

## Parent Empowerment in Education

### Measuring What Matters

## MEASURING INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to inputs, outputs and outcomes, parent empowerment efforts include **a fourth essential category of measurement – infrastructure.**

**Parents can exercise their power across a range of roles.** Each of these roles is different, but all create value. **Organizations can quantify parent power by measuring the number of parents they have relationships with in each of these roles.**

Some organizations do this informally. Others measure the infrastructure of parent power based solely on specific actions, such as phone banking or public actions (for more on these measures, see the tabs on individual actions).

Still other organizations explicitly define a set of parent roles, and then invest in developing the number of parents in those roles necessary to succeed in a campaign (and ultimately across multiple campaigns).

An infrastructure of parent power is not built overnight, nor is it a one-time occurrence. **Infrastructure is about relationships between an organization and the parents they serve, and what parents decide they will do - individually and/or collectively - as a consequence of this relationship.**

As such, building infrastructure **involves continual engagement with individuals to: (a) Build and sustain relationships; (b) understand their needs as parents and their priorities for their children and community; and (c) co-create compelling impact agendas that parents are willing to devote their time and energy to support.**

*“Because time is such a precious resource for both our staff and our parent partners, when we start to think about any campaign, we need to have a quick and accurate sense of which parents will be interested in an agenda based on our relationship with them, what we know about what they care about, and what they have been active on in the past,”* shares Jonathan Klein, Founder and CEO of **GO Public Schools**. *“This early agenda-setting HAS to happen closely with parents - we aren’t going to succeed at taking on an issue if there isn’t that critical mass of parent leaders and active members to partner with us, and - if need be - help us build out a larger infrastructure to enable a campaign to succeed.”*



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## How infrastructure and actions interact

In the 1980's movie, Top Gun, an officer cautions Tom Cruise's character, "your ego is writing checks your body can't cash." This is a risk many nonprofits also face – **our aspirations can outstrip our abilities.**

When an organization in the parent empowerment space is developing its campaign plan, it must think not only about the actions (trainings/workshops, house-meetings, public actions, phone-banking, etc.) it feels are necessary to accomplish that campaign's impact agenda, but also about the infrastructure of parent power required to execute on these actions.



Part of the complexity in this lies in the interaction between actions and infrastructure. **Infrastructure is required to enable the execution of actions. But actions themselves can also develop this infrastructure of power.** Sierra Jenkins, Vice President of Research, Policy and Communications at Innovate Public Schools, notes that, "empowerment happens not just through training but also through a lot of doing."

**Actions and infrastructure must reconcile in order for a campaign of any type to succeed, which is why measurement and target-setting are so important.** To use the example of canvassing: an organization wants to reach 1,500 people through canvassing, which could require knocking on up to 6,000 doors. This organization expects an active member to knock on an average of 100 doors over the course of a campaign. The organization therefore needs a minimum of 60 active, trained members who show up to canvass. Further, knowing that not everyone who signs up shows up, an organization may need 80 parents who sign up to canvass. Even further, knowing that not everybody who is trained even signs up to participate, the organization may need to train as many as 100 parents on canvassing to get 60 active canvassers. In addition, the organization may need 10 parents serving as formal leaders who know how to organize and lead canvassing sessions. The fewer the number of active members and leaders, the more an organization is asking of each of them (which may not be reasonable), or the less the organization can accomplish in this action. **The infrastructure available becomes either a limiter or an enabler on the ability to execute an action.**

**Fortunately, the infrastructure of parent power can be built.** If an organization's existing infrastructure is insufficient for an action like canvassing, it can invest in other actions, such as workshops and trainings, to build that infrastructure. It may need to recruit more subscriber/supporters to become active members on a collective agenda or reach out and make the ask of active members focused on an individual agenda to become partners in a collective agenda. Parents taking action builds the skills and will of many of those parents to take further actions – which further builds the collective infrastructure of that community and organization.

**Unfortunately, the infrastructure of parent power can also dissipate.** Infrastructure is built on relationships, and like any relationships, sustaining infrastructure requires constant investment and renewal. Organizations have to continually provide value to parents on the priorities most important to them, which means asking and listening to determine what those priorities are. The easiest way for relationships to deteriorate is when setting the agenda becomes one-sided, with organizations setting the agenda FOR parents instead of working together to ensure the agenda is set BY parents and organizations together.

