?

Below is a list of the types of agreements that should be part of your community agreements along with questions for helping to develop them.

Decision-making: <i>What is the process by which we will make decisions? (examples below)</i>	
• Majority rules: Whatever gets the most votes wins. • Consensus: Everyone must agree. • Delegation: Nominate one or two people on your team to be the ultimate decision-makers. ◦ Coin flip: Leave the decision to fate! ◦ Other:	
Discussion and Decision-making: <i>How we will discuss options and reach decisions as a team to ensure vigorous input and debate? (examples below)</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Engage in open, honest debate	<u>Never Do</u> Engage in personal attacks

Ask open-ended questions Balance advocacy with inquiry	Fail to listen to what others say Jump to conclusions
Meeting Management: <i>How will we manage meetings to respect each other's time? (examples below)</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Start on time; stay on time Be fully present throughout the meeting	<u>Never Do</u> Come to meetings unprepared Answer cell phones or do email
Accountability: <i>How we will delegate responsibilities for actions and activities? How will we follow through on commitments? (examples below)</i>	
<u>Always Do</u> Clarify understanding Provide follow-up on action items Ask for/offer support when there is a need Weekly check-in	<u>Never Do</u> Assume you have agreement Assume tasks are getting done Commit to a task that you know you won't do
How will you "self-correct" if agreements are not followed? Be sure to include how you will self-correct if a particular agreement is broken. (If you are not accountable, the default agreement is nothing is expected of us.) <i>(examples below)</i>	
The "Direct Check-In" (Conversational & Direct) Agreement Broken: People are interrupting or talking over one another during discussions. Self-Correction Action: Any member of the group can gently pause the conversation and say, <i>"Pause—let's check our agreement on active listening and finish hearing out one voice at a time."</i> The group acknowledges it immediately, resets, and returns the mic to the person who was interrupted. The "Call-Out" (Structured) Agreement Broken: Meetings consistently start 10 minutes late because members arrive past the start time. Self-Correction Action: The meeting facilitator brings it up at the start of the agenda: <i>"We agreed to respect everyone's time by starting on time, but we've missed that mark twice. Do we need to adjust our start time, or recommit to being here at 5:00 PM sharp?"</i> The group votes to recommit or adjust. The "Gentle Signal" (Low-Friction & Quick) Agreement Broken: Discussions are side-tracked by non-agenda items or rabbit holes. Self-Correction Action: Members use a designated phrase or signal (e.g., calling out <i>"Elbow"</i> or holding up a <i>"Parking Lot"</i> sign). The speaker stops, the topic is written on the Parking Lot board for later, and the group returns to the main agenda item without judgment.	
Teams work best when you have a regular, reliable time to coordinate together. What will your team's regular meeting time and place be? <i>(examples below)</i>	
Weekly In-Person Meetings (Worksite/School-Based) Regular Schedule: Every Tuesday from 3:30 PM – 4:15 PM Location: Room 104 (Library Conference Room) Backup/Remote Plan: If school is cancelled or closed, we meet on Zoom via the team link. Bi-Weekly Hybrid Meetings (Regional or Multi-Site Teams) Regular Schedule: Every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	

Location: Main Union Office (Conference Room B) with a permanent Zoom option for members attending remotely.

Example 3: Weekly Virtual Touchpoints (Remote or Field Staff)

Regular Schedule: Every Monday morning from 9:00 AM – 9:45 AM

Location: Microsoft Teams / Zoom (Link posted in the team calendar invite).

Roadmap for Becoming a Power-Building Strategic Planning Team

Step 1: Assessing Our Planning Team Culture

Assessing the strategic planning team's culture allows decision-makers to establish ground truth about how power, trust, and communication operate within the group before setting organizational strategy. By intentionally evaluating past dynamics, the team can identify structural barriers and power imbalances that might otherwise prevent underrepresented member voices from actively shaping decisions. Ultimately, this assessment creates the psychological safety and shared accountability necessary to navigate difficult strategic choices and build true collective power.

Key Questions to Consider:

- **Shared Purpose & Accountability:** Does the planning team have a shared understanding of its purpose (why we exist, what is expected of us, and how we hold each other accountable)?
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** How does the team approach decision-making (consensus-driven, weighted ranking, dot voting, or majority rule), and how do we ensure power dynamics do not silence underrepresented voices?
- **Driving Values:** What core values drive the team's actions (e.g., radical transparency, innovation, risk aversion, equity, rank-and-file empowerment)?
- **Conflict & Power Dynamics:** How does the team surface and resolve conflicts or historical tensions (open dialogue, restorative conflict resolution, mediation, or avoidance)?
- **Communication & Accessibility:** What communication styles and meeting structures ensure that all team members—regardless of job classification, shift, language group, or experience—can participate fully?

Step 2: Identify Core Values

Distill insights about the planning team's dynamics into core values that define team culture. These values guide how decisions are made, how priorities are set, and how team members interact throughout the strategic planning process.

Examples of Core Values:

- **Solidarity & Collaboration:** Prioritizing collective power, mutual respect, and shared ownership over individual agendas.
- **Integrity & Transparency:** Ensuring open communication, ethical behavior, and clear accountability to the broader membership.
- **Centering Equity:** Intentionally identifying and eliminating barriers to participation across race, class, gender, job classification, language group, and geography.
- **Adaptability & Power Building:** Embracing strategic choices, learning from organizing data, and building sustainable member power over servicing routines.

Step 3: Define a Shared Purpose

Develop a clear purpose statement defining what the planning team is accountable to achieve, who the team represents (constituencies), and how the process will build long-term organizational capacity. Every team member should be able to articulate this purpose clearly to rank-and-file members.

Example Purpose Statement:

"We share the purpose of advancing educational and social justice by designing a member-driven strategic plan that builds our local's power. We are accountable to engaging rank-and-file members across all school sites and job classifications, expanding leadership pipelines, and establishing equitable priorities that improve working and learning conditions for all educators, support staff, and students."

Step 4: Define Community Agreements & Equity Commitments

Translate the shared purpose and core values into explicit community agreements. These community agreements provide clarity on how team members interact, navigate power dynamics, handle broken agreements, and contribute.

Examples of Community Agreements:

- **Active & Inclusive Listening:** Actively listening to all perspectives, ensuring space is made for quiet or historically underrepresented voices.
- **Constructive & Respectful Challenge:** Speaking candidly, challenging ideas respectfully, and addressing power imbalances directly.
- **Equitable Preparation & Engagement:** Committing to thorough meeting preparation and ensuring meeting materials and schedules are accessible to all team members.
- **Shared Ownership & Accountability:** Supporting finalized strategic decisions publicly while holding the team accountable to self-correcting when community agreements are broken.

Step 5: Document the Strategic Planning Team Culture Profile

Compile the team's purpose, values, community agreements, and equity commitments into a clear, actionable guide. This document serves as a touchstone for the planning team throughout the strategic process and as an onboarding benchmark for future committee and leadership development.

