



L.O.C.A.L. Summit Series Starter Kit

*A Practical Guide to Launching a Summit for
Local Organizing, Collaborative Action, and Leadership - L.O.C.A.L.!*

Prepared by Kai Degner, SIMPLER Leadership LLC



Purpose of this Kit

This Start Kit is designed to help you and your team bring a L.O.C.A.L. Summit to your community. Whether you're starting from scratch or already connected to local organizations and efforts, this guide walks you through a streamlined process to convene your neighbors, spark action, and build momentum around shared values.

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Welcome Letter

You Can Spark What's Next

Dear Neighbor,

You don't need a title, budget, or a big organization to convene people in your community. You just need a sense that the time is now to bring folks together—and a willingness to organize a few basic steps. I'm here to help!

What Happens at the Summit?

- People are invited by a motivating invitation and theme.
- Attendees gather in a circle.
- Participants suggest breakout session topics.
- A simple schedule is built in real-time.
- Everyone self-organizes into breakout sessions.
- Actions, ideas, and energy emerge organically.
- The magic happens in the conversations.

Each “L.O.C.A.L.” Summit has theme along the lines of defending/(re)building democracy, resisting authoritarianism, protecting vulnerable neighbors.

Who Should Organize One?

- Anyone who believes their community needs more coordination, courage, and care
- Ideal for local civic leaders, nonprofit teams, activist groups, neighborhood organizers, or passionate individuals
- Can be one person but a team is best!

The L.O.C.A.L. Summit format has already helped hundreds of people reconnect, get re-energized, and coordinate meaningful action. You can bring that energy to your community. This Starter Kit will walk you through how.

Let's get started!

—Kai Degner

Founder, SIMPLER Leadership and the L.O.C.A.L. Summit Series



What Is a L.O.C.A.L. Summit - and What is it NOT?

L.O.C.A.L. = Local Organizing for Collaborative Action and Leadership

Each summit is rooted in the belief that communities already have the ideas, energy, and leadership they need—they just need a space to come together. It's action-oriented, structured for self-organization, and empowers attendees to create their own experience.

A L.O.C.A.L. Summit is:

- **Collaborative** – Participants create the agenda together.
- **Action-oriented** – People connect to existing efforts or start new ones.
- **Inclusive** – Everyone is invited to bring their perspective and passion.
- **Flexible** – You don't need tech, a stage, or expert speakers.
- **Empowering** – Anyone can start one. Yes, even you.

Think of a L.O.C.A.L. Summit as a community-powered town hall meets action fair.

But instead of arguments and long speeches, people listen, share, brainstorm, and organize together.



What a L.O.C.A.L. Summit is NOT - and What It Means for Your Team

1. Not a Top-Down Strategic Planning Effort

This isn't an attempt to form a planning group that coordinates all the efforts related to (re)building democracy, resisting authoritarianism, and protecting vulnerable neighbors. Instead, summits are an opportunity for community and civic leaders to be in the same room at the same time to share what they're up to with each other and with curious neighbors. It's a time to share information, build rapport, recruit, and, yes, coordinate. It's a space for dialogue, action, and coalition-building.

- a. **The Summit Success Team** is NOT responsible for keeping track of everything that happens, or even creating a final report (in fact, it may be advisable NOT to create such a report in this environment). But, the SST can help capture success stories and celebrate the outcomes!

2. Not an Over-Programmed Conference, Town Hall, Panel or Lecture Series

The goal for summits is to get people in the room - and get out of their way. They care enough to show up and have plenty of energy, ideas, questions, and resources to make a highly productive event for each other. This isn't a session where a few people talk and everyone else sits quietly. Instead, everyone participates and contributes. People won't be sitting through a line-up of expert speakers. The wisdom is in the room, and we create the agenda together. There's no stage, no PowerPoint, and no pre-set agenda.

- a. This means the **Summit Success Team** can mostly focus on just getting people into the room! (With a some help on logistics and fundraising).

3. **Not Just for “New” Projects and Efforts**

Summits don't assume your community is starting from scratch on addressing the challenges and goals in the event's theme. In fact, the idea is to bring all the ongoing efforts together in one space to share and collaborate. People and organizations already engaged in action are very welcome to attend - but they don't need to feel responsible to plan or lead. They may choose whether to create a breakout session and/or mingle amongst the attendees to provide perspective and resources when relevant. But, of course, new ideas and new faces are welcome!

- a. **The Summits Success Team** doesn't need to feel pressure to make sure any specific person or organization attends the event. One of the principles of the meeting method is “Whoever comes are the right people.”

4. **Not a Campaign Rally**

While elected officials, candidates, and campaigners are (VERY!) welcome at all Summits, there is not time budgeted for stump speeches or long addresses. Officials and candidate may definitely create a breakout session about their campaign and role.

- a. **The Summit Success Team** can definitely invite all officials and candidates, but does not need to feel pressure to confirm their attendance before advertising the event.

5. **Not a Space for Harassment or Disrespect**

Civility is essential. Disagreement is welcome, but dehumanization or hostility is not. This space is built on listening and mutual respect.

- a. **The Summit Success Team** can be confident that anyone disrespectful and rude will have minimal impact on the event. The design lets other people simply walk away, and no one is given the microphone to address the whole group for more than one minute.

