



NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION

NLIHC's Training Institute

Organizing 101:

Community Organizing & Power Building

May 29, 2025

Agenda



Welcome & Intro

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC

Organizing 101

- Billy Cerullo, Housing Advocacy Organizer
- Tia Turner, Housing Advocacy Organizer

Next Steps

- Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow, NLIHC

Welcome & Intro



Dee Ross

Tenant Leader Fellow

National Low Income Housing Coalition

NLIHC
www.nlihc.org

Organizing 101



Billy Cerullo

Housing Advocacy Organizer

National Low Income
Housing Coalition

Tia Turner

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Introductions



Agenda

- Power Poll
- Advocacy vs. Activism vs. Organizing
- Defining Organizing and Power
- The Cycle of Organizing
- Closing and Q&A

Goals

- To give a basic overview of organizing
- To learn the definition of power
- To learn the cycle of organizing to apply to your own work



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Poll: Is power good, bad,
or neutral?



Intro to Organizing

Advocacy and Activism

Advocacy

- Speaking on behalf of others
- Oftentimes lawyers, policy folks, researchers, etc.



Activism

- Individual-centered
- More niche and (maybe) elite
- Usually charismatic figures



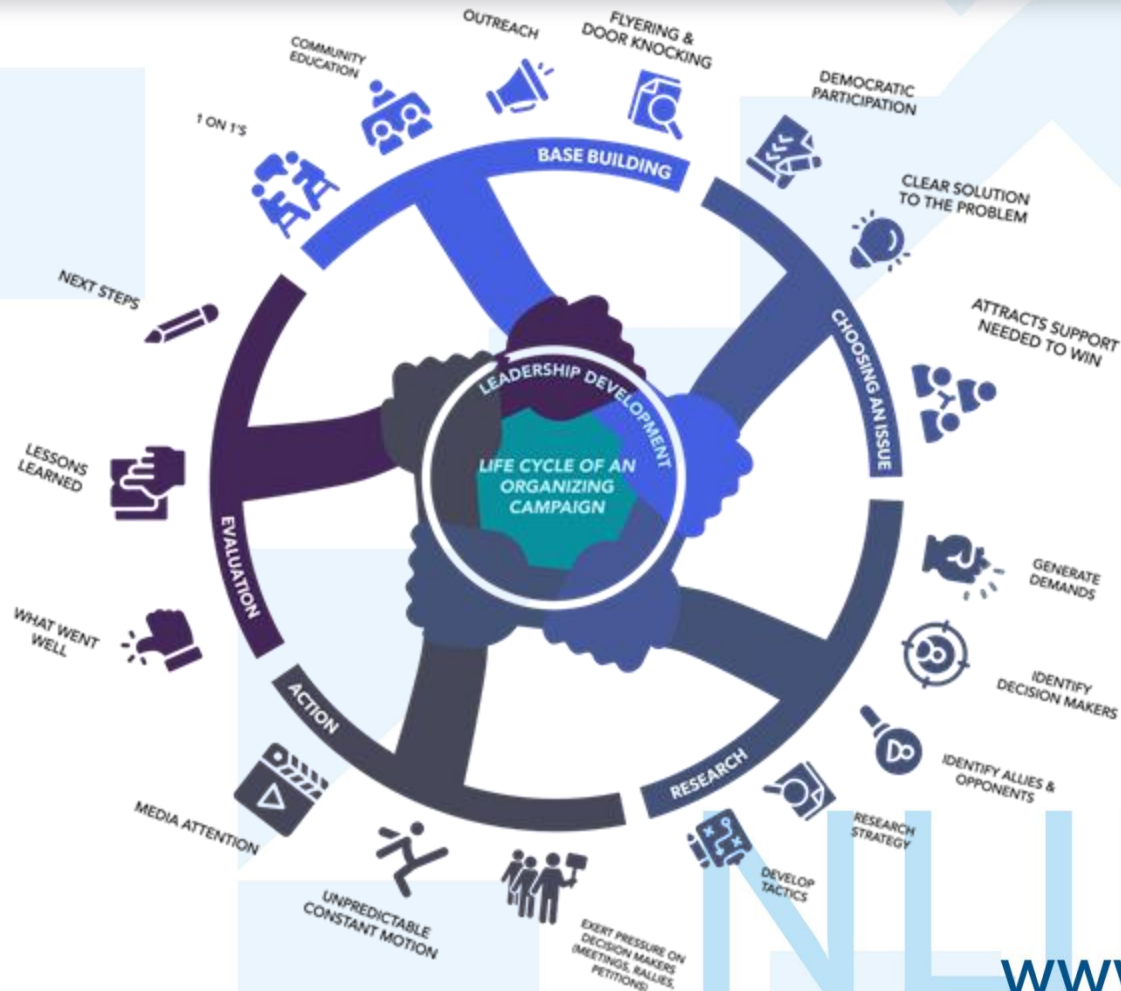
Organizing

- **Organizing:** Organized people around shared self-interest and a common goal to build and exercise power to shape politics, policies, and outcomes
- **Self-Interest:** what motivates people to act (or not act)
- **Power:** The ability to act and achieve purpose
 - Power is neutral

Political power comes in two forms - organized people and organized money