Descriptors of Effective Decision-Makers in Strategic Planning:

- **Commitment to Mission and Values:** Decision-makers are deeply dedicated to the union's core purpose, using its mission and core values to ground every strategic choice.
- **Deep Understanding of Operations & Current Reality:** Decision-makers bring a thorough understanding of union operations, worksite conditions, member needs, and the broader external landscape.
- **Forward-Looking Strategic Vision:** Decision-makers focus on long-term capacity, evaluating trade-offs and setting clear priorities that shape the future direction of the organization.
- **Diversity of Skills, Identity & Perspective:** The planning body reflects the full diversity of the membership—bringing varied expertise (financial, communications, organizing) across job classifications, worksites, and identities to ensure well-rounded decision-making.
- **Stewardship of Organizational Resources:** Decision-makers ensure that financial investments, staff time, and member resources are strategically aligned to build long-term power and operational health.
- **Ethical Standards & Accountability:** Decision-makers operate with transparency and integrity, ensuring that strategic choices comply with legal standards and reflect organizational values in practice.
- **Constructive Collaboration & Communication:** Decision-makers engage in open, respectful dialogue—surfacing differences productively and working toward shared alignment even when navigating hard choices.
- **Commitment to Continuous Learning:** Decision-makers actively examine internal data, external trends, and post-planning outcomes to adapt strategy as conditions change.
- **Rigorous Self-Assessment:** The planning body routinely evaluates its own decision-making processes, tracking metrics to hold itself accountable to stated goals.
- **Active Engagement with Membership:** Decision-makers proactively listen to members, staff, and community partners—ensuring rank-and-file voices directly inform strategic priorities.
- **Centering Equity in Decision-Making:** Decision-makers intentionally apply an equity lens to every strategic choice—evaluating how priorities, budget allocations, and policy decisions impact different member constituencies across race, gender, job classification, language group, and geography.
- **Commitment to Removing Participation Barriers:** Decision-makers actively identify and eliminate structural barriers to member involvement, ensuring that leadership pipelines and planning conversations explicitly center historically underrepresented and marginalized voices.

Scoring and Understanding Your Leadership Style

What is Leadership?

The concept of leadership seems familiar enough. Yet defining the word precisely can prove challenging, perhaps because leadership is a concept rather than a thing. You cannot see it, hear it, or touch it. How, then, can you begin to define leadership?

One good way to construct a definition is to list those things you must observe to know that leadership is occurring. To build a definition from the ground up, think of an empty stage. What do you need to place there for leadership to occur? Surely you need a leader. At the same time that you put a leader on stage, you must also put a follower there, for a leader can exist only in relation to a follower. What must occur between the two actors if leadership is present? The leader must influence the behavior of the follower. In what way? A leader influences a follower to achieve a predetermined goal. Now all the conditions are in place, and you can observe leadership in action.

What is Style?

Style can be defined as the way a person usually behaves when they are able to do things in their own way. Often you can predict how someone whom you know well will behave in a given situation. Your hunches usually prove accurate because you have already observed a certain pattern in the other person's behavior. For example, think of someone with whom you work every day. You can probably predict how that person would act if they were in charge of a project. Your behavior as a leader follows recognizable patterns, too. *What's My Leadership Style?* Provides you with an opportunity to increase your awareness of your own behavior patterns, helping you to understand how your style manifests itself in the way you lead others.

Leadership + Style = Leadership Style

Put leadership and style together, and you get a definition of leadership style: *A person's unique way of influencing others to work toward goals.* Different people have different ways of influencing others. One leader may characteristically influence others to achieve goals by appealing to their sense of fun. Another leader may simply direct others to get down to business. Yet another leader may set out a detailed "road-map" for others to follow, while still another leader may provide encouragement and support as others work toward a goal. Your responses to the items in *What's My Leadership Style?* reveal your own style of influencing others. Research demonstrates that style can best be understood by measuring the extent to which a person's typical behavior demonstrates *assertiveness* and *expressiveness*. Because we are measuring assertiveness and expressiveness in this assessment, we call these broad categories of behavior *dimensions*. Assertiveness describes the degree to which a person's behavior is forceful or directive. Highly assertive people like to take control of situations while less assertive people may be more comfortable in less visible roles. Expressiveness describes the degree to which a person's behavior is emotionally responsive or expressive. Highly expressive people like to show their emotions from interpersonal relationships while less expressive people tend to keep their emotions to themselves. Combining the two dimensions produces four styles.

What's My Leadership Style? Response and Scoring Form

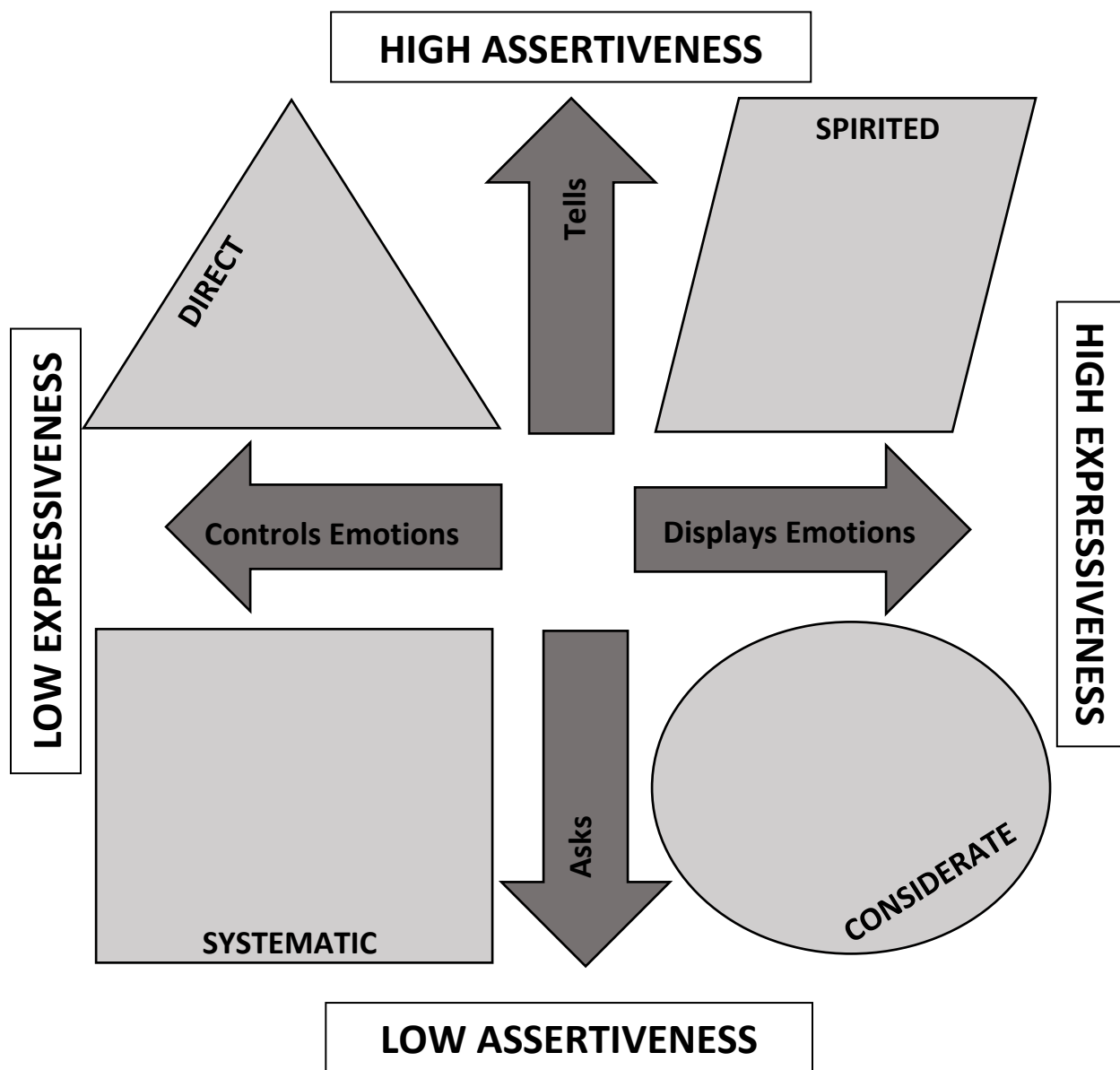
Directions: For each pair of leadership actions below, assign a total of 5 points by dividing the points between both actions. Use any combination that adds up to 5 points, but DO NOT USE FRACTIONS.

