

# House MEETING

HANDBOOK



Harnessing the power of **PERSONAL NETWORKS**  
and **STORYTELLING** to build leadership  
and support for your campaign



**The goal of this handbook is to help you build leadership, power, and the commitment to win your campaign with the help of house meetings.**

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In all likelihood, you received this from an organizer at your 1-on-1 meeting. You are not alone. We hope that with this guide in your hands, the idea of hosting a house meeting feels exciting, motivating, and empowering.

We have divided this handbook up into three sections. The first section gives a background to house meetings: We look at what a house meeting is, why one might choose this tactic, and how they use certain frameworks, such as Public Narrative.

The second section details the *Action Cycle*: a process of planning, preparing, and acting towards the completion of a successful house meeting. Each step will also be accompanied by a follow-up.

The third and final section is a resource library. We have tried to cover as many resources as possible to make your house meeting and campaign a success.

House meetings are more than just gatherings. They're places where communities express their commitments to shared values and strategy. This guide will help you plan, prepare, and facilitate house meetings so that more people in your community commit to organizing for the world you believe in.

**Good luck!**

# Credits

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The content of this handbook was developed by LCN Europe, under the authorship of Masha Burina and Benedict Hugosson, with inputs from Mais Irqsusi, Marina Pavlic, Jens Kristian Rasmussen, and Zoe Langer.

The guide draws heavily from Marshall Ganz's organizing framework, as well as a diverse number of resources found in the LCN Resource Center. In particular, we have drawn heavily on materials from campaigns and organizations such as the California Advocates United to Save Education, the 2008 Obama campaign and the New Organizing Institute.

We would like to thank our designer Zoe Langer. Wow!

Thank you also Joy Cushman, Marshall Ganz and Nisreen Haj Ahmad for your valuable feedback.

## Images

Most photos from Unsplash and Pexels:

<https://www.unsplash.com> & <https://www.pexels.com>

Page 14 - From the Bob Fitch Photography Archive, *Movements for Change*:

<https://exhibits.stanford.edu/fitch>

Pages 38 & 45 - Courtesy of Chabujo (Chabudai Gaeshi Jyoshi Action):

<https://chabujo.com/en>

Page 42 - Courtesy of Ahel: <https://ahel.org/en>

## WHAT IS LCN?

**We're a global community of organizers, educators, and researchers**

We develop and support new civic leadership that organizes communities to build power and create change.

<https://leadingchangenetwork.org/>

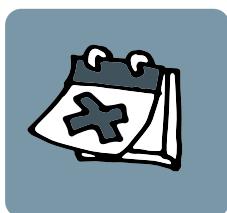


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# Foreword

## Organizers ask three questions: Who are my people? What is the change they need? How can they build power to accomplish that change?

To answer those three questions requires identifying and developing leadership, building a constituency (or community) with that leadership, and building power from the resources of that constituency—all united by a shared purpose. House meetings do just that.

They can be built from existing communities like neighborhood groups, schools, churches, unions, etc. Sometimes they are formed from extended personal networks, as they were in the United Farm Workers movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The house meetings could be held out of sight of the large farming corporations who would have crushed the movement in its early days.

In 2008, when the establishment was in full support of Hillary Clinton, it was with house meetings that organizers built the “army” of 15,000 volunteers in South Carolina (most of whom were politically active for the first time), which helped Barack Obama win the election.

House meetings have become one of the most effective ways to win campaigns and build organizational power, not only in the US—but in Jordan, Serbia, Mexico, Japan, and elsewhere.

Lastly, house meetings don’t have to be held in a “house” (although welcoming others into one’s home does wonders for building trust). They can be held in parks, coffee shops, school rooms, and now, online: where we can still interface with each other and build relationships—the biggest source of our power.

Marshall Ganz, December 2020

**WHAT**  
are house  
meetings?

A dense crowd of people, mostly women, wearing white headscarves, gathered together. They are looking towards the right side of the frame, suggesting they are listening to a speaker or participating in a meeting. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the crowd.

House meetings are an  
organizing method that

**MOTIVATES,  
ACTIVATES,  
& DEVELOPS  
LEADERSHIP**

# House meetings, in a nutshell

House meetings utilize the power of personal networks and public narrative to build relationships, energize supporters, and persuade those who might be interested in becoming more engaged to step up and take action.

## ELEMENTS of a house meeting

### People

**The host** is responsible for the venue, recruitment and supporting meeting facilitation.

**The organizer** is responsible for the structure of the event and facilitation of discussions.

**The participants** are recruited from the host's own networks, such as local communities, neighbors, colleagues, friends etc.



### Place

House meetings can take place almost anywhere, for, example a workplace, an assembly house, at someone's home (or other informal spaces) or online.

### Narrative

You can use narrative in house meetings to generate discussions regarding the problems experienced by the group, identify shared sources of hope within the community, or facilitate discussions regarding the role the group can play in solving those problems.



# Valuable CONVERSATION

**...rather than abstract politics**

House meetings are different because we start a conversation about values, rousing feelings such as anger and hope about everyday life and society, through for example, the question: "Why are you here today?"

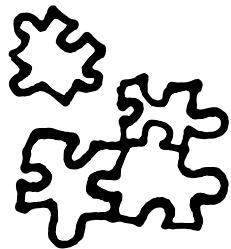


**The power of house meetings in South Carolina and the Obama Campaign**

► **WATCH VIDEO**

In the above video, we see a house meeting in action. As you watch, try to imagine how this tactic might look in your context.

- Who will you invite?
- Where will you hold it?
- What will be the outcome of your meeting for your community?



# Part of a larger **STRATEGY**

**House meetings are useful as a tactic, but not as one-offs.** We don't have a house meeting just to have a house meeting.

**Strategy without tactics is just a bunch of ideas.  
Tactics without strategy wastes resources.**

A tactic only becomes a tactic when it is: 1) a theory of how we use our resources to get what we want and; 2) strives towards a strategic outcome. To that end, a house meeting is only a tactic when it is nested within a timeline to develop leadership, to build our power, and to achieve particular outcomes to which we are committed.



**Case Study: The ISAIAH  
Trash Referendum**

**READ CASE STUDY**

Some questions to ask yourself about the above case study:

- How did relational organizing help ISAIAH build power to win other changes?
- How did ISAIAH use house meetings to develop leadership?
- How can a house meeting campaign, like ISAIAH's, be part of a relational organizing strategy to cultivate community commitment to reach a desired outcome?

WHY  
have house  
meetings?



# 1 Identify, Recruit, & Develop LEADERSHIP

---

**Anyone that is capable of turning out 20 people to a single meeting is capable of organizing other volunteers.**

Through house meetings, we generate and build leadership when we encourage new leaders to:

- **Step forward, develop the skills and knowledge needed to host a house meeting, and challenge them to take a larger role in a campaign.**
- **Engage their personal networks to create new communities, or expand existing ones, and generate shared commitment, through their own actions.**
- **Test their relational skills in a real-life situation, where they have to sink or swim based on their relational capacity, and to continually reflect and learn from these new experiences.**

# 2 BUILD A BASE

## to reach a strategic goal

---

**The house meeting campaign should be situated within a broader strategic goal.**

During a house meeting campaign, we build power, test the credibility of our strategies and theories of change, and generate the commitments and resources needed to win. Among other things, a house meeting campaign is a tactic that allows us to:

- **Organize a new constituency** into a democratic decision making process, so as to set a common agenda, prioritize and decide on organizational issues.
- **Test new leaders** to launch an existing campaign, where they can be recruited into the current campaign structure and strategy.
- **Hit the reset button** in an organization or a campaign when it's time to pause, check-in and debrief, and broaden the base before hitting go again.



# 3 Activate a community through shared **COMMITMENT**

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**The currency of organizing is commitment, relational commitment.** In order to grow our resources, and develop the capacity to win, we need to identify and develop leaders who either have or can build committed followings.

House meetings are effective in building commitment when they:

- **Provide a clear overview of our campaigns**, the steps that are needed to build the capacity to win, and challenge participants to take a specific action now.
- **Show participants that they are not alone** in both their struggles and the fight. When we do this, we are able to engage a host's personal network, bringing in new people we might not otherwise find, energize these people and generate shared commitment.
- **Focus on generating commitment** between the host and their following, towards the goals of the campaign, rather than between the organiser and the host's following towards the ends of the organizer.



