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# Grassroots Organizing, Coalition Building

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Western Association  
of Chamber Executives

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**Raise Your Hand:**  
**Chamber CEO?**  
**Chamber Staff?**  
**First time at Conference?**

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# Coalition Building

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## YOUNTVILLE CHAMBER

- Whitney Diver McEvoy, President & CEO
- Napa Valley, California
- Members: 340 Business, 150 Associate
- Tourism drives our Economy

**YOUNTVILLE**  
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

# COALITION BUILDING

# Coalition Building: What Will We Cover today?

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- **What a Coalition Is**
- **What a Coalition Does**
- **Why Start a Coalition**
- **8 Steps: How to Build Your Coalition**
- **Coalitions in Action – Case Study**
- **Your Chamber Engaging in a Coalition – Policy Position**
- **Wrap Up!**



# What is the Definition of Coalition Building?

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**Bringing together different groups to achieve a common goal.**

It happens most frequently when different individuals or organizations share similar goals, values, or interests.

**By combining resources, the collective effort becomes more powerful than each entity acting on its own.**



# What does a Coalition Do?

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**Individual Coalitions are as varied as Coalition Goals themselves, but Coalitions often contain elements of one or more of the following:**

- **Influencing or developing public policy, usually around a specific issue**
- **Changing people's behavior**
- **Building a healthy community (economic, social, environmental, etc.)**

# Why Start a Coalition?

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- **Enables members to speak with one combined voice (more POWERFUL together)**
- **Concentrate the community's focus on a particular problem**
- **Create alliances among those who might not normally work together**
- **Keep the community's approach to issues consistent**
- **A unified community coalition can advocate for the area more effectively than a number of disparate groups and individuals working alone.**



**So.....How do you Build an Effective  
Coalition?**

# 8 Steps to Building Your Coalition

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## 1. What is Your Main Goal?

**This is the backbone of your coalition. Have your elevator pitch down.**

## 2. Identify and Recruit Your Coalition Members

**Who do you want/need at the table. Who will do the work?**

## 3. Pick and Stick with your Short-Term Goals

**Identify easy wins. Show progress.**

## 4. Convene Your Coalition!

**Be organized. Give people a chance to contribute.**

# 8 Steps to Building Your Coalition

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## 5. Identify Resources Need to Maintain Your Coalition

Money. Volunteers Time.

## 6. Solidify Your Coalition Structure

Decision Making Process. How Often to Meet.

## 7. Ensure the Coalitions Vitality

Show gratitude and appreciation.

## 8. Evaluate the Coalitions Work and Improve as Needed

Always striving to be better.

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***"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."***  
***- Henry Ford***

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# COALITIONS IN ACTION

# Case Study 1: South Bay Association of Chambers of Commerce

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CLEAR GOAL: SBACC is a regional association of Chambers dedicated to **advancing public policy initiatives and regional issue advocacy for businesses and industries** in the South Bay of Los Angeles County.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VISION, MISSION, PURPOSE

2023 Strategic Initiatives

2023 Policy Platform



Est. 1979

Coalition Represents:  
17 Chambers, 60K  
businesses in SoCal

**sbacc.com**



## Case Study 2: Southwest Riverside County Regional Homeless Alliance

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**CLEAR GOAL: Identify current practices and existing solutions addressing homelessness in Southwest Riverside County.**

**FOCUSED ON: Building a Healthy Community**

While Formed in 2016, the Alliance just received \$500,000 from Congress to work on the following:

- Implement a regional homeless action plan
- Formalize and set up structure for Regional Homeless Alliance
- Consultant hired to implement this work



**Coalition Est. 2016**

**Coalition Represents:  
5 Cities in Southern  
Riverside County**

# Existing Coalitions To Check Out

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**Idaho Chamber Alliance:** [idahochamberalliance.com](http://idahochamberalliance.com)

**East Valley Chambers of Commerce Alliance (AZ):** [evcca.org](http://evcca.org)

**Northern Colorado Legislative Alliance:** [ncla.biz](http://ncla.biz)

**Inland Empire Chamber Alliance (CA):** [iechamberalliance.com](http://iechamberalliance.com)

**HOW CAN YOUR CHAMBER ENGAGE  
IN A COALITION  
*FOCUSED ON PUBLIC POLICY***

# How Your Chamber Can Engage: Adopting Policy Positions

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## Billings (MT) Chamber of Commerce Process for Adopting Chamber Policy Positions

### **STEP 1: MEMBERSHIP INPUT**

- Membership Surveys
- Conversations with members, over 1,200 members to consider

### **STEP 2: ADVISORY BOARDS**

- 11 – 12 Members from Various Industries Consider Membership Input and the chambers mission
- The Advisory Boards make recommendations to the Board of Directors

### **STEP 3: ADVISORY BOARDS**

- 19 Member Board of Directors from various industries consider member input and the chambers mission
- Approve Policy Positions

# Case Study: Billings (MT) Chamber Policy Position

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## INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

A strong economy and quality of place are fostered through well-planned community development. The quality of a transportation system, both surface and air, that connects Billings locally and regionally, along with safe and effective infrastructure, is essential for the success of Billings' area businesses in regional and national markets.