When getting others to work towards a goal, I am likely to...

		Equal to 5			
1.	Generate excitement.			Act decisively.	1.
2.	Take charge.			Offer guidance.	2.
3.	Provide encouragement.			Provide structure.	3.
4.	Point out omissions.			Seek everyone's input.	4.
5.	Emphasize goals.			Outline a sequence of steps.	5.
6.	Promote positive thinking.			Push to beat the competition.	6.
7.	Maintain a comfortable work space.			Get down to business.	7.
8.	Define tasks.			Require speed.	8.
9.	Direct others.			Create a free environment.	9.
10.	Listen to suggestions.			Provide challenges.	10.
11.	Plan things carefully.			Focus on the deadline.	11.
12.	Create a sense of urgency.			Spark creative thinking.	12.
13.	Offer inspiration.			Promote cooperation.	13.
14.	Monitor progress closely.			Improvise along the way.	14.
15.	Adopt a familiar approach.			Brainstorm new approaches.	15.
16.	Make it fun.			Set high standards.	16.
17.	Rally team spirit.			Show appreciation.	17.
18.	Demonstrate enthusiasm.			Analyze the situation first.	18.
19.	Request accuracy.			Foster teamwork.	19.
20.	Promote logical thinking.			Help out.	20.
Totals for Each Style					
Spirited 			Direct 		
Considerate 			Systematic 		

What's My Leadership Style? Response and Scoring Form Part 2

Directions: Copy the totals for each style from the previous page into the chart below. This is your leadership style profile.



Interpreting Your Score

Each of the four styles can be described based on the degree of assertiveness or expressiveness used.

Direct	High assertiveness, low expressiveness, leads by taking charge
Spirited	High assertiveness, high expressiveness, leads by inspiring
Considerate	Low assertiveness, high expressiveness, leads by building group harmony
Systematic	Low assertiveness, low expressiveness, leads by planning carefully

People generally develop a leadership style they are most comfortable using. That is their dominant style. Take a look at your Leadership Style Profile. Did you score higher than 16 on any style? If so, you probably prefer to use this style whenever you can. Did you score below 10 on any styles? These are probably leadership styles that you do not use often. Some people have one clearly dominant style. Those people generally use that style to the exclusion of others. Other people may use a variety of styles. They would have a relatively even distribution of points in their Leadership Style Profiles.

Is There a Best Leadership Style?

In a word, no. Current theory suggests that different situations require different leadership styles. In fact, the most important take-away from this assessment is this: *The most effective leaders are the ones who adapt their styles to the requirements of the situation.* Leadership Style Effectiveness shows the strengths and weaknesses of different leadership styles depending on the situation.

Direct • Produces quick results • Gets people moving • Takes charge no matter how challenging MOST EFFECTIVE in crisis situations or rapidly changing situations in which bold action and quick decisions are needed. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring careful planning and in situations requiring tact and sensitivity to other's feelings.	Spirited • Inspires others to develop fresh, new approaches • Create a fun atmosphere by acting spontaneously • Rallies support MOST EFFECTIVE in situations in which people need to be motivated to develop fresh innovative ideas. LESS EFFECTIVE in urgent situations in which deadlines must be met and in situations in which long-term planning is vital.
Systematic • Makes decisions based on facts • Asks for specific details • Is analytical MOST EFFECTIVE in situations calling for careful, long-term planning, accuracy and objective analysis. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring quick decision-making or flexibility because of ambiguity or interpersonal conflict.	Considerate • Listens actively • Works cohesively • Considers others' feelings MOST EFFECTIVE in sensitive situations requiring patience, tact, and diplomacy. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring quick adjustments because of unforeseen changes and situations in which the need to take charge of others is crucial.

Too Much of a Good Thing?

You probably find yourself most comfortable leading others in those situations in which your dominant style is most effective. But sometimes you may need to move outside of your comfort zone so that you can adapt your style to the demands of a particular situation. Otherwise, your leadership style strengths may become weaknesses. Each style has definite strengths. However, some strengths, when taken to an extreme, can become weaknesses.

DIRECT

Direct leaders, when stressed, may cross the line from taking charge to being overbearing.

Direct leaders like to get things done quickly, which is usually a plus. However, if some of their followers work at a slower pace, they may feel pressured by their direct leader's drive. In addition, direct leader's sense of urgency may cause them to be reluctant to delegate.

Direct leaders like to compete, which may give their organizations an edge over others. However, taken to extremes, their competitive spirit may intimidate those they lead.

Direct leaders work hard. But when they expect the same high-octane performance from those they lead, they may cause their followers to burn out.

SYSTEMATIC

Systematic leaders provide structure for activities, which usually helps tasks or projects progress without a hitch. However, when systematic leaders impose too much structure, their followers may chafe under so much control.

Systematic leaders make sure that no one overlooks the important details. But taken to the extreme, their conscientiousness may make the people they lead feel bogged down.

Systematic leaders make sure that all the data is in before making decisions, which is usually a sound policy. However, when urgent situations call for quick action, systematic leaders' thoroughness may be counterproductive.

Systematic leaders insist on objectivity and accuracy above all else. As a result, those they lead may view them as impersonal or picky.

SPIRITED

Spirited leaders are good at generating enthusiasm among their followers. Yet taken to an extreme, their persuasive abilities may become manipulative.

Spirited leaders know how to prompt those they lead to develop fresh new approaches. However, their emphasis on thinking of new ways to do things sometimes comes at the expense of making sure that things are carried out to completion.

Spirited leaders inspire their followers by providing them with a vision. But in presenting the big picture, they may sometimes gloss over the important details.

Spirited leaders enjoy motivating their followers from center stage, but sometimes they forget that they also need to provide their followers with an audience, by listening to them.

CONSIDERATE

Considerate leaders provide their followers with a sense of reassurance when times are difficult or rapidly changing. However, their desire to keep things comfortable by keeping them the same may cause them to resist change, rather than helping their followers adapt to it.

Considerate leaders build a loyal following by demonstrating their support for others. However, some of their followers may view their support as permissiveness.

Considerate leaders recognize the importance of taking their followers' views into account. But taken to an extreme, their willingness to accommodate others' views may cause them to cave in or *appear* to cave in.

Considerate leaders are good at maintaining team harmony, but, in some cases, their desire to maintain harmony may cause them to avoid constructive conflict.

The Bottom Line

Current research shows that people representing all four behavioral styles can and do function effectively as leaders. Here is the bottom line: Rather than asking yourself, "Do I have what it takes to be a leader?" it is far more productive to ask yourself, "What does this particular situation require from me?" Then you will be able to decide whether you need to adjust your leadership style, and, if so, how?

Action Planning

Now that you have identified your own leadership style, how can you put it to work? Use the following questions to guide your thinking:

1. Based on the information you obtained from this assessment, what do you view as your personal strengths as a leader?
2. What are your areas for improvement as a leader?
3. Think of a specific situation in which you will need to influence others to accomplish a goal. What strengths can you use to your advantage? How do you plan to adapt your leadership style to meet the requirements of the situations?

Facilitator's Guide for the Intersectionality Wheel of Privilege.

This reflection and identity-mapping activity helps strategic planning decision-makers understand how social positions, power dynamics, and systemic privilege influence how individuals view organizational priorities and decision-making.