**HOW**  
do **house**  
**meetings**  
***work?***



House meetings move people  
into action by connecting

**THE HEART,  
THE HEAD,  
& THE HANDS**

## HOW do house meetings work?

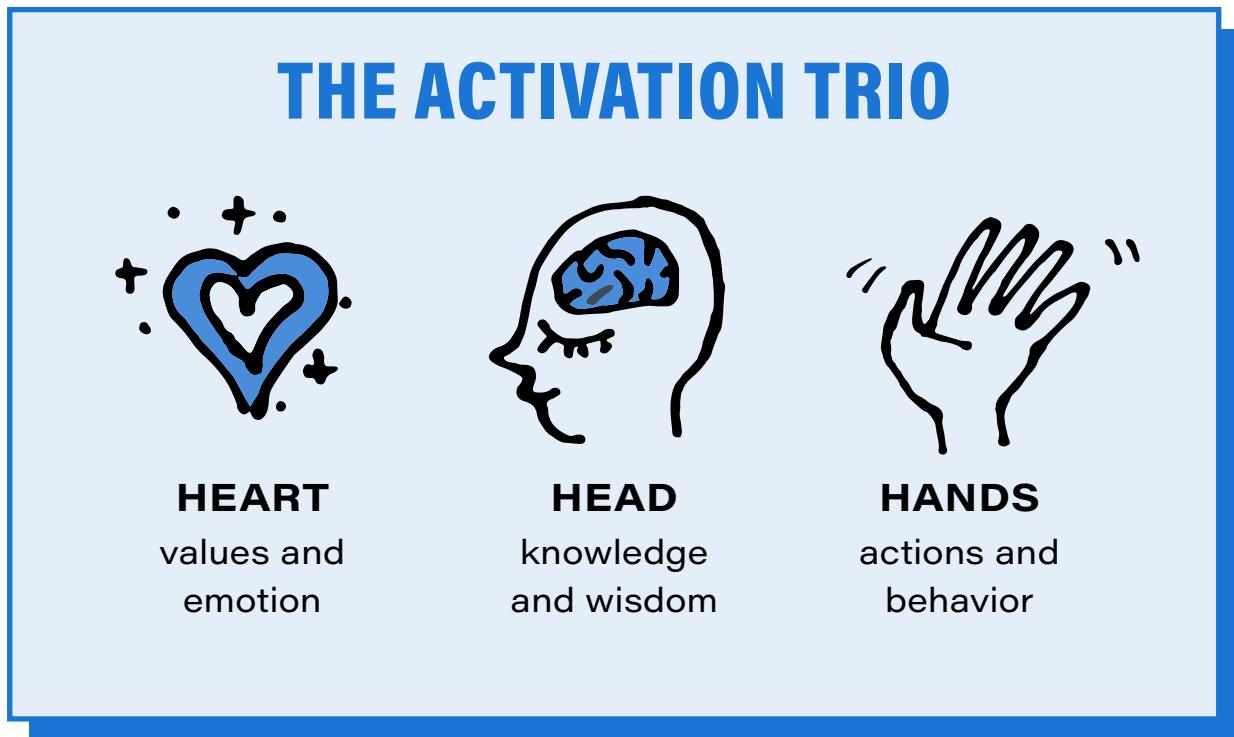
House meetings are successful when they involve the heart, the head, and the hands—three key ingredients of activation. The *Public Narrative* structure, strategic Asks, and *Scalable Actions* all help bring about the change we want.

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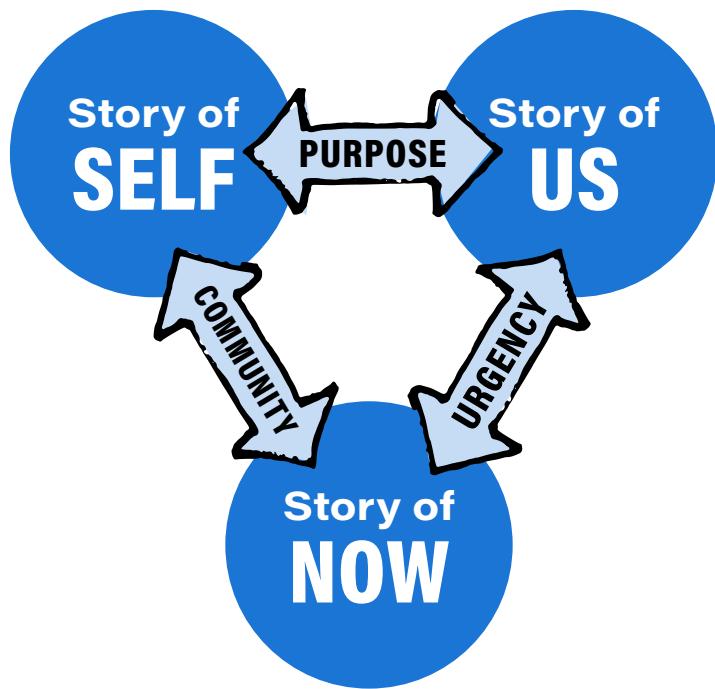
### 1. The Heart, Head and Hands

A large part of the meeting will be devoted to the heart, using narrative to transform the participants from a group of individuals to an organized constituency with shared values and purpose.

Once shared values are established, the organizer will use the *Story of Now* (strategy and action) to provide a logic for collective action.



## 2. Public Narrative

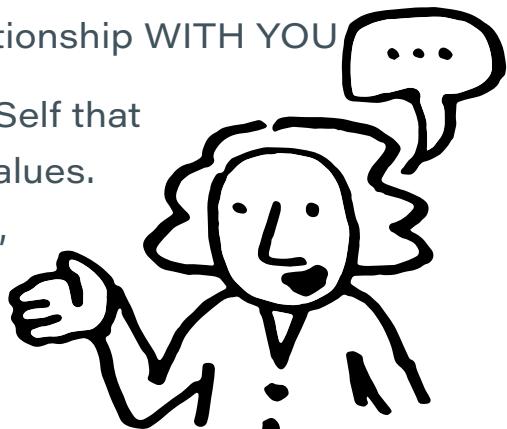


The structure of house meeting agendas move through the Story of Self, to Us, to Now. This is how we turn our community of disparate members into a constituency with shared values and a commitment to action.

Each part is facilitated through a structured group discussion and coalesces around a story of challenges, choices, and outcomes threaded by shared values. See [Sample Agenda](#) (page 61-62) for more details.

### **Story of Self** - Invite others to be in relationship WITH YOU

- Host and organizer each tell a Story of Self that relates to community and campaign's values.
- In smaller groups of two via "pair share," participants share the reasons why they have come to the meeting.



## **Story of us** - Invite others to be in relationship with EACH OTHER

By asking participants to share what they learned about each other, the organizer facilitates a discussion and develops a Story of Us amongst the participants. The organizer:

- Explores the group's: motivations (why people care), challenge (the problem and why it hasn't been solved), hopes (examples/stories of when participants took action rooted in their values).
- Tells a *Story of Us* to remind the participants of the people and their resources (e.g. time, skills, networks, etc.) that are in the room and what they are capable of if they act together.



## **Story of now** - Invite others to take COLLECTIVE ACTION

Now that the heart has been engaged and we have a sense of our individual motivations and shared purpose, the organizer's role is to provide a logical pathway for change (strategy) that enables the agency of participants by offering them a choice to make (through actions) that will result in a clear outcome. The organizer:



- Tells a *Story of Now* that imagines the possibilities: if we took collective action (dream scenario) vs. if we fail to act (nightmare scenario). In doing so they create urgency.
- Describes a clear strategy to solve the problem.
- Asks participants to take relevant actions in support of that strategy.

### 3. The Asks

#### Three asks “in your pocket”

When we engage others in collective action, we should offer different ways participants can help us reach our strategic goal. This isn't a smorgasbord of trivialities, but direct ways to contribute to change. Starting with the action that requires the most leadership responsibility, we should have roughly “three asks in our pocket” that ask participants to:

1. **Lead** - host their own house meeting
2. **Act** - volunteer for another strategic action
3. **Support** - a sign of solidarity with the campaign or organization

We should focus on the level one asks first (lead), before moving onto subsequent asks (act and support).



