

Assessing the Political Landscape To Prepare for Your Measure

What do you need to know?

Goal: Maximize potential assets. Minimize surprises.

WHAT TO ASSESS	HOW TO ACCESS	COMMENTS	NOTES
Political and Legislative History			
Results of related ballot measures: local taxes, social services, school bonds	Registrar of Voters/Elections departments have history of results of previous elections, including geographic breakdown of results		
Lessons from related campaigns -	Talk to the campaign consultants, sponsors, and proponents/opponents. What did they learn? What do they wish they had done differently? What do they think of the potential of your campaign?	Assess whether you can overcome challenges and/or incorporate the assets of the previous campaigns.	
Recent changes in the electorate that could affect the results	Demographics, party affiliations, age, or income of the population of the city or county – check out various departmental reports (health, planning, budget, elections), census data, reports from advocacy groups, grant proposals.	This could significantly impact the outcome of your measure. – for instance, an increasing percent of younger voters, families, and/or people of color voters could vastly increase your prospects.	
Recent changes in state and local election laws	Confer with your state and local election authorities about recent changes that may affect signature collection, ballot placement, ballot language, and other requirements.	In several states, lawmakers are considering measures that make the make ballot initiatives more difficult to propose and pass.	



**FUNDING THE
NEXT GENERATION**

www.fundingthenextgeneration.org

WHAT TO ASSESS	HOW TO ACCESS	COMMENTS	NOTES
Political leaders			
The initial response (concerns, positions, ideas, etc.) to the measure by local elected officials in the city or county (or both with a county-wide measure). This should include everyone on the legislative body that places the measure on the ballot.	Find out: How does local political support line up for the campaign? Are there one or more champions? What could they contribute? What baggage do proponents carry? What assets? What role could they play in the campaign? Might they help raise money or share mailing lists or sponsor an event? Are they likely spokespeople? Are some persuadable?	Beware of red flags as well as green lights. For instance, opposition from the most powerful and popular elected must be a warning. On the other hand, a popular champion could make all the difference. Local electeds will often have their own ideas about revenue options, priorities, and framing. You should be open to changes to enlist important supporters, or fend off opposition, particularly those with potential for a paid campaign.	
Potential support or opposition of state or federal electeds	State and federal elected officials may not be as accessible as local electeds. You can get lots of valuable information from their staff.	This is not as important as local folks, since it is a local measure, but it can be valuable to know whether there are strong positions pro or con.	
Positions of political clubs and politically active groups	Some cities or counties have very active political clubs (a variety of Democratic clubs, for instance), some don't. Check in with leadership or key members. Are there potential partners for the campaign?	Endorsements will come later, but you can sometimes get an impression for strong support or opposition.	
Positions of active advocacy groups – some groups could be addressing similar or overlapping issues; other groups which can impact elections may address minimally related issues but might see themselves as competing with your issue.	Local political leaders and members of your team can help identify key groups that may align or oppose your effort.	Advocacy groups often represent broad constituencies that can affect your outcome. A few may want to partner with you, some may remain neutral, and others may oppose your effort. Prioritize those with large memberships and community credibility.	



**FUNDING THE
NEXT GENERATION**

www.fundingthenextgeneration.org

WHAT TO ASSESS	HOW TO ACCESS	COMMENTS	NOTES
Influencers			
<p>This will vary with community, but key groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor • Business • Faith community • Community, civic, issue and cultural groups • Key spokespeople for various segments of the population – ethnic, racial, gender, sexual identity • Taxpayer organizations 	<p>Your inquiries can be a check-in with key leadership, or a more formal sit-down with a committee.</p> <p>Goals: Determine potential for a diverse coalition. Know where the opposition will lie – Is there potential to neutralize?</p>	<p>This is an important part of the assessment process. This can help you determine how diverse and broad a coalition you can form. It can often bring surprises, as well as opportunities for unexpected allies. However, it could also lead to compromises to avoid outright opposition. If you can neutralize the opposition, this is where your strategy might be developed. It is getting harder and harder to run a campaign that has strong opposition. Everyone has a social media platform.</p>	
General public			
Polling	<p>Many, though not all, start with a poll to assess public support for various revenue options, service priorities, messages that work, as well as which neighborhoods and populations support or oppose. One place to start can be an informal survey done by volunteers.</p>	<p>Polls money and the amount can vary. You can make it much cheaper by doing an on-line poll, but it is less accurate and less comprehensive. Best to use a pollster with experience in your issues, and one that is trusted by leaders in your city or county.</p>	
Dominant local issues	<p>Are there new issues that could impact attitudes toward your measure – e.g., natural disaster, health, public safety</p>	<p>There are ways you could frame or target parts of the measure to address an overriding public concern of your city or county.</p>	
Media coverage	<p>Review recent media coverage in local papers.</p>	<p>Identify issues of interest to local media and friendly reporters who can help you as your measure evolves. Determine if there is sympathy in the media for your issues.</p>	

Add up the ledger – Make a decision.

REMEMBER: THIS IS AN ART, NOT A SCIENCE.



**FUNDING THE
NEXT GENERATION**

www.fundingthenextgeneration.org