Activity Overview

- **Goal:** Create awareness of how power, privilege, and marginalization operate within the planning team and membership, establishing psychological safety and surfacing implicit biases before making strategic organizational choices.
- **Time:** 30–45 minutes.
- **When to Use:** Stage 1 (*Building Community and Establishing Purpose*) during the facilitator's discovery and foundational trust-building process.
- **Materials Needed:**
 - Printouts of the Wheel of Privilege diagram (a segmented wheel mapping social identity spectrums such as race, gender, class, language, job classification, geography, ability, and citizenship status from central power/privilege to outer margin/marginalization).
 - Pens or highlighters for each participant.

Step-by-Step Facilitation Process**Step 1: Set the Purpose & Psychological Safety (5–10 Minutes)**

- **Frame the Activity:** Explain that strategic plans often reflect the lived experiences and biases of those in the room. To build a plan that serves all members, the group must first examine who holds access to power and whose voices may be underrepresented.
- **Establish Community Agreements:** Remind the team of core agreements: practice self-reflection, lean into discomfort, maintain confidentiality, and honor differing lived experiences.
- **Clarify Voluntariness:** State clearly that participants share only what they feel comfortable sharing—no one is forced to disclose private aspects of their identity.

Step 2: Individual Mapping (10 Minutes)

- **Distribute Diagrams:** Hand out the Wheel of Privilege worksheet.
- **Self-Reflection Prompt:** Ask participants to silently review each wedge/category (e.g., race, gender, primary language, job classification, education, access to authority) and mark where their lived experience falls along the spectrum between the inner power center and the outer margin.
- **Silent Writing:** Provide 5 minutes of quiet time for individuals to complete their mapping and reflect on the following question: *"How does my position on this wheel shape what I notice, what I prioritize, and what I take for granted in our organization?"*

Step 3: Pair / Small Group Sharing (10–15 Minutes)

- **Partner Up:** Pair participants (preferably across different roles, job classifications, affinity groups).

- **Discussion Prompts:** Instruct pairs to discuss:
 - Where do you hold privilege or access to power within our union/workplace?
 - Where have you experienced barriers, marginalization, or underrepresentation?
 - *How might your identities influence what you think our strategic plan should focus on?*

Step 4: Full Group Debrief & Strategic Application (10–15 Minutes)

- **Reconvene the Room:** Bring the full strategic planning team back together.
- **Facilitate Debrief Questions:**
 1. **Pattern Recognition:** *"Looking at our collective team, where is power and privilege concentrated in this room, and which identities or member groups are missing from our decision-making body?"*
 2. **Strategic Impact:** *"How might our collective positions lead us to overlook certain member barriers (e.g., shift times, language access, job classification disparities) if we don't intentionally use an equity lens?"*
 3. **Bridging to Action:** *"What commitments must we make during this strategic planning process to ensure we center the voices of members who sit on the margins of this wheel?"*

Facilitator Tips for Managing Dynamics & Equity

- **Watch Power Imbalances:** Be mindful of organizational hierarchies (e.g., executive officers sitting next to new building stewards or support staff). Ensure officers do not dominate the debrief.
- **Validate Discomfort:** Acknowledge that examining privilege can bring up guilt or defensiveness for dominant groups and trauma for marginalized groups. Keep the focus structural: *"Privilege is about systemic position and power dynamics, not personal merit or intent."*
- **Bridge to Stage 2 & 3 of Strategic Planning Process:** Use the insights from this activity directly in Stage 2 (*Current State Data Diagnosis*) and Stage 3 (*Supermajority Benchmarks*) to ensure demographic filters are applied to all survey data, organizing metrics, and strategic goals.

Adapted from Sylvia Duckworth, Canadian Council for Refugees, and Olena Hankivsky, PhD

What insight does this provide on how you have been treated as a person of privilege or a marginalized person?

Which Identity brings you the most discomfort or confusion?

Intersectionality Wheel of Privilege: A Reflective Process for UniServ Director and Organizers

Effective UniServ Directors or Organizers help leaders develop confidence, strengthen organizing skills, broaden participation, and build the capacity of others to lead. When union staff and leaders differ by race, gender, job classification, age, geography, or other dimensions of identity, organizing does not occur outside of those differences. Power, experience, credibility, and communication are often shaped by social and organizational dynamics that can influence how feedback is given, received, and acted upon. Equity-minded union staff remain aware of these dynamics without making assumptions about another person's experience. They organize with curiosity, humility, and a commitment to understanding both individual circumstances and broader organizational realities. An equity-centered union staff person approach seeks to see the person, see the system, and see the interaction between the two. That balance creates the conditions for deeper growth, stronger relationships, and more effective leadership development.

Key Ideas to Hold

When union staff and leaders differ by race, gender, job classification, age, sexuality, class background, geography, or another identity, the goal is not to ignore the difference nor make it the center of every conversation. The goal is to understand that difference may influence trust, credibility, communication, risk, and how feedback is received.

1. Union Staff Work Is Never Separate From Power

The relationship is not just UniServ Director/Organizers ↔ Leader.

It is also:

- Race ↔ Race
- Gender ↔ Gender
- Staff ↔ Member
- Manager ↔ Employee
- HQ ↔ Field
- Older ↔ Younger
- Credentialed ↔ Non-credentialed

People enter union staff and member conversations carrying their lived experiences with power.

The purpose of this activity is not to measure who is more or less privileged. Instead, it helps UniServ Directors and Organizers develop greater awareness of how their identities, experiences, and relationship to power shape the way they listen, ask questions, interpret situations, and build trust with leaders. Self-awareness is a prerequisite for union staff to do their work with members across differences. UniServ Director and Organizers cannot effectively navigate power dynamics with others if they have not first explored their own relationship to

power and identity. To complete this, you will need to complete the Intersectionality Wheel that follows the directions and guided reflections. You will also need to plan about 60 minutes to complete the wheel and to journal through the guided reflections.

Step 1: Complete Your Intersectionality Wheel

Using the Intersectionality Wheel, identify the identities that are most relevant to how you move through the world. Examples might include:

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Class background
- Education
- Job classification or professional role
- Age
- Ability/disability status
- Religion or faith tradition
- Geographic background
- Language and communication style

For each section of the wheel, consider where your identity may place you closer to societal privilege, marginalization, or a combination of both.

Step 2: Identify Where You Experience Power and Where You Experience Marginalization

Review your wheel and reflect:

- In which areas do I typically receive credibility, trust, or benefit of the doubt?
- In which areas do I have to work harder to be heard, respected, or understood?
- Where do I experience both privilege and marginalization depending on the situation?

Notice that you likely experience a combination of privilege and disadvantage rather than fitting into a simple category. It is highly likely that the people you work with will also have perceptions, behaviors, and experiences informed by a similarly complicated intersectionality.

Step 3: Reflect on How Your Identities Have Shaped Your Leadership Story

- What messages did I receive growing up about leadership, authority, success, and belonging?
- Which parts of my identity have opened doors for me?

- Which parts of my identity have created barriers?
- How have these experiences shaped the way I lead, communicate, and respond to conflict?

The goal is to connect identity to lived experience rather than treating identity as an abstract concept.

Step 4: Explore How Others May Experience You

Imagine entering a room as a facilitator, Organizer, or UniServ Director and Organizers. And reflect:

- Before I say a word, what assumptions might others make about me?
- Which aspects of my identity may increase my perceived credibility?
- Which aspects may lead others to question my expertise or authority?
- How might different people experience me differently?

Consider how your identities influence staff and member relationships whether you acknowledge them or not.

Facilitator's Guide for the Core Purpose

This is designed to help strategic planning teams establish a shared understanding of why their organization exists, who it serves, and what members of the team are accountable to achieve.

