



Loud & Proud Youth Organizer's Toolkit

Accessibility Version

Your Guide to Finding Your Voice, Building
Your Base, and Maximizing Your Impact

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Youth Forum (USYF)

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1. Introduction



Why We Created This Guide:

At the United States Youth Forum (USYF), we believe that young people lead the way. This guide is here to help you find your voice, bring people together, and make a difference.

Who Is This For:

This guide is for you, a young person who wants to make a difference. Maybe you're not sure what to do, or maybe you have an idea for something big. No matter where you are in your journey, this guide is to help you find the next step.

How to Use This Guide:

This guide is your map. Start where you want, jump to the parts that matter to you, and pick and choose what is helpful. We've also added examples, links, and templates to help you get started.

2. Finding Your Direction

Feeling fired up but you don't know where to start? You're not alone.

Every great change begins when someone notices that something isn't right. Whatever your goal, the first step is to make a plan.

It Starts With You:

Ask yourself:

- What makes you angry, hopeful, or inspired?
- Is there something happening in your school, town, or state that doesn't feel right?
- Have you or someone you care about been hurt by something unfair?
- What's a change you want to see right now?



Start small. Big change begins with small ones.



Find Your Focus:

Maybe you care about a lot of issues and you don't know where to start. That just means you care. But trying to do everything can make you feel tired or stuck. Instead, start with one thing and work your way up.

Ask yourself:

- What problems matter to me?
- What problem feels the most important right now?
- Where could you make the biggest difference?

3. Building Your Base

Once you've figured it out, the next step is to build a team. Change happens faster when you work together.

Start By Reaching Out:

You don't need a huge group to start, just a few other people who care. Look around you:

- Who else has talked about being angry?
- Are there clubs, classes, or school groups that also care?
- Do your friends and/or family care?
- Can you find social media pages or online groups who can help?



Create Your Team:

As more people join, you may want to give team members a clear idea of what to do. Here are some common roles:

- Coordinator: Schedules meetings, tracks goals, assigns tasks, monitors progress
- Social Media Manager: Handles social media, designs posts, facilitates outreach
- Policy Lead: Tracks legislation, gathers facts, and keeps group informed
- Action Planner: Plans logistics for rallies, ensures events run smoothly
- Fundraising: Manages donations, fundraising ideas, and grant applications

Even small teams need roles. Try this:

- Have regular check-ins
- Use an app or a shared document
- Share leadership with everyone

Include everyone:

The strongest movements make space for everyone.

This can look like:

- Listening to a variety of people
- Making sure meetings and events are easy for everyone to join
- Letting people ask questions, make mistakes, and be honest
- Respecting each other



4. Planning

Okay, now it's time to turn your ideas into action. Good planning will make you stronger.



Start with a Goal:

Ask yourself and your team:

- What is the change we want to see?
- Who has the power to make that change happen?
- What do we want people to do after we take action?
- How will we know we've made progress?
- What resources or allies can help us reach this goal

Good goals are SMART, meaning, they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Here are examples:

- In 6 months, we will host a food drive at school and at least 10 people will come.
- Over the next 3 months, we will sell t-shirts and raise at least \$50 for the local humane society.



Choose Your Action:

Think about how you are going to make change and what sorts of resources you have to make it happen. Here are some ideas for what you can do:

- Rallies or protests: Get attention and bring people together.
- Sit-ins or walkouts: Peaceful ways to call out problems and get noticed.
- Petitions: Gather support and show that people do care about this issue.
- Social media campaigns: Use TikTok, Instagram, and other social media to share your message.
 - **Be careful:** Protect yourself. Never post personal information or photos without permission.
- Teach-ins or workshops: Help others learn about this issue and how they can help.
- Letters or calls to leaders: Speak directly to the people in charge to ask for change.
- Posters or art: Creative ways to grab people's attention.



Build a Timeline:

Once you've chosen an action, plan backward from the date you want it to happen. Write a concrete timeline with specific and actionable to-dos that build to the end goal.

Start with the Action Day. What needs to be ready? What should be done a week before? Two weeks before? What's the very first step we can take today to get started?

