

Who are our allies?

An activity for identifying decision-makers

During this activity, you will:

- Identify the actors that have an influence on the issue you are addressing through your community action project.

Materials:

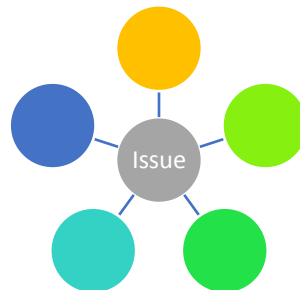
- Flipchart paper, markers

Total time: 30min

Activity outline:

1. Power map (20min)

- Explain to the group that for the purpose of this project, decision-makers are defined as people who are in positions of power at various levels, and who are involved in decision making affecting youth and their communities. Decision-makers can include parents and guardians, teachers, youth worker, principals, community leaders, religious leaders, city councillors, government officials, etc.
- Draw a power map on a flipchart (see example below). Place the issue the group is working on in the centre.



- Identify all the actors that influence the issue and write them in the circles around the issue. Be sure to include examples such as peers, family members, teachers, media, religious leaders, community leaders, city councillors, government officials, etc.
- Classify each of the actors as an ally (someone with a positive influence on the issue), an opponent (someone with a negative influence) or undecided. Actors for which you have no information should be classified as undecided.
- Prioritize the allies, opponents and undecided based on the degree of influence that they have on the issue.

- Identify the 3 most important allies or undecided actors and the 3 opponents that might have a negative influence on your project.
- Record the information on the flipchart version of the table on the following page (*Decision-Maker: Allies and opponents*)

2. Group discussion (10min)

In this activity you will lead a group discussion and identify a strategy for integrating decision-makers into your community action project.

- Lead a group discussion based on the following questions
 - Do you feel you were able to identify the most important allies and opponents that could have an impact on the success of your project? Why or why not?
 - How can having allies make a difference to the results of your project?
 - How can you engage the allies and opponents you have identified? *Share the tips listed in the box below.*
- Identify a strategy for integrating decision-makers into your community action project by completing the worksheet on the following page.

Top Tips for engaging decision-makers!

- ✓ Learn about local decision makers' roles and responsibilities in order to contact the right people.
- ✓ Get in touch with decision makers via email, a letter, or a short meeting.
- ✓ Plan ahead! A few weeks is often needed to get an answer when you ask for a meeting with decision makers.
- ✓ Be prepared when you meet, as this shows a high degree of professionalism.
- ✓ Use a collaborative and non-confrontational approach will help you get off to a good start. For example, make links between your project and the work of decision makers (i.e., their "action plans"), as well as highlighting common goals.
- ✓ Provide decision makers with clear choices about their possible levels of involvement to help them decide how they can be involved. For example, they can be invited to come speak to the group and share their point of view, they can attend the final event, write a letter of support for your project, etc...
- ✓ Keep decision-makers informed about your activities throughout your project. This is important in order to develop trust and build a long-term relationship.
- ✓ Be realistic and stay positive!

Decision-Makers: Allies and opponents		
Community action project – Issue:		
Name	Why they are important	Contact strategy
Allies		
1		
2		
3		
Opponents		
1		
2		
3		
Undecided		
1		
2		
3		

“I’m committed to the project. I see that we can actually have decision makers on board for what we do.” Youth, Speaking Rights Montreal

“I will commit to actively working with some of the groups that were here tonight and getting them involved with some of the stuff that we’re doing so that they feel that they are voice is being empowered through their rights and also getting involved in some of their initiatives and promoting that through our networks”. Decision-maker, Speaking Rights Montreal