6. **Not a Place Restricted to Formal Leaders or Experts**

It's not about status—it's about connection and collaboration. Attendees (and Success Team members!) don't need a title, resume, or years of experience to attend or lead. They just need to care and be ready to contribute. The summits are open to people new to civic and community participation AND those longstanding community and civic leaders.

- a. **The Summit Success Team** can focus on inviting people not normally engaged, but who are ready to be in a space that provides resilience and opportunities to get plugged in.

7. **Not a One-Time Event - If You Make It a Series and Connect with the L.O.C.A.L. Action Accelerator (the app for Summits!)**

- a. While even just one event is valuable, imagine the possibilities if your network of civic and community leaders knew there would be 2-4 events like this each year. They could become part of the civic infrastructure - a reliable opportunity to recharge, regroup, and supercharge efforts for the season ahead. And, there's even an app that lets those most motivated to stay engaged to stay in communication between and across the summits.

- i. **The Summit Success Team** can decide on the frequency of summits in their community, and individuals may choose (or not) to join the L.O.C.A.L. Action Accelerator.

Video Overview

 **How to Host a 300-Person Community Summit with No Agenda using Open ...**

Some Nuts and Bolts

General Roadmap

In broad strokes, here's a basic list of what needs to happen:

- Assemble a core team (3–5 people to start)
- Pick a date (4–6 weeks out recommended)
- Choose an adequate venue (space for 100-300 people in a circle with 8-12 breakout spaces)
- Confirm a Summit Title and Theme, and a motivating invitation
- Build an RSVP page (Kai will create this in Action Network)
- Promote via email, social, and word of mouth
- Invite organizations and community leaders to participate and spread the word
- Determine volunteer and fundraising needs
- Set up materials: name tags, signage, materials for open space, kid zone, etc.
- Be sure there's drinks, snacks, pizza, and coffee

Resources/Service Kai Provides

- Custom RSVP page
- Summit Agenda
- Facilitation
- Event day set-up (with some help)
- Printed materials (sign-in sheets, signs, facilitation materials)
- Email and social media messaging templates
- Coaching
- Integration with the LocalSummits.org website
- Invite to the L.O.C.A.L. Action Accelerator (the app and online community for Summits!)

Budgeting & Donations

- No big budget needed!

- Typical costs: space, supplies, coffee/snacks, optional childcare
- Many events are fully funded by local donations and sponsorships (we provide templates!)
- If you'd like Kai to attend and facilitate, additional arrangements can be made

Three Ways to Partner with Kai & SIMPLER Leadership LLC

Choose the option that best fits your local team's needs and resources.

In ALL models, if the event is a match for the L.O.C.A.L. Summit Series brand, Kai Degner & SIMPLER Leadership LLC support the Event Registration page on Action Network. The L.O.C.A.L. Summit Series brand is focused on themes related to (re)building democracy, resisting authoritarianism, and protecting vulnerable neighbors.

*ALL models include a **Summit Support Team (SST)**, made up of committed individuals committed to making the event a success.*

Model A: “Follow Kai’s Lead for this (first) one.” ← BEST FOR THE FIRST ONE OR TWO

“We’ll co-host, promote, and help cover costs. Kai coordinates and facilitates.”

- SIMPLER Leadership LLC guides the team, coordinates logistics and leads facilitation.
- Local team promotes, helps raise funds, and supports on-the-ground logistics.
- Expenses are covered by donations (requested by Kai) and sponsors (found by SST).
- SST members are reimbursed from revenue for the event.
- If there's a shortfall, the SST helps cover the gap (up to \$1,000).
- Any surplus remains with SIMPLER Leadership LLC.

 *“We trust the momentum, and we’re ready to work together.”*

 *Money flows through SIMPLER Leadership LLC.*

Model B: “Flat Fee, No Fundraising”

“We’ll cover all expenses, including Kai’s facilitation.”

- Local SST team pays SIMPLER Leadership LLC a flat fee (plus any travel-related expenses).
- No public fundraising or donation request by Kai or SIMPLER Leadership LLC needed at the event.
- SIMPLER provides planning, coordination, and facilitation support.

 *“We’ve got a budget and want to keep it simple.”*

Model C: “We Got This - Just Guide Us!”

“We’ll lead locally. Kai supports as a coach.”

- Local SST team leads all planning and logistics.
- SIMPLER provides training, templates, and coaching.
- SIMPLER helps identify or train a local Open Space facilitator (Kai does not attend).
- Fee: \$1,000 for the first summit, \$750 for the second, \$500 for later events.

 *“We’re building local capacity and running with the vision.”*

? 10 Key Planning Questions

Use this list to guide your first planning meetings:

1. Do you want only one event or do you want to start a series (at least two)?
2. What's the **date**, time, and length of the first event?
3. What's our **venue** and does it meet our needs?
 - Large circle space, chairs for 50–300
 - Breakout areas that are audible
 - Accessible parking and restrooms
4. Will we provide a kids' space?
5. Who's on our **planning team** and how will we divide responsibilities?
6. What **groups or organizations** should we invite to partner or attend?
7. How will we **promote** the summit (email, flyers, social, canvassing)?
8. How will people **RSVP**? (Kai can provide Action Network setup)
9. Do we want to **fundraise** (donations, sponsorships, exhibitor tables)?
10. Do we want to invite Kai to **facilitate** or consult?