Activity Overview

- **Goal:** Transition from a basic, single-sentence mission statement to a deep, multi-layered core purpose that connects personal motivations to organizational power building.
- **Time:** 30–45 minutes.
- **When to Use:** Stage 1 (*Building Community and Establishing Purpose*) after assessing team culture and community agreements.
- **Materials Needed:** Printed Core Purpose Worksheets, chart paper/whiteboard, markers, and sticky notes.

Step 1: Frame the Purpose & Address the "Four Whys" (5–10 Minutes)

- **Facilitator Framing:** State clearly that many groups stop at a generic, surface-level answer to "why we exist." To build real strategy, the team must examine four distinct dimensions of purpose:
 1. *Why does our organization exist?*
 2. *Why does this strategic planning effort matter right now?*
 3. *Why have these specific individuals been asked to participate in decision-making?*
 4. *Why does each participant personally care about our future?*

Step 2: Individual Worksheet Completion (10 Minutes)

Instruct participants to work independently on their Core Purpose Worksheet. Direct them to complete three core prompts:

- **The "Who":** Who are our primary constituencies (e.g., certified staff, support personnel, community allies, students)[cite: 2, 3, 5, 8]?
- **The "What":** What core activities build our collective power and capacities (e.g., member-led advocacy, steward training, organizing campaigns)?
- **The "So That":** What is the ultimate impact or condition we are trying to achieve (e.g., winning contract protections, securing workplace equity, transforming public education)?

Step 3: Small Group Synthesis & Draft Framing (15 Minutes)

Break the room into small groups of 3–4 participants (ensuring a mix of roles, worksites, and identities).

Instruct each table to compare individual notes and draft a single shared **Core Purpose Draft** using the following structured template:

*"We share the purpose of **[Insert Ultimate Impact / Strategic Goal]** by organizing **[Insert Primary Constituencies]** to build their capacity for collective action through **[Insert Core Capacities / Strategies]**, resulting in **[Insert Concrete Wins & Conditions]**"*

Step 4: Full Group Review & Consensus Alignment (10–15 Minutes)

- **Post Drafts:** Have each small group post their purpose statement on the main wall.
- **Identify Overlap:** Highlight points of intersection (where groups naturally agree) and points of divergence (where perceptions differ).
- **Test Alignment:** Use the **Up, Side, Down Thumbs Consensus Process** to refine the final wording until the entire team enthusiastically supports the statement.

Core Purpose Worksheet Example (There is also a simpler version on the following pages)

1. Personal Connection (The Internal Why)

Why does this organization personally matter to you, and why do you care about its direction over the next 3 to 5 years?

(Write 1–2 sentences)

2. Current Reality & Urgency (The Contextual Why)

Why is now the right time for our organization to engage in strategic planning, and what critical choices face us today?

(Write 1–2 sentences)

3. Deconstructing Our Purpose (The Core Elements)

- **Our Constituencies:** Who do we represent, organize, and serve across job types, shifts, and backgrounds?
- **Our Core Work:** What strategic activities, leadership development efforts, or organizing practices must we excel at?
- **Our Ultimate Impact:** What does success look like in 3 to 5 years for our members, workplace, and community?

4. Drafting Our Core Purpose Statement

Combine your notes above into one clear, powerful sentence:

*"We share the purpose of _____ by organizing
_____ to build our capacity for
_____ through
_____, resulting in
_____."*

Organization and Personal Core Purpose Worksheet

What is the purpose of THIS LOCAL? (Mission) Why does it exist? List what you believe is expected by your members of THIS LOCAL.

What are the current PRIMARY GOALS of THIS LOCAL? What is it doing? List actual activities you know that it does.

What is your purpose as member of the strategic planning team? (Mission) Why does your position exist? List what you think are your expectations.

What are your PRIMARY GOALS as a member of the strategic planning team? What are you doing? List actual activities you do.

**How are you, as a member of the strategic planning team actively supporting the PRIMARY GOALS of THIS LOCAL?
List the specific activities you do as a that specifically connect with a primary goal.**

Facilitator's Guide for the Up, Side, Down Thumbs Consensus Process. This quick, visual decision-making tool allows strategic planning decision-makers to test alignment, gauge degree of support, and surface hidden disagreements productively.

Activity Overview

- **Goal:** Quickly assess consensus on a specific goal, priority, or action step while giving space for non-dominant voices to express nuance or concerns without blocking progress unnecessarily.
- **Time:** 5–15 minutes per decision point- very flexible.
- **When to Use:** During Stage 3 (Prioritization) or Stage 6 (Commitment & Adoption) after a proposal has been presented and discussed.

Participant Gesture Scale

- **Thumbs UP (Full Support):** *"I fully agree with this proposal and am ready to support and implement it."*
- **Thumbs SIDE (Support with Reservations / Neutral):** *"I can live with this decision and will support the group. I have minor reservations, questions, or suggestions for refinement but they can be addressed later if needed."*
- **Thumbs DOWN (Block / Serious Objection):** *"I cannot support this proposal as written because it conflicts with our core mission, equity commitments, or organizational capacity. Here is what I need in order for my thumb to move at least to "sideways" _____"*
 - A down thumb must come with the proposal for moving the thumb to "sideways"

Step-by-Step Facilitation Process

Step 1: State the Proposal Clearly

- Read the exact motion, strategic priority, or goal statement aloud (e.g., *"Proposal: We will adopt a 1:15 building steward target as Priority 1 for the 2027 organizing plan"*).
- Ensure the text is visibly displayed on a wall, slide, or document so everyone is voting on the exact same wording.

Step 2: Call for the Simultaneous Vote

- Ask everyone to place their hand near their chest to keep votes hidden initially.
- Count down: *"3, 2, 1... Show your thumbs!"*
- Ensure everyone reveals their vote simultaneously to prevent visual bias or authority figures from influencing others.

Step 3: Read the Room & Process the Votes

- **If All Thumbs are UP:** Declare full consensus and move immediately to the next agenda item.

- **If there are Thumbs SIDEWAYS:**

- Option 1 – especially if there are a lot of sideways -Invite those with sideways thumbs to share their reservations briefly: *"What small adjustment or clarity would turn your thumb up?"*
- Option 2 – is there are only 1 or 2 sideways – declare that adoption – near consensus – with the ability to revisit the decision should it prove problematic.

- **If there are Thumbs DOWN:**

- Prioritize hearing from thumbs-down voters immediately: *"What core barrier, equity concern, or capacity limit prevents you from supporting this as written?"*
- **Rule:** A single thumbs down pauses the decision to allow the group to address the objection – discussion continues until the thumb can at least be moved sideways.

Step 4: Refine or Re-Vote

- **Quick Tweak:** If a minor edit addresses the objection or clarifies sideways reservation, update the wording on the board and run a quick re-vote.
- **Deeper Tension:** If fundamental disagreement remains, move the item to a "Parking Lot" for dedicated breakout discussion rather than derailing the full meeting agenda.

Facilitator Tips for Equity & Power Dynamics

- **Check Senior Leaders First:** Watch for board officers or executive staff looking around before voting. Remind the group that all votes carry equal weight in testing alignment.
- **Validate Sideways Thumbs:** Thank participants who raise sideways thumbs—they often surface vital operational risks or capacity constraints that over-enthusiastic groups overlook.

Facilitator's Process Guide for the Affinity Wall Process, designed to help strategic planning teams generate, categorize, and prioritize ideas while ensuring equitable participation

Activity Goal

To transition from broad visioning ("*What could the future look like?*") into structured strategic themes by surfacing raw ideas, grouping common patterns, and driving consensus without letting dominant voices overpower the room.