#### ASKS “IN YOUR POCKET” EXAMPLES

##### Lead

Host a house meeting of their own

##### Act

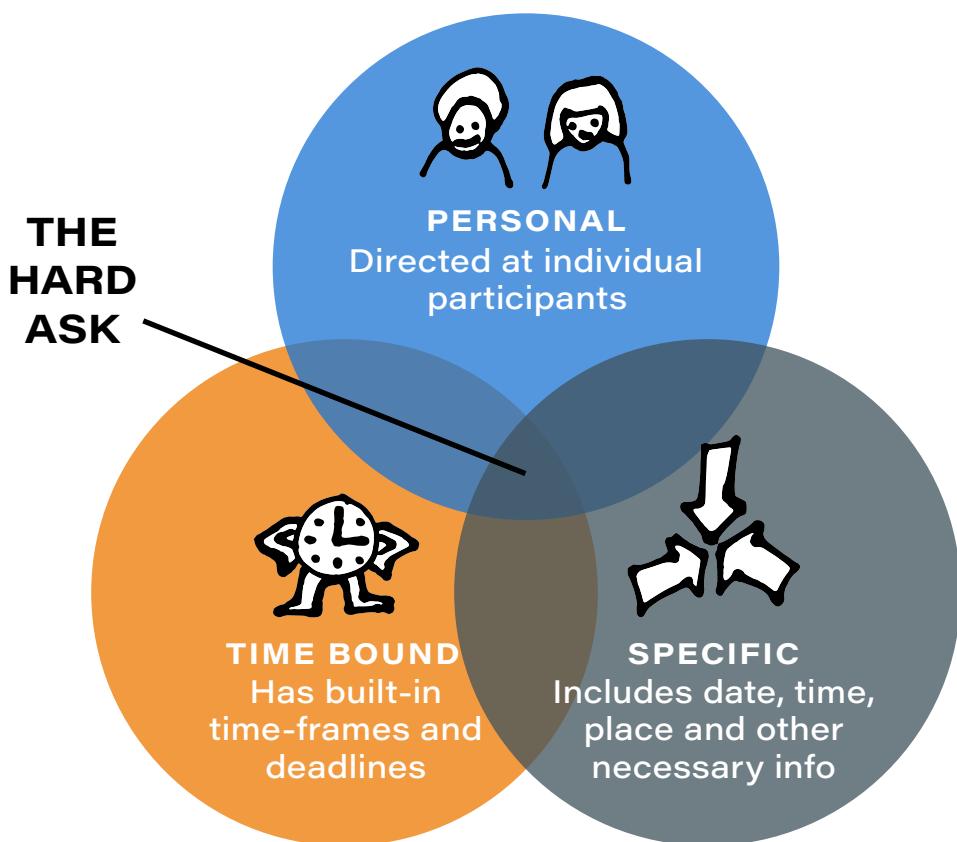
Phone bank event  
Signature gathering action  
Organizational meeting

##### Support

Become a member  
Sign a petition  
Sign a pledge card

## The Hard Ask

The *Hard Ask* is a reminder to be as clear as possible when asking others to join us in collective action. The organizer should end their Story of Now with a Hard Ask that is actionable right away.



### HARD ASK EXAMPLE

"(Name), can we count on you to hold a house meeting like this one, in your home, with 10 of your friends and family, **within the next two weeks?**"

**(PERSONAL, SPECIFIC, TIME BOUND)**

Hard Asks are personal and should be directed to a specific individual, without waiting for someone to volunteer. Work your way around the room, asking everyone individually if they can join you in collective action.

Start by addressing the person in the room who you think is the most likely to host a house meeting, based on energy and your interactions with that person during the house meeting. Ask that person to commit to hosting a house meeting within a set time-frame. Also, book in a one-on-one meeting with that person within the next two days (preferably the next day).

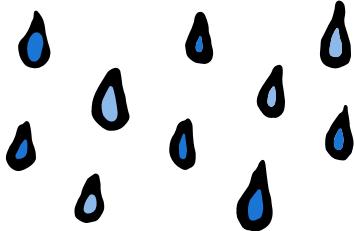
All three “asks in your pocket” should be formulated as a Hard Ask.

### TIP

Regular and scheduled actions, such as phone banks, canvasses and other outreach events, allow you to always have a strategic “ask in your pocket”. You don’t have to overwhelm people with multiple asks, just the next available action in your local area.

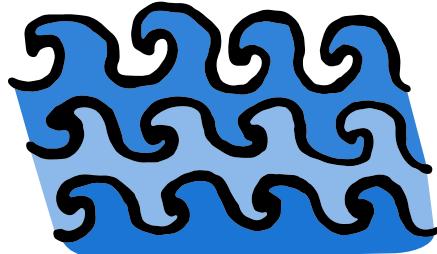
## 4. Scalable Actions

House meetings reach scale through many small, **scalable actions**, rather than actions-at-scale.



### Scalable actions

Small actions can be repeated multiple times to get to scale i.e. door-to-door canvassing.



### Actions-at-scale

Big actions reach scale through sheer numbers i.e. number of people at a strike.

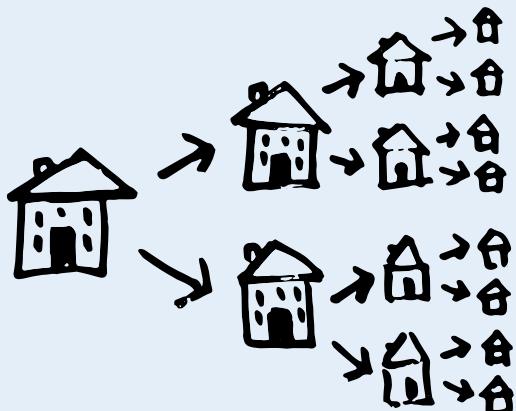
## HOW IT WORKS

**We are focused on getting as many as people possible to plan and act on their own house meetings, rather than creating one big house meeting for everyone.**

We do this by recruiting new hosts...

- from previous house meetings
- by encouraging participants to step up and take a leadership role via a hard ask at our house meetings.
- from 1-on-1 meetings

This grows the number of house meetings and our communities while accessing deeper and more personal networks and engaging new parts of our communities.



Don't agonize,

**ORGANIZE!**



## **“Don’t agonize, organize!”** - Florynce Kennedy

**Do you have some fears about hosting or organizing a house meeting? If so, you’re not alone.**

Ask yourself, what's really holding you back? How can that be overcome? Remind yourself why you are called to organize and build community. There's probably something in your gut telling you that things aren't right. And you know there are others who think things need to change too.

Uncertainty is part of the process. But we'll let you in on a secret: there's no such thing as a perfect house meeting! It's all about getting started and learning as you go.

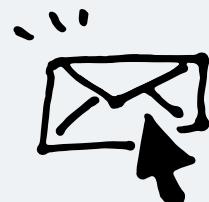
### **DROP US A LINE**

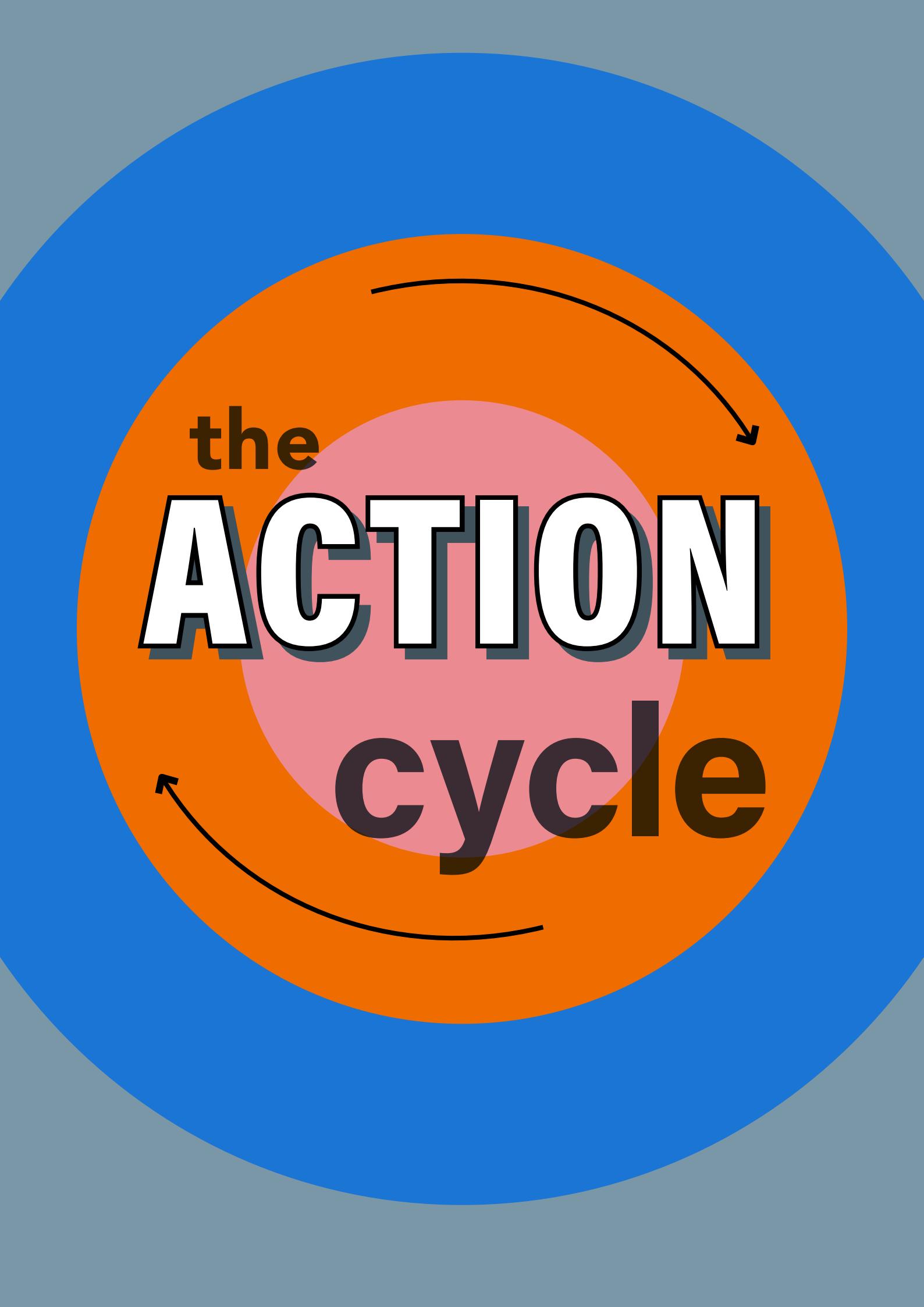
If you have any hesitations, we are here for you:

[info@leadingchangenetwork.org](mailto:info@leadingchangenetwork.org)

If you're based in Europe:

[europe@leadingchangenetwork.org](mailto:europe@leadingchangenetwork.org)



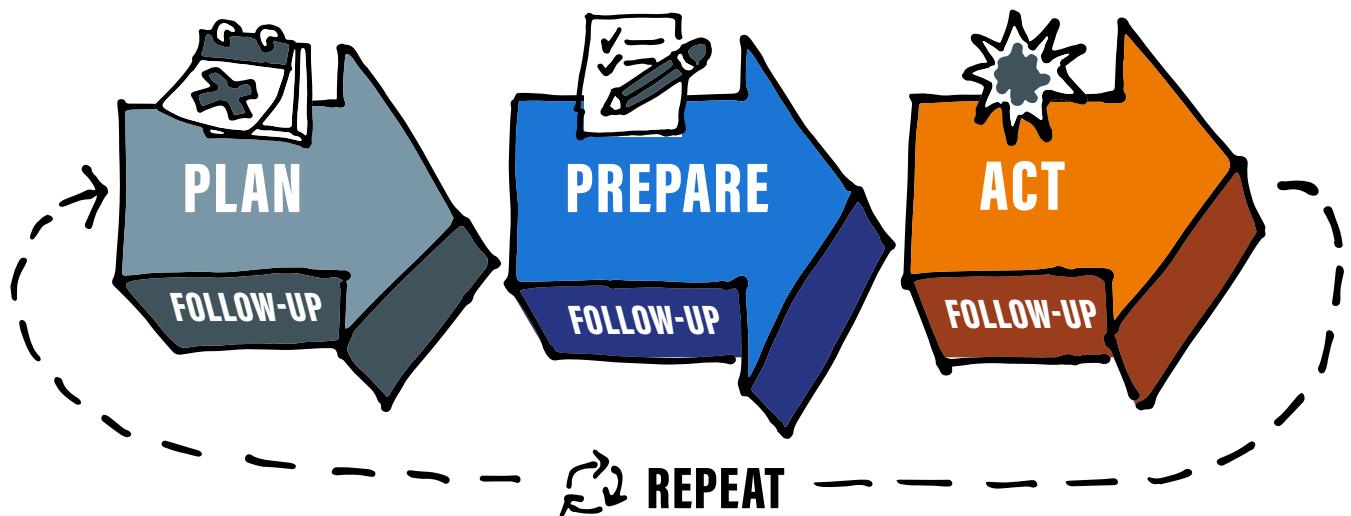


# the ACTION cycle

# The Action Cycle

The *Action Cycle* is a process that can help carry out many different types of strategies—house meetings being one of them.

Each step of the Action Cycle builds on the previous, with following-up being present throughout the whole process. The action cycle is typically repeated multiple times during a campaign.



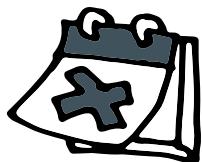
## The action cycle, in short

**Plan:** A more cognitive step which details how we will act later.

**Prepare:** In this step we focus more on sharpening our skills and moving resources into place.

**Act:** Putting the planning and preparation into action.

**Follow-up:** A continuous activity which involves reflection, observation, and assessment to help us accomplish our goals.



## The Action Cycle **PLAN**

### 1. Date, Time, & Place

The first step should be to decide when and where your house meeting will take place. This will become the foundation of your future planning decisions.

#### **Date**

Pick a date in advance, allowing for at least two weeks between when you first contact participants and the date of the actual house meeting. Use this date and build outwards: add dates for recruitment calls, reminders, coordination meetings between the host and the organizer, follow-up etc.

## Time

Pick a time when most people are able to participate, either after work, lunch breaks or on the weekend. Avoid public holidays or vacation times when most people will be away or find it difficult to attend. Picking a time is more of an art than a science, and might require a better understanding of those that you want to recruit i.e. if you are running a house meeting for nurses, you might want to look at picking a time around shifts rather than a 9-5 time-frame.

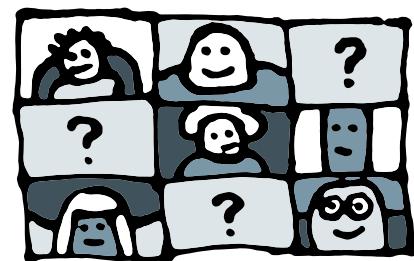


## Place

This can be both on- and offline. It is usually an informal setting where the participants can feel at ease and are able to talk freely about their challenges, hopes, and visions for the future and society. Usually in the home of the host but could also be in trade halls, community centers, workplaces, churches, online meeting rooms etc.

## 2. Recruitment

Much of the planning phase should be focused on recruitment—because people are the most important element of house meetings, of course! (and effective recruitment takes time).



**Set a recruitment goal** for how many people you want to attend your house meeting. See “The Law Of Halves” (on page 31).

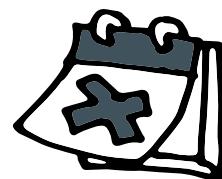
We recommend starting with a list of 50 people.

**Brainstorm a list of potential participants.** Here the organizer's role is to help the host reflect on their personal networks and find participants from all parts of the host's life. Consider everyone in your life including "people like me" or your strong ties. Then list out all of the "people not like me" or your weak ties. People who you interact with less frequently, your weak ties, can enrich your gathering with new information and recruitment opportunities. To brainstorm and keep track of calls, reminders, confirmations, and attendance, use the [Recruitment List](#) (page 57).



### **Set dates and make time for initial outreach and reminder calls.**

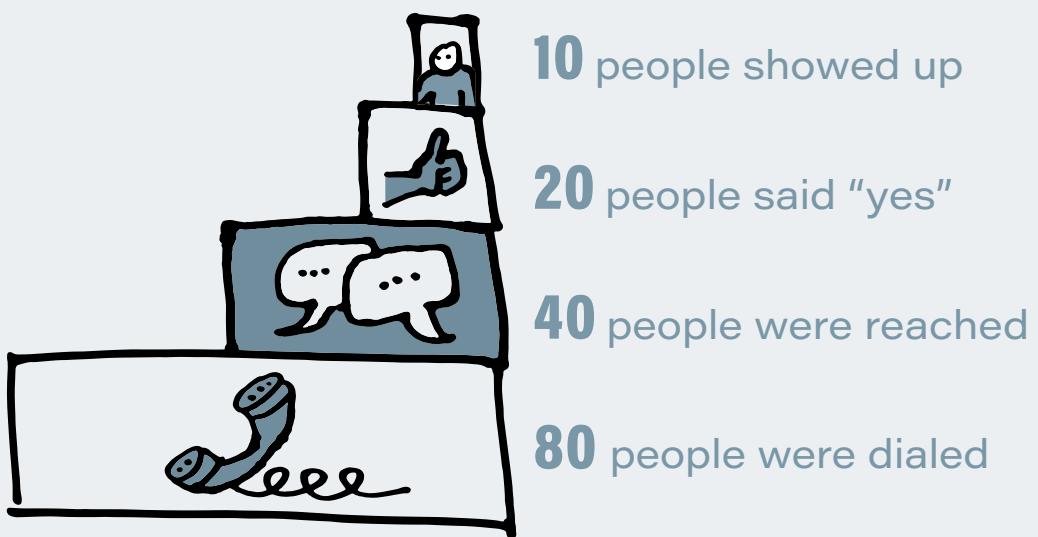
Choosing the medium is also an art depending on what you think is the best way to contact people: emails, calls, social media direct messages, or text messages, etc.



**\*Tip:** Aside from in-person communication, phone or video calls secure highest returns in commitments. Follow-up on any commitments that might be made, such as reminders or sending more information.

## THE LAW OF HALVES

The law of a halves is a rule of thumb for setting outreach goals. It's helpful if you're not yet familiar with your constituency and hosts or organizers. It estimates that your number of outputs will roughly be half of the number of inputs, as in the example below.



In reality, your outputs will depend on variables such as:

- the strength of relationships (weak or strong ties)
- ability to motivate (through aspects of narrative like urgency)
- methods of outreach, etc.

In the absence of previous data on rates of output amongst your constituency, use the Law of Halves to set initial goals.

### 3. Key Moments & Sequences

It is important that we plan step by step, how the house meeting will unfold.

