Involving Members in Building Their Own Organization

OK, I’M READY—LET’S GET TO WORK

Walking along 116th Street to the Community Voices Heard (CVH) office, Lorena looks up and sees the words on the green awning, “CVH—Fighting for Families, Fighting for Ourselves.” She likes that. As she guides her son up the long flight of stairs, she can hear voices coming from the second floor. Renée comes over and says, “I’m so glad you’re here!” and then helps Lorena settle her son in a room with another child and a babysitter. Her son picks out a toy and seems at ease. Lorena sits at a table with about a dozen people. Around her, phones are ringing, a copy machine is humming, and people are walking around, talking in English and in Spanish. On long lists posted on the faded blue walls surrounding the meeting table people’s names handwritten in marker indicate sign-ups to do things.

Lorena accepts a slice of pizza and writes her name and contact information on a sign-up sheet that people are passing around. A woman who introduces herself as a CVH member starts the meeting and asks everyone to introduce themselves. Everyone seems to be in the same situation as Lorena, trying to get by. The woman talks about the ways that they want to improve the way the welfare system works and how they are fighting to get the city and state to create paid jobs, with education and training, for welfare recipients. She talks about the progress they made in getting people to support their bill, and Lorena recognizes the name of her local city council person. She thinks to herself that this group must be important if they got him to do something. At one point, the woman running the meeting says they need to pick three people to go into a meeting with the mayor’s staff while a larger group of people will hold a press conference outside. She asks Lorena what she thinks. Lorena comments, but feels a little uncomfortable.
By the end of the meeting, Lorena has not learned anything to help her with her case, but she feels less alone than when her caseworker screamed at her just a few days before. She doesn’t want to bring her son out at night, and she isn’t sure if she likes talking in meetings, but when Renee tells her afterward that it would be great if she’d come to the press conference, Lorena says she will try. Something is happening here, and Lorena wants to be a part of it.

What Is Member Involvement and Why Is It Important?
Member involvement is an evolutionary process in which organizers develop the participation and ownership of constituents. Members do the work of a community power-building organization, so their participation is essential. When members are deeply involved, they come to feel their own power and start to demystify the concept of community engagement.

Organizers move members to take on tasks, make collective decisions, and turn out for actions and organizational activities.

Involvement does not just happen. You think strategically about how to use each member’s abilities to greatest effect and how to motivate each of them to act—and to continue to act.

What Are the Different Types of Members We Need?
You need an active membership with people taking different roles.

General members. General members come out to mass actions, large annual membership meetings, and sometimes planning meetings. You contact general members at least every three to six months. You test ideas for new campaigns with them and ask them to help make decisions about potential campaigns.

Working members. These members actively build the campaigns and the organization. You ask them to come to the office, make phone calls, do mailings, talk to their neighbors, and attend organizing meetings. They often exercise some leadership by making decisions on campaigns and actions. The more working members you have, the greater the potential you have for a large turnout.

Leaders. Leaders are core organizational decision makers. They also bring their own networks of people into the organization. You engage them in deep strategy planning for campaigns and for the organization. Leaders represent the organize-
tion to powerholders—decision makers such as elected officials or CEOs—who are the targets of your campaigns. Leaders negotiate on behalf of the organization. They are accountable to the rest of the membership.

“Paper” members. These less active members have taken a formal step to connect with your organization. For instance, they may have signed a membership card or even paid dues, but they do not come out to actions or meetings. You may send them newsletters or call to try to move them to come to mass actions, but you do not invest a lot of time into involving them. The power they lend to the organization is that they build your numbers. Labor unions, community organizing networks, elected officials, and the media all respond to these numbers.

How Do We Involve Members in Our Organization?

Simply put, you get members to do things!

As we described in Chapter Three, you start the process of involvement in the first five minutes of meeting a potential member, when you get him or her to respond to a call to action or to sign a pledge card. Some specific ways to continue the process include involving members in the following ways:

Making decisions. When members come to meetings and make decisions about the direction of campaigns and the organization, they develop ownership of its well-being. Decision making is a source of real power. We include sample sessions throughout this book that show how to engage members in decision making.

Mobilizing other members. Members need to send out mailings, call people to turn out for actions, or knock on doors in their neighborhoods to recruit new members. Tool 4.1 shows how to conduct a phone bank evening for getting people out to an action. Exercise 4.1 provides a half-day training on how to do door-knocking for recruitment.

Coming out to actions. Members get most energized when they engage in action that moves the campaign forward. You mobilize them to meet with elected officials, march, form pickets, and participate in a wide range of other exciting actions, which we describe in Chapter Twelve.

Taking on roles. You increase the likelihood that someone will get involved if you give him a role at the meeting or action you invite him to attend. Ask him to greet people at the door, make food, chair the session, or present testimony. You make sure you include time to prep or train him. Tool 4.2 provides guidelines for helping a member prepare testimony.
Paying dues. When members pay dues, they expect the organization to deliver. Dues help pay salaries, rent, and other costs. When members invest their own money in the organization, it becomes their organization.

Meeting membership criteria. Many organizations establish some kind of criteria members need to meet. For example, every member must recruit ten more members or hold one house meeting a year or participate in a leadership training course.

Raising money. When members not only give their own money but also fundraise for the organization, it shows their commitment in a very deep way. Fundraising includes seeking in-kind donations, such as computers or skills. For more on fundraising, see Resource B.

Engaging in public relationships for power. People get involved and stay involved with an organization when they have positive relationships within it. You foster these relationships, for example, when you place new people in working groups with other members, then call to find out how it’s going, or when you have members meet with new people before or after meetings. Activities such as general membership meetings, holiday parties, and movie nights also help develop these relationships. The relationship between an organizer and a member can be very strong. Keep in mind that although you truly try to get to know each member, you have a public relationship based in your work together, not a private one.

Getting Members Involved: Two Stories

After 9/11, Community Voices Heard (CVH) participates in a campaign to create an emergency jobs program to put some of the tens of thousands of people who lost their jobs in a range of industries back to work. Organizers recruit temporary workers and WEP workers in city agencies and begin by getting people to come out for a specific action—a town hall meeting and march to the agency responsible for redeveloping Lower Manhattan. The march will take place during the lunch hour so workers can attend. They will demand a meeting with the head of the agency.

Organizers focus on points of entry downtown and use a rap and materials aimed at turning people out for the action. Many people are not sure if they can come, but most agree to sign pledge cards supporting the campaign as well as postcards demanding that the agency allocate funding for an emergency jobs pro-
gram—an initial form of involvement. Organizers call those who agree to come to the action to remind and move them to come out. Some do so, deepening their involvement.

One WEP worker, Paula, tells the organizer she is angry about being forced to work for no pay and that the agency distributing the 9/11 funds is giving the jobs to the friends of its own board members. Since her shift starts at lunch time, Paula cannot march. Assessing that from her anger and interest Paula wants to do something now, the organizer asks if she will recruit the other workers in her office. A Spanish-speaker, Paula can bring in workers with whom the organizer, who speaks only English, has trouble communicating. Paula readily agrees. She collects pledges, postcards, and names and phone numbers from the other workers and gives them to the organizer. The organizer then asks a Spanish-speaking organizer to call these workers and get them to come to the action. The organizer suggests to Paula that the workers will be more likely to come to the action if Paula walks them to the building lobby. Paula arrives early on the day of the action and does this. She sees her involvement come full circle, as she connects the workers directly with the organizer.

Although this story shows how organizers got several different people involved in different ways within two weeks of meeting an organizer—signing pledges, coming out to an action, recruiting others to participate—another campaign offers an example of member involvement that took several months of follow-up on the part of the organizer.

In the Transitional Jobs Campaign, an organizer meets Sam coming out of a welfare office one day. She engages him using her rap and gets his contact information. She calls Sam the next day to get him to come to the next planning meeting. He says he will try, but winds up not being able to make it. Based on his interest and good conversations with Sam, the organizer decides to keep calling him. After four months of intermittent conversations and attempts to move him to action, Sam finally comes to an organizing meeting at CVH.

At the meeting, members identify a small number of people to testify to the mayor at a public hearing to urge him to sign the Transitional Jobs Bill the city council has passed. Although the mayor vows to veto the bill, members want to offer the best possible testimonies to try to sway him at the last minute.
Sam tells the other members that he is a veteran, disabled in the Vietnam War. In addition, he worked for twenty-five years before he was fired from his job due to downsizing. He then had to turn to welfare. Based on this compelling story, members decide to ask Sam to testify, even though this is only his first meeting. The organizer preps Sam and Sam gives an excellent testimony. Although he does not move the mayor to sign the bill, Sam feels his power. The organizer immediately offers Sam additional opportunities for action. Sam becomes very involved and two years after attending his first meeting, he becomes a CVH board member.