Ex: labor unions (local and national), NRA, Planned Parenthood

Cycle of Organizing





Base Building

Base Building

- **Principle of Organizing:** Power in relationships
- “Who are your people?” – Ella Baker
- Questions to consider:
 - How much power do we need?
 - What does power in numbers look like?
 - How many people do I want on my central organizing committee?
- **Principle of Organizing:** Organizers teach leaders, leaders organize

The Snowflake Model



- The snowflake model is a way to organize teams that replaces a single leader with a team of interconnected leaders
- The success of the team depends on developing leadership throughout the team



Choosing an Issue

Choosing an Issue



Problems vs Issues

- Problems=big and overwhelming. Not effective goals
- Issues=bite-sized pieces of the larger problem that help us chip away at societal exploitation

Example



Problems vs Issues

- Problem: Homelessness
- Issues: Funding for COCs, just cause policies, defeating homelessness criminalization bills, increased funding for public housing

Effective Goals

Qualities found in Ineffective Wants	Qualities of an Effective Want
Fixes/ends a vague or general problem	Pursues a specific solution to an issue
Centers a symptom (cosmetic change)	Centers a root cause of an issue
Does not address concrete issue in people's lives	If achieved, results in concrete change in people's daily lives
Is in someone else's power to achieve	Your people have specific power to achieve it
Can be achieved through your actions alone	Will be achieved through the work of many
Achieved through cultural shift	Achieved through policy change or systemic change-concrete policies or protections

