

THE ART OF THE "ONE-ON-ONE"

A “one-on-one” is a cornerstone of grassroots engagement. By doing one-on-one meetings, you can develop relationships and identify where common interests lie. A one-on-one is an intentional face-to-face dialogue – not a sales pitch – based on exploring common values and ways to come together. By doing one-on-ones repeatedly, you will begin to build a network of people that support your effort.

Here are several of the most important reasons why people have such success building relationships by using one-on-one meetings:

- **Helps to Build Lasting, Meaningful Relationships:** Relationships help build trust, allow you to bounce ideas off people, take action together, and celebrate your success. We simply can't accomplish alone what we can accomplish together, so a series of one-on-ones can help you build a network of support that has the potential to grow.
- **Uncover self-interest:** Oftentimes, people feel personally aligned to a particular effort because it connects with their identity, their values, and/or their faith. Discovering what motivates a person can help you, since people are more likely to get involved in issues that are connected to their self-interest.
- **Get your effort or an idea on people's radar:** One-on-one meetings allow you to introduce a concept to people and give them the opportunity to express their feelings and impressions about an idea. As someone describes their impressions about something to another person, he/she also begins to reflect on and explore how he/she resonates with the effort.
- **Gauge potential traction:** One-on-ones will help you evolve your message and help monitor the degree to which your organization or a specific effort is gaining traction.
- **Uncover New Ideas:** Asking people about their interests will create opportunities for people to talk about ideas that may have been floating in their heads. Oftentimes, other people will have the similar thoughts and by uncovering these ideas, connections can be made to build momentum toward a deeper relationship or a particular action.

Qualities of a Good One-On-One

A Good “Engager”:

- Infuses his/her own connection to the cause (when appropriate).
- Asks a lot of questions.
- Uses a relaxed, informal, natural tone and maintains eye contact.
- Tells a story.
- Listens to other people's stories.
- Pauses in conversation.
- Doesn't overuse lingo or jargon.
- Talks 10% of the time, listens the other 90%

Utilizes Storytelling:

- Facts don't resonate – stories do. "No one cares about facts and figures as much as you do".
- Stories connect the dots between the rational and the emotional creating a strong mental image.
- Storytelling builds trust, as the listener reflects on what he/she has in common with the teller.
- Storytelling can make complex ideas simple.
- Stories prove your impact by giving people a picture of how it really looks.
- By sharing stories about your organization, you equip people to spread the word to their own personal networks of friends and family

Uses Active Listening:

- Use appropriate body language. Face the speaker and leaning slightly toward them.
- Use nonverbal responses. Nodding your head and maintaining eye contact.
- Don't think about your response while you're listening to someone speak. It's difficult to truly listen when you're formulating a response to what you're hearing.
- Recognize the speaker's feelings. Indicating that you are aware of how the person is feeling in addition to simply understanding what they are stating, makes them feel heard and helps build a relationship.
- Pause. Throughout the conversation, pause at key points to make sure your counterpart has time to respond or ask questions.

CONDUCTING A ONE-ON-ONE MEETING

There's no one right way to conduct a one-on-one but below are some suggestions that can help:

Explain why you want to meet with this person. At the beginning of the conversation, briefly and casually set the expectation of what you'd like to explore. Don't read a pre-written paragraph verbatim; instead, explain your purpose and project in a way you'd explain it to a friend or acquaintance. For example:

"Thanks again for agreeing to sit down with me and chat. I'm hoping to talk informally today to learn more about your group (or you), share a little about what the Metropolitan Council is up to, and perhaps explore some ideas you may have."

- 1) **Share how you connected with the target.** If an organization or individual suggested that you meet with this person, explain the connection. Explain why you are interested in this community and/or organization.
- 2) **Break the ice and begin to exchange stories.** Share a little about your *background, and your work at the Metropolitan Council*. Ask the target questions to draw out his/her story:
 - What's your background? Have you lived in your neighborhood long?
 - How did you get involved with a specific organization or cause?
 - What was it about the organization that drew you in?

- 3) **Continue the conversation, drawing from some of the following areas and sample questions:**

Find out more about the target's interests and skills.

- What kinds of activities or volunteer efforts are you currently involved in?
- What issues are you passionate about?
- What is your role or your strengths in the effort?
- What gets you excited about volunteering?
- What kind of free time do you have?

Talk more about the target's community/organization.

- Who are the leaders in these groups or your neighborhood?
- What kinds of people are involved?
- What are/were you trying to accomplish?
- What successes have you had?
- What challenges have you faced?

- 4) **Explore perspectives on the work of the Metropolitan Council.** It's important to keep in mind that some people may never think about this topic. Throughout the conversation, work to understand and appeal to the target's perspective. Where appropriate, share your own perspective as well. To begin the discussion, draw from the following questions:
 - What kinds of infrastructure issues are being faced in your community (give examples, schools, parks, transportation)?
 - What do you think would help your community be a better place to live? What bothers you about where you live?
- 5) **Wrap up the conversation.** Ask who else you should talk with from the target group or neighborhood. If it seems like a good fit of mutual self-interest or common values, ask the person whether and how he/she would like to stay in touch (E-mail? Phone?). Mention that you will touch base again in a specified amount of time, such as 2-3 weeks, to update him/her on what you are learning or what's happening. Also ask if they want to receive ongoing information through emails. Encourage the person to contact you in the meantime if he/she thinks of anything else that might be helpful to you.
- 6) **Thank the person for taking time to meet and sharing his/her story.** Send a thank-you note within a few days of your meeting. Follow up again at your specified point. Ask the person if he/she has additional thoughts. Let him/her know how you've followed up with other members of the group. When it feels like a natural progression, see when the person may want to meet or talk again.
- 7) **Get your reflections down on paper.** Soon after a one-on-one conversation, take some time to reflect on how it went, what you observed, and what the person said.