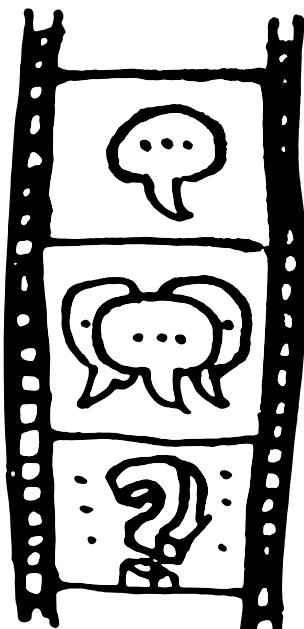
#### Agenda

Start with a Sample Agenda (pg. 61-62) as your base. From there, you will be able to change specific parts according to your needs or the needs of the participants. This should be via a discussion between the host and the organizer.



#### Key Moments

There are a number of key moments and sequences in a house meeting. These in particular require extra attention:



**Your story** a.k.a. "Story of Self" from the host and the organizer (worksheet on page 66)

**Group discussion** a.k.a. the "Story of Us" (page 68)

**Presentations and materials**

**The "Hard Ask"**

When planning for these moments, it is a good idea to go into more detail regarding the purpose of these moments, tangible outcomes (your goals), and any steps that might be needed to get to your goals.

## Your Story

What are you going to say? How long do you think it will take? If you're not sure about the details yet, don't worry—it's covered in the next section, "Prepare"). You just want to get the general idea here.



How will you transition from your story to the rest of the meeting? This can often be a point at which many emotions are present in the room. You can come back to this later when you have clearer idea about what you want to say.

## Group Discussion

Write up questions that will help you get to know the participants. Decide how you will capture the discussion and come to a consensus at the end of the group discussion. Use the [Story of Us Worksheet](#) to help you on page 68.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Motivation	Challenges	Hope
Why did the participants decide to come to the house meeting?  What issues are most pressing?	What problems do the participants experience and how do these impact their lives?  What do the participants see as their greatest challenges within their community?	What are the participants' visions of the future?  What are the sources of hope within the community (both moral and tangible)?

## Presentations and materials

If you have any presentations about a current campaign, write down some of the key points that are important to convey in the presentation.



## The Hard Ask

Be clear on what you are asking others to commit to. Write these down.

- Write up a few Hard Asks that might be appropriate for the group.
- Write up a method for how you will create a Hard Ask on the spot. Base this on the content of group discussions, paying particular focus to sources of hope and the resources of the group.
- Plan for how you will capture commitments relating to the hard ask so that they're visible to all participants.



## 4. Mobilization & Coordination



**Mobilization** is the activation of resources and commitments.  
*(The match lighting)*

**Coordination** is leadership working together to enable the mobilization of resources and commitments.

*(The hands working together to strike the match at just the right angle)*

# PLANNING GUIDELINES

## Mobilization

Write a list of all necessary resources. Go through the recruitment list and the agenda. At each point, write up a list of resources that will be needed and where these will come from. Write up a list of the commitments needed and how they can be activated.

## Coordination

Create a description of roles and responsibilities for both the organizer and the host. Where there is overlap, discuss how you will work together to get the results you want.

## Key Resources

### House Meeting Planning Document

For the organizer and host to plan for a coming house meeting. It contains key steps and blank spaces to help the host develop an outline.

 View

### Recruitment List

Use this to brainstorm, keep track of participants, reminder calls, commitments, attendance and contact info. Space for 50 names maximum.

 View

### Sample Agenda

Edit this document to suit your needs.

 View

### House Meeting Campaign Timeline

Refer to this example when creating your own house meeting campaign.

 View

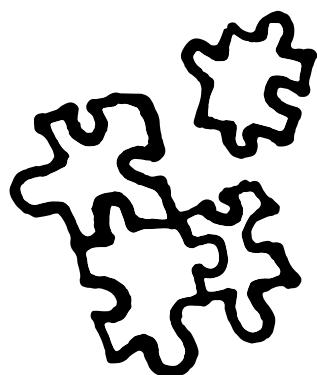


## the action cycle **PREPARE**

### 1. Understand

#### **Context of current campaign**

How will this house meeting fit into the current campaign and goals of the organization? This should be a priority for the host, as the organizer should already have this knowledge. Review any campaign documentation. The host should talk to the organizer if there are still questions that are unanswered or unclear.



## Participants' points of view

What unique perspective might each participant bring? Considering this should be a priority for both the organizer and the host. Work through the recruitment list and make notes on the participants based on expected motivations, challenges and hopes. Also, include the asks that might be appropriate for particular participants.

## 2. Practice

Make sure you practice in front of and with others. It can even be friends and family not involved in the house meeting. They'll help you see things that are impossible to know by practicing alone.

### Sharpen your storytelling

Stick to the time-frames and try to get to the point where you can tell your story without aids or reading from paper.



Chabujo, a grassroots feminist organization based in Tokyo, Japan

As the organizer, you should practice your [Story Of Self](#) and creating a [Story Of Us](#) and a [Story Of Now](#). As an organizer, you will be required to develop and adapt stories of us and now at the house meeting whilst on the fly.

As a host, you should practice your Story of Self. (Story worksheets begin on page 66)

## Facilitation fine-tuning

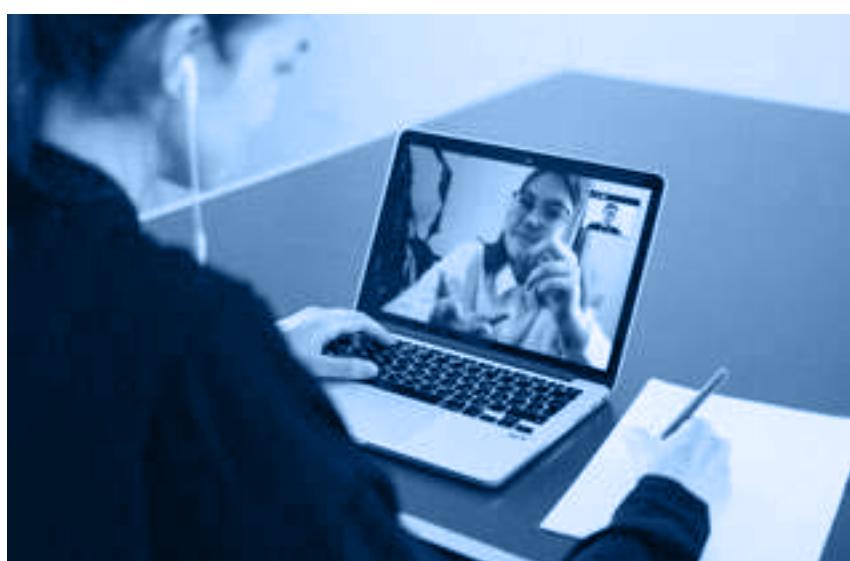
As an organizer, you should practice your group facilitation skills. The main skills are:

- **Asking questions** - Practice asking both open and closed questions. Practice asking more general probing questions and funnelling questions that helps the group drill down to more specific understanding of the topic.
- **Narrative coaching** - Practice coaching others in their storytelling. This will help you ask relevant questions when getting to the source of motivations, challenges and hope.



## 3. Coordinate

Better coordination between the organizer and host will improve the flow of the house meeting.



## How to improve COORDINATION

- **Be clear about the goals** of the house meeting, review these goals and have a discussion around those that are the most important.
- **Discuss roles.** Start with a general discussion and then together work your way through the time-line discussing what each will do and when.
- **Create a framework for giving feedback, check-ins and reflecting.** This might be anything from set questions at the end of planning meetings, regular check-ins or a quick message every now and again.
- **Review how you will communicate** and what each person needs for better communication, both to be communicated with and to be communicated to.
- **Be honest with each other** about how far you have come, deadlines that are missed and fears you might have.

# Key Resources

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## Recruitment List

 View

A list of the participants who have accepted your invitation and any notes from recruitment calls. This will be specific for your house meeting.

---

## Recruitment Script

 View

A framework for writing recruitment scripts, plus a number of sample scripts for inspiration.

---

## Story Of Self Worksheet

 View

A worksheet to help you develop your *Story of Self*.

---

## Story Of Us Worksheet

 View

A worksheet to help you develop your *Story of Us*.

---

## Story Of Now Worksheet

 View

A worksheet to help you develop your *Story of Now*.



Women Now coached by Ahel  
"Against Early Marriage" campaign



## 1. Final Preparation

Before any house meeting, it's important to get everything you need ready-to-go. That means mobilizing **resources** and **commitments**—which gives us the ability to act.

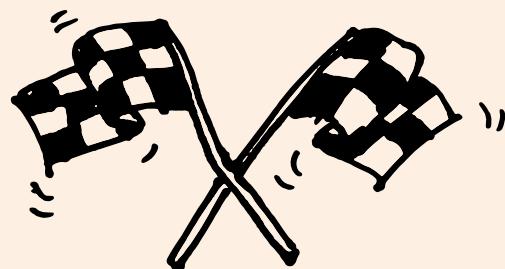
**Resources** are assets (e.g. people, energy, knowledge, relationships, and money) that can be readily used to achieve the change you want. Sometimes resources cannot be consumed in their original form and must be transformed, for example: collecting phone numbers of supporters which are turned into an outreach list and used for a phone-banking action at a later date.

