

## **In The Beginning: Preparation for a Healthy Group Start**

So you have your group together, now what? The RESULTS model offers many ways for volunteers to participate. The **Group Leader or Group Coordinator** sits at the center of your group and helps to manage incoming information, get it out to volunteers and then support group members in learning the skills they will need to become savvy political activists. A good Group Leader, well supported by active partners is key in developing long lasting relationships with your members of Congress, the media and members of your community.

The following section has been developed to help Group Leaders navigate their way to a healthy, engaged, in action RESULTS group. Taking the time to walk through this section with your group will help to strengthen your groups relationships, define the groups vision, set clear definable group goals and set individual milestones. A yearly investment in this group inventory process should be the goal of every group, new or old.

### **Keys to Success:**

#### **□ Delegating Responsibility**

Delegating is one of the most important things Group Leaders and volunteers can do to ensure a healthy group. If one person takes on everything they end up feeling overwhelmed and burnt out, the others in the group feel like they have nothing to contribute, aren't making that big of a difference and end up leaving for greener pastures. So delegate, delegate, delegate, your group will thank you.

#### **□ First Steps**

- **Define your Vision**
- **Define Ways of Participating**
- **Map your Groups Collective Strengths and how Volunteers Want to Stretch Themselves and Learn New Skills**
- **Use the Activists' Milestones and Toolkit for Action Based Goal Setting**

## Define Your Vision

- What inspires you about this work and the people in the room?
- How do you see this group working together?
- What is your overarching goal for this group and how do you see yourselves getting there? Laughing? Trudging? Skipping? Singing?

### **Training Exercise:**

- Bring pens and paper and have each person write down three things they personally or as a group want to accomplish this year.
- Put all of the pieces of paper in a basket and have each person pick one out and read it to the group. (not their own of course)
- After all of them have been read, take time to share about each other's visions.

## Defining Ways to Participate: Democracy in Action

### **Training Exercise:**

- Go around the room and have each person take a turn reading the different roles.
- After they are all read, ask people (knowing training will be provided) what opportunities most inspire them?

- **Activist:** A lean, mean, lobby savvy machine intent upon changing the world and having a great time doing it!
- **Group Leader:** Central figure in your group who disseminates information, supports activist's trainings for your group, and encourages leadership development. (One year Commitment)
- **Regional Coordinator (RCs):** A key player in the RESULTS community. RCs are the brilliant network of people who provide training, cheerleading and support for our network of groups. RCs work directly with RESULTS staff members, receive leadership coaching, coaching on powerful speaking, legislative updates and attend a yearly retreat for skills development. (1 year Commitment)
- **Legislative Point person:** Each Representative and Senator that your group covers should have an individual assigned to develop a long term relationship with your members of Congress and their aides. If your state has more than one RESULTS group make sure you have good communication between the groups to know who will be handling each Senator. The point person for each

member of Congress is a key position within the group. Each member of your group should be groomed to take on this leadership role at some point in their career as a volunteer.

- **State-wide Legislative Coordinator:** For states with more than one group a state-wide legislative coordinator can be an invaluable member of your team. This dynamic team player organizes legislative point people for each congressional district and keeps our issues on the front for members of Congress.
- **Media Coordinator:** This may be one or more people in your group who work to develop their skills in generating media focused on hunger and poverty. Generating media is key in any successful political movement. RESULTS media activists work diligently to generate editorials, features, op-eds, radio programs, press conferences and letters to the editor. This person may want to consider joining the RESULTS Media Network training call once a month to get further training and learn from other activists and experts in the field.
- **Community Outreach Coordinator:** This person organizes outreach events for your group. This includes inviting people to monthly conference calls, letter writing meetings, outreach meetings and networking within the community. This can be many people within your group working together or separately on different aspects of outreach in your community.
- **Issues Expert:** People join RESULTS for many different reasons and one of those may be because they are interested in a specific issue RESULTS works on like Head Start or Microcredit. Encouraging them to develop themselves as an issues expert in your group is a great way to harness their enthusiasm and develop their leadership. This person may speak for the group on this specific issue with your member of Congress, be asked to speak on a radio show, talk to editorial writers or volunteer to speak at a Rotary, church or other outreach event within your community.
- **Community Spokesperson:** This person is ready at the drop of a dime to speak to reporters, community members, editorial writers, community leaders and others about RESULTS, our issues and our legislative priorities. This person helps the group identify key hooks, frames and messages that will resonate in your community.
- **Fundraising Coordinator:** Funding the vision of a world free from hunger and poverty is a vital part of our work. A large portion of our budget is funded through our grassroots fundraising efforts and allows us to maintain a certain level of independence on what issues we take on. Many groups have found fundraising to be an empowering aspect of what we do

and a great way to generate new volunteers and to network with others in their community. (New groups are not expected to do a fundraiser in their first year.)

- **Expansion Team Leader:** Inspired visionary leader in your group who works to expand RESULTS groups to every congressional district in your state.

*Many of the people in your group may feel intimidated by taking these on, nervous about calling their member of Congress for the first time or unsure of how to develop a relationship with an editorial writer. Remind yourselves here that RESULTS is committed to excellence and providing you with all of the resources and training necessary to make sure your group succeeds. Media training calls are provided to support our grassroots media network on a monthly basis. Long time partners and staff are available to mentor new partners when making calls to Congress, and volunteers are consistently asked to challenge themselves and learn new skills at regional conferences and the International Conference in Washington, D.C. every summer.*

*Encourage volunteers to take on leadership for three, six or nine months, checking in regularly with how they are doing and encouraging them to train others in their groups to transition into their position to develop depth of leadership within your group.*

*Remember, be creative and don't let our lack of vision or imagination stop you from making the difference you have always dreamed of. We depend on your brilliance and enthusiasm to move this organization into the future.*

## Mapping your Group's Assets

This is a great way to find out all of the amazing experiences people are bringing with them to your group. Your group will undoubtedly be filled with all kinds; students, grandmothers, teachers, doctors or lawyers, this is a great way to get to know more about each other as your group begins to spread its wing.