### **Federal Legislative Positions:**

- Support the continuation of Essential Air Service utilizing Billings as the hub.
- Support increasing 5G connectivity throughout Montana.

### **State Legislative Positions:**

- Support state authorization of adequate funding to assist in Montana's infrastructure improvements to keep pace with 21st Century business demands.
- Oppose reductions to the gas tax which funds roads and bridges in Montana.
- Support solutions to increase broadband and 5G connectivity.

### **Local Positions:**

- Support subdivision and zoning regulations that encourage efficient, practical development, while allowing flexible and innovative development strategies.
- Support the growth and maintenance of air service in Billings, including revenue guarantees for expanding service.
- Encourage investment in a more diverse transportation system that provides viable choices to walk and bike, use public transportation in addition to driving.
- Support a vote of the public on a county gas tax to improve infrastructure and trails.

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***“Effectively, change is almost impossible without industry-wide collaboration, cooperation, and consensus.”***

***- Simon Mainwaring, Founder/CEO, We First***

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# Questions to Ask Yourself

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- **Is there an issue or initiative my chamber can build a coalition around? What would our goal be?**
- **Is the coalition I am currently engaged in effective?**
- **Going into the 2024 Election Cycle, is it time my board created policy positions?**
- **How can my chamber be a fearless problem solver and use a coalition to help us do it?**

# Thank You!

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# Grassroots Organizing

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## TEMPE (AZ) CHAMBER

- Colin Diaz, ACE, IOM President & CEO
- Tempe, Arizona (East of Phoenix)
- **Population:** 190k | **Members:** 570+

### City + Region Facts

- Innovation Hub
- Largest Public University in the Country + 9-time consecutive winner for most innovative university in the US
- Fastest Growing County in the US
- Part of the Largest Manufacturing Region in the US



**TEMPE CHAMBER**  
— of COMMERCE —

# **GRASSROOT ORGANIZING**

# Grassroot Organizing: What Will We Cover today?

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- **What Grassroot Organizing Is**
- **When to start a Grassroot Campaign**
- **Key Steps: How to Lead Grassroot Organizing**
- **Avoid these Pitfalls**
- **Grassroot Organizing in Action – Case Study**
- **Wrap Up!**



# What is Grassroot Organizing?

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## Bottom-Up Approach

Grassroots organizing is the process by which underrepresented people organize themselves to improve the social, cultural, and economic well-being of their families, communities, and societies

**The collective sum is greater than the individual parts**





# When to Start a Grassroot Campaign

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**When you have a clear understanding of a problem or desired solution, and have identified the targeted stakeholders to engage**

- **Developing relationships with the public and other leaders**
- **Locate your target audience**
- **Desired outcomes have been identified**

# Grassroots Advocacy Strategies



Craft a  
compelling  
message



Gather support  
online



Canvass your  
community



Launch  
peer-to-peer  
campaigns



Host events

# Key Steps to Grassroot Organizing

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## ❖ Define your vision and values

- Clear and compelling vision and values that guide your actions and decisions
- Should reflect the needs and aspirations of your community

## ❖ Build your base and leadership

- Core group of people who are directly affected by the issue
- You need to identify, recruit, train, and support potential leaders and activists

## ❖ Develop your strategy and tactics

- Overall plan of action that outlines your objectives, targets, allies, opponents, resources, and timeline

## ❖ Engage your community and allies

- Bring in the like-minded

# Key Steps to Grassroot Organizing

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## ❖ Evaluate your progress and impact

- Always be re-calibrating; conditions and factors change in real time
- You need to define your indicators and criteria
- Collect and analyze data and evidence
- Report and disseminate your findings and recommendations

## ❖ Future Plan and sustainability

- Process of envisioning and preparing for the long-term goals and challenges of your movement
- Identify how to enhance viability and vitality

# **Pitfalls to Avoid** in Grassroot Organizing

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## ❖ **Lack of Leadership**

- **No clear direction**
- **Centralized management is missing**

## ❖ **Slacktivism**

- **Cause is supported in simple measures only (social media shares)**
- **No real action is taken**
- **Small base of support resulting in little influence**