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## How organizations actually quantify each of these roles

Some roles are easier to quantify than others. And we want to emphasize again that not every organization seeks to develop the power of parents in all of these roles. The required infrastructure of parent power, and therefore the roles parents play, can vary based on (1) which of the **four parent empowerment strategies** an organization focuses on (and the underlying actions), which then (2) determines which roles parents must play to execute on those strategies.

Organizations will then (3) determine the definition of each of their roles, which drives measurement.

### Steps for an organization to determine how to measure its infrastructure of parent power

#### Step 1

- Determine which parent empowerment strategies an organization is pursuing and the set of actions required to support those strategies

#### Step 2

- Determine what roles parents must be willing and able to play to execute on those strategies and specific actions

#### Step 3

- Determine an organization's definition of each role, and what it will measure to determine if or when an individual is in that role

**Organizations may also have their own language for how they think about different parent roles.** We believe these seven archetypes capture the range of parent roles, but we recognize that each organization may use different internal language/designations.

Further, **not every organization uses the same measures to define the same roles.** One organization may define a "Supporter/Subscriber" based on a measure that another uses to set the bar for an "Active Member." Particular variability exists around different levels of leadership.

**Ultimately, each organization needs to decide for itself what roles are included in its infrastructure of parent power and what measures go into the definition of each role.** Also, to acknowledge the complexity (and perhaps irony) in measuring infrastructure, infrastructure is usually defined by a set of output and outcome measures (see below).

Here are the most common measures tracked to quantify an infrastructure of parent power in each of these seven roles:

# General Community Member



## General Community Member

An individual who is consuming value from your organization (i.e., going to your website or social media) or receiving mass outreach from you (i.e., mass mailing), but for whom you don't have unique identifying information.

**This role is quantified mainly through measures of reach** (either online reach or mass mailing), **although organizations also will track some measures of online engagement.**

As a reminder, **your organization should 'Goldilocks' what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

### Common measures of reach include:

- **Website:**
  - # of unique visitors to your website
    - # of direct visitors
    - # of visitors directed from other websites
- and/or-
- **Social Media:**
  - # of views on Facebook
  - # of views on Twitter
  - # of views on YouTube
- and/or-
- **# of people sent mass mailings** (using 3rd-party mailing lists, and not individuals who have provided their unique identifying information to your organization)

### Common measures of engagement include:

- **Website:**
  - Average time spent on website (overall)
  - # who spend time on specific content (and average time spent)
  - # who spend X minimum time on specific content such as videos
  - # who download content (if allowed without first providing unique identifying information)
- and/or -
- **Social Media:**
  - Facebook
    - # of likes (overall and by key posts)
    - # of shares (overall and by key posts)
    - # of followers
    - # of comments
  - Twitter
    - # of likes (overall and by key tweets)
    - # of shares (overall and by key tweets)
    - # of followers
    - # of comments
  - Youtube
    - # of likes (overall and by key content)
    - # of shares (overall and by key content)
    - # of followers
    - # of comments

# Subscriber/Supporter



## Subscribers/Supporters

An individual who has made a deliberate choice to give your organization unique identifying information – online or by signing up in real-world events – so that they can have ongoing engagement with your organization and its content. Not all Subscriber are necessarily Supporters. Some Subscribers may in fact be opposed to your organization’s agenda, but want to consume content you are providing.

**Most organizations only define Subscribers/Supporters based on measures of reach and engagement. However, several also define Subscribers/Supporters based on online actions** that individuals take and can be tracked (though many organizations consider these people to be Active Members).

As a reminder, **your organization should ‘Goldilocks’ what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

### Common measures of reach include:

- o # who have given your organization their email, mailing address, and other unique information through any channel (online or real-world)
  - # who sign up for your website content (if you ask for sign up)
  - # who sign up at real-world events
- o # who receive email from your organization (specifically, individuals who have given unique identifying information to your organization)
- o # who receive mail from your organization (specifically, individuals who have given unique identifying information to your organization)

**Common measures of engagement** by individuals who you have provided unique identifying information to your organization:

- **Online engagement:**
  - o # who spend time on website (and average time spent)
  - o # who spend time on specific content (and average time spent)
  - o # who spend X minimum time on specific content such as videos
  - o # who download content
  - o # who request mailed content
  - o # who open emails
  - o # who click through email to content, and measures of time spent on content
- **Real-world engagement**
  - o # who attend an event or workshop
  - o # who attend an event or workshop and sign up to become a new Subscriber/Supporter

**Common measures of action:** Several organizations define a Subscriber/Supporter not just on their reach and engagement, but if they take actions online (for other organizations, these are measures to define an Active Member). Common measures include:

- **Online action**
  - o # who have signed a petition
  - o # who have engaged with an authority figure by sending a letter online
  - o # who have engaged with an authority figure by sending a report, article or analysis
  - o # who have completed a survey
  - o # who have posted their story online

# Active Member - Individual Agenda



## Active Member - Individual Agenda

A parent who is actively involved in exercising their power through engagement with your organization, with the focus being on meeting the individual, specific needs of their children (vs. a larger collective agenda).

