A smiling man in a suit is pointing at a document. The document has the word "STRATEGY" written on it. The background is a solid blue color.

# Issue Strategy Guide

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

---

# I. ISSUE ANALYSIS

In this section, you will analyze where your issue currently stands and the ecosystem that already exists with that issue. This is the foundation upon which you will build your issue strategy.

**The issue I am working on is:**

---

**What I know about my issue:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
I know where decision makers stand on this issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is legislation on this issue at the state or local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partner organizations are working on this issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I/my chapter has the capacity to work on this issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is community support for this issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

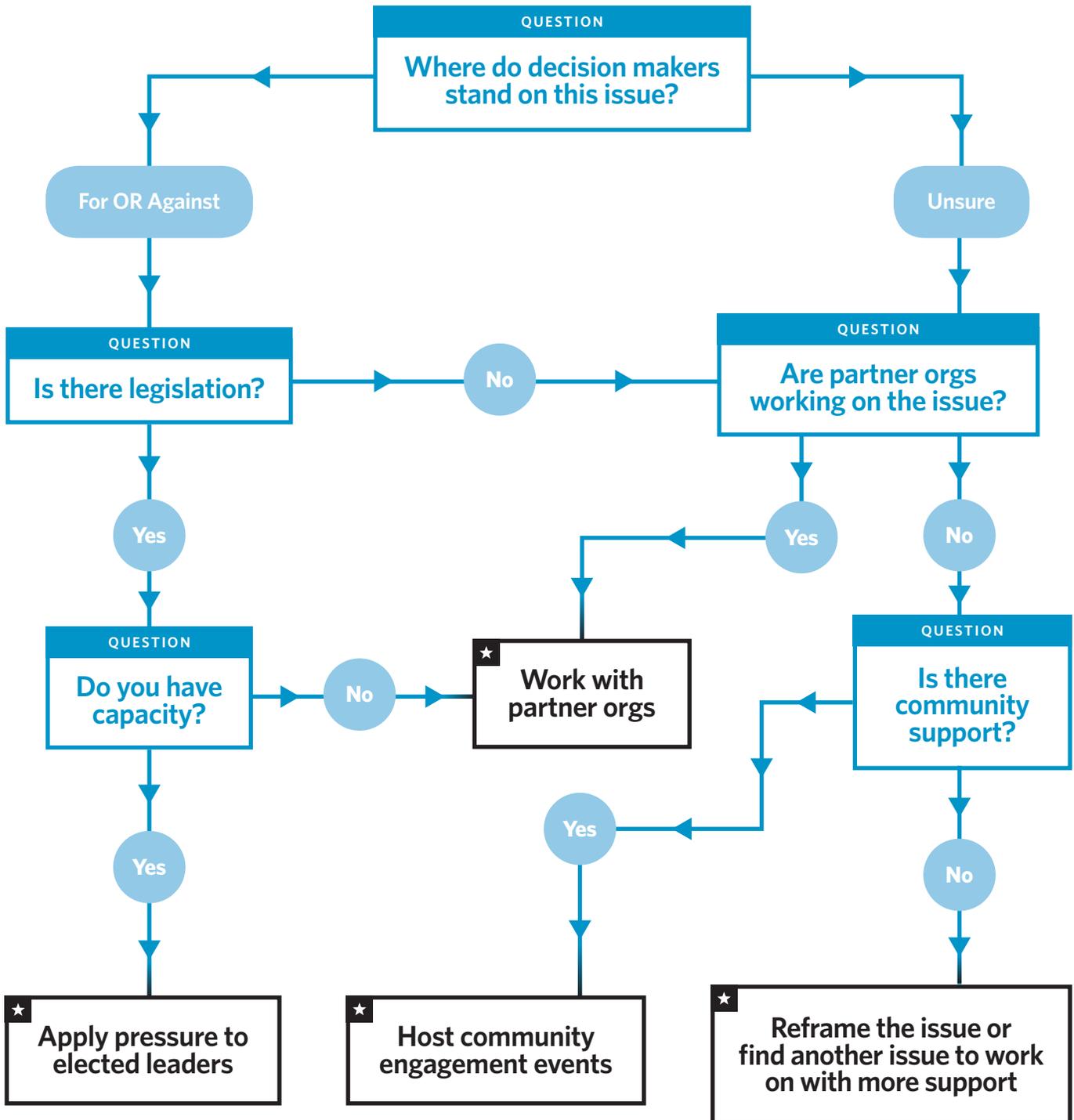
**Provide more details about what you currently know about your issue in your community. For example, where do decision makers stand? Which partner organizations are working on this issue?**

**Using your answer above and the decision tree on the following page, what action should you take on your issue?**

**This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.**



## ISSUE CAMPAIGN DECISION TREE



**Action**

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.



## ISSUE ECOSYSTEM: OVERVIEW

An issue ecosystem is the environment surrounding a decision maker. The goal of an issue ecosystem is to create the conditions for decision makers to take action on the issue you care about.

Think about a fruit tree: the tree needs a lot of different conditions to line up for it to grow and produce fruit. It needs to be planted in an area with the right amount of sunlight, water, and nutrients in the soil—and it needs all of these things to work in tandem with one another. Even if the fruit tree receives plenty of water, but it's planted in the wrong soil and receives little sunlight, it will not grow.