## ❖ **Astroturfing**

- **Movements appear to be grassroots, but are led by outside organizations**
- **Grassroot campaign credibility can be lost, as well as long-term repercussions in dealing with new issues** [T.E.D. 2023]

# SLACKTIVISM

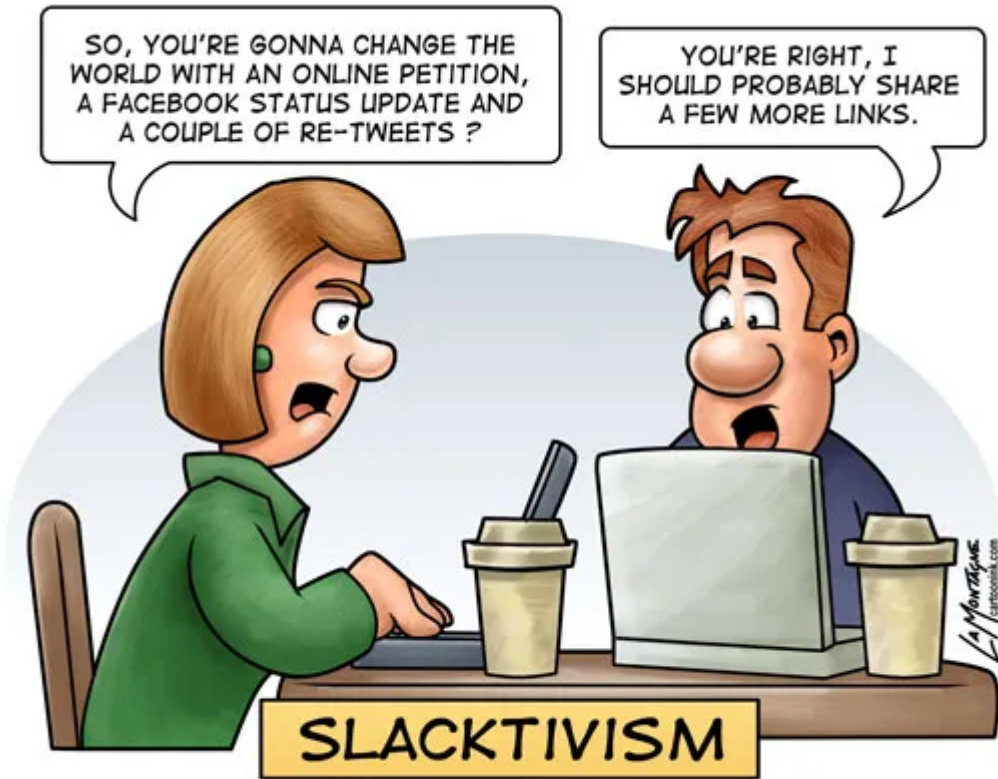


image credit: [blog.lodestar.asu.edu](http://blog.lodestar.asu.edu)



# ASTROTURFING

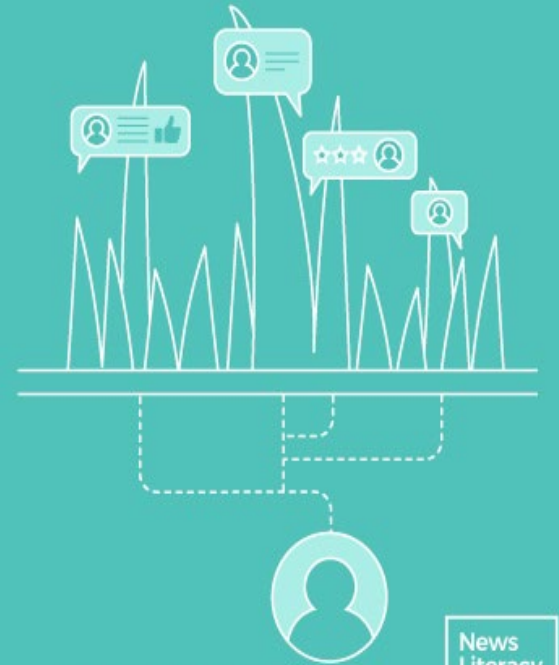
In the 1990s, Philip Morris' public relations firm created the National Smokers Alliance, a seemingly grassroots pro-smoking group

2020 COVID-19 Stay-At-Home orders protest that seemed to be rampant

2023 Tempe Entertainment District + Perception of Meruelo Group (Wealth being vilified)

**As fake as  
it sounds**

**Nothing grassroots  
about Astroturfing  
campaigns**



**#DidYouKnow**

News  
Literacy  
Project

# **GRASSROOT ORGANIZING IN MOTION**



# Eugene Chamber State of Homelessness

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## The State of Our Homelessness Crisis

An Overview of Lane County Homelessness &  
Recommendations from the Eugene Business Community

