

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESEARCH ON ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Transforming Anchor Institutions: A Toolkit for Community Organizers

This short guide provides tips for using technical assistance and research strategies for transforming anchor institutions. It focuses on a few key questions organizers and community leaders often have:

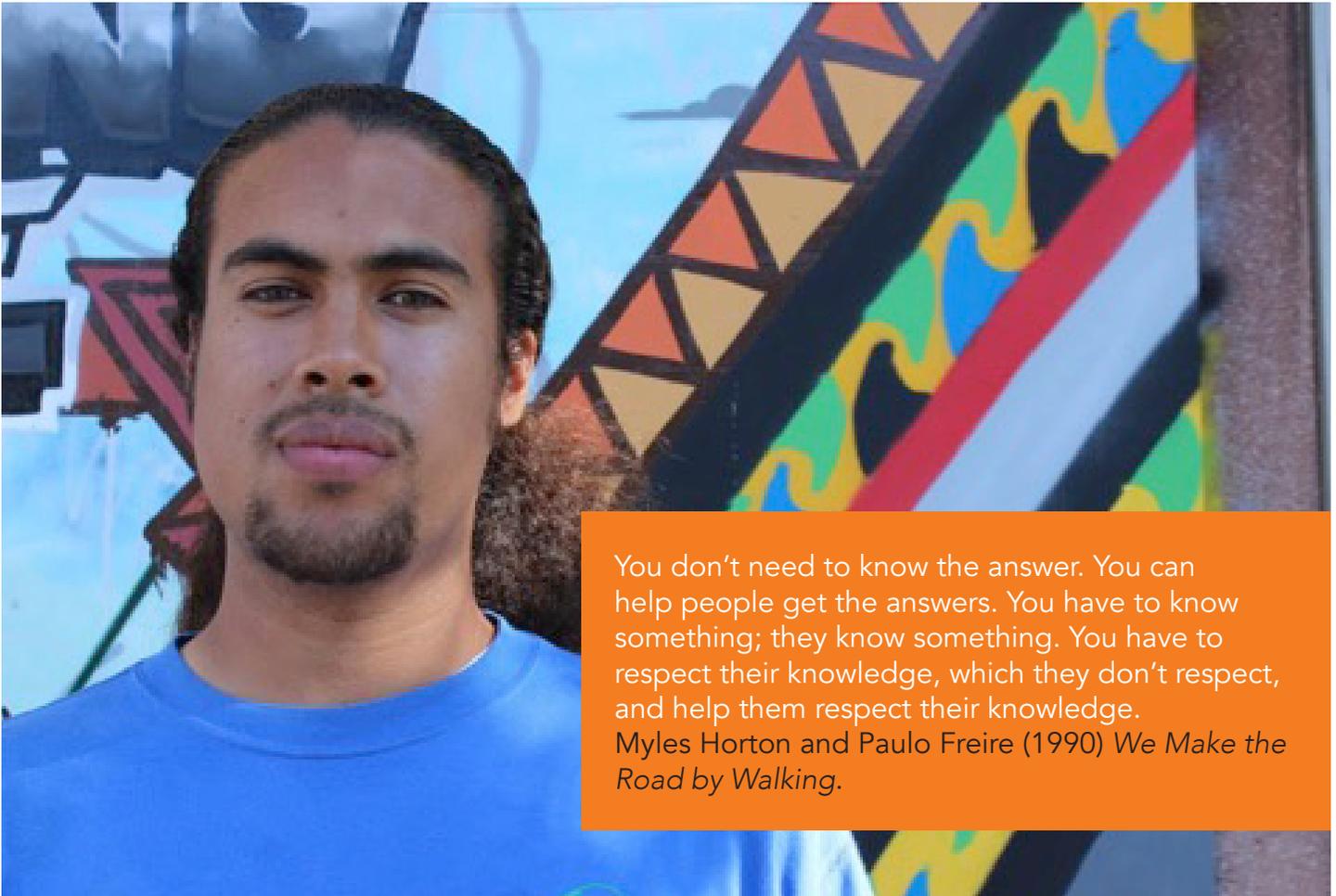
- What kind of technical assistance will help support a powerful community-driven campaign to transform an anchor institution?
- Where can a community go to get the right technical assistance?
- How can community groups and technical assistance providers work together to support a community-driven process?
- How can we make sure that technical assistance providers support the campaign, rather than redirecting it?

