

Grassroots Organizing for Change: Handout

I. Checklist for Evaluating Grassroots Organizing and Organizations

MEMBERSHIP

Does the organization have a membership or constituency base?

Is there a membership recruitment plan? Does it include one-on-one engagement of people? Does membership recruitment play an important role in the organization? Is there a mechanism to retain current members?

Does the membership reflect the diversity of the community?

Is there active participation in the group by people of color and women? Are questions of race and gender addressed in the education and leadership development process of the group?

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Is the organization democratic? Specifically, does the membership have some direct control over the decision making process and structure of the organization? Over programmatic policies, the budget, and staffing?

Are members and leaders involved in all levels of the actions and campaigns of the organization, including fundraising and financial oversight?

Is the leadership elected, and actively changing every few years?

Are people of color and women part of the decision making and leadership bodies?

Does the organization have an identifiable leadership development process?

If the organization is staffed, are professional community organizers included in the staffing structure? Are they trained and regularly provided additional training opportunities?

STRATEGY

Does the organizational mission identify the values of social, economic and environmental justice as a part of its work?

Does the group have the ability to realistically assess the political terrain and devise strategies to address their concerns in the long and short term?

Does the organization think systematically about the education of its membership, leadership and staff?

Is there evidence that the group works collaboratively in coalitions?

Does the organization have a strategic plan in place that makes them viable and sustainable for the long haul?

Is the organization developing its own culture, social relationships and celebrations?

IMPACT

Is the organization developing creative solutions to difficult community problems?

Does the organization have a record of and/or the capacity for delivering victories?

Is the organization increasing the civic participation of communities traditionally left out of the political process?

Does the organization have a stated method for organizational evaluation? Is the evaluatory process a measure of objectives met as well as a learning tool for the organization?

II. General Characteristics of Grassroots Organizations

- Involves large numbers of people in geographic location
- Members are actively involved in the work of the organization in ways that go beyond subscribership or donating money
- Democratic, with the leadership and staff accountable to the membership
- Principal Objectives
 1. Develop the capacity of its members to participate effectively in public life
 2. Deliver concrete victories on issues of direct concern to its constituency
 3. Affect institutions, public policies and power relationships in a way that advance social, environmental and economic justice