

THE POLICY PROCESS: STEP 7

MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR THE POLICY

The goal of Policy Step 7 is to mobilize the community to take action in support of your policy through writing letters, petitions, and editorials in order to help inform key decision makers about the importance of a tobacco-free campus policy.

Community mobilizing is central to successfully adopting a tobacco-free campus policy. The goals of mobilizing are to educate groups about the campus policy, and stimulate action that will put pressure on the decision makers to adopt the policy. For this specific policy, the mobilizing needs to primarily take place among on-campus groups and individuals, using educational messages and media advocacy to move people from inaction to action in support of the policy. It is not sufficient to educate the campus community about the risks and consequences of tobacco use; there must be a call to action in all facets of the mobilizing phase of the campaign.

Community mobilizing is often an overlooked step when conducting a policy campaign. This is particularly true when the coalition feels it already has the support of the campus administration or trustees to pass the policy. Many coalitions have decreased their efforts to keep the pressure on the decision makers, thinking the policy was guaranteed to pass, only to find that they lost the campaign as the opposition continued its communications and pressure on the decision makers. Community mobilizing must continue until the final vote is cast in favor of your policy.

Influencing Key Decision Makers

This is one of the most important parts of the mobilizing strategy. Your coalition will want to influence the campus decision makers by having those they listen to become



WHAT IS A POWER ANALYSIS?

A Power Analysis is an advocacy tool that explores how decisions are made in your community on a specific issue.

**Table 8. Power Analysis:
Assess the Individuals Who Are Decision Makers**

Who has the power to adopt the policy?
Who are the most important individuals?
Who must be approached in order to talk with him or her?
How are they influenced?
What is the self-interest of each?
Who will approach this person?

supporters of the policy. Those who influence the decision makers must also be willing to communicate with one or more such decision makers. For example, to influence a university trustee, identifying someone who has the ear of a specific trustee becomes the first step to encouraging that person to support your policy. Central to the mobilizing process is understanding how decisions are made in the spheres you are trying to influence.

A tool to facilitate the coalition's understanding of the decision-making process is called a power analysis. This process concretely identifies who needs to be approached and who can do it. Table 8 is a tool coalitions can use to carry out the analysis; a sample is available in Appendix 16.

The combined strategy of exerting strategic pressure on key decision makers and powerful media advocacy can move a decision-making body from opposition to support of a tobacco-free campus policy.

Mobilizing Tools and Resources

1. **Letters of support** — These are often used as a marker of the level of support for the campus policy. Letters are important, but not all letters are good letters. Good

letters are written to specific decision makers with the messaging that will appeal to their identified interests and address specific concerns about the policy. We recommend developing a number of templates for letters of support that include key points for specific audiences. Better still, letters from key influencers with specific points carry significant weight. The power analysis will help you identify which key influencers could write letters. Keep in mind, letters of support are good, but generally face-to-face visits to decision makers are better.

2. **Resolutions of support** — Resolutions usually come from organizations or groups. These are important, and the more the better. Seeking resolutions from organizations that carry weight on campus is important. For example, a resolution of support for a tobacco-free campus from the associated student body would be a huge victory. Similarly, if there is a student body parent group, receiving a resolution from that group would likely carry significant weight. Both these two examples are constituencies that would likely be influential with the trustees.
3. **Petitions of support** — Petitions signal the depth of support for the policy. Obtaining 1,000 signatures on a campus of 2,500 students would be a powerful statement about the level of support. But 1,000 signatures on a campus of 35,000, although useful, carries a different message about how deep the support runs. If your coalition decides to use petitions, set a signature goal and be sure it is feasible; if not, consider not using petitions. Too few signatures can suggest that the policy is not strongly supported and work against the campaign.
4. **Line up supporters for the hearing on the policy** — The public hearing on the policy is an important date for the coalition. Turning out large numbers of supporters can sometimes turn a likely “no” vote to a “yes.” Conversely, if no supporters attend, decision makers may assume people do not consider this policy to be important and thus vote against it. This is particularly true if the opposition outnumbered the supporters. Thus, the coalition should mobilize efforts to recruit supporters to attend such meetings. If there are multiple meetings, get people to attend as many meetings as necessary to see the vote occur. Reluctant decision makers may postpone hearing the policy as the date nears, if they

sense they will have too many supporters in the audience. Sometimes the postponement actually takes place in the hearing. Do not be discouraged; this is a well-known tactic.

Mobilizing takes time; a comprehensive mobilizing effort may take four to eight months. This timeline can be significantly shorter if the policy is broadly supported from the beginning. It can also be shortened if the relationships developed during the one-on-one assessments have been kept alive and current. Generally, building a committed core of supporters is an ongoing effort that begins once the policy goal has been developed by the coalition. In the life of every policy campaign, there is a point when the supporters need to be rallied into action.

Addressing Other Tobacco Policies

All policy campaigns require community mobilizing. For example, mobilizing for a ban on campus tobacco promotions may have the same decision makers as a tobacco-free campus policy, but the fact that the policy focuses on promotions will likely shift who the trustees need to hear from to garner their support. Similarly, mobilizing to adopt an off-campus tobacco-free housing policy will require identification of the decision makers and a power analysis to understand who can exert influence in support of this policy. The power analysis must always be specific for the policy under consideration, knowing that this shapes the analysis of who may be the key influencers. The same mobilizing tools are useful regardless of the policy. Remember, building a constituency of vocal supporters is essential.

Summary of Policy Step 7

There are numerous tools associated with successful community mobilizing. Letters of support, resolutions and petitions are all important, but cannot substitute for face-to-face meetings between key influencers and decision makers. The power analysis process is the foundation for the rest of the mobilizing, as it establishes the key people and organizations that can influence the decision makers. From this analysis flow the tactical decisions about who to approach for support, what specific messages they should use when decision makers are approached and the proper mix of the various tools.