**This role is commonly measured through a combination of both engagement and action.**

As a reminder, **your organization should 'Goldilocks' what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

**Common measures of engagement:** # of general touchpoints with a parent, or segmentation by specific activities, such as:

- **# who attend events, workshops or trainings**
  - # who attend a single event/workshop/training, or
  - # who attend a specific target dosage of events/workshops/trainings

-and/or-
- **# who participate in a certain number of 1-on-1 meetings** (with an organizer, navigator or teacher)
  - # who attend a single meeting, or
  - # who attend a specific target dosage of meetings over a specific period of time

**Common measures of action:** Note, these actions will vary based on if parents are exercising their power as partners in education or exercising the power of their choice.

Choice measures here are focused on choices between schools (i.e., which school to pursue attendance at), but it is also possible to consider measures of choices parents make within a school (such as course selection, or advocating for the specific needs of a child), though these are not listed here.

- **On Partnership**
  - # who attend parent/teacher conferences, and/or
  - # who engage in home visits with teachers, and/or
  - # who spend X hours per week helping with homework
- **On Choice:**
  - # who take an action to support their child in school choice
    - # who start and complete a lottery (on or offline), and/or
    - # who apply to more than one school, and/or
    - # who make a deliberate change in school with characteristics more aligned to their child's educational needs and priorities (as they assess it)

# Active Member - Collective Agenda



## Active Member - Collective Agenda

These are parents who are actively involved in exercising their power through engagement with an organization on a community-level collective agenda, usually related to exercising the power of their collective voice in an issue campaign or exercising the power of their vote in an electoral campaign.

**There are a wide range of different actions an organization and its parents may take as part of these types of campaigns.**

As a rule, most organizations use demonstrated involvement in recent campaigns as a starting point to measure an individual's ability and willingness to assume such a role in future campaigns.

As a reminder, **your organization should 'Goldilocks' what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

Common measures include:

- **Training: # who have completed a training or workshop.** This can be a general training and workshop, or specific to building the skills to participate in a specific action (such as participating in a research meeting, being trained in how to tell their story in a video, phone-banking, or canvassing)

-and/or-

- **Involvement - overall: # who have been involved in X number of actions within Y time period** (with the number of actions and the time period involved varying). For example:
  - o One organization measures this as involvement in 2 or more actions within the last 90 days
  - o Another measures this as involvement in 4 or more actions within the last 12 months

-and/or-

- **Involvement - specific actions: # who have been involved in a specific mix of actions within a time period.** Some organizations may find value in knowing how many of their members are participating in specific types of action so that they can plan and execute campaigns accordingly. And some define their Active Members based on their participation in a specific set of these actions.

Please note, involvement in some of these actions may be used by organizations to define Active Members, while others may use some of these actions in their definition of an Emerging Leader or Formal Leader (particularly those actions involving communicating as an individual publicly or to those in authority).

Common specific measures of **real-world action** include:

- o # who have signed a petition
- o # who have been involved in a public action
- o # who have been involved in a candidate forum
- o # who have been involved in a house meeting
- o # who have been involved in a research meeting
- o # who have been involved in phone-banking
- o # who have been involved in canvassing
- o # who have been involved in lobbying
- o # who have been involved in get-out-the-vote

Common specific measures of **communications-related actions** (online and real-world) include:

- o # who have signed a petition
- o # who have completed a survey
- o # who have engaged with an authority figure by sending a letter online
- o # who have engaged with an authority figure by sending a report, article or analysis
- o # who have posted their story online
- o # who have created a video testimonial
- o # who have given public testimony

# Emerging Leader and Formal Leader



## Emerging Leader and Formal Leader

Organizations think about Emerging Leaders and Formal Leaders on a continuum, though most consider as a common starting point measuring an individual's completion of a formal leadership training. As a rule, most organizations use demonstrated experience in leading actions on recent campaigns as a starting point to measure an individual's ability and willingness to assume such a role in future campaigns.