How Do We Identify Where Members Fit in the Organization?
You call, visit, and use every interaction to assess where a member is in relation to the organization and the campaign.

The following are assessment tools:

Assessment phone calls. In assessment calls, you determine how comfortable people are in their roles, see how they are doing, and assess if they want to step up their involvement or step back. These calls last about fifteen or twenty minutes, so in an evening you can speak with between nine and twelve people. Assessment calls help you to update your lists, you remove people who are no longer interested.

Home visits. You do home visits with people you have identified as “1s” during recruitment. You also do them with people with whom you want to solidify a connection because they have come out to some meetings or actions. You arrange the visit in advance or you drop by, and you have a goal for the visit, such as getting people to come out to an important action or to host a house meeting. Home visits generally last fifteen to twenty minutes, and you have to account for the time to travel from one home to another. The face-to-face contact helps you assess body language and build deeper relationships. People are more honest in person. They consider a home visit to be a more serious gesture on the part of an organization, increasing the likelihood they will get involved.

Organizing meetings. Organizing meetings offer ideal ways to assess how people can be involved. You ask them directly to do things, both in preparation for meetings and at meetings, such as making reminder calls, photocopying, and facilitating. At the end of meetings, you review the tasks that members need to complete before the next meeting or action so that people can volunteer right there.
One-on-one meetings. Through one-on-one meetings with individuals, you identify people who are ready to take on more significant leadership roles. A one-on-one is a specific type of home visit, which lasts thirty to forty minutes. We describe how to do one-on-ones in Chapter Five.

Database. Especially in larger organizations, you may not notice everyone who comes out. A database that tracks involvement can be useful for identifying these people. You can produce lists of members who have come to many events, people who have been consistent over a number of years, or people who have taken on some ongoing activities, and follow up with them.

How Do We Increase the Involvement of Members?
You are strategic and deliberate about moving people from one type of membership to another in order to increase and deepen their involvement.

You make choices about which member is right for which role, who is likely to follow through on her promises, who needs to be challenged, who requires training, and who is not going to progress. You engage people in conversations and use intuitive skills to determine when they are ready to get more involved. You observe, watching to see which members are taking on tasks and responsibilities. Once you determine that someone is ready to do more, especially to move into a leadership role, you ask him to do so and support him as we describe in Chapter Five.

Moving a Member to Be More Deeply Involved
After meeting an organizer at her welfare office, Lorena becomes a general member with Community Voices Heard. For years she occasionally participates in strategy meetings, but CVH can best count on her to attend major actions. When Paul decides to leave his job as executive director of CVH, leaders consider whom to approach to serve on the board and shepherd this transition. Zelda, a long-time leader and board co-chair, has seen Lorena participate in meetings and actions. She is impressed with Lorena’s judgment and commitment. Zelda and Paul agree that they will each approach Lorena and ask her to consider joining the board.

They meet with Lorena and talk with her about the time commitment as well as what she can bring to the organization in this new, deeper role. After several discussions and time to think about it, Lorena agrees to join the board. Lorena did not just decide one day, “I want to be on the board.” Instead, a leader and staff person guide her movement from one type of membership to another.
You assess members every chance you get. Opportunities include when a member drops by, when you are driving to a meeting together, or when you are waiting for a meeting to start. A good organizer juggles a lot of relationships and responsibilities, making it important to form assessments whenever the opportunity arises.

The biggest mistake is not to try to move someone. If you think someone is ready, ask. Member involvement requires being direct with people, honest with yourself about their potential, and both challenging and flexible as you support them. Exercise 4.2 provides a scenario and questions for getting people to think about opportunities and ways to engage new and existing members more deeply.

How Do We Make Sure Members Do What They Commit to Do?
The following describes how you can increase the likelihood that someone will follow through when she agrees to do something.

1. Before the Activity
   • Make confirmation calls. In these calls you remind the person about what she said she would do and when she needs to do it. You make three confirmation calls. The first call is the day after she makes the commitment; the second is halfway between the time she made the commitment and the activity; the third is the night before the activity. Leaving a phone message is not enough—you need to speak with her directly.
   • Offer support, training, and technical assistance. Here is an example of offering your support in a confirmation call: “Hello, Lorena—this is Renee from CVH. You agreed to pull together people from your tenants association on the 28th to talk about CVH and our campaign for jobs. Are we still on for that meeting? Yes? Great! Is there anything you need to do to prepare for that meeting? Do you need me to come and go over an agenda with you? Help you doorknock? No? Great. Well, I’ll call you a week before the meeting to check in with you again, get a list of people who will be coming, and to go over the agenda. Talk to you then!”
   • Send a reminder by snail or electronic mail. A written reminder firms up commitment, particularly for group activities such as a mailing or phone bank. You include the date, time, place, activity, information about food or child care, a thank you, and a contact number.
• Make a final reminder call. Even if you have to keep trying on the day of the activity, make that final live call to turn the person out!

2. During the Activity

• Make the member feel comfortable. Tell her how this activity is critical for building the organization and winning the campaign. Offer training and support.
• Observe the activity. Make sure the member is being effective.
• Thank the member. Acknowledge and thank the member publicly and get her to commit to doing something again, right there.

3. After the Activity

• Ask how it went. Ask the member how the activity went and how she feels she performed.
• Ask if she has questions. Answer any questions she has and assess if she will continue to work on the campaign and in what capacity.

Is Paying People a Good Way to Get Them Involved?

No. We strongly believe that paying people to engage in power-building activities with an organization does not ultimately build power.

You could never raise enough money to pay for all the work required for building an effective organization. If you pay members, you also risk seeming to reward certain people and not others, which creates instability. In addition, you foster an atmosphere of serving and helping individual members rather than building their collective power. If members get paid, they are accountable to whoever is signing their check, not to other members, which limits their ownership in the organization. In years of organizing with no-income people, CVH has not paid constituents. Power is the payoff.

Sometimes, particularly with constituents who are unemployed, those who put in a lot of time—and feel they are doing the same tasks as a paid organizer—want to get a stipend or move into a paid position. Some just feel entitled, others would really like to become organizers. In this case, you can try the following:

• Provide material support. Provide food and child care at meetings and work activities and arrange for transportation if needed, so that coming out does not cost people money.
• Clearly explain how organizations build power and why you don’t pay members. It is easier to enforce the organization’s position when everyone knows, up front, what it is and why it exists.

• Don’t be afraid to lose a member. If someone disagrees and wants to stop participating, you let them. You are not resentful, just clear. Never make a special arrangement for one member. It will definitely cause problems with others in the future.

• Provide opportunities for members who want to organize or work in a social change organization as a career. Establish clear policies and programs for training people within the organization and for considering members who want to apply for job openings along with other qualified candidates. Refer members to look outside the organization as well, to training programs, entry-level jobs, and short-term jobs that will expose them to the career of organizing or administering an organization.

  Organizations do sometimes hire people from the membership and some cultivate members to learn to take on staff roles. This can work out well, but when a member goes on staff, his or her role changes. For example, after about three years of being a member and serving as board chair of CVH, our colleague, Gail, accepted a job on staff. She went from representing the organization in public to developing other people to do so. She no longer had oversight of the organization’s director, but instead was accountable to him and to other staff. This is not always an easy transition. Although hiring members can seem like the perfect solution to staffing needs and to address the interests of members, it requires clear guidelines and oversight to make it work.

| CHALLENGES TO MEMBER INVOLVEMENT |

“Our lists are overwhelming” Although this is a good problem to have and the result of effective recruitment, a huge list can overwhelm an organizer and lead to losing potential members. You can address this challenge by doing the most effective assessment possible during recruitment, so that the numbers of people with whom you have to follow up are real and you do not waste time calling people who are not interested. You also train members to assist with assessment phone calls, calling the “2s” or those you have not contacted recently. You clean up your list by choosing an upcoming event or conducting a survey that provides
an opportunity to call through the entire list and see who is still interested. Fi-
nally, you invest in people who say they are going to come out, and do, not those
who keep promising but don’t show up. Try a “three strike” rule. If someone says
he is going to come and three times in a row does not, put him lower on your pri-
ority list or take him off.