Materials Needed

- Sticky notes (2–3 pads per participant; different colors for different categories if needed).
- Thick markers for every participant (ensures text is legible from across the room).
- Large blank wall, whiteboard, or butcher paper.
- Dot stickers (3–5 per participant for prioritization voting).

Step 1: Frame the Prompt & Silent Generation (10–15 Minutes)

- **Facilitator Framing:** State the central strategic vision question clearly (e.g., "*If our organization is wildly successful 3 to 5 years from now, what will be different for our members, workplace, and community?*")
- **Silent Writing:** Direct participants to write their ideas on sticky notes independently.
 - **Rule:** One distinct idea per sticky note.
 - **Rule:** Use large, legible, writing (not more than 10 words per note).
- **Equity & Inclusion Check:** Silent generation prevents fast talkers or senior leaders from influencing the group's initial thinking, allowing quiet or underrepresented voices to contribute equally[cite: 5, 6, 8].

Step 2: Wall Posting & Clustering (20–30 Minutes)

- **Whole Group Posting:** Have participants come up to the wall in small groups to post their notes.
- **Organic Grouping:** As notes go up, instruct participants to visually scan for common themes and move similar sticky notes near each other.
- **No-Talking Clustering (Optional Adaptation):** For high-tension or power-imbalanced groups, run 5 minutes of completely silent sorting where anyone can move any sticky note to form clusters until movement stops naturally.

Step 3: Labeling Strategic Themes (15–20 Minutes)

- **Name the Clusters:** Facilitate a full-group discussion to assign a clear, active title to each cluster (e.g., *"Member Communication Networks"* rather than just *"Emails"*).
- **Manage Outliers:** For sticky notes that do not fit into any cluster, create a dedicated "Standout / Unique Ideas" group—do not force notes into themes where they don't belong.
- **Refine & Consolidate:** Combine overlapping clusters or break down overly massive groups into distinct sub-themes.

Step 4: Prioritization & Dot Voting (10–15 Minutes)

- **Distribute Dots:** Give each participant 3 to 5 dot stickers.
- **Set Voting Rules:** Explain the decision-making criteria (e.g., *"Vote for the 3 themes you believe are most critical for building power and capacity over the next 3 years"*).
 - Participants can place all dots on one theme or spread them across multiple themes.
- **Cast Votes:** Participants place their dots directly on the cluster header cards.

Step 5: Review, Debate & Transition to Core Choices (15–20 Minutes)

- **Analyze Results:** Tally the dots and highlight the top-voted strategic priorities].
- **Test Consensus:** Ask the group: *"Looking at these top priorities, does anything critical feel missing? Does this reflect our core mission and equity commitments?"*
- **Bridge to Stage 4 of planning process:** Transition the top-voted themes into **Stage 4 (Strategic Choices)**, forcing the group to evaluate what work must **Start, Stop, and Continue** to support these new priorities.

METHODOLOGY

8 Box SWOT

Cross-reference internal & external factors in order to identify potential campaign scenarios.

CONTRIBUTED BY

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"THE 8 Box SWOT MATRIX CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE OR CLARIFY YOUR STRATEGIC GOALS, IDENTIFY CHALLENGES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER, AND DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY OR ACTION PLAN."

"A goal without a plan is just a wish." —Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Planning a campaign? Need a way to assess your situation and your capacity to address it? The SWOT matrix can help you and your organization identify key factors in play. By carefully considering internal *strengths* and *weaknesses*, alongside external *threats* and *opportunities*, you can identify your "best case," "missed opportunity," "mobilization scenario," and "worst case" options.

Let's say you're running an anti-corruption campaign. If a SWOT analysis reveals that an internal strength (you have large core of committed volunteers) overlaps with an external opportunity (a huge corruption scandal has just broken), you would potentially have the best case scenario of being able to field a large team to deliver information or materials to newly aware constituents. This could lead you to identify a need to develop materials and fundraise for their printing. If, however, you have a minimal staff and no trained volunteers (weakness) when a major corruption scandal has just broken (opportunity) this could be a "missed opportunity" scenario, meaning you may need to develop alternative ways to meet your goals. These are just a few examples of the sorts of insights a SWOT analysis can provide. With a fully completed matrix, other insights could lead you to different strategic conclusions.

You may notice that, depending on the situation, an organization's strengths could also be similar to an organization's weaknesses. For example, many volunteers can be a strength if you need them, and a weakness if they need extensive training you cannot provide. In the same way, a breaking scandal can be both an opportunity (it's a chance to expand your campaign) and a threat (your target may suddenly see you as a greater risk, and lash out in new ways).

SWOT can work well in combination with other methodologies, particularly:

- Pillars of power (see: METHODOLOGY: Pillars of power), to identify the key institutions that need to be included as external forces in the SWOT Matrix
- Spectrum of allies (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies), to help you identify and assess specific key parties, constituents, impacted communities, and opposition forces.
- Force field analysis, to identify the relative strengths of forces acting to support the status quo, as well as what forces and actions might counter them.

POTENTIAL RISKS

The SWOT analysis is useful for clarifying your strategic goals and helping you decide how to achieve them. It will not, however, help you determine the relative importance of any particular factor or outcome, unless you add a quantitative measure to your analysis. When using the SWOT matrix, be mindful about the assumptions you are making. Rather than acting on incomplete or inaccurate information, keep a list of further research or questions that need to be answered before you act.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Round Dance Revolution
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Civil disobedience

Principles

- Build strength through repetition
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Change is the only constant
- Do your research
- Fail forward
- Praxis makes perfect
- Solidarity, not aid

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The people's shock

Methodologies

- Ladder of engagement
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy



A SWOT matrix can help you clarify your strategic goals and your capacity to address them.

The SWOT matrix's superpower is to help you determine or clarify your strategic goals, identify challenges you may encounter, and develop an effective campaign strategy or action plan.

HOW TO USE

1. Assemble the right team for the job: those with the knowledge of both the internal strengths and weaknesses, and the external threats and opportunities.
2. Using the matrix, first list out your internal "strengths" and "weaknesses," then the external "threats" and "opportunities." (Remember, some items could end up in more than one category!) If you are working with a large group, consider sketching the matrix on a large sheet and writing the SWOT items on sticky notes and then placing them in the appropriate boxes.
3. Now, take some time to figure out how your strengths and your opportunities intersect, and write down those ideas in the appropriate scenario box. Do this for the remaining scenario boxes (strengths and threats, weaknesses and opportunities, weaknesses and threats). Note that the ideas that come from the intersection of strengths and opportunities fall in the "best case" box, and could be considered "low-hanging fruit" — actions that could be done fairly easily, with minimal effort or expenditure of resources. Where weaknesses and opportunities intersect, you'll find your potential "missed opportunities" — opportunities that are hard to act on unless you can overcome your shortcomings. Where strengths and threats overlap is a possible "mobilization scenario," where you have potential to proactively meet the threat. Finally, where weaknesses and threats intersect you'll find your "worst case" scenarios (where you end up in the "W.C."), which you should try to avoid if possible.
4. Use the scenarios to help you identify SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals as part of your strategic planning process.

LEARN MORE

A SWOT action analysis from brainstorming to action

Roy Mogg's blog, 2010

<https://www.roymogg.com/how-to-use-a-swot-analysis-to-drive-action-and-take-control-a-work-shop-guide-swot-planning/>

Implementation Plan Worksheet: Monthly Actions

Month	All Current Actions	Stop Doing	Start Doing
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			

Personal Plan: Monthly Actions and Indicators

Month	Actions and Alignment	Outcomes
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		

Strategic Planning Template

Stage 1: Foundational Purpose

Mission (Why we exist):

Vision (Where we want to be in 3–5 years):

Core Values (Principles that guide us):

Stage 2: Understanding Current Reality

Analyze internal capacity and external forces to establish ground truth.

