

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BALLOT MEASURE CAMPAIGN FOR KIDS FROM A TO Z

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS IN PLACE:

- Diverse coalition that works well together, has credibility in the community and is committed to exploring a ballot measure.
- Convening organization providing backbone support for coalition.
- Respected leaders prepared to engage in a campaign, including youth and parents.
- Well-documented need for new services. Information about current level of public investments in children and major gaps.

TRANSITIONING TO CAMPAIGN MODE

A. Create your Steering Committee.

This is your core group. It is the central decision-making body of the campaign. It needs a devoted, determined, knowledgeable and skillful chair. Ideal size – 6 – 8 people. Select for commitment and skills. THEY MUST ALL BE WORKERS. For folks who just want to chat-it-up, put them on an advisory committee.

B. Develop your budget.

This will likely be an evolving process depending on your fundraising and the campaign dynamics, but you should start with a good idea of both the minimum and ideal budgets. This will depend on the size of your electorate, the voter threshold needed, and the popularity of your measure. It will include consultant, staff, communications, events, field operations, and compliance costs.

C. Begin fundraising.

You can't start too early. Develop a specific fundraising plan based on your campaign budget. Everyone involved in campaign must participate. Set up a fundraising committee if you can. Seek out large donors like unions and hospitals. You may want to hire a fundraising consultant to

help you. CAMPAIGNS CAN'T RUN WITHOUT MONEY!

D. Set up compliance systems for local, state and federal regs.

Never under-estimate the importance of dotting all the "i's" with a campaign – you do not want to be dinged by a government agency. Learn all your reporting obligations. Immediately recruit a politically experienced treasurer; file with the FPPC; open a bank account; and do all paperwork required of your city and county.

CRAFTING THE MEASURE

E. Decide on revenue source.

Your major choices are either a tax or a set-aside of existing revenue. Most frequently used are sales taxes, property taxes and set-asides. Consider history of revenue measures, legal feasibility, polling, and ability to get on ballot.

F. Decide what to fund.

Your coalition will grapple with this. Criteria should include public opinion, community need, energy and motivation of allies. Should it be all children and youth, only young children, or specific types of services?

G. Decide how much money to raise.

The amount of money needed for the kids in your city or county will far exceed what you can raise in a single measure. Use your cost modeling information. Here the advice "Big enough to matter; small enough to win" is relevant. Be ambitious, but able to justify every cent.

H. Decide how and when to place on ballot.

First: what election? Factors to consider – best turnout for your supporters, how much time you need to get ready, other measures

on the ballot. Next decision: Should it be put in the ballot by elected officials or by signatures of the voters. Considerations: Signatures are hard to collect and expensive to pay for, but YOU get to control the measure. Elected officials will control the content when they put it on, but then your city or county does all the legal work. Sometimes (as in CA) voter threshold needed to pass depends on decision.

- I. Draft basic elements of measure.
Even though the final measure will be drafted by a lawyer, a critical part of the process is for the coalition of advocates to make decisions about the content of the measure. This includes things like eligibility for funding, administration and governance, oversight, and accountability.
- J. Work with a lawyer.
If you plan to draft your own measure, hire a lawyer with expertise in elections and ballot revenue measures, and preferably one with experience on kids measures. If your city council or county legislative body is putting it on the ballot, work as closely as possible with their lawyer – often through your elected official champion.
- K. Poll.
You might do more than one poll. The first helps determine the feasibility of the campaign, the most popular revenue source, and the public's priority. Later, with resources, you could poll status of opinion and areas of voter strength and weakness; and then finally you might do a tracking poll late in the game.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT

- L. Expand network of supporters.
Conduct maximum outreach and enlist motivated community members. Have specific "asks" for the broad coalition of supporters – utilizing their political and

social capital, their fundraising capacity, and their recruitment of volunteers. Many will start with their non-profit organization network who have special expertise and motivation – reach out from there with their help, including their Boards.

- M. Engage youth and parents at the outset.
Many people under-estimate the importance of youth and parent voice in all aspects of the campaign – from designing the measure to media to GOTV. These voices can be the most grounded in establishing priorities and the most compelling in persuading voters. This requires an ongoing conscious effort, as well as resources for support and stipends.
- N. Neutralize the opposition.
This is the very important task of attempting to convince or at least neutralize the opposition. Use meetings, personal connections, and messages aimed at their needs and priorities. Some could become your strongest partners.
- O. Build contact lists.
Your lists are golden, and you can't start too early to develop and expand them. Become a list-crazed person – go everywhere to add names.
- P. Solicit endorsements.
Go to public officials, political clubs/organizations, unions, non-profits, media, celebrities, civic leaders, law-enforcement – any person or group who can influence voters. This is a whole process and big part of the campaign.
- Q. Train and utilize volunteers.
This is hugely important – volunteers make a campaign work. Just know they need to be nurtured throughout the campaign. They do everything from walk precincts, to present at meetings to raise dollars.

STAFFING AND ROADMAP

R. Hire a campaign consultant.

Interview several so you have a choice. Get referrals from other successful campaigns. Get specifics about their costs and exactly what is included. Check references and previous work. Do they love your campaign? Trust your gut.

S. Develop campaign plan.

Your campaign consultant will likely be the one to lay out an overall campaign plan and strategy. This will be your roadmap, the way to hold everyone accountable and measure your progress. You will likely start with calculating your “win number.”

T. Hire additional staff.

It is difficult to run a campaign without a full-time person on the ground. This is not your campaign consultant. You need someone who is passionate about the cause, has great interpersonal skills, loves politics, and will work like crazy. Depending on the size of your community and your budget, you may need additional staff.

U. Use data.

Increasingly campaigns are using data to get and track the best information about the electorate and your outreach work. From “voter analytics,” to developing mailing lists, to tracking voter contacts – this is an important part of a campaign and you need to have the most accurate and dynamic platforms and systems. Whether it is your campaign consultant or another professional, get the help you need.

MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATION

V. Develop messages and messaging plan.

This can be a brainstorming process as you consider messages for the target audiences. Good messages are credible, concise, compelling, consistent, and relevant. This

should happen at the beginning the campaign but will evolve as the campaign proceeds. Remember: the core message is children and youth. It’s a winner!

W. Use the media.

Your best friend is free media – if you can get it. Best opportunity: Leverage key campaign milestones like getting on the ballot, high profile endorsements, large rallies with kids, or positive polling. Use every connection you have and all the skills you have garnered over the years. Develop plan for negative media – it will come.

X. Maximize digital strategies.

Increasingly campaigns are depending on digital – it’s cheap and more and more folks are online. Start with a website, of course, but move on quickly to everything from Facebook and other platforms. You can use it to recruit volunteers and garner support.

Y. Pick your paid communication strategies.

Start with a walking piece that folks can use at the beginning of a campaign as they start their personal outreach for supporters. Then with limited dollars, choose what you need most: direct mail (still the most tried and true), radio ads (particularly effective with ethnic communities), TV, billboards, door-hangers, newspaper ads, or signs.

DIRECT VOTER CONTACT

Z. Build your person-to-person connections.

Many say this will be your most important strategy. It includes everything from canvassing, to phone-banking, to events, to house parties. Its success depends on your volunteer base.

It all builds to a robust **GOTV (Get Out the Vote)** operation close to the election. And getting folks to vote (whether by mail or at the polls) is the only thing that counts in the end.