Just like a fruit tree will not grow without the right combination of sun, soil, and water, a decision maker will not take action on the problem you care about without the right combination of tactics, voices, and messages. Here's why:

- **A variety of tactics:** Using multiple tactics—press, digital, and in-person—ensures that your message is heard by the decision maker and shows him or her that people who care about your issue are everywhere. Tactics that are strategically spaced on a calendar keep the issue popping on the decision maker's radar.
- **A variety of voices:** Multiple groups working on an issue shows more support for that issue and each organization contributes its unique voice to the conversation on the issue.
- **A message that appeals to the target's motivations:** All decision makers are motivated by something. It is the job of you and your partner organizations to figure out what that motivation is and how to appeal to it.

Decision makers are surrounded by many issue ecosystems every day. If you and your partner organizations are not part of an issue ecosystem around a decision maker, the opposition is filling that space with their message or the issue is not on the target's radar.

Another important aspect of an issue ecosystem is your ability to successfully and effectively work with coalition partners. In order to establish meaningful partnerships, you should identify your own strengths, and then combine those strengths with the strengths of your partner organizations.

**This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.**



## ISSUE ECOSYSTEM: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### PROBLEM

**Issue does not have enough steam**

### POSSIBLE SOLUTION

#### **Choose your issue carefully and change takes time**

Organizing does not happen in a vacuum. While there are issues that you and others might be passionate about, there are others that might take priority at a given moment. This does not mean you stopped organizing around your cause. Instead, it means that you organize strategically, considering the broad political environment and mood.

The more you fight for your issue, and the longer you expose your message, the more likely you will win on the issue. But that win takes time, as the political mood environment and mood changes.

**No clear strategy or effective tactics**

#### **Tactics must validate the strategy**

It takes a variety of tactics to create an effective issue ecosystem. That is, we cannot count on just one method of communicating with a decision maker to make the change we want to see. We need a combination of tactics—in the press, online, and in person—and a staggered calendar to keep our issue on a decision maker's radar.

However, and equally important, your tactics and strategy must work together to reinforce the message. In other words, the tactics that you select must support your strategy, which achieves your goal.

**Motivations of Key Decision Makers**

#### **The motivations of key decision makers must be targeted**

Like all people, decision makers have certain motivations that influence the decisions they make. The best chance for a decision maker to take action on the problem we want to solve is for our issue advocacy work to appeal to his or her motivations. There are several possible motivations a decision maker could have—here are just a few: career and legacy, validation, and reputation.

**No collaboration or coordination**

#### **Stronger Together**

The goal of working with partner organizations is using each other's complementary strengths to make progress on an issue. Building relationships with partner organizations and coalitions enables you to work effectively within an issue ecosystem and make the most of the strengths you have.

**Tactics do not reinforce each other**

#### **Organizing = One tactic leads to the other**

If you organize a meeting or an event and there is not a clear follow-up activity, then you failed to organize. When organizing around an issue, make sure to plan tactics that help you build towards the next action.

**This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.**



## OFFLINE AND ONLINE ORGANIZING TOOLS

TOOL	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Community Engagement Events</b>	<b>Offline</b>	<p>In order to achieve our goals of winning on the issues and growing chapter membership, we plan to provide a menu of civic engagement programs and tools that educate people on the issues and gives them a number of ways to take meaningful action. Events should tie into the work you're doing with your chapter on your issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Service Project:</b> Service projects should fulfill an actual need in your community and are a great way to introduce potential new volunteers to the work you do.</li> <li>• <b>Panel Discussion/Issue Forum:</b> Discussions and forums educate people about and issue and create moments of collaboration with partner organizations.</li> <li>• <b>Social Impact Documentary Film Screening:</b> Film screenings provide an entry point for potential new volunteers and educate on an issue you work on while providing compelling, new content for long-time supporters</li> </ul>
<b>Partner Organizations</b>	<b>Offline</b>	<p>To win on the issues, we cannot go it alone. Allied partner organizations can provide vital intel on pending legislation, where elected leaders stand on the issue, and can link you to a whole network working on an issue you care about. Best practices for working with partner organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn what common goals you share</li> <li>• Find out what tactics or events you can collaborate on</li> <li>• Share how you define success for this issue campaign</li> <li>• Find out in what areas you can support one another</li> <li>• Share what strengths each of you bring</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media and Email</b>	<b>Online</b>	<p>We often think of digital organizing and offline organizing as speaking different languages. The reality is that they are one language- organizing. Like all organizing tools, each platform has specific strengths and uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social media:</b> tells the story of the work you do from start to finish and contributes to the larger conversation that surrounds the issues we work on. Think of social media as a recruitment tool because it widens your pool of possible supporters by making them interested in what you're doing.</li> <li>• <b>Email:</b> Strengthens your network of supporters by through regular communication and conversation. Through email, you have the opportunity to build your case for your work and make low-bar asks.</li> </ul>
<b>Connect</b>	<b>Online</b>	<p>Think of Connect as your virtual field office- it is where you welcome volunteers to your work, nurture their development, inform them about what's going on, and provide meaningful action for them to take.</p>

**This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.**