Tangible resources include money, materials, equipment, and buildings. Intangible resources include things like knowledge, creativity, and goodwill.



## How to mobilize **RESOURCES**

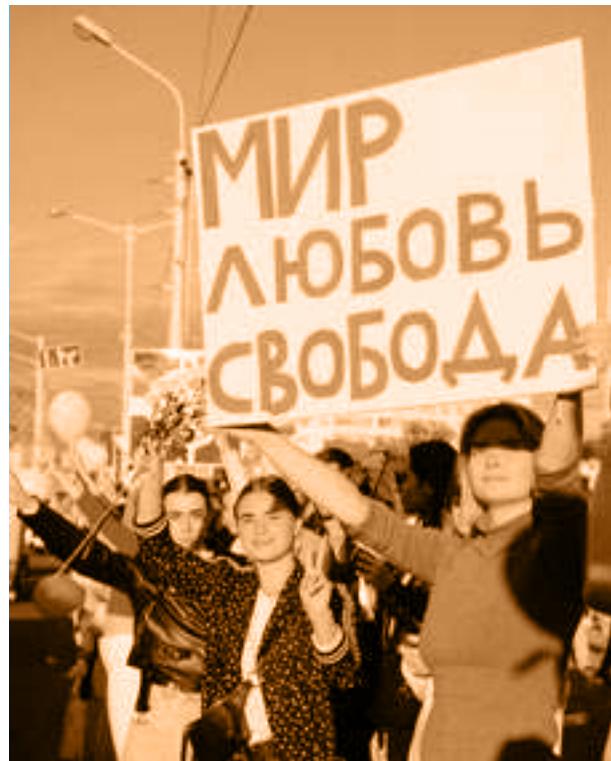
- **Think ahead** - Understand what resources are needed and when. Write this down next to agenda items.
- **Ready to go** - Move resources into position early so that they can be easily mobilized when needed i.e. materials are at the venue early, presentations have been sent over the night before, and any refreshments have been purchased the day before.
- **Accessible** - If resources need to be prepared in a special way for easy access, do this before the house meeting starts, i.e. boxes of materials placed under tables for easy access when needed, sign-up sheets printed out and placed in a spot where both hosts and organizers have easy access, etc.



Note: Resources can also be stored for mobilization at a later date.

**Commitments** are promises or agreements to do something. Commitments help us mobilize resources in the hope of reaching goals and generating outcomes.

People who are committed to an organization or campaign truly believe that it is important, they show up, follow through, and stick with it. A culture of commitment is something that can be fostered within an organization or campaign.



## How to mobilize **COMMITMENTS**

- **Remind people** about their commitments and why their commitments are important.
- **Help people act** on commitment by showing them the steps they need to take to realize their commitments.
- **Help people understand** how their commitment contributes to the success of the house meeting and the broader goals of the organization.

Note: Commitments can also be stored for mobilization at a later date.



## 2. During The Meeting

Once we have started our house meeting, it is important that we both maintain momentum and take advantage of opportunities that arise during the house meeting.

### Maintain momentum

- Act in accordance to a plan or timeline.
- Stick to the agreed agenda and stay within time limits.
- Push through despite setbacks, such as going over time or no-shows.



Chabujo, a grassroots feminist organization based in Tokyo, Japan

### Taking advantage of opportunities

- Adapt the agenda to focus on where the energy is in the room.
- Give time to those agenda items that evoke more emotion or when there is opportunity for greater commitment or resource generation.
- Adapt and use the momentum of unexpected advantages, such as larger than expected attendances, to generate more resources and commitment.

### 3. Next Steps

Decide on which next steps should be taken to act on the commitment created at the house meeting. When doing this you should:

- Write clear and actionable next steps.
- Delegate those next steps to a person. This might be either the host or organizer, a participant or, if you are part of a team, someone from that team.

#### How to effectively **DELEGATE**

- Be clear about what the expected outcomes are.
- Ask those you are delegating to summarize next steps in their own words, what is required and how they will get there.
- Make sure those you are delegating to have the right resources, both tangible and intangible.
- When delegating to a group, delegate a lead person.



# Key Resources

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## Sign-in Sheets

 View

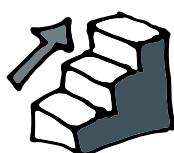
Where participants can sign in to a house meeting. These can be referenced later to see who attended, to complement any contact details that are missing, and to get consent for saving those details.

---

## Commitment Sheets

 View

Where activists can express commitment to your campaign by signing up to participate in future actions.



## the action cycle **FOLLOW-UP**

Follow-up usually happens in some form during all phases of the Action Cycle (plan, prepare, act). It typically involves reflection, metrics and next steps.

### 1. Reflection

When we reflect, we give ourselves the opportunities to act in a more purposeful and strategic manner moving forward. Reflection requires that we ask some of the following questions:

- What was the result of the house meeting?
- What happened—before, during and after the house meeting?

- Why did the house meeting happen that way?
- What does that mean for us and our campaign?
- What opportunities arose? What challenges?

Get into the habit of regularly reflecting both before and after your house meeting.

## 2. Metrics

We use metrics to understand how we are performing. Your goals and strategies help determine your metrics.

**Goals** are desired outcomes, e.g. number of signatures, number of votes or number of supporters.

**Strategies** are prescriptive plans or methods of achieving stated goals.

**Metrics** are the measurements that capture goals in terms of: efficacy, performance, or quality of a plan, process, or action.



## House meeting metrics

**Recruitment** - how many have answered "yes" or "no" to attending a house meeting? (Tip: "maybes" are a "no"). Another metric might be how many people each participant has promised to bring.

**Participation** - How many actually showed up?

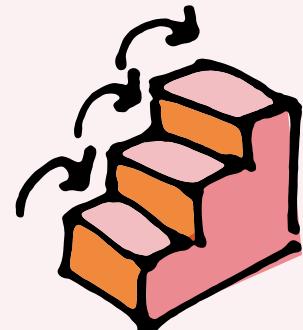
**Commitment** - How many people have answered the hard ask and when will this be completed?

## NEXT STEPS

The house meeting is only the beginning. Once completed the big question is: **how do we act on the commitment generated at the house meeting?**

Use the following guidelines to work through next steps:

- Write down all commitments and what is expected. Include deadlines. Use the Commitment Sheet to help you (Page 74)
- Write down any promises that were made at the house meeting, regardless of what was promised.
- Write a plan for how these commitments and promises will be honored.
- Include a time for check-ins to see that everything is on track before due dates.
- If these can be connected to metrics, do this.



# **CHEAT SHEETS**

**a very quick review**

**of the contents**

**of this guide**

# House Meetings

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## What are they?

House meetings require a host and an organizer.

Through discussion, they allow communities the opportunity to discuss life events, societal challenges and the solutions to those problems.



## Why have them?

They are instrumental in listening to the local community and bringing new groups of people into our campaigns or organizations.

They can be used to change the public's narrative on an issue.



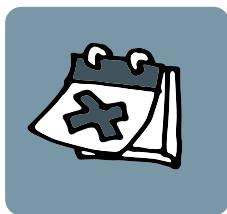
## How do they work?

They are structured according to the Public Narrative framework.

They invite others to be in a relationship with the host and their own communities, and to act on pressing challenges affecting that community.

# The Action Cycle

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## PLAN

**Decide a date, time and place.**

Develop a timeline for recruitment.

**Form an agenda** and structure key sequences.

**Create a list** of needed resources.

### **Key Resources:**

[House Meeting Planning Document](#) (pg 56)

[Recruitment List](#) (pg 57)

[Sample Agenda](#) (pg 61)

[House Meeting Campaign Timeline](#) (pg 65)



## PREPARE

**Deepen your understanding** of your campaign, the goals of the house meeting, and the participants.

**Practice key skills** such as narrative. Facilitate discussions and recruitment conversations.

**Improve coordination** between host and organizer.

### **Key Resources:**

[Recruitment List](#) (pg 57) Use the filled out recruitment list from the planning phase.

[Recruitment Script](#) (pg 63)

[Story Of Self Worksheet](#) (pg 66)

[Story Of Us Worksheet](#) (pg 68)

[Story Of Now Worksheet](#) (pg 71)

# The Action Cycle (continued)

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## ACT

**Maintain momentum** by sticking to the decided agenda and time-line for recruitment etc.

**Divert from the agenda** only when challenges arise or new opportunities present themselves, which can be planned or spontaneous.

**Decide on next steps** to act on the commitment generated at the house meeting.

### Key Resources:

Sign-In Sheet (pg 72)

Commitment Sheet (pg 74)



## FOLLOW UP

**Reflect on your actions** and why the house meeting went as it did.

**Decide on key metrics** and set goals: for recruitment, acting and the commitments generated.

**Follow up on next steps**, support new leaders to step up in future house meetings and act on any commitments.

# KEY resources

# House Meeting Planning Document

Both the host and the organizer will fill in this sheet together.