Following is a list of principles and tools for technical assistance to help build a powerful campaign. Following that is a chart with the key topics and research questions that have come up in our work on anchor institutions. For each topic, we describe the central questions to answer, and suggest the methods for researching them and some resources for gathering the needed information.

PRINCIPLES FOR POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

There are many non-profits and consultants that provide technical assistance, but not all is done in a way that honors community voices and builds community power. Following are four principles we suggest for technical assistance. Try to make sure that you are retaining technical assistance providers with a proven track record with this approach – and establish these dynamics up front.

1. **Community-driven:** The technical assistance providers work for the community organizers, not the other way around. The community should lead in deciding the scope of work, timeline, products, and areas of focus.
2. **Focus on popular education:** Technical knowledge must be turned into accessible material that uplifts and honors community knowledge. To do this right, the technical assistance provider must begin by listening and then ground the analysis in the experiences and insights of community members.
3. **Relevant and appropriate:** Policy ideas and research may not be right for your community if they do not take into consideration the local conditions, needs, and vision. Community members must be involved in providing feedback to guide revisions to the analysis.
4. **High-quality and critical:** For technical assistance to have credibility and provide true answers, it must be done with rigorous methods and with a critical lens. This may lead to analysis that questions the community's assumptions and leads to deeper understanding.



You don't need to know the answer. You can help people get the answers. You have to know something; they know something. You have to respect their knowledge, which they don't respect, and help them respect their knowledge.
Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990) *We Make the Road by Walking*.

Be sure to build in face-time for direct contact and open exchanges between community representatives and technical assistance providers, especially at the outset of the engagement. This will help develop a trusting and effective working relationship.

TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESEARCH

Here are a few concrete ways to ensure that technical assistance is community-driven:

1. **Memoranda of Understanding (“MOU”) on roles and principles of collaboration:** this is a written agreement between the community group and technical advisors that describes the shared goals and each one’s roles and responsibilities.
2. **Technical assistance sub-contracted by Community-based organizations:** having the community group receive funding and then sub-contract to the technical advisor helps ensure that the technical advisor is responsive to community needs and vision.
3. **Joint fundraising:** when community groups and technical advisors fundraise together, it creates transparency and accountability about the shared goals, roles, and resources.
4. **Participatory action research methods:** there are powerful strategies for combining research and organizing through participatory action research and community-based participatory research. Key authors include Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, Meredith Minkler, John Gaventa, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.



