

# An Incomplete Glossary of Organizing Vocabulary

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**ASSET MAPPING:** The process of creating an inventory of resources available for use in an institution, community, or collective. Resources can include infrastructure, materials, skills, relationships, financial resources, objects, & equipment.

**BASE BUILDING:** Developing a connected and motivated group of people who see their stake in taking concrete, collective action towards justice, and who have agreed to respond in specific ways when asked to take action.

**CAPACITY BUILDING:** Growing the power, leadership, skills, and resources of individuals and institutions, in service of shared work for collective liberation.

**DIRECT ACTION:** The use of disruptive tactics to intervene in a system, demand change to current practice or policy, amplify the voices of marginalized communities, and re-imagine what's possible. Direct action is an alternative to negotiation, lobbying, collective bargaining, or other methods of seeking change.

**DISCOMFORT:** In the context of organizing, discomfort describes the emotional disequilibrium of those who have been agitated by strategies and tactics of movement building. Both those who are being targeted by a particular tactic (i.e., an elected official whose office has been shut down by protesters) or those who are part of the organizing (i.e., white allies who are asked to follow the leadership of POC) can experience discomfort. The experience of discomfort can lead to increased resistance or irrevocable transformation.

**FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES:** People who are most directly impacted by systems of oppression-- and the violence that comes from those systems--due to their identity, geography, or status. Like all communities, frontline communities are internally diverse and overlapping. Frontline communities can also describe people who are directly impacted by systems of oppression and who are fighting to change those systems through collective action and resistance.

**ISSUE:** Within organizing, something that needs to change, that is within the power of a known decision maker to change, that can be changed within a defined timeline, and that if changed will have a meaningful impact on people's lives. [e.g.: World peace is not an issue; increasing statewide funding for reproductive health care is].

**INTERSECTIONALITY:** A critical theory describing the ways in which oppressive institutions and systems, as they apply to a given individual or group, are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.

**MOVEMENT BUILDING:** The long term process of building relationships and mobilizing communities for mass-scale, intersectional work for justice and liberation. Phases of movement building are often iterative, rather than linear, and include raising public consciousness, building infrastructure, developing relationships of trust, responding to “flash-point” moments, and engaging in sustained strategies to apply pressure on powerholders.

**ONE-TO-ONE:** An intentional meeting of two individuals or organizations to build relationship, elicit shared values and interests, and develop trust in order to work toward a shared goal or vision.

**POWER MAPPING:** The process of identifying and assessing social, political, and relational structures of influence. Power mapping includes identifying who holds power (officially and unofficially), how power is exercised, and how to influence power holders.

**SELF-INTEREST:** Knowing in philosophical, spiritual, personal, and practical terms one’s shared stake in the work, and how the work directly and materially relates to your core values and needs.

**SOLIDARITY (“SHOWING UP”):** Any physical, written, or visual expression of support by an allied community in partnership and alignment with a marginalized group to positively impact the status quo. Acts of solidarity are based on the impacted community’s stated interests & needs, and highlight the leadership of the impacted community, while uplifting shared, intersecting values of all parties.

**STRATEGY:** An overall approach to achieving objectives. It is the way or ways that a community power building organization uses its power to win what it wants. A campaign is a planned series of strategies and actions designed to achieve clear goals and objectives. Effective organizations are strategic in everything they do. They are always refining their power analysis and strategies. Research is an essential component before launching any campaign.

**TACTICS:** Concrete steps to implement your strategy. Tactics can and should match the context and circumstances.