

Circles of Influence

Understanding and Creating



CALIFORNIA TOBACCO
ENDGAME CENTER FOR
ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT
A project of the American Heart Association.

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About the Circles of Influence Tool

Circles of Influence is a key tool in completing the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart (MASC). This tool will determine how a coalition can use its network and relationships to connect with and influence a decision maker (DM). Refer to the Glossary of Terms under “Resources” on organizingtoendtobacco.org for definitions.

Use the Circles of Influence (COI) tool to identify your allies and constituents to measure their level of influence in relation to you and the DMs.

Complete the COI tool with your coalition prior to filling out the “Constituency: People Power” column in the MASC. The COI supplements the MASC by identifying your current level of influence with your DM and determines which key players are missing from your coalition. Encourage coalition members to draw from their own networks to identify potential community activists and allies. The COI will be comprised of personal, geographically specific, and policy-oriented connections, but it should only include people who are *constituents*.



Key Concepts



Personal. The COI is highly personal. It describes the relationships and connections a DM has with their community and determines how much power and influence your campaign will have over the DM. The goal of all campaigns is to use people power to get a DM to say “yes” to your goals. A typical COI will consist of five DMs for a City Council or Board of Supervisors but will look different for other governing bodies like Tribal Governments.



Geographic Boundaries. Your COI is specific to the jurisdiction in which you are waging the policy campaign. For example, you may know Jin Lee, a nurse who lives in Long Beach (a city outside of your campaign jurisdiction) and volunteered on the Prop 56 tobacco tax campaign. You would not include her since she is not a constituent with your campaign. However, if you have good reason to believe she may have contacts in your jurisdiction, you can ask her if she has contacts who can help you.



Policy Goals. Ultimately, the connections, and relationships you identify and build in your COI are people who will help pass the policy. You may know Mrs. Smith at the Rotary Club, but if she is going to oppose the policy or will not help you, do not include her in your COI.

Following is a sample of a completed COI and a fillable worksheet can be found on our website.

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Need help? Submit a request for assistance through our Community Engagement Support Gateway on our website.