Strategic Area	Key Strengths and Assets	Critical Gaps, Challenges & Barriers
Internal Capacity (Staffing, stewards, finances, infrastructure)		
External Environment (Policy, district/employer relations, political landscape)		

Theory of Change / Core Premise: What primary roadblock stands between our current state and our future vision?

Drafting Statement: "To build power and achieve our mission, we must _____ by addressing _____."

Stage 3: Equity & Inclusion Lens Assessment

Examine outcomes across job classifications, race, gender, language group, and district geography.

Constituency Gaps: Which groups of members or stakeholders are currently underrepresented in our leadership or organizing efforts?

--

Equity Commitments: What concrete steps must we take to address structural disparities across our organization?

--

Stage 4: Defining Strategic Priorities & Success Metrics

Identify 3–5 high-level focus areas and establish clear metrics.

Priority Area 1:
Goal Statement:
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-

Priority Area 2:
Goal Statement:
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-

Priority Area 3:
Goal Statement:
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-

Priority Area 4:
Goal Statement:
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-

Priority Area 5:
Goal Statement:
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-
Quantifiable target-

Stage 5: Strategic Alignment & Capacity Choices

Start: What new initiatives or programs must we launch to achieve our priorities?	Stop: What current activities consume significant time or money without advancing our strategic goals?	Continue: What core operations are working well and must be sustained?

Stage 6: Implementation & Accountability Roadmap

Translate strategic priorities into actionable work plans with owners and timelines.

Strategic Priority	Key Operational Action Steps	Lead / Responsible Owner	Required Resources / Budget	Target Timeline

Stage 7: Rollout & Continuous Adaptation Schedule

Ensure the plan stays active and is communicated broadly.

Communication & Rollout Strategy: How will we share this plan with rank-and-file members, staff, and external partners? Fill in communication channels/deliverables

--

Review Schedule:

--

Quarterly Review Owner/Frequency:

--

Annual Progress Assembly Date/Forum:

--

Strategic Plan Example 2: Any Place Education Association (APEA)

1. Organizational Foundation – Why do we exist?

- **Organization:** Any Place Education Association (APEA).
- **Motto / Tagline:** Moving Education Forward.
- **Core Values & Mission Focus:** Advancing public education, supporting education professionals, promoting social justice, and fostering democratic engagement among members.

2. Strategic Position: Current Reality & Assessment

Strategic Area	Strengths	Challenges & Gaps
Internal Capacity	* Strong statewide affiliate network and established local leadership structures. * Dedicated professional development and instructional leadership capacity. * High member pride and established political action infrastructure.	* Uneven steward coverage and engagement across certain districts or job classifications. * Need for broader, multi-channel communication infrastructure to reach all rank-and-file members. * Resource constraints in offering continuous equity and restorative practice training across all local affiliates.
External Environment	* Strong community value placed on public education across Any Place. * Opportunities to build coalitions with local civil rights, social justice, and parent organizations. * Active seat at the table with local decision-makers and the General Assembly.	* Legislative and local budgetary pressures impacting school funding and educator compensation. * Ongoing teacher and support staff retention challenges across the local. * Complex social justice and equity disparities affecting students in high-poverty school districts.

- **Theory for Change:** To build long-term power, APEA must leverage its political influence and professional expertise to expand member participation, deepen community social justice coalitions, and ensure robust organizing coverage in every school.

3. Equity & Inclusion Lens

- **Social Justice Integration:** Embedded as an explicit core focus area alongside traditional union functions like organizing and bargaining.

- **Disparity Targets:** Address social justice issues affecting students and public school employees across diverse communities.

4. Strategic Priorities, Proposed Measurements, Responsible Leads & Timelines

Priority 1: Communications

- **Goals:** Enhance internal and external communication channels to keep members informed and public stakeholders engaged.
- **Proposed Key Measurements of Success:**
 - **Member Reach:** Achieve a 65%+ open rate on digital newsletters and a 30% increase in active member engagement on internal union communication platforms.
 - **Public Perception:** Track a 15% increase in positive media coverage highlighting APEA educators and public school needs across local news outlets.
 - **Rapid Response Capability:** Maintain the infrastructure to deploy coordinated call-to-action communications to 100% of local affiliate leaders within 2 hours during major policy or bargaining developments.
- **Responsible Lead:** Communications Director & Public Relations Team
- **Proposed Execution Timeline:** Ongoing quarterly execution with annual review cycles through Q4 2028.

Priority 2: Organizing

- **Goals:** Build membership density, strengthen local leadership capacity, and activate rank-and-file participation.
- **Proposed Key Measurements of Success:**
 - **Density Targets:** Maintain or grow overall localwide union membership to 85%+ across active public school employees.
 - **Leader Development:** Identify, train, and deploy at least one active building representative per 20 members across 100% of Any Place school sites.
 - **New Hire Onboarding:** Engage 90%+ of all newly hired educators and education support professionals during annual district orientation sessions.
- **Responsible Lead:** Director of Organizing & Regional Field Representatives
- **Proposed Execution Timeline:**
 - *Phase 1 (Q1–Q2 2027):* Building steward gap audit and training curriculum launch.

- *Phase 2 (Q3–Q4 2027):* Localwide new-hire engagement blitz.
- *Phase 3 (2028):* Full density review and sustained local leadership maintenance.

Priority 3: Leading the Profession

- **Goals:** Position educators and union members as the primary experts and leaders in education policy and classroom practice.
- **Proposed Key Measurements of Success:**
 - **Professional Development Turnout:** Increase member participation in APEA-sponsored professional learning workshops and micro-credential programs by 25%.
 - **Member-Led Advocacy:** Ensure educator-led advisory committees present formal policy recommendations to the Local Board of Education/Department of Education at least twice annually.
 - **Retention Impact:** Achieve a 90%+ satisfaction rating on APEA early-career educator mentorship programs designed to reduce teacher and support staff turnover.
- **Responsible Lead:** Professional Development Committee Chair & Member Cadre Trainers
- **Proposed Execution Timeline:**
 - *Phase 1 (Q1–Q3 2027):* Expand professional learning workshop offerings and mentorship framework.
 - *Phase 2 (Q4 2027–Q2 2028):* Formal presentation of member-led policy recommendations to local education boards.

Priority 4: Political Engagement

- **Goals:** Mobilize members to influence local and local-level policy, legislative budgets, and educational governance.
- **Proposed Key Measurements of Success:**
 - **Legislative Victories:** Successfully pass key legislative priorities related to school funding, healthcare protections, and workplace conditions in the Any Place General Assembly.
 - **Voter Mobilization:** Mobilize at least 35% of active members to participate in phone banks, canvassing, or lobbying days for pro-public education initiatives.
 - **PAC Contributions:** Increase voluntary member contributions to the APEA political action fund by 15% annually.
- **Responsible Lead:** Government Relations Director, Legislative Committee & PAC Board

- **Proposed Execution Timeline:**

- *Legislative Cycles (Q1–Q2 Annually):* Direct lobbying, member lobby days, and budget advocacy.
- *Electoral Cycles (Q3–Q4 Even Years):* Candidate endorsement forums, voter registration, and GOTV field operations.

Priority 5: Social Justice

- **Goals:** Promote equity, fairness, and inclusion within schools and broader communities.

