

Creating Community-Based Policy Analysis (The Praxis Project www.thepraxisproject.org)

Getting Started: Gathering Information

Problem Scope and Impact

How are your core constituencies affected? Does the impact change when you move from urban to rural? Youth and aged? Homeowners and renters? Between different geographic locations? Make sure any surveys or interviews help you track these kinds of demographic differences so the data you gather can better inform policy options.

Historical Context and Precedent

What policies have led up to the current situation? What are the historical events (decisions, demographic shifts, changes in jurisdiction, etc.) that shape present problems? What laws help or hurt your efforts? Is there any preemption (a higher level of government preventing local government from making laws in a certain area)? What levels or divisions of government have jurisdiction and why? Are there other mechanisms (administrative rulemaking, executive order, etc.) for addressing the issue beyond legislation? What have other jurisdictions done well in this area? Not so well?

Patterns of Power and Privilege

Who decides? Who is left out? Who has influence? Who got paid? Who benefits? Who is hurt? Break down impact by race and income, gender and ability if you can. Stark differences in impact should be highlighted to build the case for addressing institutional racism and bias.

Framing the Analysis

Summarize your findings in each of the three areas outlined above. Are there current policy proposals that your findings relate to? How? Identify key stakeholders and their issues related to your findings. Are there likely allies that would join you? Are there others that may oppose you? Is there a way to frame or reframe the policy initiative so that you significantly divide your opponents without losing allies? Or at least not lose too many?

Identify organizing and policy goals. State your policy goal(s). Be sure you have a clear target (decisionmaking body). Assess: who are the targets/key decisionmakers? What do you need them to do? What will it take to move them? (See “power pyramid” below.) What are the primary audiences? What do they read, watch and/or listen to? What format should the briefing paper/analysis be so that it’s most effective with the primary audiences (short paper, book, press, DVD, etc.)?

Develop the Product

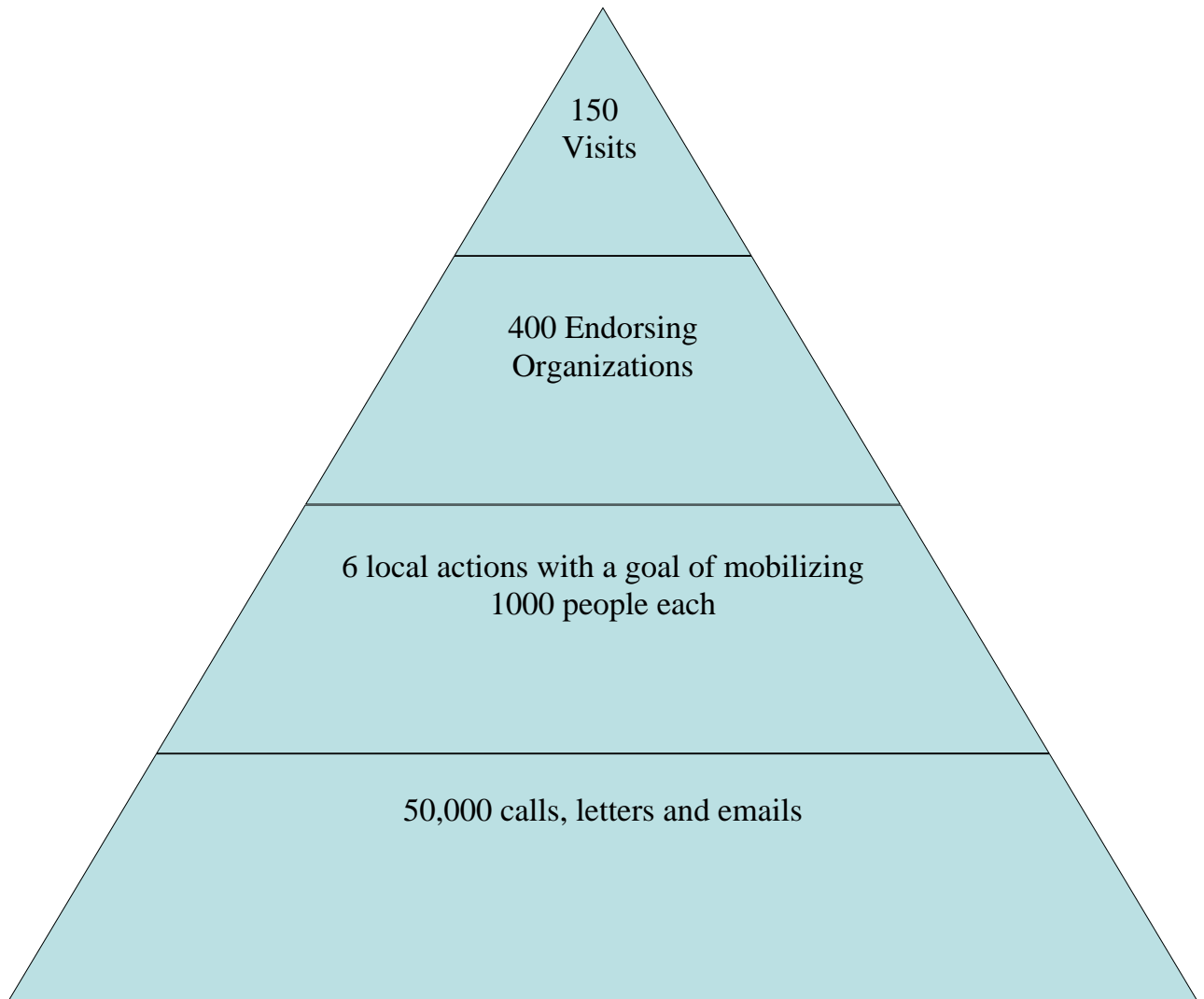
Most policy analysis pieces are relatively short and feature at least five sections:

- Summary and Introduction. Briefly state what’s going on, what’s at stake, brief examples of impact and what decisionmaking body/ies have the jurisdiction and a summary of what they should do.
- More in-depth Description of the parameters of the problem and what’s at stake including short case examples.
- Historical background and context

- Recommendations and best practices available
- Conclusion/Closing Thoughts/Acknowledgments

Be sure to have a report release plan for engaging media.

POWER PYRAMID: WHAT KIND OF PRESSURE WOULD YOU NEED TO WIN?¹



¹ These numbers are placeholders. You'll need to identify your own numbers and may even need other outreach categories.