

Parent Empowerment in Education

Measuring What Matters

RESEARCH MEETINGS

Research meetings are highly structured engagements with people in the community who have a stake in an agenda with the purpose of building relationships through listening, learning, informing, and where possible finding common ground.

Downloadable measurement template

Below is a template of common measures organizations use in the parent empowerment space to manage research meetings.

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).

Please note, the organizations we worked with focus most on measuring the parent infrastructure to conduct research meetings and the output of number of meetings and participation.

While research meetings do have outcomes, they are generally tracked in terms of: (a) learning information that will help shape the course and success of a campaign; and (b) an organization's ability to influence overall support from critical stakeholders for that campaign.

RESEARCH MEETING MEASUREMENT TEMPLATE

Overview of research meetings

Research meetings are a foundational component of all four parent empowerment strategies.

Research meetings can occur early in a campaign cycle to help identify a campaign agenda, or further in a campaign to advance an agenda once it has been selected by the community.

Research meetings should start by identifying all the people who have a stake in the issue you are seeking to address.

Research meetings then provide an opportunity to:

- Ask, listen and learn information about why an issue exists, why it has not been resolved, and what it would take to achieve an organization's agenda on that issue.
- Clearly understand a person's position on that issue, and what is driving that position.
- Provide information to shape a person's point of view about an issue and potentially influence a change in their position.
- Develop an understanding of who has what power to decide an issue; "*Research with decision-makers is where you find out where the real power is,*" explains Karen Belote¹.

- Develop deep relationships built on common ground and also identify where there are clear differences in positions.

Research meetings are also excellent opportunities for parent leaders to develop their leadership skills.

Some tips for successful research meetings include:

- Be clear on the purpose of a research meeting . Ask yourself, what will success look like?
- Based on that purpose and definition of success:
 - What voices need to be heard in that meeting?
 - What information needs to be provided and what is the most compelling format?
- What do you know about the person with whom you are meeting? What is their position on the issue (if known), and what may be driving that? What information do you have that they may not, and how would providing that information influence them?
- Plan a detailed agenda in advance.
- Assign roles (e.g., leaders, speakers and note-taker) in advance.
- Develop a script and practice that script. A strong script and practicing it will help to keep a research meeting on track.
- Plan time to debrief after a research meeting: What went well and why? What could have gone better and why? Did you stick to your script? Was your goal achieved? What follow-ups were committed to and what are next steps? What learnings can inform future research meetings?
- Always follow up on post-meeting commitments you have made and commitments others have made.

1. Mark Warren and Karen Mapp, *A Match on High Grass: Community Organizing As A Catalyst For School Reform*, (Oxford University Press, 2011), page 42.