“Our members are burned out.” Although burnout is normal, you don’t want to
lose people. Be sure to acknowledge and recognize members for their work by
holding volunteer and member parties that recognize people’s contributions and
help energize them. Similarly, CVH recognizes those members who put in a lot of
time by prioritizing them to participate in exciting movement-building activities in
other states and countries. Having social time, such as sharing dinner before or
after a volunteer shift, is another way to build solidarity and a sense of mutual sup-
port. In addition, taking on varied roles and tasks energizes people. Directly ask
members if they would like to do something new or different and what kind of
training or support would they need to do it. Make sure that you are not over-
asking the same members to do things. It is easy to go to those who do the job well.
You don’t have to prep them, you know they will show up. Check in periodically
so you know these members aren’t feeling burned out.

| ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS |
| FOR INVOLVING MEMBERS |

- Get them to do things. Moving people to action early and often is the best
way to get them involved and keep them involved.
- Engage them in making decisions. People feel that the organization is their
own when they come to meetings not just to talk, but to make decisions that
move the work forward.
- Call, visit, and continually assess how and when to involve them. Staying in
contact with people and directly asking what they can and want to do builds
their involvement.
- Make at least three live confirmation or reminder calls. When a member
agrees to do something, you call at least three times to directly speak with
her, remind her, and offer your support.
- Acknowledge and thank them. When you acknowledge and thank members
publicly for the work they do, it builds your relationship with them and en-
courages them to do more.
Tool 4.1
Phone Bank Evening

Phone banks are a great way to get members involved in doing something that really helps the organization. In the example here of an agenda for such an evening, the purpose of the phone bank is to get people to an action.

Sample Phone Bank Training and Phone Bank Evening

6:00  Callers arrive and help themselves to refreshments.

6:15–6:45  Training

Introductions: Everyone says their name, how they are involved with the organization, why they came out tonight.

Goals of the evening: On chart paper, facilitator writes out how many phone calls we need to make tonight, how many hours we have, how many calls a person can make per hour, and our goals for contacts and yeses. This is important for evaluation and a sense of accomplishment at the end of the evening.

Review phone bank materials: List of people to call, instructions, sign-up sheets, rap.

Review campaign material: Campaign one-pager, action flyer and location, goals of action.

Review “Five Things to Remember for Callers”

Five Things to Remember for Callers

1. Figure on five minutes per contact (actual live person).
2. Remember to get a firm commitment, Yes or No.
3. Convey urgency—Why this action is important.
4. Smile! Your face shows over the phone. Grumpies and tired people convey a grumpy, lazy organization.
5. Keep good records.

Rap: Review rap and answer questions.

Role play: Two people role play a couple of phone calls. They do different types of calls, both good and bad, and ask the volunteers what they think: what worked, what did not?

Break up into pairs and role-play: Organizer or phone bank leader listens to pairs and gives positive feedback.
Tool 4.1
Phone Bank Evening, Cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:45</td>
<td>Start phone calling. Organizer or phone bank leader checks in with volunteers constantly, listens to their rap, and gives positive reinforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15</td>
<td>Organizer goes around and engages volunteers in brief conversations to get to know them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Light food available. People take a short break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00–9:00</td>
<td>One-hour push—best time to call!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00–9:15</td>
<td>Convene for evaluation. Did we reach our goals? What were people’s experiences?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tool 4.2
Preparing Testimony

When members who are affected by an issue speak truth to power in public hearings, as media spokespersons or while trying to engage other groups in a campaign, their words can move people to change their opinions and to act. Providing testimony also builds member skills and buy-in. You can use the following guidelines and the sample that follows when helping a member to prepare testimony.

Guidelines for Helping a Member Prepare Testimony

Don’t write a person’s testimony, provide an outline (see the example below). An outline lets the member develop her own ideas about what she wants to say. Include the length of time the person has to speak.

Clearly identify and state the goals for the speaker. Each speaking engagement should have a goal and a clear ask. Help the member to be as specific and targeted as possible and to develop testimony that fits the audience.
Tool 4.2
Preparing Testimony, Cont’d

Connect personal experience to systemic problems and structural solutions. Stay away from horror stories or sob stories. Help the member connect personal experience to a larger community problem and state a solution to address it. Include facts.

Always include a call to action or a demand. Testimonies can make people uncomfortable or can make them more open to listen. Either reaction can get them to move on an issue. The member uses the opportunity to directly call for what the organization wants the listeners to do.

Practice, practice, practice. The member should write and practice her testimony so she does not read it from a piece of paper. It is best to practice at home in front of a mirror or with other members who can give feedback.

Sample Outline for Testimony

Introduction, hello, and thanks
My name is Helen Smith and I want to thank you for coming out to hear about the important issue I want to talk about today.

Credentials and organizational background
I have been a member of __________ for five years. In that time __________ has accomplished these three things: ____________, ____________, ____________.

Why you are here
We are here today to . . . (present testimony, educate the congregation)

Personal experience
I have lived in this community for twenty-five years and remember what a wonderful place it was. Like many of you, I came here to raise a healthy family in a beautiful setting. But that is the past. Today members of my family are sick, and one family friend has passed away from a rare form of cancer. The woods that once were a paradise have become a toxic waste dump.
Involving Members in Building Their Own Organization

Tool 4.2
Preparing Testimony, Cont’d

Connection to the larger problem
I am not alone. Hundreds of other families in this community have family members who are seriously ill as a result of this dumping.

State the problem
Corporation X has been dumping toxics into the river for two years and the state EPA has not done anything to address it. The company’s behavior has caused increased incidences of cancer in our communities and many of our children are at risk of severe illnesses.

State the demand
We are asking that the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee hold hearings on Earth Day to find out why the state EPA is not doing its job to protect our community from corporate polluters.

Ask for action
Please call and write the chair of the committee to demand that he hold public hearings to find out why the EPA is doing nothing and the pollution is allowed to continue.

Express thanks
Thank you for hearing me today and allowing me to represent the hundreds of other families affected by this issue.
Exercise 4.1
Doorknocking Training

The following is a training you can use to train members and volunteers to knock on doors for base-building or other organizing purposes. It includes seventy-five minutes of training, two hours in the field, and fifteen minutes to debrief. Because people go out into the field together to accomplish a goal, this kind of training is also a form of collective action. It is a group of people acting together to inform and move community members and to build your power. You evaluate it like an action, have goals like an action, and make it a group activity like an action.

Materials:

For training: Handout—basics of a rap; easel, pad, and markers.

For field work: Rap sheet, pledge or membership cards, surveys or petitions, pens, clipboards (with a rap sheet and staff phone number taped to the back!), maps or directions to the places where the outreach is taking place, organizational information or action information, organizational buttons or hats.

Room set-up: Chairs in a circle. Have drinks and snacks available when people return from the field.

Preparation for the Training

• Scout the area where people will doorknock—if people have a bad experience, they will not come back.
• Map out the quickest ways to get people from the training site to the field.
• Use the training as a membership development opportunity. Identify members to take on the role of team captain, gathering their group and working with people out in the field. Set the teams in advance and prep the team captain.
• Make sure all materials are ready to go.

The Training

• Facilitator leads a round of introductions, in which people say their names, how they got involved, and why they are there. (5 minutes)
• An organizer or leader presents the basics of the campaign, also written on chart paper, and explains the goals for the doorknocking, including numeric goals for the number of contacts for the day and what this will mean to the campaign. For
Exercise 4.1
Doorknocking Training, Cont’d

example, if the goal is for each person to get six commits an hour and twenty people are going out, they will get 240 commits in a two-hour canvass. Also review any other relevant goals, such as getting people to sign a pledge to vote.
(10 minutes)

• Facilitator reviews the following basics and writes them on a chart: (10 minutes)
  □ Spend only about five minutes with each person. You need to talk to lots of people and get their names and numbers.
  □ Doorknocking without getting names and numbers is not useful and does not build your lists. Get contact information and write it down yourself.
  □ You do not need to know every situation and policy in order to doorknock. If you don’t know an answer, tell the person to call or stop by the office.

• Facilitator asks what concerns and fears participants have about talking to people at the doors. She writes down and addresses each fear, giving the overall message that most people will be receptive at the doors. The following are the fears you might hear: (20 minutes)

Doorknocking Fears

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear</th>
<th>Facilitator Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People will say no.</td>
<td>Give the number (or percentage) of people who usually respond yes at the doors. Also tell them that if someone says no, say thank you and move on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally afraid of knocking on a stranger’s door.</td>
<td>Have a leader prepped who has done this before and talk about the experience. Frame this as an opportunity to build trust with people and build community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to bother people.</td>
<td>If people are busy, say that you are sorry for bothering them but you only need them for five minutes. If they are too busy to spend five minutes, ask them when you can come back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid for own safety.</td>
<td>Explain that the people we work with live in these areas as well and that fear is something that is real—but in reality the threat is not. Tell people we are also going out in teams that will keep an eye out for one another.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 4.1
Doorknocking Training, Cont’d

- The message of the facilitator and leaders is that most people will be receptive at the doors.
- Facilitator distributes the rap and reviews the basic components of a rap and the recruitment tools (contact sheet, clipboard, and other tools). Participants read the rap to themselves and ask clarifying questions. (10 minutes)
- Rap practice: In the larger group or in pairs if the group is large, participants practice giving the rap and using the tools. Leaders or staff work with people to make sure they are using the rap and the tools effectively. After people have a chance to practice, ask for volunteers to model for the group and use the volunteer modeling to reinforce what people need to do. (15 minutes)
- Participants ask brief clarifying questions and form teams. Facilitator reminds people that they will be out for two hours, then come back to debrief as a group. (5 minutes)
- When people return, they debrief for fifteen or twenty minutes. As they come in, the facilitator has them mark down their numbers on a big sheet and write a word or two about their experience. As people grab something to eat, the facilitator talks to them about the experience. When everyone has returned, the facilitator brings the group together and evaluates with the following questions: What were our goals? Did we reach them? Why or why not? What did you learn?
- Close by asking people what they liked about the experience and relate it back to the fears they discussed earlier. Facilitator asks who was the best person each doorknocker met and why.