KEY RESEARCH TOPICS AND RESOURCES

RESEARCH NEEDS & QUESTIONS		METHODS	RESOURCES
Identifying Your Anchors	What are the anchor institutions in our community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for anchors in the list of top employers in your city Review reports on universities, hospitals, and other anchors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Annual Financial Report often lists top employers Reports from regional business associations, institutional community benefits programs, and anchor annual reports
	Which ones are expanding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any new funding sources, expansions or policy changes that the anchors will be affected by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview elected officials and policy experts. Review industry and regional economic outlook reports Interview anchor staff, and unions representing workers there
Leverage Points	What opportunities exist for our community to be powerfully engaged in transforming an anchor in our community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the institution's organizational chart and governance board Analyze funding sources, including major donors and public funding Identify any approvals the anchor will need from the city or other public agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions often have their organizational charts and info about their board of directors online Major donors and funding sources are often listed in annual reports City Planning officials and lawyers with planning expertise will know if city approvals are needed
Developing Policy Proposals	What could be achieved from transforming our anchor? What types of policies and practices would lead to the kind of impact on the ground that our community has envisioned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read case studies on anchors that have transformed to benefit marginalized communities Analyze how existing community priorities could be supported by an anchor. Eg. more funding for affordable housing can come from anchors as well as other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies and policy guides on anchors have been published by Democracy Collaborative, Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, PolicyLink, and others.
Data on Existing Issues	We know the issues our community members care about, how do we find data on these issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the gaps between your community and a goal for universal wellbeing Analyze differences along lines of race, gender, income and other group characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NationalEquityAtlas.org DiversityDataKids.org FactFinder.Census.gov
Strategic Communications Planning	What is the best approach to communicating with the right people to achieve our vision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategic communications plan that allows you to connect community members' stories to a clear narrative for change, and reach the people you need to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words that Work report by Partnership for Working Families StoryBasedStrategy.org PublicWorks.org ToposPartnership.com
Legal Assistance	What legally binding agreements can be reached, and how do we know when an agreement has loopholes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Community Benefits Agreements signed by community groups Retain an attorney to advise on development of agreement language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBAs Currently in Effect at www.forworkingfamilies.org Community Benefits Agreements at juliangross.net

WORKING WITH LAWYERS

by Julian Gross, an attorney with 20 years experience working with communities on community benefits agreements.

Legal expertise can be a crucial component of an effective campaign to influence an anchor institution, but working with lawyers can be challenging. Here are some tips for getting the most out of an attorney working with your coalition:

- **Clear Roles.** Make sure it is 100% clear whom the lawyer is representing. Use a formal, written retainer agreement – even for pro bono lawyers.
- **You're in Charge!** Remember that the lawyer works for you! Lawyers are under strict rules requiring them to work only in their clients' interests. (This is true both for pro bono attorneys and paid counsel.) If you have any concerns about whether this is occurring, ask questions until you are satisfied with the answers. If necessary, instruct your lawyer to refrain from communications with other parties except as specifically instructed – and to report back to you on all conversations.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** It's important to have channels of communication with your lawyer that are completely confidential, so that your lawyer can give you his or her best advice. Do not forward e-mails or memos from your lawyer without prior discussion. Be careful about recounting for other parties legal views you heard in confidence. When in doubt, ask first.
- **Lawyers as coalition members.** Sometimes a lawyer or law office – often a nonprofit, like a legal aid office – will become part of a coalition, and will help advocate regarding an anchor institution. They may provide some legal expertise as part of the coalition's advocacy. This is appropriate and helpful, but all parties should understand that *being in the coalition* is different from *being the coalition's legal representative*. Just make sure that everyone understands what role the lawyer or law office is playing.
- **Pick the right lawyer.** Remember that (i) not every lawyer is expert in every area; and (ii) even lawyers with the right expertise will not necessarily be a good fit for you and your campaign. Spend some time with the lawyer before bringing him or her in, to make sure it feels like it will be a good working relationship. And make a change if necessary, even as the campaign is underway.
- **Ask questions!** While lawyers have special expertise, nothing they do is so mysterious that it cannot be explained – and in fact, it is your lawyer's job to do so. You should be 100% comfortable that you understand the basis for any legal recommendation, and have authorized everything your lawyer is doing.

For many campaigns, legal expertise can greatly amplify the effectiveness of the coalition. Follow the above guidelines to help make sure that lawyers' work supports and strengthens your coalition's advocacy.

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT From 2013 to 2016, community leaders organized for a community benefits agreement with the Berkeley Global Campus development in Richmond, CA. Their visions for change have translated into a massive mobilization of Richmond's community through dedicated organizing and strategy-building. This guide is part of a toolkit sharing some of the lessons learned about transforming the policies and practices of anchor institutions. For additional guides, videos, and presentation slides that are part of this toolkit, go to <http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/anchortoolkit>