

Engage your Relationships and Community

- Growing strong and trusting relationships is the spark to community change. It is ongoing action that takes time and attention to connect with partners and in real and authentic ways.
- Community engagement is the next step of relationship building. Once you have a big, bold, and diverse table, it's time to engage those relationships to move the issue and energy forward!

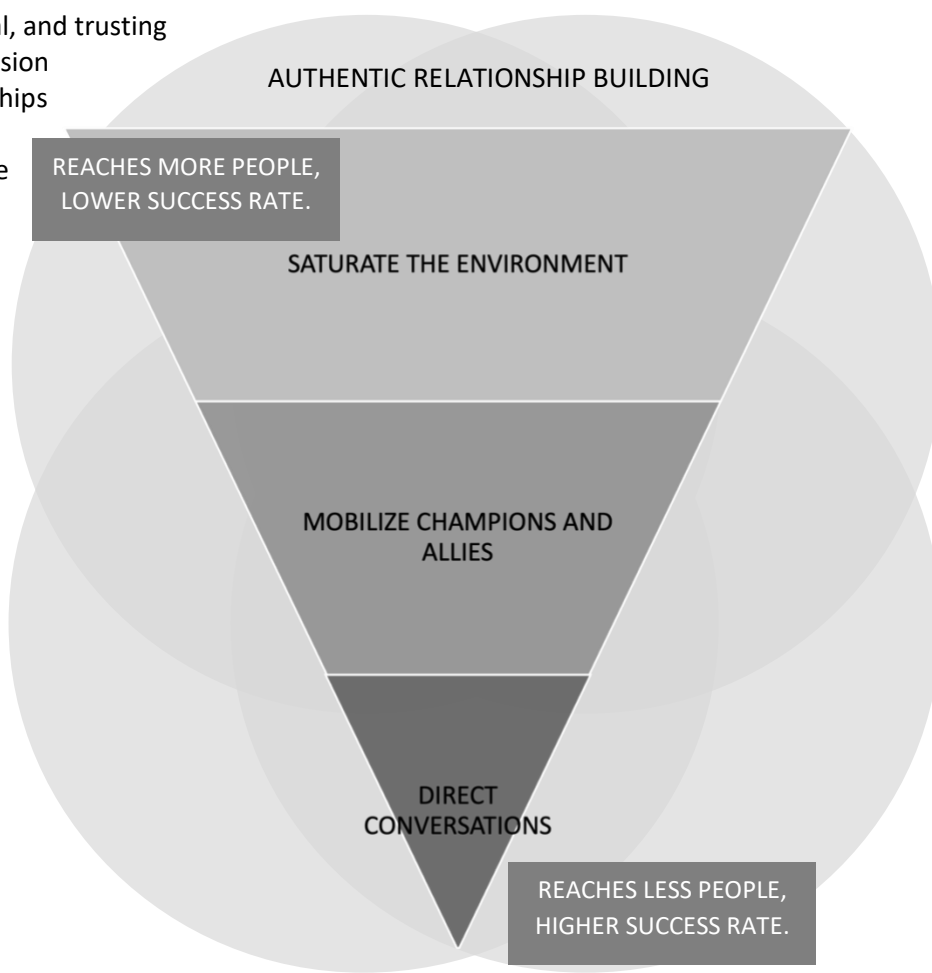
River point: Current – clarifying out roles and responsibilities for coalition members and partners is important to pull any Lever.

Strengths & Skills that can pull lever:

- **Feelings & Relationship Building**

Decision-Making Power: Community

Once you have authentic, reciprocal, and trusting relationships, you can move your vision forward by bringing those relationships into the issues and vision you care about. It can often feel like you are "swimming" in engagement - constantly trying all sorts of outreach but not feeling much success. The Engagement Pyramid (1) can provide some structure to your efforts. At all levels of the pyramid, authentic relationship building (2) is that foundation that reinforces and strengthens community engagement and energy.