### **Training Exercise:**

- Make copies of the Assets Questionnaire on the next page for your partners.
- Provide 15 minutes for your partners to fill it out.
- Spend 30 minutes going over the forms together to allow all present a chance to share their assets, personal goals and inspiration!
- Use a large piece of butcher paper to write down your group's assets, goals and skills building priorities.
- Collect all of the questionnaires and put them in this notebook for you to refer back to when guiding your partners through achieving their Activist Milestones and skills building goals.
- Follow this up with the "Walk through the Activists' Toolkit and Milestones".



## Walking through the Activists Toolkit and Milestones

In the following section you will find the RESULTS Activists' Toolkit and Milestones which are meant to be used as a step-by-step guide for you to introduce new volunteers and other community activists to the concrete actions they can take to hone and develop their skills as effective citizen activists.

Taking these actions one-by-one builds a solid advocacy foundation for your group, and breaks down what is often an incredibly overwhelming amount of information RESULTS activists feel they need to learn in a short amount of time.

This toolkit will allow activists to mark their progress as they move through the milestones and give you the roadmap you need to facilitate skills training in your new groups and with new volunteers.

### **Toolkit Training Exercise:**

- Explain the idea of the Milestones and the Toolkit and ask for any feedback. (5 Min.)
  - The Activists' Milestones are meant to be used as a step-by-step guide for you to introduce new volunteers and other community activists to the concrete actions they can take to hone and develop their skills as effect citizen activists.
  - Taking these actions one-by-one builds a solid advocacy foundation for your group, and breaks down what is often an incredibly overwhelming amount of information RESULTS activists feel they need to learn in a short amount of time.
  - This toolkit will allow activists to mark their progress as they move through the milestones and give Group Leaders the roadmap they need to facilitate skills training in their new groups and new volunteers.
  - The milestones are the actions to take and the toolkit provides the back up training materials for folks to use to coach and train volunteers.
  
- Go through the Milestones one at a time with all of your partners. (15 Min.)

- Use your copy of the full Activists' Toolkit to show folks in the room the background materials that come with it. (All materials are available on the RESULTS website: [www.results.org](http://www.results.org) )
  
- Choose one of the milestones and do a skills building section. (25 Min.)
  - Drafting and delivering a laser talk.
  - Writing a letter to your member of Congress.
  - Writing a letter to the editor.
    - Be mindful of what your group may need and have some fun!
  
- Finish up this section with at least 10 minutes of feedback and ask people how they can use this toolkit to increase their advocacy skills and become powerful spokespeople.

If you are starting a new group or working with new volunteers ask them to dive in to Milestone number one.

If you are an established group, ask volunteers to put a star next to the milestones they have achieved and ask them declare the next milestone on their advocacy tool belt.

## Building Trust, Accountability and Clear Lines of Communication:

It can be easy in the group dynamic to allow others to take the lead or to make promises that are never fulfilled. It can be easy to not practice our speaking skills or take the time to develop leadership within our groups.

This is the great failure for many of us, shrinking to fit the mold instead of standing tall and being an example of inspiration and leadership to our groups. In RESULTS we ask all of you to stand tall, encourage you to break out of your comfort zones and challenge your limitations. We encourage it, cultivate it, love it and need it if we are going to break the myths surrounding hunger and poverty and provide the dignified pathways out of poverty that everyone deserves.

### Training Exercise:

As a group sit down and talk about how you will support each other in fulfilling your goals, and how the group will handle situations where partners are making promises but not following through. This is crucial and sets the stage early for how the group will function and allows inspiration and action, to replace guilt and embarrassment.

Start with a relationship building exercise by asking everyone to go around and share their first political memory.

Next, go through the questions below to start your group off on the right foot.

- How will we stay in regular communication with each other?
- Will we ask before offering coaching to anyone?
- How will we hold each other accountable? Or, how will we continue to inspire each other into being more than we ever thought we could be?
- What does it mean to work as a team and value others opinions?
- How can we best support each other?
- How will we celebrate our successes?
- Why do we practice speaking? What does it bring to our advocacy skill set?
- How will we handle it when group members make commitments but don't follow through?
- Where do we want to grow and challenge ourselves?
- What do we want to accomplish as a group? How do we help each other get there?

## What is a healthy Group?

- ❑ Healthy groups have at least four active members.
- ❑ The group has chosen a Group Leader or Coordinator to act as a conduit of information from the RESULTS office to group members.
- ❑ Healthy groups feel engaged and inspired and are taking regular actions to educate their community about hunger and poverty.
- ❑ Health groups feel like they are part of a wider network working together to make a difference.
- ❑ Healthy groups are in regular communication with each other.
- ❑ Healthy groups are getting what they need (training, materials, timely information) from RESULTS staff members and Regional Coordinators.
- ❑ Healthy groups have Group Leaders who spread the wealth by giving others opportunity to take on working with the media, working with Congress, doing outreach and fundraising.
- ❑ Healthy groups are having fun!
- ❑ Healthy groups are networking with a wide variety of other organizations and individuals.
- ❑ Healthy groups feel like they are making a difference.

## What Makes Your Group A Healthy Group?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.