Some organizations **measure leadership roles based on the overall number of actions of any type an individual has taken, while others measure leadership based on a specific set or combination of actions.** The former is simpler, while the later gives an organization a sense of which individuals spike in their leadership of particular actions.

Some organizations **have different expectations about which type of actions an Emerging Leader vs. a Formal Leader should be involved in.** For example, some may designate an Emerging Leader as someone who leads a house meeting, and a Formal Leader as someone who leads a large public action (which requires more effort to organize and lead).

Others **have the same expectations in terms of types of actions but different expectations about the target level of action.** For example, an Emerging Leader is someone who is involved in 4 actions in a certain time period and a Formal Leader is involved in 8 actions in the same time period.

As a reminder, **your organization should 'Goldlocks' what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

### Common measures of Emerging Leadership and Formal Leadership include:

- **Training:** # who have completed a leadership training (usually a multi-session training or formal fellowship). This may include completing deliverables such as a story of self and an individual's mapping of their network capital. This may include not only leadership development, but training on education policy and politics, campaign planning, school budgeting, etc. This may also include pre- and post-testing on knowledge and self-assessment of change in attitudes about power (theirs and others).
- **Involvement:** # who were involved in X number of actions within Y time period. This may be a general number of actions or a specific mix of actions. Even as an Emerging Leader, organizations also tend to measure involvement in actions that others lead as this demonstrates commitment and development of knowledge and expertise about executing actions. For a list of these actions, please see Active Member: Collective Agenda.
- **Leadership – overall:** # who have organized and led one or more actions in a specific time period. Some organizations measure actions 'in aggregate' rather than break them out by type. Others measure both the total number of actions and by specific type (see below).
- **Leadership – specific actions:** # who have organized and led one or more specific mix of actions in a specific time period. Please note, not every organization assumes an Emerging Leader and Formal Leader are expected to be able to organize and lead the same types of actions. Common measures for both Emerging Leaders and Formal Leaders (but with likely different targets) include:
  - o # who have organized and led one or more research meetings
  - o # who have organized and led one or more public actions (or been part of a team of leaders doing so)
  - o # who have organized and led one or more lobbying actions
  - o # who have organized and led one or more house meetings
  - o # who have organized and led one or more phone-banking actions
  - o # who have organized and led one or more canvassing actions
  - o # who have organized and led one or more 1:1 meetings with other parents and community members

- **Leadership – specific communications actions:** # who have been trained in and can execute specific communications actions. These tend to be more expected of Formal Leaders than Emerging Leaders. Common measures include:

- o # who have led one or more general (i.e. any of the below) communication actions
- o # who have given interviews to the media
- o # who have led press conferences with the media
- o # who have written letters to the editor
- o # who have given public testimony

Three communication actions (below) tend to stand out as measures specific to individuals defined as Formal Leaders. Note, for all of these, organizations provide training and support to build parent capacity to lead on these actions:

- o # who have written and published original content
- o # who have written public policy platforms
- o # who have responded to external content (i.e. newspaper articles, 3<sup>rd</sup>-party reports, blogs, etc.) to support an organization and its campaign

- **Leadership – Turnout:** # who have demonstrated the ability to get X members of their community to attend an action. Note - this is a less common measure but important to some organizations, and also one where the target level can be greater for a Formal Leader vs. an Emerging Leader.



# Formal Authority



## Formal Authority

A parent who holds a formal role – elected, appointed or employed – to have influence on decisions impacting their community.

As a reminder, **your organization should 'Goldilocks' what it measures.** You should only capture measures that help your organization make better decisions to increase impact (and are practical to collect).

Common measures include:

- **# who have demonstrated ability as a Formal Leader with an organization** (see measures of defining formal leadership)  
-and-
- **# who have completed a specific leadership training or fellowship that prepares them to pursue a position of Formal Authority**  
-and-
- **# who pursue and achieve positions of Formal Authority**
  - # who run for and win an elected position  
-and/or-
  - # who are nominated, selected and accept an appointed position - including on non-elected boards  
-and/or-
  - # who become formally employed in a position of authority
    - In the school system or municipal or state government, and/or
    - In a nonprofit in education, including within the organization itself that is measuring (Note, some organizations specifically measure those parents who take on a formal, employed role as a professional in organizing)