5. Funding

You don't have to be rich to make a difference! But having a little bit of money can help your ideas grow. Money can be good for things like printing flyers, buying snacks for volunteers, and buying stickers or merch.

Where to Find Support:

Don't know where to find funding? Don't worry, help is out there! You would be surprised how many people want to support youth.



Start with:

- Friends and family: Ask the people closest to you to chip in or share your project.
- Teachers and school staff: Some schools have small budgets for student projects or can connect you with helpful resources.
- Local businesses: Many businesses will donate money, supplies, or space if you give them a thank-you or shoutout.
- Other youth organizers: Connect with other youth-led groups. They might share resources or team up on fundraising.
- Grants: Big companies like Target, Walmart, and Meijer sometimes offer small grants for youth projects. You usually need to fill out a short application to apply.

How to Fundraise:

There are lots of ways to raise money!

Here are a few ideas:

- Online fundraisers: Use sites like GoFundMe, GiveButter, Venmo, or PayPal. Be clear about what your cause is and how the money will be used.
- Friends & family: Have each team member reach out to a few people to donate or share your fundraiser.
- Social media challenges: Create a fun challenge or hashtag campaign that spreads awareness and encourages donations.
- Merch sales: Sell handmade crafts, t-shirts, stickers, or pins that share your message.
- Events: Host something fun — like a movie night, open mic, dinner, or talent show — and ask for a small donation to join.
 - *Note: All fundraising activities must follow local laws. If you are under the age of eighteen, talk with a parent, guardian, or trusted adult to help plan and keep things safe.*

Pro-tip: Always share updates and thank your supporters!

Grants for Youth Organizers:

Many companies and foundations offer grants (free funding) for youth projects. Applying for one might sound scary, but some are actually pretty simple.

Start by exploring youth-focused organizations.

- UNESCO Global Youth Grant Scheme
- Global Youth Mobilization
- Youth4Climate
- UN-Habitat Urban Youth Fund
- Youth Service America Grants
- Karma for Cara Foundation
- Peace First
- YouthBank

Also look for grants in your area.

Before applying, keep this in mind:

- Know what you need: Be clear about how much money you're asking for and what it's for.
- Show your impact: Explain what you plan to do, who will benefit, and why it matters.
- Get feedback: Ask a mentor, teacher, or trusted adult to read your grant before you send it. They can help you make it stronger and easier to understand.



6. Outreach & Mobilization

So, now you have a reason, a team, and a plan, meaning it's time to get moving! This is where you spread the word, grow, and inspire others. Whether you are organizing one event or starting a campaign, how you talk about your plan and connect with others makes a difference.



Digital Outreach (Making the Internet Work for You):

Social media is free, fast, and the perfect place to reach your audience.

Here are some tips for each social media:

- Instagram: Great for telling stories, sharing event graphics, and posting behind-the-scenes moments. Use Stories and Reels to stay active and connect with people.
- TikTok: Short videos with a strong hook can reach a lot of people. Be real, show your team, talk directly to the camera, and use trends to explain your cause.
- Email: Best for keeping people involved long-term. Send updates, share action steps, and invite people to events. A monthly newsletter helps you stay connected with supporters and donors.
- Twitter/X: Good for quick updates and connecting with journalists, local leaders, or other organizations.
- Group chats & Discord: Private group spaces help build community and keep volunteers organized.

Also, use hashtags!