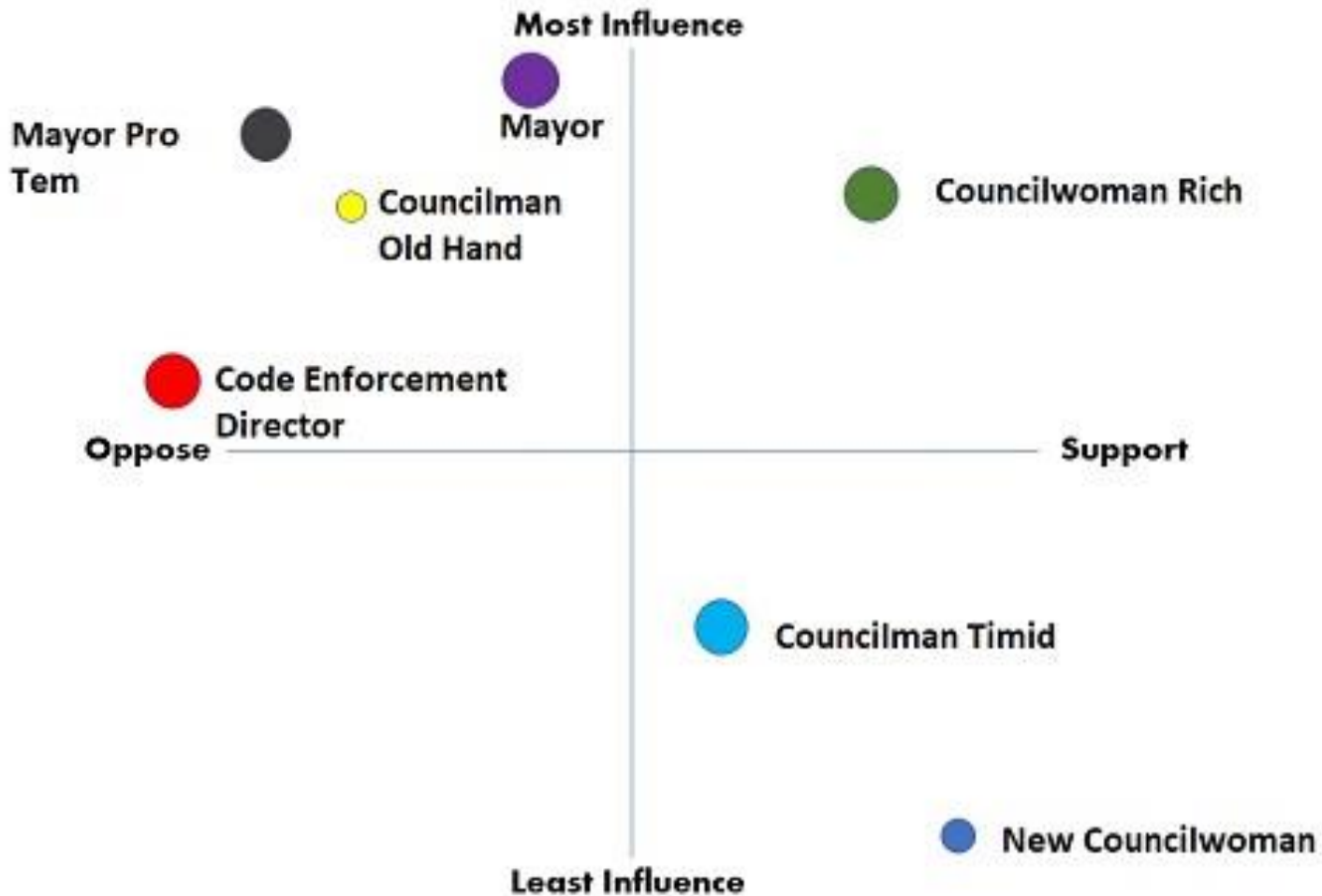


Research

Research

- Who are my targets?
 - Primary target
 - Secondary targets
- What is the policy surrounding our issue?
- What will it take to win?
- What has been done in the past?

Power Mapping



The background is a light blue gradient. It features several abstract geometric shapes in a slightly darker shade of blue. On the left, there is a small cluster of four squares arranged in a 2x2 grid. To the right of this, there is a larger, more complex shape that resembles a staircase or a series of overlapping triangles. In the bottom right corner, there is a large, semi-circular shape. The word "Action" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font, positioned in the lower-left area of the image.

Action

Actions

Effective	Ineffective
We ask “who” / the right people	We might ask “what” / how many people
The means to an end	The end within itself.
Follow up: the program is just the beginning.	Follow up: when it’s over, it’s over.
In evaluating, we look for the reaction	In evaluating, we might look at logistics
We get something new – a reaction: new leaders, interest, energy, possibilities, new thinking	We might get exhaustion & burnout
We’re working towards fixing things that are broken	At best, we’re learning about what’s broken