<b>Information about host:</b> Name: Address: Telephone number: E-mail address:	<b>Information about the organiser:</b> Name: Address: Telephone number: E-mail address:
<b>Meeting date, day and time:</b>	
<b>Goals and expected results:</b>	
<b>What is needed during the meeting and who makes sure these will be there:</b>	
<b>What is needed and who should be responsible?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Refreshments</li><li>● Materials to hand out (flyers, membership flyers, information flyers about the next meeting, etc.).</li><li>● Extra chairs</li><li>● Babysitting</li><li>● Someone who answers the phone</li><li>● Tables to put materials on</li><li>● Information about membership / fundraising etc.</li></ul>	<b>Who should be invited?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What could be of interest to each guest?</li><li>● Any obstacles to getting everyone to the meeting (possible conflicts, childcare, etc.)</li><li>● Solutions any obstacles.</li></ul>

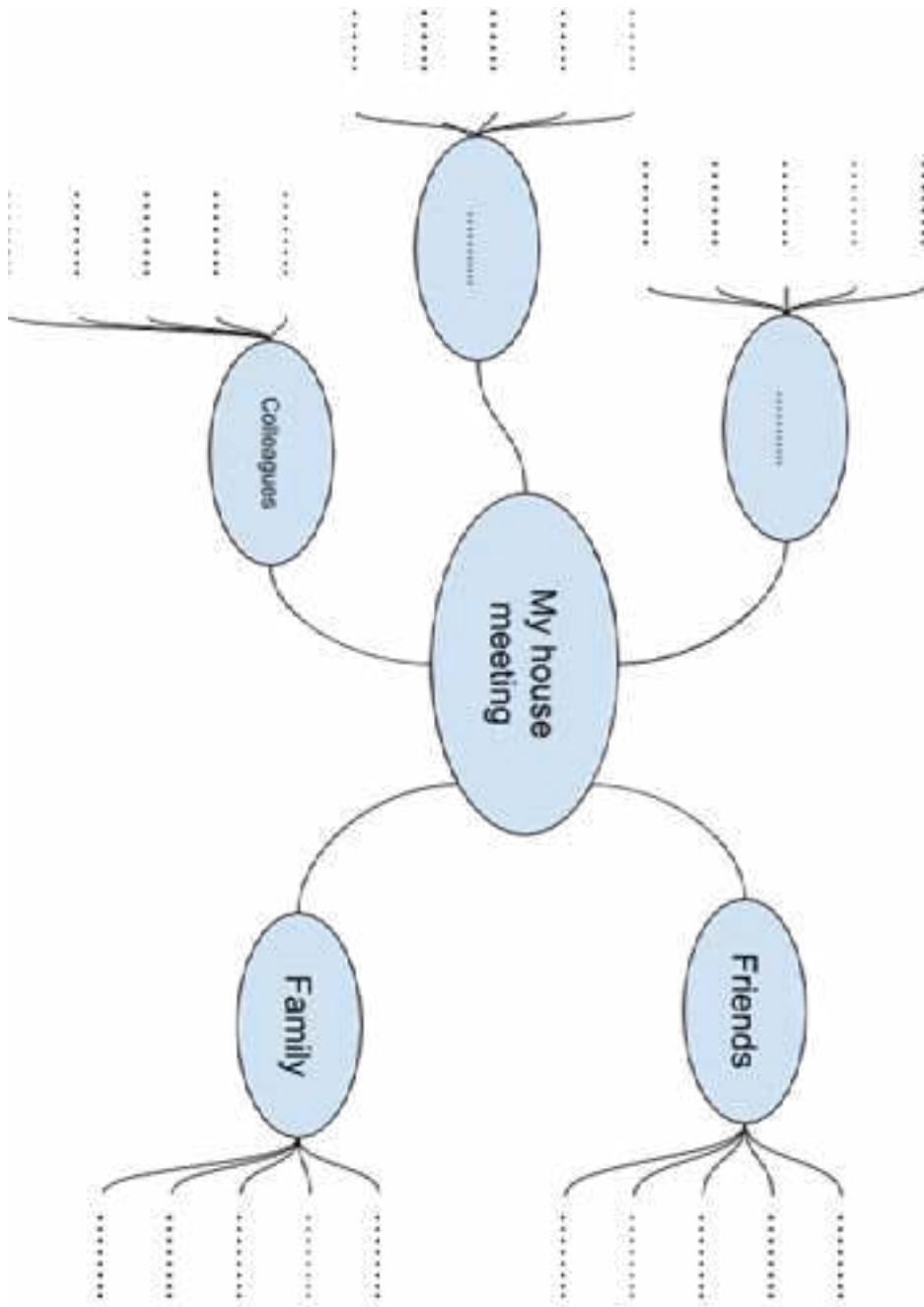
# Recruitment List

## Brainstorming

Our goal for a successful house meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ is to have roughly 20 people attend the meeting.

To actually have 20 people there however, will mean inviting at least 50 of your friends, family and acquaintances.

Use this brainstorm sheet to think of those you want to invite. Indicate those who are likely to attend.



# Recruitment List

Based on the brainstorming above, create a recruitment list that you will use to invite people to your house meeting.

Name	Phone #	Support (Y/N)	Invited (Y/N)	Committed (Y/N)	Confirmed (Y/N)	Notes
1						
2						
3						
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## Recruitment List

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## Recruitment List

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# Sample Agenda

Time	Agenda item	Who
00:00 (5 min)	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	Host
00:05 (5 min)	<p><b>The host's story</b></p> <p>The host will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly review the agenda</li> <li>• Share their <i>Story of Self</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why did you decide to become a leader in this campaign?</li> <li>○ Where do you come from? What one or two life experiences motivated you to step and become a community leader?</li> <li>○ Why are you hosting this meeting?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduce the Organizer</li> </ul>	Host
00:10 (5 min)	<p><b>Organizer's Public Narrative: Self, Us, and Now</b></p> <p>The organizer will share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their personal <i>Story of Self</i> (2 min)</li> <li>• The campaign's <i>Story of Us and Now</i> (3 min)</li> </ul>	Organizer
00:15 (5 min)	<p><b>Pair and Share</b></p> <p>The organizer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break participants into pairs</li> <li>• Ask participants to share with each other their reasons (life experiences) for coming to the meeting</li> </ul>	Organizer
00:20 (20 min)	<p><b>Group Discussion</b></p> <p>The organizer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask participants to share their stories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why did you attend this meeting?</li> <li>○ Why are you involved in this issue?</li> <li>○ How have you previously been active in your community or our democracy?</li> <li>○ What inspired you to act and get involved now?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Summarise with a <i>Story of Us</i>, based on values and experiences surfaced by participants during the discussion</li> </ul>	Organizer

00:40 (10 min)	<p><b>Strategy</b></p> <p>The organiser will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retell the <i>Story of Now</i>, inserting new information (regarding common challenges and values) that was brought up during the meeting</li> <li>• Share the strategy of your campaign</li> <li>• Explain how a house meeting campaign is run by recruiting new hosts at regular intervals to reach scale because they introduce the campaign to networks of new people</li> </ul>	Organizer
00:50 (15 min)	<p><b>Testimony &amp; action</b></p> <p>The organizer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the host to explain how easy and fun it was to set up this house meeting</li> <li>• Reiterates the participants' role in reaching the goals of your campaign and the importance of hosting new house meetings at regular intervals</li> <li>• Ask each participant one at a time to commit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>Lead</i>: host their own house meeting</li> <li>◦ <i>Act</i>: volunteer for another strategic action</li> <li>◦ <i>Support</i>: support the organisation or campaign in a sign of solidarity i.e membership, pledge etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Organizer
01:05 (5 min)	<p><b>Address the undecideds</b></p> <p>The organizer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank them for coming</li> <li>• Let them know that you are happy to talk after the meeting about issues that are important to them.</li> <li>• Share contact details if they should decide to get involved</li> </ul>	Organizer
01:10 (5 min)	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>The organizer will ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What they liked most about the meeting</li> <li>• Suggestions for improvement</li> <li>• Reflections and take-aways from the meeting</li> </ul>	Organizer
01:15 (5 min)	<p><b>Thank you &amp; mingle</b></p> <p>The organiser will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the host</li> <li>• Thank the guests</li> <li>• Conclude the meeting</li> <li>• Encourage people to stay and mingle (with refreshments if possible)</li> </ul>	Organizer
01:20	<b>Finish</b>	

# Recruitment Script

The purpose of these calls are to invite friends, family and acquaintances to your house meeting. These scripts are not meant to be followed verbatim – feel free to take liberties with them. These calls are merely a conversation between you and your friends.

Make sure that you have recruitment lists handy so you can jot down notes during each call.

## Call No. 1

Ideally, this call should be made 1-2 weeks before your house meeting, to provide ample opportunity for your guests to come.

Hi \_\_\_\_\_, it's \_\_\_\_\_, how are you?