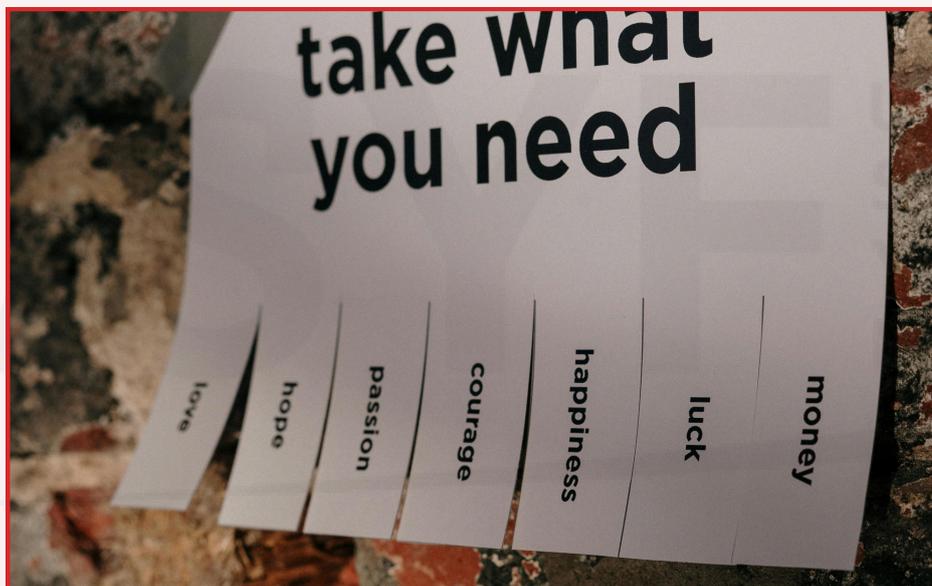
Craft a Spiel:

You'll often be asked, "What's this about?" That's your moment to shine. A short, clear "elevator pitch" helps people understand and remember your cause.

Include these parts:

- The problem: What issue inspired this cause?
- Why it matters: Who's affected, and why should people care?
- Your vision: What change are you fighting for?
- The ask: What do you want people to do right now?

Pro-tip: Being upfront about your age and your passion for change is a powerful way to engage adults and get them interested in your cause. Youth action is moving, so use it to your advantage.



Physical Outreach (IRL Still Matters):

Even in a digital world, real-life outreach still makes a big impact — especially in your local community.

Here are some ways to spread the word:

- Flyers: Hang them in schools, libraries, coffee shops, rec centers, or on community boards. (Always ask before posting! Not every space is open for public use.)
- Posters: Use bold colors, clear text, and include a QR code so people can find your online info.
- Handouts: Keep them short! Include a simple next step, like following your social media or joining a meeting.
- Tabling: Set up a table at school or local events to talk to people face-to-face. (Make sure you get permission first! Many events require sign-ups.)

Always follow school or community rules about posting, tabling, or other outreach. Breaking those rules can hurt your cause. Stay in open, public spaces and stay aware of your surroundings. If you're under 18, plan with a parent, guardian, or trusted adult before doing in-person outreach. Having an adult with you can help you stay safe and handle any issues that come up.

7. Engaging With Institutions

So far, you've been rallying your friends, community, and team. But to make long-lasting change, you'll probably need to connect with institutions.

What do we mean by "institutions"?

These are groups or people in power, like:

- Schools and school boards
- Local government or city councils
- Policymakers or legislator
- The media

Basically, anyone or any group that makes decisions affecting lots of people.

Why This is Different:

Institutions have power. They might control rules that affect the community. For example, think of your principal or someone in your school who has the ability to make rules that affect everyone. Working with institutions and people in power is different from talking to other people. But don't let it scare you.



Handling Conversations:

When you are trying to meet with a principal, a school board member, city council rep, or other decision-maker, remember:

- Do your homework: Learn about the person's role, background, and what they can actually change. Don't expect a principal to make laws like a legislator can.
- Come prepared: Be clear about what you're asking for. Bring talking points, facts, and examples of how the issue affects your community. Personal stories are powerful!
- Be respectful but direct: You can be professional and assertive at the same time. Stay calm even if you feel ignored or frustrated.
- Follow up: Send a recap email or message thanking them and restating your ask. It's okay to follow up more than once, but don't overdo it.

Building Partnerships:

You don't have to do this alone. Partnering with other organizations is helpful.

Look for:

- Youth-led groups in your area
- Student clubs at schools that care about the same issues
- Local nonprofits

A united team is harder to ignore and gives you more resources. When building partnerships:

- Be clear about your goals, values, and expectations
- Offer your support too — celebrate each other's wins