Things to Remember:
- People will find reasons not to go or delay hitting the streets. Get people moving.
- When calling people for a reminder, tell them not to bring things they need to carry, such as a large purse, bag, or backpack. They should come light on their feet and wearing comfortable shoes.
- Depending on what you are signing people up to do, in addition to practicing the sign-up, have a large copy of a filled-out form for participants to view. Reinforce that the doorknockers fill out the information themselves.
Exercise 4.2
Develop, Don’t Destroy! Part Two

You can use the following as a training exercise to review the fundamentals of involving members. For Part One of this exercise on how to recruit members, see Chapter Three.

Scenario: Your organization wants the state legislature to adopt its plan to develop affordable housing and locally controlled stores in an up-and-coming area of your state, just outside the small city where your constituents live. At the same time, a rich developer is proposing to build luxury housing and big-box stores in the same area, with no commitment to hire locally and a weak promise of including some affordable housing units. Your organization is planning a mass meeting with Speaker Morgan, a key legislator, next week. Over the last two weeks, you met your goal of signing up 150 new people who say they will come and you have followed up with a phone call to each of them to confirm.

Task: Answer the following questions:
- How can you use this as an opportunity to assess if some existing, working members of your organization can get more involved?
- What kinds of roles can you give these members to increase their involvement and work this new list?
- What can you do with two or three of the “1s” you’re recruiting to involve them as deeply as possible?
Developing Leaders from All Walks of Life

GETTING OUR LEADERS READY FOR THE FIGHT
During the Community Voices Heard (CVH) campaign for transitional jobs, labor union members and officials need to see and hear the workers out front in order to support the campaign. Organizers set out to find rank-and-file WEP workers who will not just be involved, but who have the potential to be leaders. They train WEP workers to run meetings, lead actions, give testimony about the impact of WEP, and engage in discussions with elected officials, labor leaders, and the press. Training takes place at organizing committee meetings, in Saturday sessions, in one-on-one meetings in people’s homes, and right before actions. Trainings include a combination of readings about political ideology, discussions, presentations, and role plays covering the potential scenarios leaders can expect to face in action. Organizers also bring potential leaders together for a three-day leadership-training weekend that focuses on team building, skills development, and critical thinking. This new base of leaders helps win the campaign. (For more information about WEP, workfare, and the CVH jobs campaign, see “The Story of Community Voices Heard,” p. xxxi.)

What Is Leadership Development and Why Is It Important?
Leadership development is a strategic and deliberate effort to educate and train members to strengthen their skills so they can apply these skills to campaigns and the work of the organization. Leadership development gives members the knowledge and skills to run their own organizations effectively, hold staff accountable, and manage campaigns that address the issues they care about.
Leadership development significantly deepens the involvement of members. It is one of an organizer’s primary responsibilities. You develop a broad base of leaders to ensure that decision making, knowledge, and responsibility do not become concentrated in one or two people. Because organizations across communities develop leaders, it builds the base for democratic movements for social change.

How Do We Develop Leaders?

You develop leaders following a specific process.

The following describes the process of leadership development by following the development of Angela, who became a core leader at CVH. We begin with Angela’s recruitment (see Chapter Three for how to recruit people) and move through her initial involvement (see Chapter Four for involving members) in order to show why and how the organizer identifies her as a potential leader and starts to guide her development. Although we number the steps in sequence, you sometimes do them in a different order depending on the situation.

Step One. Angela gets recruited. While Angela is cooking dinner one night, Jackson, a CVH organizer who is out surveying people to identify new issues for CVH to work on, knocks on her door. He explains that he is talking to everyone in her housing project to learn about community issues.

Even though Angela is busy making dinner, she is excited that someone actually wants to know what she thinks about problems in the community, and invites him in. She turns off the flame and says her husband and daughter can eat a few minutes later. She sits at the table with Jackson. She tells him she has been active in the past and that preserving public housing is her biggest concern. Jackson completes the survey with her and takes down her contact information. He hands her a flyer for the next CVH meeting and says, “I’ll call to remind you about the meeting, I hope you can come!” When he leaves the apartment, Jackson is enthusiastic about Angela. After his two weeks of doorknocking, someone finally stands out. Angela has a political analysis of her problems, she’s been involved in collective action, and she wants to do something. He writes a “1” next to her name—very likely to get involved—and makes a note to call her the next day.

When Jackson calls Angela the next day, she says she can’t make it to the next meeting. He tells her that CVH members are still considering whether or not to work on public housing, but she can get involved right away with other activities. She says she might. He thanks her for her time and says he will call her soon.
Jackson calls Angela a week later to invite her to attend an accountability session with the newly elected city council person from her district. CVH wants the council person to commit to working with CVH on a range of community issues. (For more about accountability sessions see Chapter Twelve.)

**Step Two. Angela moves to action.** Jackson calls Angela two more times and sends Angela two mailings about the accountability session. She is interested that this group is trying so hard to get her to come to something. She also wants to hear what the new city council person has to say. Even though she is very busy, she decides to go to the action.

**Step Three. Angela enters into a relationship with the organization.** At the accountability session, Angela talks with Jackson as the meeting room fills with people. He introduces her to Susan, a board member and core leader at CVH, who asks Angela about what concerns her in the community and urges her to get involved “because we need a lot of people to get those in power to give us what we want!” At the end of the accountability session, a CVH member whom Angela recognizes from the neighborhood gets up and invites everyone to come to the next CVH meeting to plan a Lobby Day in Albany to fight the governor’s proposed budget cuts. When Angela goes over to this member after the meeting to say hello, he urges her to come to the meeting and she agrees.

Angela goes to the meeting and participates in brainstorming about places to do more recruitment in her neighborhood. At the end of the meeting, Jackson asks if he can come by Angela’s house again to talk a little longer. Angela says yes and they figure out a time and date.

**Step Four. Angela moves toward leadership.** When Jackson visits Angela, she enjoys answering his questions about her interests and her family. She then tells him that she had to go on welfare when she lost her long-time job. She was only on welfare for a short time before getting a job at a social service organization. She tells him that when welfare reform was happening a few years earlier, she tried to get some of the women using services where she worked to sign letters to the governor, but no one really cared. This turned her off from trying to do anything. Instead, she got more involved in her church and focused on her family. She is now looking for another job after being laid off.

In response to Jackson’s questions about what she cares about, Angela says that she is most concerned about losing her housing because of the rumors she’s heard that the city is getting ready to sell her development. She also says that she’d like
to improve her housing project. After about a half-hour, Jackson thanks her and says he will contact her soon. He was focused and intentional about guiding this one-on-one meeting, and now has a better sense of Angela’s leadership potential.

Step Five. Angela participates in a leadership training. Although Angela has come to some activities and met with Jackson one-on-one, she has not gotten more involved. She is focused on getting a job. She is most concerned about housing, and CVH has not yet chosen an issue for its next campaign. One day, Jackson stops by her apartment to invite her to the Saturday School—a training day to educate new members about power, self-interest, and the approach CVH uses for organizing, and a way for organizers to initiate the process of leadership development with specific individuals. Angela says she will come if she has time. When Jackson calls to confirm that she’ll come, she’s swayed by his persistence and decides to go.

At the training, Angela sits in a group with others to discuss when they felt powerful in their lives. One woman describes leading a meeting with a city council person, another talks about addressing a group of union leaders. In the afternoon, Angela plays the role of a state senator who refuses to fund a new after-school program. Angela learns that the Saturday School is just one kind of training that happens at CVH. She also learns that CVH requires a lot of people to make a decision to take on a campaign, which is why it has not started to work on public housing. Another member of CVH agitates her a bit, saying that if she wants to see the campaign get started, she has to do something to help make it happen. Later, on her way home, she reflects on the training. She learned about how to move a person with power, but also about the people in the group. She feels connected to something and thinks that her participation could help move CVH to work on public housing. She wants to do something to help not only herself and her family, but her friends and neighbors as well. Angela decides to work with Jackson a few hours a week to survey people in her building about their concerns.

