

Identifying People and Groups to Help You



Activity

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How can you identify potential supporters for your project? How do you find ways to work with other people who support what you are trying to do? Some people may be already interested and want to get involved; while others may want to check out your activities first. The tool below can help you categorise individuals and organisations according to their level of awareness, engagement, or readiness to join in with your activities.

Categories of levels of engagement

- Aware and Active (Natural Allies)
- Aware and not Active (Possible Partners)
- Neither Aware nor Active (Indifferent Folks)
- Not Interested
- Opposition

Make a Big List of People and Groups

Start by making a big list. Ask members of your group to:

- List key people in your community.
- List key groups in your community.
- Categorise these key players into one of the 5 categories (see above). The most common category is typically 'Neither Aware Nor Active (Indifferent Folks)'.
- Review this big list periodically.

Once sorted into categories, consider how you may want to engage with each group, and what the risks might be.



1. **Aware and Active** (Natural Allies)

With this category aim to:

- Create relationships with them. This typically does not require much time.
- Make sure they know what you are doing.
- Support their work and ask them to support yours.
- Find out what their aims are and how you can support them.

Risks to be aware of:

Your Natural Allies can feel upset or competitive, especially if your relationship has not been tended or strengthened for some time (see [Building Trust](#), see [Building Bridges](#)).

2. **Aware and Not Active** (Possible Partners)

With this category aim to:

- Spend some time building these relationships. They help you to get established or deepen into your community.
- Go to their meetings; don't expect them to come to yours.
- Take time to understand their priorities, and figure out how your group might support them (see [How to Create Partnerships](#)). These folks are usually interested in issues similar to the ones you are: food growing, energy, community development, and so on.

Risks to be aware of:

Make sure to engage with Possible Partners in a truly collaborative two-way process. Listen to them and support their agenda, as well as your own. If you don't, they can end up feeling bad about the relationship, and you risk ruining your reputation among similar Possible Partners (see [Unconscious Bias](#), see [Enhancing Cultural Competence](#), see [Respect for Diversity](#)).

3. **Neither Aware Nor Active** (Indifferent Folks)

With this category aim to:

Be very clear about how your work could help these folks, who are often busy with family, career, or basic survival. If you want something from them, say what it is and ask whether they can give it.

Risks to be aware of:

If you ask for too much, these people will not respond positively.



4. Not Interested (They give a clear “No”)

With this category aim to:

- Find another way to be in a relationship.
- Respect their no. Don't spend any time trying to 'convert' them.

Risks to be aware of:

Trying to persuade Uninterested Folks can make you seem intense and pushy.

5. Opposition (They give a clear “No”)

With this category aim to:

- Know who your Opposition is. Develop strategies to counter anything they do to block you, undermine your work, or treat you poorly (see [Re-Framing Conflict](#)).
- Learn from their arguments. Their concerns may inform Indifferent and Uninterested folks, and that may give you a clue about what is stopping those folks from joining you.

Risks to be aware of:

If you are unprepared for your Opposition, their initiatives can surprise you or even hurt you. You might find yourself reacting, retreating, or regrouping. Try not to make it personal. And don't get into pointless arguments with these folks (see [Conflict Styles](#)).

Related Resources

[Building Trust](#)

[Building Bridges](#)

[How to Create Partnerships](#)

[Re-Framing Conflict](#)

[Conflict Styles](#)

[Unconscious Bias](#)

[Enhancing Cultural Competence](#)

[Respect for Diversity](#)



References

Wadud, Eric. "[Recognizing Allies](#)." Community Toolbox.
The Giving Practice (2018). "[Champion Checklist](#)." Pretty Good Tools.

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