- **Proposed Key Measurements of Success:**

- **Coalition Partnerships:** Establish formal active working partnerships with at least 5 localwide civil rights, community, and social justice organizations.
- **Equity Training:** Complete diversity, equity, and restorative practice training for 100% of executive board members, local presidents, and field staff.
- **Policy Impact:** Successfully advocate for local-level policies or local district resolutions that directly target discipline disparities and resource inequities in high-poverty schools.

- **Responsible Lead:** Social Justice Committee Chair, Equity Task Force & Staff Liaisons

- **Proposed Execution Timeline:**

- *Phase 1 (Q1–Q4 2027):* Internal leadership equity training and coalition partner onboarding.
- *Phase 2 (2028):* Joint community-union policy campaigns targeting educational equity.

5. Integrated Implementation Roadmap

Strategic Focus Area PPTX	Operational Activities PPTX	Responsible Lead	Target Timeline
Communications	Media outreach & member communications	Communications Director	Ongoing (Q4 Reviews)
Organizing	Member engagement & field campaigns	Director of Organizing & Field Staff	Q1 2027 – Q4 2028
Leading the Profession	Training, workshops, & policy leadership	Professional Development Chair	Q1 2027 – Q2 2028
Political Engagement	Lobbying, PAC, & grassroots advocacy	Government Relations / PAC Chair	Q1 2027 – Q4 2028

Strategic Focus Area PPTX	Operational Activities PPTX	Responsible Lead	Target Timeline
Social Justice	Equity initiatives & community partnerships	Social Justice Committee Chair	Q1 2027 – Q4 2028

6. Communications & Rollout Plan

- **Internal Member Engagement:** Cascade strategic focus areas through local associations, building reps, and digital communications.
- **Public Outreach:** Utilize targeted messaging to position public school employees as key drivers of educational quality across Any Place.
- **Rollout Responsibility:** Communications Director in coordination with Local Affiliate Presidents (Target Completion: Q1 2027).

7. Review & Continuous Adaptation Schedule

- **Quarterly Progress Audits:** Executive Board and Committee Chairs evaluate performance metrics at the end of each fiscal quarter.
- **Annual Delegate Assembly Reporting:** Present progress reports on all five focus areas to member delegates during the annual localwide assembly (Q2 Annually).

**Strategic Plan Template Example:
Anywhere Public School Employees Association**

1. Organizational Foundation- Why are we here?

- **Mission Statement:** *To organize, support, and advocate for public school employees—ensuring high workplace standards, fair compensation, and strong public education for every student in our community.*
- **Vision Statement:** *A unified, fully engaged union of educators and support professionals that leads decisions impacting public education, secures top-tier contracts, and guarantees strong safety and workload protections in every school.*
- **Core Values:** *Worker Solidarity, Public Education Advocacy, Equity & Inclusion, Democratic Rank-and-File Engagement, Accountability.*

2. Strategic Position & Current Reality

Strategic Area	Key Strengths	Critical Gaps / Challenges
Internal Capacity	Dedicated building stewards; high membership pride among veteran staff.	Under-represented support personnel (paras, custodial, bus drivers); low new-hire orientation attendance.
External Environment	Strong community support for public schools; active labor coalition partners.	Legislative/budget constraints; administrative pushback on workload & class size limits.

- **Theory of Change:** To build real bargaining power, we must bridge the gap between instructional and support staff while transforming silent members into active workplace organizers.

3. Equity & Inclusion Lens

- **Constituency Analysis:** Examine member participation and leadership metrics across job classifications (certified vs. support staff), race, gender, language group, shift time, and district geography to identify structural barriers to participation.
- **Disparity Targets:** Ensure equity commitments explicitly address wage compression for lower-paid support staff, multilingual accessibility for union communications, and equitable steward coverage in historically under-resourced schools.

4. Strategic Priorities & Key Measurements of Success

Priority 1: Organize and Engage Rank-and-File Members

- **Objective:** Increase overall union density and build an active steward network across every school building and job classification.
- **Key Measurements of Success:**

- Density Rate: Reach 85%+ signed union membership across both certified educators and classified support staff district-wide.
- Steward Coverage: Maintain a ratio of 1 trained building steward per 15–20 workers in 100% of district schools.
- New Hire Conversion: Sign 90%+ of new district hires within 30 days of onboarding.
- Classified Representation: Increase support staff (paras, custodians, drivers) union participation by 25%.

Priority 2: Secure Robust Contracts & Workplace Protections

- **Objective:** Align contract campaigns with key member priorities including living wages, safety, manageable workloads, and healthcare security.
- **Key Measurements of Success:**
 - Survey & CAT Participation: Achieve 70%+ member response on pre-bargaining surveys and place active Contract Action Team (CAT) reps in 90% of school buildings.
 - Wage & Benefit Benchmarks: Win wage increases that equal or exceed regional CPI inflation, along with zero increase in member health insurance premium shares.
 - Workload & Safety Caps: Secure enforceable contractual caps on class sizes, guaranteed prep time, and mandatory 24-hour response timelines for workplace safety reports.
 - Contract Ratification: Achieve an 80%+ turnout rate for contract ratification votes.

Priority 3: Community & Political Mobilization for Public Education

- **Objective:** Position the union as the leading community voice for public education funding, safety, and school equity.
- **Key Measurements of Success:**
 - Coalition Growth: Establish formal, active partnerships with at least 4 local parent, student, or community advocacy organizations.
 - Turnout on Key Actions: Mobilize at least 30% of active membership for school board budget hearings, rallies, and endorsement forums.
 - Electoral Impact: Endorse and run rank-and-file field programs for school board candidates, aiming for an 80%+ candidate win rate.
 - PAC Contributions: Increase voluntary member contributions to the union's political action committee by 20%.

5. Strategic Alignment: "Start / Stop / Continue"

- Start: Joint bargaining/organizing committees that combine teachers and support staff; automated member onboarding at new-hire orientations; translation of all core union materials into primary non-English languages spoken in the district.
- Stop: Relying solely on email updates for critical communications; spending leadership capacity resolving individual grievances without building steward-led resolution skills.
- Continue: Annual steward leadership academy; joint labor-management safety committee meetings.

6. Implementation & Accountability Roadmap

Strategic Priority	Key Action Steps	Lead / Owner	Required Resources	Target Completion
1. Organizing	1. Audit school-by-school steward gaps 2. Launch building-level steward training	VP of Organizing / Field Reps	Steward toolkit materials, release time budget	Q2 2027
2. Bargaining	1. Conduct district-wide member contract survey 2. Establish Contract Action Teams (CAT) per site	Bargaining Chair / Officers	Survey tools, campaign signage/swag	Q4 2027
3. Community	1. Host quarterly Parent-Educator town halls 2. Coordinate school board candidate forums	Political Action & PAC Committee	Meeting space, community outreach collateral	Q2 2028

7. Communications & Rollout Plan

- Internal Leadership Rollout: Present the strategic plan to Executive Board members, field staff, and building stewards in dedicated briefing sessions.
- Rank-and-File Cascade: Host school-level site meetings, produce a 1-page summary flyer, and distribute physical/digital copies in all major languages spoken by membership.
- External Alignment: Share strategic vision summaries with community coalition partners, parent groups, and labor councils to align external advocacy efforts.

8. Review & Continuous Adaptation Schedule

- Quarterly Review: Executive Board and Committee Chairs evaluate KPI progress, field organizing reports, and budget allocations.
- Annual Membership Assembly: Present progress reports to rank-and-file delegates/members during the annual leadership conference and adjust goals based on district contract timelines.