Step Six. Angela participates in decision making. Four weeks later, Angela joins about forty other CVH members to analyze data from CVH’s recent surveys and meetings to decide what the organization will work on for its next campaign.

Participants in the meeting vote on six possible areas to focus on. The top three are public housing, public education, and gentrification. Although all of these are important, they learn that in a few weeks the city’s housing commissioner will be deciding whether to approve a proposal to raise public housing fees. The group decides to engage in a campaign to stop the fee increases. Although Angela has
given her opinion at CVH meetings before and even helped make some basic decisions for actions or events, she has entered a deeper level of decision making at this meeting on something she really cares about.

**Step Seven. Angela takes responsibility.** At a follow-up meeting, Jackson and some core leaders ask Angela to take on a leadership role. She agrees to facilitate an important meeting at CVH the following week at which members will decide on what kind of action to run at the housing commissioner’s office and begin to plan it out.

**Step Eight. Angela receives leadership prep.** Angela meets Jackson at her house for a leadership prep session. They develop an agenda for the planning meeting. They come up with a list of ideas for what the action at the commissioner’s office might be that she will use to start the meeting off. They review who will be at the planning meeting, what she can expect, and some tips for facilitation.

**Step Nine. Angela assumes a leadership role and puts the training into practice.** The action planning meeting is packed because of the proposed fee increases. Angela starts off the meeting well, but it soon gets chaotic. People have a wide range of opinions about what to do at the action. A couple of new people keep interrupting, saying, “We should get Oprah to cover the issue on one of her shows.” The senior organizer needs to help facilitate the decision making. The group settles down and decides to hold a picket and deliver a letter to the commissioner asking to meet with him. Angela closes the meeting on her own.

**Step Ten. Angela reflects and evaluates.** After the meeting, Angela, Jackson, and the senior organizer evaluate. At first, they review what happened and how Angela feels about it. Although Angela feels generally good about how the meeting went, she is concerned about the portion of the meeting that she could not manage alone. As they move into evaluating what worked, what did not, and what she could have done differently, she learns how to deflect people who want to sidetrack decision making and how to neutralize people who come with their own agendas. She tells the organizers, “I learned, but I am exhausted.” She says, half-jokingly, “I never want to do that again!” However, she commits to playing a leadership role in the action and to working with Jackson to improve her facilitation skills.

**Step Eleven. Angela participates in direct action, confronting and challenging people with power.** On the day of the action at the agency, Angela is a core decision maker and a press spokesperson. She works along with Jackson, whom she first met only four months ago, and another long-time community member. She makes critical decisions about how close to the entrance to do the picket and negotiates with the
police to get there. She makes sure the group is chanting while a television crew is filming the action. Toward the end of the action she talks to a reporter, making sure that the demand to eliminate the housing fee increase is the key message she delivers.

Angela is a developing as a leader. After this action, Jackson talks more with her about the skills she wants to develop and the role she wants to play. He writes up a leadership plan for Angela, like the one in Tool 5.1 at the end of the chapter, so he can be strategic about developing her.

**How Do We Make Leadership Development an Ongoing Process?**

*After the campaign that initially engages a leader is over, in addition to involving her in additional campaigns that interest her, you use a range of organizational functions to keep that leader engaged and to deepen her skills. These methods include leadership retreats, strategic planning sessions, and joining the board or one of its committees.*

For example, engaging Angela again and again allows her to get more comfortable with different leadership roles, learn how to deal with real-life scenarios, and improve her ability to think on her feet. The more Angela does, the stronger she becomes as a leader. She also experiences the following characteristics of leadership that CVH builds into the organization:

- *Sharing power.* Leaders rotate through different roles. They practice working in teams. They step aside at times or challenge themselves to take on new forms of leadership so that emerging leaders can play key roles. Power-sharing also prevents individual leaders from taking on too much and burning out. This understanding begins for Angela when she realizes that she cannot do everything at the action. While she is talking to the press she has to allow other leaders to make decisions about when and how to end the action.
- *Remaining accountable.* Leaders understand that they represent a larger group of members, not just their own interests. The organization builds accountability into its structure. For instance, leaders formally report back to one another about their activities on behalf of the organization. When Angela recruits tenants in her building to join CVH, she has to report back to them about the campaign’s progress and bring their ideas back to the organizing meetings she attends.
- *Getting recognition.* When the organization publicly recognizes the contributions and accomplishments of leaders, it affirms that they make a difference and that the organization values them. Recognition happens at organizing meetings, public actions, meetings with partners, and other venues. Displaying pictures in
the office from actions and celebrations also recognizes people. It helps everyone who comes there to know the story of the organization and the people who make it work. At the end of the action at the commissioner’s office, members cheer when Susan, the CVH board member Angela met at the first CVH activity she attended, publicly thanks her for her work on the action. The next day, Angela feels even more acknowledged when a neighbor comes over with the newspaper in which Angela is quoted. The neighbor reads Angela’s quotes out loud and hugs her, thanking her for fighting for all of the residents of the building.

Why Do We Develop Many Leaders?

More leaders mean more power.

The power of having many leaders shows up in many forms:

- **You have more members.** Because each leader has a following or is building one, the more leaders you have, the more members they can each mobilize.
- **Powerholders perceive you as strong.** People in power assume that leaders have followers. When powerholders interact with many different leaders from your organization, they know that the organization must have a strong base.
- **The work gets done.** An effective organizer builds a team of people with a variety of strengths and skills to meet a range of responsibilities.
- **The work is sustainable.** Success does not rely on one person. If a key person leaves or pulls back on her or his involvement, the work continues because other leaders can take on the roles and responsibilities that person fulfilled.
- **There is increased accountability.** With a team of leaders who are trained and experienced in collective action and decision making, the organization can make democratic decisions and people can hold one another accountable.
- **The group’s roots are in the community.** When an organization has more leaders based in the community, it more fully represents the community’s experiences and ideas. Also, like a tree with deep roots in the ground, an organization with a broad base of leaders is able to withstand harsh conditions.
- **New opportunities arise.** When you have a broad base of leaders, some leaders can engage in activities outside of the core campaign, such as movement-building or alliance-building. With a lot of leaders available for these activities, you don’t burn out the leaders who are working intensively to win the campaign.
• There is a stronger movement for justice. The strength of the movement becomes especially clear when a crisis ignites a community. For example, in 2006, when the U.S. Congress was considering changes in immigration policy, community-based leaders from throughout the country organized a series of walkouts, marches, and other actions in support of specific pieces of legislation that would support immigrants. These actions involved millions of immigrants as well as supporters of fair immigration policy. Their precision, cohesion, and sheer numbers showed the depth and breadth of both highly experienced and emerging leadership in immigrant communities. Communities that had built their leadership and their power over many years were able to mobilize when they needed to.

What Do We Look for in a Leader?

You look for potential—basic skills you can develop as well as the ability to get involved in collective action and bring others into the campaign or organization.

You can develop anyone with potential who is directly affected by social and political issues and who is ready to step up and act. Leaders are the people in your base. They are taxi drivers, janitors, lawyers, homemakers, teachers, unemployed people, and office assistants. Leaders are ordinary people of all races, ages, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. These are the qualities you look for in a potential leader:

• A following. One important sign of leadership potential is a following. A following is an active base of people that a leader can turn out. Leaders either have a following, or they have the appetite and ability to develop one.

The Appetite to Build a Following

Gail Aska, the cofounder of Community Voices Heard, was a leader not only because of her sharp political analysis, excellent public speaking, and agitation skills, but also because she had a following. She brought a base of women on welfare to the initial organizing project. These women came from her network of friends and her colleagues at various community organizations. She continued to build her following by engaging women she met at CVH actions and meetings. She talked with individual women about their lives, their frustrations, their children, and their dreams. She offered herself as an inspiration—someone who was speak-
ing out to gain respect for women on welfare. She did not do this for her own personal ambitions but to have relationships with a base of women she could motivate to build the organization.

- **Different styles.** Not all leaders are alike. Although some people have more than one type of trait in their leadership style, you rarely find everything in one person. The best teams of leaders include a range of interests and strengths. See Tool 5.2, Qualities of Leaders in Community Organizing, for an outline of some of the traits, contributions, and key words related to these styles. Tool 5.3, Leadership Styles, and Exercise 5.1, What’s My Leadership Style? provide more resources for thinking about and balancing the styles of individuals on a team. The following chart provides examples of the kinds of activities people with different styles of leadership like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Leader Likes To . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The doer</td>
<td>Get things done. Move to action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thinker</td>
<td>Analyze every option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The visionary</td>
<td>See how things should ideally be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The caretaker</td>
<td>Make sure everyone is included and respected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **A range of skills.** Within a range of styles, leaders have a variety of skills. These include skills that move the work of the organization forward, such as conducting recruitment and researching issues. They also include skills that help constituents run their own campaigns and the organization itself. These are skills such as facilitating meetings, planning and strategizing about campaigns, talking with reporters and interviewers, confronting and negotiating with powerholders, reviewing budgets, and raising money.