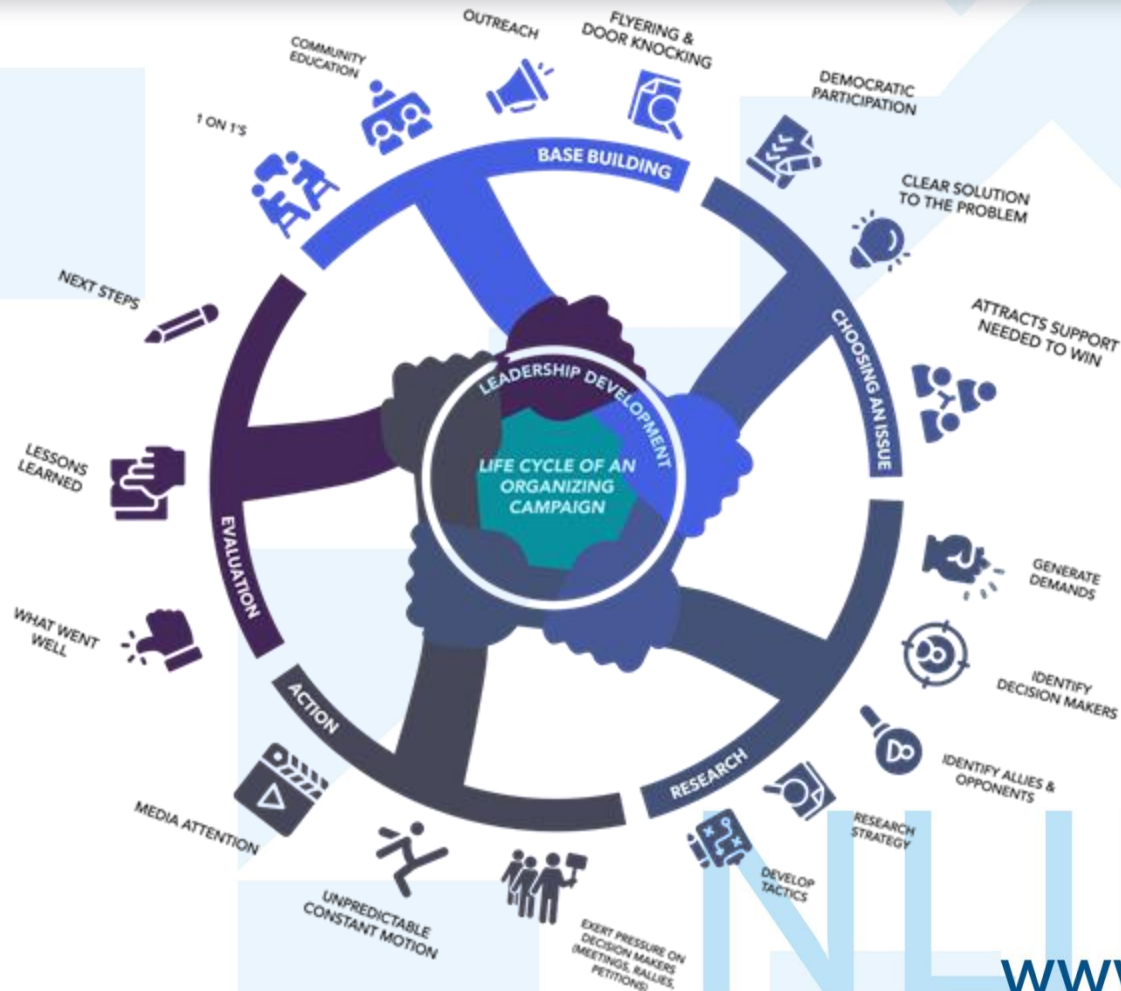


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Evaluation – Did we win?

Why or why not?

Cycle of Organizing



Recap

- **Power** is neutral
- The **cycle of organizing** is your roadmap for any successful organizing campaign
- There are distinctions between **advocacy**, **activism** and **organizing**.

Next Steps

- **Where** do you want to go?
- **What** additional training/resources do you need?



Stay in touch!



Billy Cerullo and Tia Turner

Housing Advocacy Organizers

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Next Steps



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Upcoming Courses



Fundraising & Sustainability 101

- This session will teach sustainable fundraising strategies like grassroots campaigns, grant writing, and donor engagement. Participants will learn how to secure funding, grow tenant-led advocacy efforts, and effectively use resources to support long-term impact.

Marketing & Branding 101

- Discover how to craft powerful messages, build a strong brand, and amplify the voices of tenant-led movements. This session will guide you in using social media, storytelling, and visual identity to raise awareness, attract support, and grow your impact.