# Case Study : Eugene (OR) Chambers of Commerce

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**CLEAR GOAL:** Eugene Chamber Board of Directors agreed that bringing the private sector to the table to accelerate our community toward permanent solutions to homelessness needed to be a top priority for the chamber

## ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NONPROFITS DELIVERING HOMELESS SERVICES

BUSINESS & COMMUNITY LEADERS

CITY AND COUNTY STAFF

UNHOUSED INDIVIDUALS + RESIDENTS



**Eugene Area  
Chamber of  
Commerce**

**Est. 1903**

**Population: 178k**

**Location: Lane County,  
southern end of Willamette  
Valley**

**[eugenechamber.com](http://eugenechamber.com)**

# The Recommendation: Eugene Chamber State of Homelessness

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## QUALITY DATA

Our current methods and systems for collecting data are inadequate and make it difficult to fully understand the scope of the problem. We need to establish a quality, actionable baseline of data so we can accurately identify solutions.



## SHARED GOALS + COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Convene leaders from across sectors to agree on shared goals and align around strategic actions to end homelessness. We cannot rely on government and nonprofits to solve this crisis, it will take all of us.

# The Recommendation: Eugene Chamber State of Homelessness



## SERVICE PROVIDER CAPACITY

Restrictive funding sources make it difficult to pay good wages and retain staff. We need to strengthen administrative and programmatic capacity for nonprofit service providers, with reimagined funding strategies.



## EMERGENCY SHELTER + PERMANENT HOUSING

We must prioritize increasing emergency shelter capacity and relentlessly pursue strategies that will make housing more affordable in Lane County if we are going to make progress on ending homelessness.



# The Recommendation: Eugene Chamber State of Homelessness



## OUTREACH + CASE MANAGEMENT

Better coordinated outreach and case management is needed to reduce overlap, use our limited funds more efficiently and make the system easier to navigate for our unhoused population.



## WRAP-AROUND SERVICES

We need effective 'wrap-around' services like mental health and substance abuse support, workforce skills training and employment connections that will help our unhoused achieve sustained wellness.

# The Recommendation: Eugene Chamber State of Homelessness



## ENFORCEMENT + ACCOUNTABILITY

It's time to shift our community culture from one of tolerance to one of wellness and accountability. We need to send the message that Eugene is no place for those, housed or unhoused, who want to break the law.



## REBUILD COMMUNITY TRUST

Improving communication, transparency and accountability among all stakeholders, is critically necessary to rebuild community trust and instill a sense of hope for the future.

# **HOW CAN YOUR CHAMBER ENGAGE IN GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING**

***PRACTICAL EXAMPLES***

# **How Your Chamber Can Engage: Order of Operations**

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**Eugene (OR) Chamber of Commerce | Addressing Lane County Homelessness Crisis**

## **STEP 1: IDENTIFY DEPTH & STATE OF PROBLEM**

- Saw an increase in homelessness and heard business leaders' frustration
- Sentiment grew that there were unsafe places for customers and employees
- There was no collective effort for private business to formally engage

## **STEP 2: ACTION PLAN**

- Chamber polled 150 stakeholders (business leaders, nonprofit staff working on homelessness, unhoused individuals, and residents.
- They also engaged experts in homelessness from around the region

## **STEP 3: NEXT STEPS + PATH FORWARD**

- Comprehensive report about multiple solutions, which documented the current state of the homeless crisis in the community
- Includes highlight of successes and suggested solutions moving forward



# Grassroot Campaigns To Check Out

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**US Chamber | Federation Relations & Grassroots Advocacy**

[uschamber.com/program/federation-relations](https://uschamber.com/program/federation-relations)

**Manhattan Chamber (NY) | Small Business Agenda**

[smallbizagenda.com](https://smallbizagenda.com)

**Texas Association of Business | Employers for Childcare (E4C) Task Force**

<https://txrestaurant.org/EmployersForChildcare>

# Questions to Ask Yourself

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- **What are the greatest issues impacting our community right now? What is our role current? What should it be?**
- **Are our efforts on this issue sufficient? Have we maximized it?**
- **How do we gain larger exposure and engagement?**
- **The nexus of solving future problems and monetizing your value will be where you future-proof your chamber**

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***“The best education I received was working with people in the community on a grassroots basis. Because what it taught me was that ordinary people, when they are working together can do extraordinary things.***

***- Barack Obama, 44<sup>th</sup> US President***

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# Thank You!

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# Final Thoughts!

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- **What are 2 things you learned from this presentation that you can take back to your chamber and implement in the future?**
- **W.A.C.E. Resource Library is a great place to go when you need inspiration.**

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# Questions?

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of Chamber Executives