Saturate the Environment

The first level of the engagement pyramid includes activities to ensure that all members in the community know about your vision and work - even those who may not be your direct audience. The more familiar communities are with your vision, the more likely they are to listen when they hear someone talking about it in the future. Saturation makes it more likely that potential community members respond to the activities on the lower levels of the pyramid - it's a primer. Saturation is important, but on its own lead to few community members ultimately engaged in your work.

Examples include: radio announcements, social media campaigns, posting flyers, tabling at community events, announcements on school intercoms, and blurbs in newspapers and TV.

Mobilize Champions and Allies

Finding a community champion and a great partner who put the "stamp of approval" on your vision and work is one of the best engagement strategies that leads community to engage with your vision and work.

Who are the strongest champions?

- Neighbors and other community members
- Principals, Counselors, Teachers
- Religious leaders
- Community or cultural leaders or elders
- Direct service providers
- Medical providers
- Business leaders
- Youth
- Coaches

What are the strengths of champions?

- Involved
- Passionate
- Trusted
- Respected
- Connected
- Enthusiastic
- Believe in the same vision and goals

Engage and support champions by:

- Growing strong relationships and trust.
- Ensuring reciprocal partnerships - participating in, volunteering with, and uplifting the work they are doing.
- Meeting with them in person for face-to-face time.
- Giving them printed and/or electronic information they can easily share.
- Making a specific request & giving them a time frame.
- Leaving a very small gift or like bringing coffee, or other goodies.
- Following up to ask how their outreach went and providing additional support or tools.
- Sending a thank-you note and sharing an outcome of their support.

Direct Conversations

Sharing your passion, stories, and knowledge is another very successful strategy to get people engaged. Asking questions and getting to know those you are talking with is an important part of engaging

potential participants, as is responding directly to their experiences and needs and continuing to build authentic relationships.

You can set up a fun table at a community location, host a lunch-time pizza party, and talk with larger groups to share pictures, treats, and lots of great stories about how your vision could support their family and the larger community. One last important lesson learned: remember to collect contact information from anyone who shows any interest so you can continue the conversation later.

Locations for direct conversations included: Faith-based institutional gatherings, sporting events, at local restaurants and supportive businesses, community fairs, mini-presentations (such as a short art, activity, storybook, or game) in classrooms or with youth groups, community hubs, or cultural events.

The Sign-Up List & Follow-Through

It is very important to stay in touch with those people who expressed interest in your vision. Follow up with interested individuals after the initial contact through phone, text, and email. A few tips:

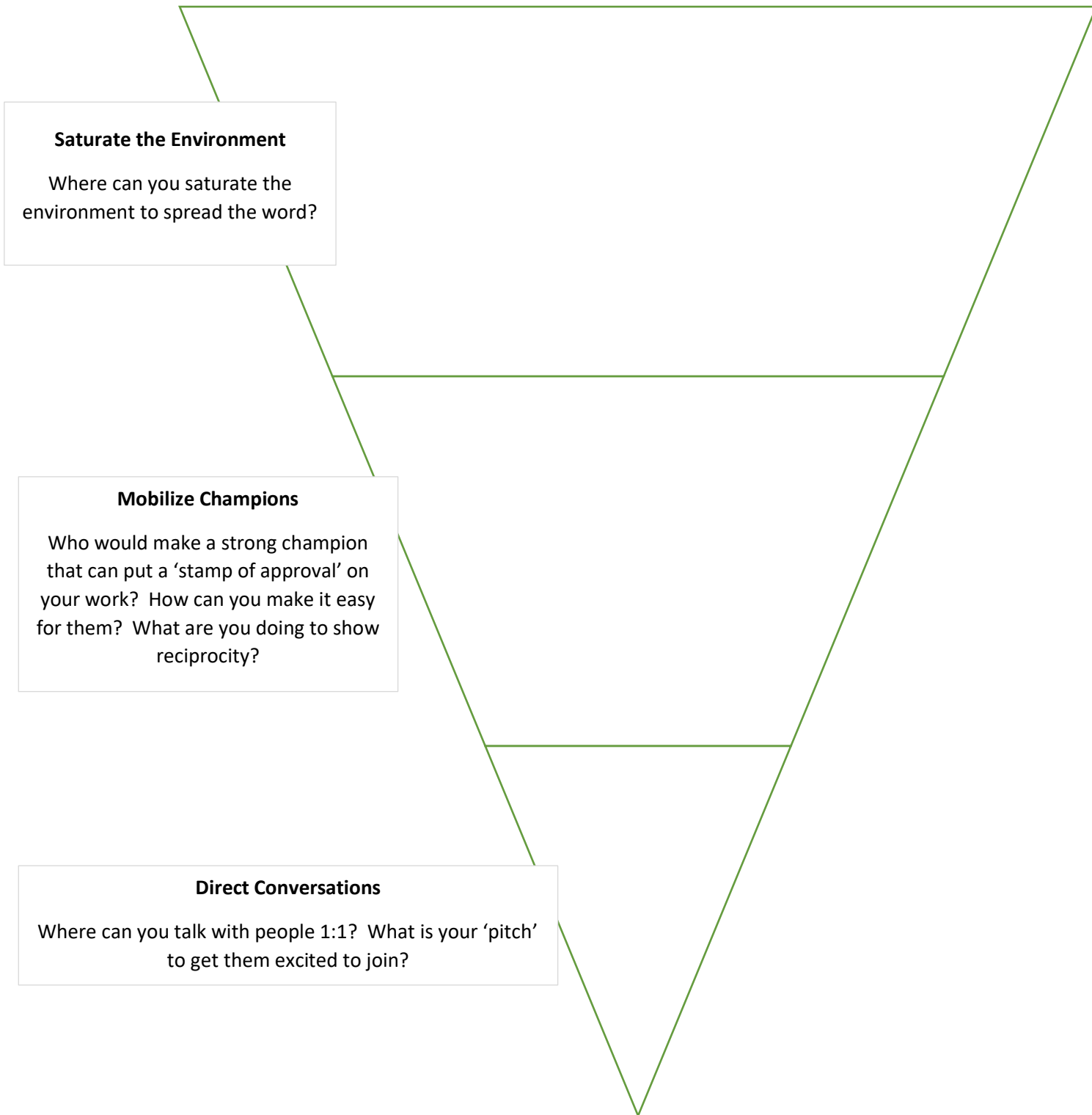
- Follow through on anything you said you would do.
- Create a contact list of anyone who shows interest in joining, making sure to include multiple ways to get in touch with them.
- Build reciprocity - show up and support their interest, passions, and work.
- Engaging for specific event(s):
 - Follow-up 2-3 times through phone calls, text, or email, plus a final text, call or email the day before the event.
 - Gauge their level of commitment, set the expectation that they will be there, and preempt barriers by using some of the following prompts:
 - "I know that folks are busy! How can I help you be able to come?"
 - "We will be ordering lunch for everyone. What food requests/dietary needs do you have?"
 - "Most folks ask us to text/email/call a few days before with a reminder. What type of reminder do you want from me?"
 - "Text/call/email me back with your favorite candy and a Y/N to confirm that you'll be there!"

Community Democracy River

ENGAGE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS + COMMUNITY



Use this blank engagement triangle to plan your engagement activities. Make sure to continue [growing strong relationships](#) with new partners as part of your pyramid.



References and Resources

1. Linking Families and Teens was developed by Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands with the goal of increasing family connection in rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. More information can be found at: <https://sparked.net/lift/>.
2. Authentic Relationship Building was developed by Grace Caligtan, Linda Guijosa, with additional credit to Faster than 20 (<https://fasterthan20.com/>) and Dr. Sara Flowers as part of the Linking Families and Teens program.