When assessing whether or not you will invest in developing someone as a leader, you look not just at how a person experiences the problem, but also at how she or he views the issue—the solution to the problem that the organization can focus on in a campaign. For instance, Angela and other CVH members are experiencing a problem—their housing is unstable. They decide to create a campaign around a solution that will help address this problem—stop the fee increases. (For more on the difference between problems and issues, see Chapter Seven.)
You can use the following questions as guidelines for thinking critically about a person’s potential:

**Assessment Guidelines: Is This Person a Potential Leader?**
- What is this person’s worldview? How sharp is her political analysis of the problem?
- How clearly does she understand and support our strategy (base-building and community organizing)?
- Does the issue affect her personally? What is her self-interest?
- What are her skills and abilities? What can she do, what does she want to do better?
- What networks and connections does she have?
- How effectively can she talk about the issue?
- Does she see beyond her own immediate circumstance?
- How much time and desire to work collectively on the issue does she have?
- How well does she listen? How will she work with others?
- What sustains her? How can she keep going for the long haul?

**What Are Our Tools for Identifying Potential Leaders?**

*One-on-one meetings and observation of members in real-life scenarios are the two best ways to identify leaders.*

One-on-ones are “agendaless” meetings in which an organizer or trained leader explores the kinds of questions we list above. In addition, watching how members participate in meetings and actions and how they respond to real-life situations helps you see who acts as a leader and who you can follow up with one-on-one for further assessment.

In a one-on-one meeting, you sit down with a person for thirty to forty-five minutes to build a stronger relationship and to assess her or his leadership potential. You meet one-on-one with a person who has done something that makes you want to invest more time in her. She may have played an important role at an action, come out for actions consistently, or told you about her network of people in the community.

In a one-on-one meeting, you listen much more than you talk. This meeting is not to chat or for you to solve an individual’s problem. You are not there to sell
your organization or convince someone to join you. You are there to learn and to build a relationship. As with a rap, you are very focused in a one-on-one meeting. Doing effective one-on-ones is among the true arts of organizing. The following scenario illustrates a conversation for setting up a one-on-one meeting.

**Organizer:** Angela, I’m really glad you came out to the accountability session. I’m wondering if I can come by your house again to talk with you, maybe for about a half-hour this time.

**Angela:** I have to go out and meet with a man about a job. I can stop by your office afterwards.

**Organizer:** I’d rather come to you. How about the next day? *(Best to meet in her home. You get to know her better. Also, meeting her in the office feels like “intake.”)*

**Angela:** I’m usually home in the mornings. You can just stop by.

**Organizer:** Why don’t we say Wednesday morning, at 10 A.M. at your house. *(Specific about the date, time, and place.)*

**Angela:** OK. What do you want to meet about?

**Organizer:** I want to learn more about what you’ve done before in the community and what you think needs to happen to improve things. *(Be clear that this meeting is about getting to know her and what she thinks, not about getting her to do something.)*

**How Do We Conduct a One-on-One Meeting?**

*Use the following guidelines and sample statements to structure a one-on-one meeting:*

*State very clearly why you are there.* Within the first few minutes, after exchanging greetings, let her know the purpose of the meeting: “I’m here to listen to you. I want to find out more about what’s important to you and learn what you think should be done to improve the community.”

*Note what you see in her home.* Are there family members around or pictures on the walls? Does it seem she has a support system to support her organizing? Is she financially comfortable? Struggling? What else do you notice?

*Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer.* Listen for lead-ins to her story. Explore different areas, touching on her personal experience, what she knows about her community, and her view of the world: “Whose responsibility
do you think it is to prevent your housing project from being sold?” “What do other people in your building have to say?” “Who do you think would want to buy out the projects?”

Use her comments to learn, not to offer advice. Build the conversation off of what she raises, by asking questions related to what she says: “Why do people join the tenants’ association?”

Share some common ground. Sharing during a one-on-one helps build a relationship. The organizer or leader conducting the meeting primarily listens, but does talk about 25 percent of the time. During this time, you share some of your views about the world and the issues at hand as well as how the organization approaches community problems. You can talk about why you got involved in organizing. Just remember, you share your perspective to build a relationship, not to tell someone what or how to think: “I took a job with CVH because my mother needed welfare to raise us. Growing up, I saw that rich people are organized. I believe we have to be organized too, and the city can do more to help regular people raise their families instead of giving all the tax breaks to rich people.”

Identify self-interest. What does this person get excited about? Ask follow-up questions to confirm your hunches: “It seems like you’re most concerned about your housing. What other things are you concerned about, besides the rumors you’ve heard that it’s for sale?”

Assess if her views are generally similar to the vision of your organization. Ask a question that will get at whether she believes in the more just society your organization envisions: “Why do you think the city shouldn’t sell off the housing projects?”

Clarify her understanding of collective action. Does she embrace a long-term struggle, or is she looking for immediate answers? Does she respond to the idea of joining with others, or does she think individuals should take care of their own problems? “What do you think is the best way for our community to make sure we preserve public housing and improve the projects?”

Introduce agitation into the conversation to find out how she responds to uncomfortable situations. If a person shuts down or gets too angry in the face of agitation, it gives you information about her potential to handle situations that are difficult or require negotiation. Agitation helps to get people thinking about the world, their situation, and their role in the situation: “In Chicago, when the city came in with a plan to sell public housing, people were outraged. They called their representatives and the press, and basically went down to City Hall and demanded the mayor stop
his plan. But in this community, there has been hardly a whimper. Excuse me for saying this, but if the mayor knows he can get away with it, he can just start the bidding for public housing.”

*Find out her networks and other leadership roles.* Begin to develop a picture of the people she knows: “What other organizations do you work with? Are you active in the PTA or at your church? Let’s talk about other friends or family members you can bring with you to the next meeting.”

*State the follow-up.* Be clear about what will happen next: “I’ll call you to remind you about the next meeting.”

*Solidify the commitment.* Suggest a role she can take at the next opportunity: “Maybe at the next meeting you can greet new people at the door.”

*Always thank the person for her time!* Tell her you will be in contact.

After the conversation, write down a few points such as the following:

- Three things that impressed me about this person.
- What motivates this person?
- Do I think this person will really get involved with our organization? Why?

When doing one-on-ones, keep the following points in mind:

*Avoid taking notes during the conversation.* You need to be listening and making eye contact, not writing.

*Let the responses guide the conversation.* Don’t work off a checklist of questions. Just make sure you hit all the points you want to somewhere during the conversation.

*Start doing one-on-ones with a more experienced organizer.* Especially in the beginning, debrief with someone so that you can improve your skills.

**What If We Do Not Have Time to Do One-on-Ones or We Have Too Many People to Meet With?**

*You do “mini” one-on-ones during times such as travel and when people are engaged in volunteer activities like mailings and phone-banking.* You ask the same kinds of questions as in a one-on-one meeting and practice careful listening.

We strongly encourage you to invest some time into doing one-on-ones out of the office and in people’s homes. But when you are short on time and cannot do one-on-ones with everyone, you incorporate one-on-one questions and listening into your regular interactions with members. If you are taking a train to a meeting
with a member, you don’t pull out the newspaper or your laptop. You ask about her story. Use all opportunities to engage people in conversations about their interests, networks, experience of collective action, and their skills.

**How Many People Do We Need to Contact to Find One Leader?**

You cast a net that is wide enough to catch people with a range of skills and interests as well as those people who may not strike you as potential leaders right away.

It is hard to quantify exactly how many people you need to recruit to develop leaders. It depends on factors such as the constituency, the issue, and how you recruit people. In any case, the more people you talk with, the more likely you are to find a leader to develop. Here are how many contacts we find it typically takes to bring in a leader:

- Four hundred contacts for whom you have a name, address, and phone number
- One hundred who express an interest
- Thirty who attend a meeting or action
- Ten who come back again and continue in some form with the organization
- Between one and five who engage in a leadership-development activity through attending a training or taking on a key role in an action
- One or two who continue to develop as leaders

These numbers may look daunting, but you get hundreds of contacts by continually doing recruitment at good points of entry and involving people in the organization in meaningful ways. This is really the work of effective base-building.

**Can an Organizer Be a Leader?**

The role of an organizer is different and distinct from that of a leader. Organizers are not the leaders of the organization. Instead, they exercise leadership.