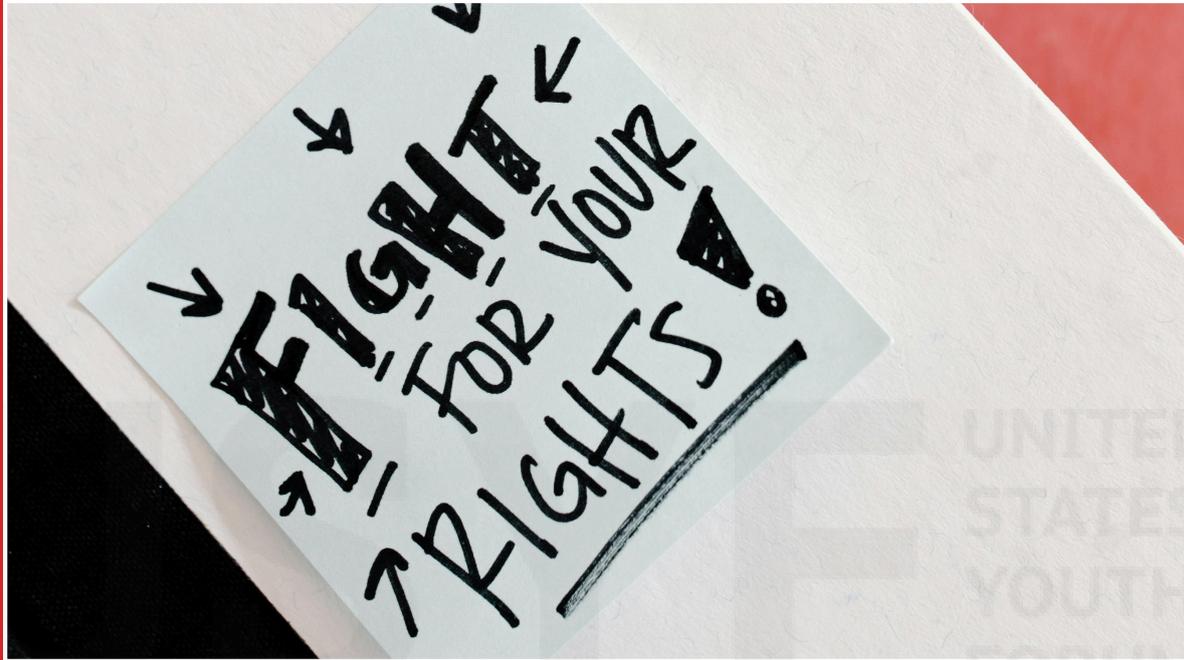
Working with Local Media:

Media coverage can boost visibility and help you reach more supporters. It can also pressure decision-makers.

Ways to connect with local media:

- Draft a press release: Include the who, what, when, where, and why of your event or campaign.
- Email local reporters: Write a short, interesting pitch. Look for reporters who cover similar issues.
- Notify media about events: If you're planning an in-person event, local media may cover it.

8. Knowing Your Rights



If you're working with institutions or planning a rally, it's important to think about safety for yourself, your team, and supporters. Remember: the right to protest and speak out is protected by the U.S. Constitution. But how those rights are respected can differ depending on where you are. As a young leader, it's important to understand the risks. We recommend researching how local, state, and federal authorities respond to movements in your area before taking action.

The Basics:

In most cases, the First Amendment protects your ability to:

- Peacefully protest in public spaces like sidewalks, parks, and government buildings.
- Carry signs or wear clothing with messages.
- Hand out flyers and petitions.
- Record public officials (like police), as long as you're not getting in the way.

However, your rights are not protected if:

- You are on private property (like inside a store or business)
- You are blocking traffic without a permit
- You are in an unpermitted march in certain cities or areas

Always research local rules, regulations, and laws.

Legal Disclaimer:

This guide is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional legal advice. Laws and policies may vary based on your city, state, or school district. The United States Youth Forum (USYF) is not responsible for any legal consequences that may result from participation in actions or protests.

9. Sustaining Your Cause

Organizing can be exciting, but it's also challenging. You might run into unexpected problems or feel frustrated if people aren't engaging the way you hoped. That's completely normal.

Avoiding Burnout:

Burnout happens when organizing feels more stressful than fun. It's common, but there are ways to manage it:

- Set realistic goals: You can't fix everything overnight. Focus on making progress, not being perfect.
- Share the load: Don't do everything yourself. Rotate responsibilities, delegate tasks, and let your team contribute. This helps everyone feel valued.
- Take breaks: Rest is part of the work. Step away when needed and encourage teammates to do the same. Set up a plan for when someone is "out of office."
- Build a support system: Check in with your team and also connect with others who can support and celebrate your wins.
- Protect your joy: Make time for things that recharge you and keep you motivated.