I'm calling you because I've committed to hosting a House Meeting for the \_\_\_\_\_ campaign. The \_\_\_\_\_ campaign is committed to \_\_\_\_\_ in our community. Are you interested in participating in the \_\_\_\_\_ campaign?

- Indicate on your recruitment list if this person supports your campaign with either a yes or a no.

### If Yes

Great! I'd love to tell you more about the project and the types of events we'll be hosting to meet our campaign goals. I'm hosting a house meeting to bring our neighbors together and plan how we'll make sure the voices in our community are heard.

The house meeting is next week at my home. It's going to be on (day/date) at (time), at (location). Can I count on you to be there?

- Indicate that you have invited this person to your house meeting, with either a yes or a no on your recruitment list.
- Indicate if this person is committed to attending your house meeting, with either a yes or a no on your recruitment list.

Well, thanks again for your time – Please let me know if you have any questions and I'm looking forward to seeing you next week.

### If No

Not to worry, there will be plenty more opportunities to attend an event sometime in the future. I have jotted down your support for the campaign and will cycle back to you in the lead up to our next event.

Thanks for your time and let's talk more soon.

# Recruitment Script

## Call No. 2

The second call should be made no later than the day before the house meeting, to remind your guests of their commitment to come.

Hi \_\_\_\_\_, it's \_\_\_\_\_. How are you?

Great. I'm calling to remind you about the \_\_\_\_\_ campaign event I'm hosting tomorrow. You're still coming, right?

- Indicate that you have confirmed this person is attending your house meeting, with either a *yes* or a *no* on your recruitment list.

### If Yes

Ok, great – thanks a lot for your time, I look forward to seeing you tomorrow!

### If No

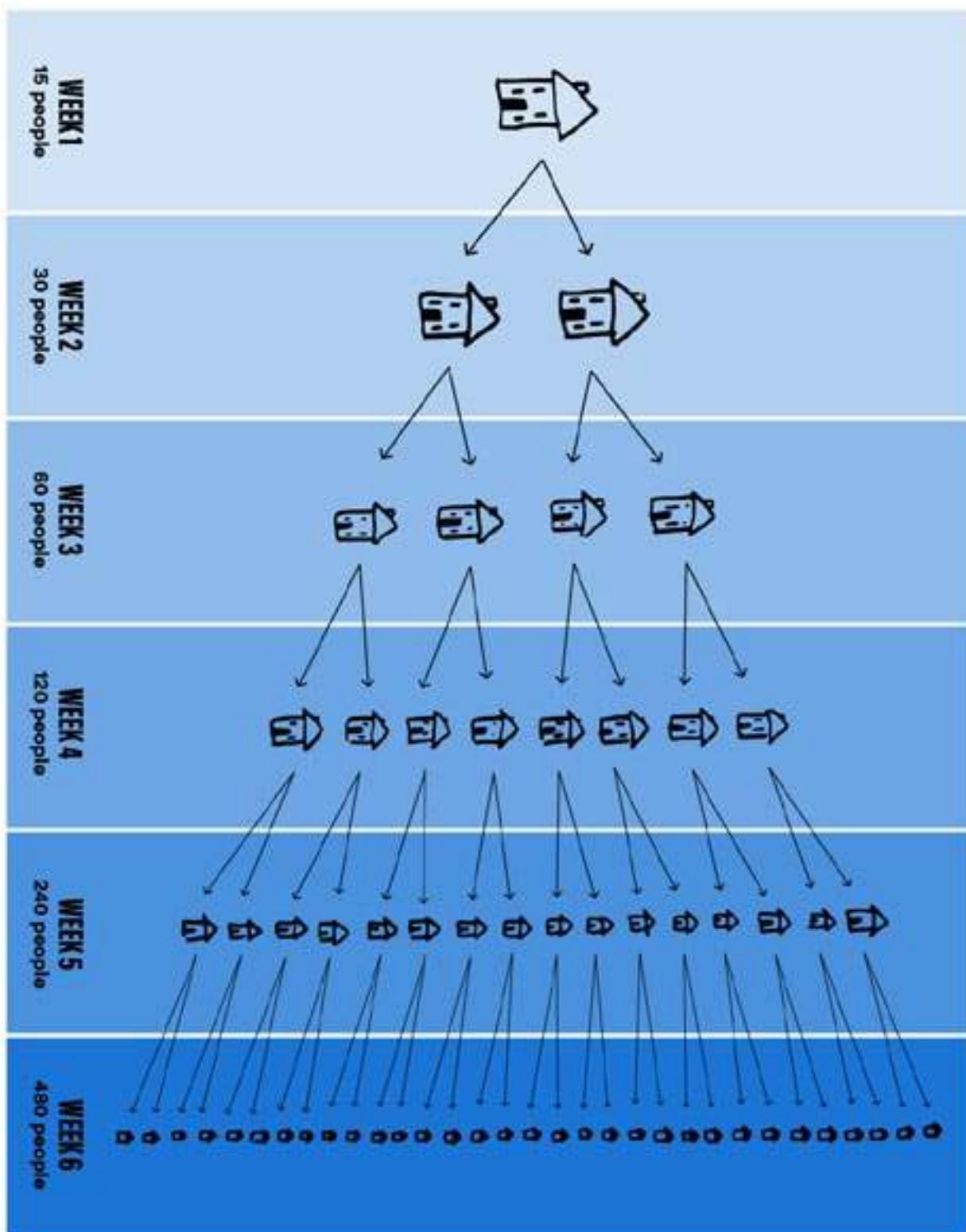
That's too bad. There's nothing I can do to convince you to come? It won't last long, and I'm committed to making a difference for this project. We can make a bigger difference if we do this together.

### If still No

I understand, it's okay. there will be plenty more opportunities to attend an event sometime in the future. I have jotted down your support for the campaign and will cycle back to you in the lead up to our next event.

Thanks for your support.

# House Meeting Campaign Timeline



= 945 people  
in total



## Story of Self Worksheet

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Before you decide what part of your story to tell, think about these questions:

- Why am I called to lead others?
- What values move me to act? How might they inspire others to similar action?
- What stories can I tell from my own life about specific people or events that would show (rather than tell) how I learned or acted on those values?

What are the experiences in your life that have shaped the values that call you to leadership?

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD	LIFE CHOICES	ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents/Family</li><li>• Growing Up Experiences</li><li>• Your Community</li><li>• Role Models</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School</li><li>• Career</li><li>• Partner/Family</li><li>• Hobbies/Interests/Talents</li><li>• Experiences Finding Passion</li><li>• Experiences Overcoming Challenge</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Experience of organizing</li><li>• Connection to key books or people</li><li>• Role Models</li></ul>

Think about the challenge, choice and outcome in your story. The outcome might be what you learned, in addition to what happened. Try drawing pictures here instead of words. Powerful stories leave your listeners with images in their minds that shape their understanding of you and your calling. Remember, articulating the decisions you make in the face of challenges ultimately communicates your values.

Challenge	Choice	Outcome



## Story of Us Worksheet

---

The purpose of the story of us is to create a sense of community among individuals who may or may not yet see themselves as a community and to give them hope that they can make a difference. It builds on shared experiences and outcomes of previous actions to establish the context in which to take future action. Your goal here is to tell a story that evokes our shared values as your audience, and shows why we in particular are called to take responsibility for action now.

Your story of us may be a story of what we've already done together (common experiences), challenges we've already faced and outcomes we've achieved. Or it may be a story of some of our shared heroes, challenges they faced and outcomes they've achieved. Hearing how we've met challenges in the past gives us hope that we can face new challenges together.

Brainstorm all the stories you know about your audience and your collective story and experience. Your story of us may change each time you are talking to a different group of people as you create a new community with them.

Brainstorm through the following questions (**5 min**):

Which specific **shared experiences** has this community experienced as meaningful moments? These should be events (not characteristics) that your group feels connected around, whether they occurred before or during this workshop.

Which specific **shared values** are expressed in these shared experiences? Around which shared values do you hope to build a public narrative?

What are the **challenges** in these stories?

What are the sources of **hope** in these stories?

## Construct your Story of Us

Choose a few of the stories you brainstormed above to flesh out in vivid detail.

Remember, you can use this space to draw pictures instead of writing words, to help you think about where to add detail and nuance in your story. (5 min.)

Challenge	Choice	Outcome
What was the challenge we faced? What's the root of that challenge?	What specific choice did we make? What action did we take?	What happened as a result of our choice? What hope can it give us?



## Story of Now Worksheet

---

Use these questions to help you to develop your story of now:

**Why is it urgent to act now? What will happen if we *fail* to act? What experiences can you share that can make this challenge urgent for this community**

**How do you know? What's the source of hope? What makes it plausible? What makes success possible?**

**What choice are you asking each person to join you in making right now? Why will it add up? How could it achieve the desired outcome?**

# Sign-In Sheet

Name	Phone #	Email	Address	LCN member	Organization/other affiliations
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

## Sign-In Sheet

16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

## Commitment Sheet

Use the sheet below as a template for creating your sign-up sheets for gaining commitments at your house meeting.