For example, organizers step up to take on job responsibilities or gain expertise on the issues to help guide member decision making. We describe the distinctions among the roles of organizers, members, and leaders throughout this book, but the following are some essential differences:

*Salaries.* Assuming that you have some resources, organizers get paid by the organization, leaders do not. (See Chapter Four for why we strongly recommend

Tools for Radical Democracy
against paying stipends to members and leaders to ensure their involvement.) If you do hire a leader, her role changes. Her job is to develop a broad base of members to become leaders, not to function as a leader herself.

**Decision making.** As we describe earlier in this chapter, decision making is a primary building block of developing leadership. Organizers help guide decision making, which is a critical and skilled role, but they do not make organizational decisions.

**Representation.** Leaders publicly represent the organization at actions and with the press. We recommend that organizers do not speak at public actions at all—and that they speak to the press on background only. This press policy can sometimes be particularly challenging. Reporters want to talk with someone now, and if you can’t reach a leader, you can lose the chance to have your organization in the press. In our experience, the trade-off is worth it to ensure community empowerment.

It can be easier to have staff work the press, but it keeps you from the important work of training a broad base of people to do so. We have seen public attention intoxicate even the most committed staff, and before you know it, member voices are reduced to providing anecdotes while the organizer takes the mic.

It is absolutely essential to prioritize having leaders out front as spokespersons. In our own work, there have been clear boundaries between organizer and leader roles, supported by organizational policy. However, others handle these distinctions somewhat differently. For example, at the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, an organization in West Virginia that fights mining companies, codirector Janet Keating says that, although they bring the media to talk to people in the coalfields, and members of the organization are the speakers at public actions most of the time, she and other staff also take on these roles at times. According to Janet, a fear-driven “culture of silence” has existed for a long time in their community. “People have not spoken out here,” she says. “There is so much poverty, and the only good jobs are through these corporations that are doing the destruction.” Janet, who was born in the community where she now organizes, sees part of her staff role as providing an example of “a regular person who challenges authority.”

In addition, organizers often exercise leadership in coalitions and other types of partnerships, attending meetings, strategizing, and engaging in negotiation with staff of other organizations while remaining accountable to their own leaders and members.
What Is Leadership Training?

Leadership training is the tool you use to make sure that people have the knowledge and skills to be effective in their leadership roles. Leadership training is different from leadership development, which is happening all the time.

Most training in community power-building organizations is popular education. This is a form of adult education that incorporates what people already know from their direct experiences. Popular education engages participants in hands-on activities, not lectures. For example, to learn how to identify community issues, participants might spend a day out in the community talking with people. Popular education also includes small-group discussions and other formats that invite everyone to participate. It emphasizes reflection as an essential learning tool. So, for example, after going out into the community to talk with people, participants reflect on and talk about what happened, what they thought of the experience, and how it made them feel.

The following are different types of trainings you do with members as well as with leaders. Since members and leaders often participate together, we include the full range of trainings here. Although staff generally design and facilitate trainings, leaders can learn to do so as well. See Resource D for training tips. In addition, there are training exercises throughout this book that you can use or adapt to your needs.

Training in organizational ideology and culture. Ideology training includes an overview of the strategies the organization uses to create social change as well as the mission and values that drive the organization. Topics include an overview of the organization’s history, how organizing is different from social service delivery, and an introduction to power.

Skills building. Skills training includes two areas: doing the work of organizing and developing leadership skills. Topics for doing the work of organizing include door knocking, recruitment, phone calls, and mobilization tasks. Leadership skills topics include how to facilitate meetings, how to conduct power analyses, and how to negotiate with powerholders. Skills trainings help ensure that constituents can truly lead the organization.

Political education. Political education includes two main areas: issues and education about social movements and history. In issue training, you broaden people’s knowledge about the issue—why it is necessary to pursue, whom it affects,
and who makes decisions related to it. With this knowledge, members and leaders can make the best decisions about campaigns.

You offer a clear ideological bent. You seek to change or broaden people’s understanding, make connections between their local issue and larger social issues, and see where their struggles fit into a historical perspective. Sample topics include the history of the squatters movement worldwide, the impact of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, how the U.S. Electoral College disempowers voters, key changes in public health policy since the AIDS epidemic began, and an overview of capitalism.

Civics education. In these trainings you review how government operates, the lawmaking and policymaking process, and how decisions are made. From this base of information, members can look at policy and analyze it. They can discuss policy with reporters and in meetings with powerholders. Topics include how a bill becomes a law, the process for zoning and redevelopment, and who represents us.

In addition to building knowledge and skills, each of these kinds of trainings increases the capacity and confidence of leaders and helps them to think critically and engage in vibrant, challenging discussions.

Leadership “prep.” Leadership preparation, or “prep,” is training that you target to a specific role that a leader takes on. When a leader agrees, for instance, to facilitate a planning meeting, to give testimony at a public hearing, or to engage in a legislative meeting with a public official, the organizer walks the leader through the role and provides background, including the goal of the activity and the main players. The organizer preps all the leaders who will have roles in the activity. Prep includes reviewing what the leaders will do or say, considering the what ifs, and role-playing their parts. Leadership prep provides the opportunity for leaders to do the best possible job and to learn from their actions. They have the chance to make sure they understand the dimensions of the issue, how it plays out in this activity, and other things that do not get covered in more general trainings.

Before a large action, it is best to have some one-on-one leadership prep, then small-group prep, and a final larger-group prep before the activity. Depending on the activity, if these sessions are not possible due to time considerations, you meet together one-on-one. Keep in mind, however, that group prep helps people practice and evaluate how they work as a team. The following offers examples of when to do leadership prep sessions; see Exercise 5.2 for a sample leadership prep session.
Sample Progression of When to Do Leadership Prep Sessions

1. Organizing committee decides to do an action.
   Assigns ten leadership roles.
   Quick meeting of leaders to set date of first prep and final prep meeting.
   Organizer schedules individual prep meetings.
2. Individual prep meetings.
3. First group prep meeting.
4. Final pre-action group prep meeting (on-site run-through, day of the action).
5. Leadership group evaluation.

Challenges to Leadership Development

“We don’t seem to have the time to develop leaders and do new recruitment.” If you just develop leaders, you will not bring in enough members to win campaigns. If you focus only on recruiting new members, you will not have leaders to run the organization. Finding the time to prep leaders before an action can be an especially difficult challenge, as you juggle that activity with turnout, getting press coverage, and other demands. If you struggle with this situation, you are not alone, but you can’t let any of the pieces slide. You can try to address the challenge of managing a range of base-building activities by training members to help with the phone calls and mailings needed to get people to meetings and actions and by scheduling your base-building activities. For example, during CVH’s Transitional Jobs Campaign, organizers recruited WEP workers in the morning and early afternoons. They did one-on-ones and leadership prep in the late afternoons when the workers were just getting off work and going home. They did more formalized group trainings in the evenings and on weekends when workers could come to the office. Finally, between campaigns or when recruitment is slow, prioritize one-on-one leadership development.

“We seem to focus on people who don’t work out.” Identifying leaders takes practice and experience. In addition to learning how to recognize a leader, you can eas-
ily spend time developing someone you like who really does not have the potential. Sometimes you have a dearth of leadership, so you focus on someone who is not ready. You can address this challenge by being aware of it and by challenging yourself to be as objective as possible. Evaluating with others, such as senior staff or experienced members, can help.

“Everyone who works hard in our organization thinks they’re leaders.” Although people might be doing important work, they may or may not be leaders. For example, if a member who comes to every meeting is great at motivational speaking but cannot effectively engage with other members to make decisions, it may not be appropriate to develop her as a leader or place her in leadership situations. You can try to challenge her one-on-one on her weaknesses to see if she is willing to address them. You can also try directing her to other kinds of responsibilities. In the end, you don’t focus on developing people who are not leaders.

“We develop people, then they leave.” Many organizations, particularly those that are organizing fluid and transient communities such as parents, unemployed people, or students, experience this challenge. Sometimes the reason is positive: a homeless person gets a home or a student graduates and goes off to college. Sometimes it is not positive: a person loses his job and has to move to get a new one, or you call and the number is disconnected. The best way to address leadership turnover is simply to develop a lot of leaders who are doing different kinds of things. When someone leaves you lose “a” leader, not “our” leader, and there is someone available to take on his or her role.

“Our leaders act like a clique.” Especially in organizations that value leaders highly, those who become leaders may acquire a sense of privilege, which is a natural result of the time and energy they put in, but is not good for sustaining a collective spirit. Cliques can form naturally among founders and people who have worked intensively together for a long time. Sometimes the feeling of there being a clique is less about wanting to keep people out and more about functioning within an unwritten culture that new people can find hard to enter or understand. To address the problem of cliques, honor and reward leadership openly, honestly, and with clear reasons. Be clear that people receive benefits, such as opportunities to travel on behalf of the organization, based not on who they are but on what they have done. Make sure that all leaders and members know how people can enter leadership positions, such as board positions or public roles in actions. Remain
accountable, going back to the membership periodically to report on who is taking on which roles and why. It also helps to write out your operating principles so that everyone can see and understand them. Engage experienced leaders in orienting new leaders to their roles.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

☑ *Be proactive.* A good organizer is always looking for people who have the appetite and the potential to be leaders and including clear objectives in her or his work plan for developing individual leaders.