Reflecting & Celebrating:

After an event, campaign, or milestone, take a moment to pause and reflect:

- Debrief as a team: What worked well? What could be better? What did you learn, and how will you use it next time?
- Celebrate: Thank your team, post recaps online, and be proud of what you've accomplished.
- Say thank you: Thank volunteers, donors, and partners — anyone who helped along the way.



Next Steps:

Your work isn't over, and that's a good thing. Movements don't end with one rally or campaign. Think about what comes next:

- Can you grow your team?
- What gaps or challenges have you noticed?
- Should you start a new campaign or adjust your strategy?
- Is it time to rest, regroup, and plan?
- Are there lessons you can share with new youth organizers?



10. Staying Connected with USYF

This guide is just the beginning. Whether you are planning your first protest, starting a student organization, or building a long-term campaign, we're here to support you every step of the way.

Stay Connected:

The United States Youth Forum (USYF) is a youth-powered movement dedicated to uplifting young voices. Here's how you can stay connected:

- Join our mailing list: Want updates on new resources, events, and the work that we are doing at USYF? Sign up for our mailing list to stay in the look and never miss a beat.
 - [Subscribe here](#)
- Follow us on social media: Follow, share, and tag us!
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Website](#)



Submit Your Story:

We want to hear from you! If you've used this guide to organize an event, build a team, or take action, share your story with us. Your experience could inspire other young people to step up and make change in their own communities.

[Reach out to us!](#)

Get Involved with USYF:

Want to take activism further? Volunteer with USYF! There are many ways to get involved, including:

- Social media and outreach
- Campaign organizing
- Supporting other youth-led initiatives

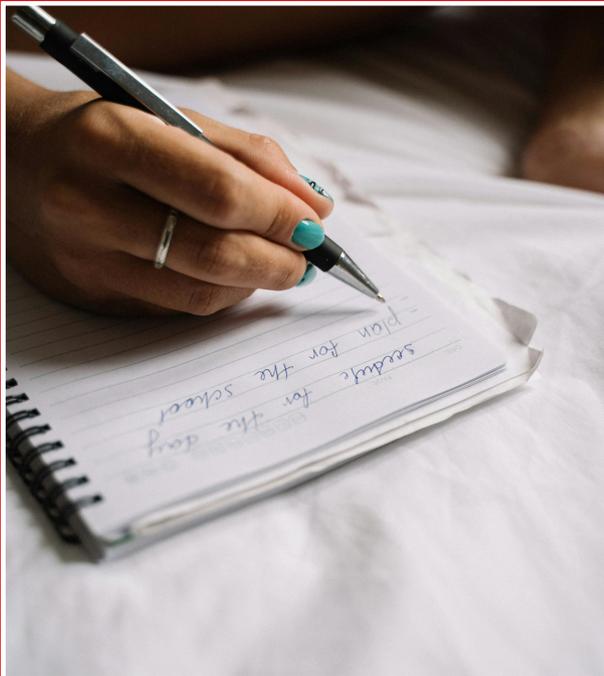
Plug in, grow your skills, and make an impact alongside a national network of youth leaders.

[Contact us!](#)



11. Templates & Resources

Think of this section as your toolkit for organizing, one that can grow and improve over time. Starting something new can feel overwhelming, which is why we've included templates and resources to help you take action faster, smarter, and with more confidence.



State-by-State Resource Guide:

Need to know which resources or youth-friendly organizations are in your area? Check out our State-by-State Resource Guide, which lists organizations by state so you can connect locally.

Letter to a Legislator Template:

Make your voice heard! This template shows you what to say and how to format your letter when reaching out to local or state officials.

Press Release Template:

Planning an event or campaign? Use this to get the media's attention.

Team Role Assignments:

Clarify who is doing what to avoid burnout and to manage tasks effectively.

Social Media Content Planner:

Organize your posts, pick themes, and plan your outreach for maximum impact.

Event Planning Timeline:

Use this simple checklist to plan backward from your event date and stay on track.