☑ *Do one-on-ones.* Take the time to meet with people to assess their potential.

☑ *Provide training and opportunities to apply it.* You not only train people in workshops, you get them to exercise leadership in ways that they can evaluate and learn from. When considering any organizational activity, you ask “How will this develop leaders?” You train leaders in formal workshops, prep sessions, in “quick and dirty” trainings built into actions and meetings, and by evaluating with them after activities.

☑ *Develop different types of leaders.* Look for a range of people who are willing to step up, work with others, and be accountable for their actions.

☑ *Understand your role.* The job of an organizer is different from that of a leader. Do not blur the boundaries of your role or your responsibilities.
Tool 5.1
Leadership Development Plan Template

You can use the following as a sample for developing leadership plans for individuals.

Name:
Entry—how she became involved in the organization:
Issues or campaign she wants to work on:
What is her leadership style?
What are her strengths and weaknesses? How do we build on her strengths and address her weaknesses?
What would challenge and stretch her?
One-on-one meeting—date held or scheduled:
Self-interest:
Skills:
Motivation:
What she likes to do:
Current membership roles or leadership tasks:
Leadership roles goals:
What does she need to achieve these goals (use the following worksheet):

Meeting Leadership Development Needs: Sample

Member name: Maria Storrs
Past membership activity: Participated in eight phone-banking evenings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Opportunity</th>
<th>Training Needs</th>
<th>How We Give It to Her</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone Bank Coordinator</td>
<td>Phone Bank Coordinator Training; Database Training</td>
<td>Individual training followed by staff leading phone bank with her two nights</td>
<td>One week before next action January 10th</td>
<td>Jackson (organizer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Facilitator</td>
<td>Facilitator Training &amp; Public Speaking</td>
<td>Prioritize inviting her to next leadership school training.</td>
<td>Next leadership school is in February.</td>
<td>Henry (lead organizer who runs leadership schools)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 5.1
Leadership Development Plan Template, Cont’d

Meeting Leadership Development Needs: Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Opportunity</th>
<th>Trainings Needs</th>
<th>How We Give It to Her</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tool 5.2
Qualities of Leaders in Community Organizing

You can use the following handout as part of a leadership training session. To use this in an exercise, for example, you could ask participants to read the handout, either out loud or to themselves, and circle something—for instance, what is most surprising to them or perhaps what they believe best describes them. They then discuss what they circled with the person sitting next to them, then come together and discuss as a group. It can also be useful to ask participants to add qualities to the list—based on their own experiences—in both categories.
Tool 5.2
Qualities of Leaders in Community Organizing, Cont’d

Leaders are people who:

• **Deliver.** If a leader promises to do something, she or he does it.

• **Have a following (or want to build one).** Leaders know other people in the community who share their concerns. Leaders identify other people who can be brought into the project and welcome new people readily.

• **Are accountable.** Others in the organization or community care about what a leader is saying or doing on their behalf. Leaders check in with the people they represent.

• **Listen.** Leaders have their ear to the ground and take the time to ask other people what they need and what they think.

• **Motivate others.** Leaders bring out the best in other people.

• **Get respect and give respect.** Other people listen to leaders and experience them as trusted colleagues.

• **Rise to the occasion.** In a crisis, others can count on leaders to respond.

• **Are angry.** Leaders are comfortable expressing their dissatisfaction with oppressive people and institutions and are ready to direct their anger at doing something productive.

• **Are hopeful.** Leaders believe that change is possible and that they have a role in creating their own future.

• **Understand self-interest.** Leaders know what’s important to them and what they want to get from building the organization. Leaders believe that working with others is how to get what they want.

• **Want to build collective power.** Leaders know that building collective power is the way to create long-term solutions to social problems.

• **Have a sense of humor.** Leaders understand that humor sustains communities and individuals and prevents bitterness and burnout. They may not be comedians or great joke-tellers, but they are able to find the humor in both the good and not-so-good aspects of everyday life.

**A leader is not necessarily:**

• The loudest person in the group.

• The person who speaks the most.

• The one with the most money or education.
Tool 5.3
Leadership Styles

You can use this handout together with Exercise 5.1 to guide staff and leaders to reflect on how they contribute to the whole—as a member of a leadership team, an active leader in a campaign, or in their role in the organization. We suggest Exercise 5.1 as a sample of how you can use the outline of each style, and the figure presented here, “The Style Wheel,” to have a discussion to achieve your purpose.

### Leadership Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Contributer</th>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Traits Include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>Dreamer. Lofty. Creative.</td>
<td>• Able to dream and think big.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can describe and bring to life a picture of the world they want to see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can become so wrapped up in the big picture, never figure out how to get there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Others can see them as being unrealistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinker</td>
<td>Research and strategy</td>
<td>Educated (or self-educated). Grounded. Analytical.</td>
<td>• Able to engage in deep analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enjoy research, reading, and reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can get stuck in analysis and be resistant to action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Others can see them as being inflexible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doer</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Hands-on. Fun. Confrontational.</td>
<td>• Able to think on their feet and move quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enjoy challenging others and doing things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can get so focused on doing that can act just for the fun of it, or can move ahead without others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Others can see them as being insensitive and uncaring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Teacher. Selfless. Warm.</td>
<td>• Able to share knowledge and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enjoy nurturing others and making sure everyone is participating and feeling respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can believe they have all the knowledge; don’t like when others confront or challenge them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Others can see them as being condescending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 5.3
Leadership Styles, Cont’d

The Leadership Style Wheel: Who Else Do We Need?

- Caretaker
  - Teacher
  - Selfless
  - Warm
  - PROCESS

- Thinker
  - Educated
    - (or self-educated)
  - Grounded
  - Analytical
  - RESEARCH and STRATEGY

- Visionary
  - Dreamer
  - Lofty
  - Creative
  - GOALS

- Doer
  - Hands-On
  - Fun
  - Confrontational
  - ACTION

Developing Leaders from All Walks of Life

105
Exercise 5.1
What’s My Leadership Style?

You can use Tool 5.3 and this exercise to guide staff and leaders to reflect on how they contribute to the whole—as a member of a leadership team, as an active leader in a campaign, or in their role in the organization. You do not use this exercise to box people in, but to engage people in self-reflection and discussion. You can also use this exercise in other ways; for example, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a leadership team. If the team members see that they are all visionaries, do they need to recruit some doers? If everyone is a doer, who is making sure others are OK?

Sample Exercise

• Hand out Tool 5.3, Leadership Styles, and review the grid and the figure there. Then ask each member of the group to do the following:
  ○ Read the outlines of each style. Think about where you fit on the wheel.
  ○ Identify your one or two dominant styles.
  ○ Talk with a partner about how the contributions, key words, and traits describe you. How are you possibly a little different from this description?

  Talking about this second question can relieve the natural inclination that some people have not to get “boxed in.” The goal here is to get people thinking about the need for a range of styles on their team or committee, not to agree or disagree with the descriptions of the different traits.
  ○ As a group, identify where your team is strongest. Who else do you need to add?
Exercise 5.2
Sample Leadership Prep Session

You can use the following as a guideline for planning a leadership prep session. You can use this guideline for both group and individual prep sessions.

5:30–6:00 Gather.

6:00–6:10 Introductions. Leaders say their names, their roles in the organization, and their roles in the activity.

6:10–6:20 Goal review. Organizer reviews the goal of the activity: Is it to educate legislators at a hearing about a proposal or an issue, to move a specific legislator to support a piece of legislation, or to plan an action?

6:20–6:30 Lay out and clarify roles and responsibilities. Leaders review the different roles that need to be filled and who will do what. They explain what each role requires and the purpose of the role (example: introduce a public official, lead go-abouts in an organizing meeting).

6:30–6:45 Develop and review speaking pieces. Each member develops and reviews sample talking points or questions that will prepare him or her to speak.

6:45–7:15 Role play. Leaders test their skills, practice what they are going to do, and see how the group works as a team. Later, they will be able to say what worked, what needs improvement, and what problems they encountered.

7:15–7:45 What ifs. The organizer and leaders brainstorm everything that could happen and what the group will do in each instance.

7:45–8:00 Questions. The leaders raise questions as well as concerns. Sometimes people need to raise things they haven’t thought of before that they recognize as they get closer to actually playing a critical role in a meeting or action.

8:00–8:15 Meeting evaluation and close. The leaders evaluate this session and identify when and where they will evaluate the activity for which they just prepared.