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Let's Rally

A rally is an effective organizing technique and accomplishes two goals simultaneously: It raises awareness about your campaign and can be used as a leveraging device to advance your campaign to **INSERT CAMPAIGN GOAL**. If properly organized and attended, rallies will elevate your campaign; they are an excellent way of pressuring campaign targets, as well as motivating your friends, fellow students, faculty, and staff to join the **INSERT CAMPAIGN** on your campus. Plus, they are super fun!

Here's our six-step guide to organizing a rally to **INSERT CAMPAIGN:**

Step 1 –Reserve space.

Step 2 –Recruit great speaker(s)—i.e. your members.

Step 3 – Get the word out.

Step 4 –Prepare for the event.

Step 5 –Wrap up.

Step 6 – Further actions!

STEP 1 — Reserve a Space

Think of a large, public area. If the climate seems like it will cooperate, the oval, quad, or center of campus where people congregate is an excellent choice, and can usually be reserved through the university for a specific time and date. If the climate is not conducive to outside events, try the open area in your student union or center.

Make sure to reserve the space! Otherwise, you often cannot have amplified sound or even occupy the space. The procedures for reserving areas differ from campus to campus. Many institutions have online room registration forms, or perhaps paperwork at the student affairs office. Sometimes you may need the permission of an academic department. The whole process can be much easier if you find a student or community group, academic department, or dean to **co-sponsor** the event with you.

[Here are template emails](#) for approaching co-sponsors to help secure a space for your event.

Once you've reserved a room, [register your event with us](#). We'll set aside a mini-grant of up to \$50 for you to cover the cost of printing materials to publicize the event as well as rent any audio equipment you may need. ([click here for a sample mini-grant budget](#)).

STEP 2 — Recruit Great Speakers: your group members.

If you can find an expert on your topic who is willing to speak at your rally, that's excellent! AID can assist in this process. If not, no worries, because no one is more of an expert or authority on your campaign than the members of your group! Speaking at a rally is the perfect time to develop new leadership in your group, as well as promulgate your campaign message clearly and persuasively.

STEP 3 — Get the Word Out

The most important thing to plan is the message you hope to convey at the rally:

- Why are you having the rally?
- What is your campaign goal?
- What do you want your decision maker to do next after the rally?

It is advisable to make sure everyone in your group is clear on the message your group wants to convey, and once you have decided, repeat it on everything—from rally speeches to the flyers and handbills, and from press releases to interviews with the press after the event. More information on messaging can be found [here](#).

Successful publicity campaigns utilize **many channels** for disseminating information. Think about using the following, and if you discover another method which is particularly successful, [let us know](#). We suggest committing to publicizing through the first three methods and then doing whatever else you can. For more effective tactics, go to Part II of the organizing toolkit and click on the link "Publicity."

1) Call your friends! The best way to get people to turn out for the rally is to draw upon your friends. If each person in the group commits to calling 3 friends a week before an event, and then makes two follow up phone calls, this is the surest way to get a large turnout. They will most likely already know you are involved with the campaign, and so cajoling, guilt, and persuading them to come to the rally is fair game and highly effective.

2) Distribute posters and flyers. With your mini-grant and AID's design help, you can distribute and buy flyers, tape, tacks, and chalk if you fill out the [flyer template](#) and [email it back](#). Tips:

- **Don't waste time with bulletin boards!** Fliers on bulletin boards will be covered in a matter of days, if not hours. Put your fliers someplace they'll get noticed.

- **Do flier in unorthodox places.** Bathrooms, tables, the ground, building entrances, lounges, etc. are the best places to put your fliers. If it's a strange place to put a flier—it's probably a good one!
- **Don't flier too far in advance.** Your fliers will probably just get ripped down or covered. Try to start flyering about a week and a half in advance.
- **Do flier with all your energy the morning of your event.**
- **Don't hesitate to e-mail groups or departments that seem unrelated.** Reach out to new groups—Greek houses, campus ministries, student groups, and academic departments—to engage more people in global issues.
- **Do stand at the entrance to your campus's busiest dining hall or student center at lunchtime.** Spend just half an hour handing out quarter sheets at the entrance and reach hundreds of students.
- **Don't forget to put fliers in the community.** Use tables or bulletin boards at local shops and cafes.
- **Do choose two large lectures to make announcements at on the day of your event.** Show up ten minutes early to ask the professor if you can make a 30 second announcement before class.
- **DO MAIL MERGE!** Consult our guide online at <http://www.aidemocracy.org/mailmerge.doc> for sending personalized e-mails to your lists of contacts.

3) Submit a press releases 1 week and again 2 days before the event. [Click here for a sample press release templates.](#) If you need to fax the release, you can email [Autumn](#) with the number and we will fax it for you. A great resource for finding press office fax numbers (and the tool that we use) is [Newspapers Online](#). Then call to remind the press outlet of your event the days before. [Click here for a sample phone script.](#)

4) Send emails or "e-flyers" to relevant professors and student groups. [Here's an email flyer](#) you can send out to your listservs. [Click here for an email template](#) to send to professors or other student group leaders so that they can mention the event in their classes and meetings. AID will even distribute emails widely for you using our mail merge capabilities—[just ask us](#).

5) Create a Facebook event and invite your friends. Paid Facebook ads also work.

6) Class announcements, dorm meetings, dinner conversations or table tents, phone calls.

STEP 4 — Prepare for the Event

You will need a few, key materials for the rally.

- 1. A PA system or megaphone** so that speakers can be heard. Ask one of your friends to DJ the event—maybe even turn the rally into a dance party.

2. **Signs/Banners.** Make signs on parts of cardboard boxes with paint or other materials with your message so that many people at the rally can hold them.
3. **Noise Makers:** Whistles, drums, tubas—whatever is going to make a bit of an auditory ruckus. It is way more fun when people can toot their own horn. When calling your friends, tell them to bring these things.
4. **Optional—Free food, such as cookies.** Nothing brings college folks out like the enticement of free food. You can have a group baking session a bit before the event. The mini-grant can help finance the materials for your culinary endeavors.

Also, make sure everyone has specific tasks at the rally:

- **Speakers:** Make sure you or your primary speakers have your key talking points well planned.
- **Media Contacts:** The people primarily responsible for greeting and speaking to members of the press.
- **Information Distributors:** The people walking around in the crowd distributing flyers and handbills with information on your campaign. Also, have these folks gain petition signatures if you are using those as well.

STEP 5 — Wrap up

Done? Excellent work! Now you can look back nostalgically on all that labor and look ahead eagerly to the next event. First take some time to decompress, and then:

1. **Debrief with your group and cosponsors:** How did the event go? What worked well and what would you do differently next time? **Fill out an event report form** at http://www.globalscholar.org/event_report/
2. **Mail in your reimbursement form and sign-in sheets** in the envelope provided (AIDemocracy, 701 Cathedral Street, Suite L3, Baltimore, MD 21201)
3. **Write a letter to the editor to a local newspaper.** [Send us a letter in progress](#) for editing and feedback. Click for [an example letter](#) to the editor written by an AID organizer in the past.

Step 6 – What’s Next:

Escalate your campaign on INSERT INITIATIVE!

Hopefully, the rally was sufficiently large and impressive to convince your administration to *INSERT CAMPAIGN GOAL*. Make sure to keep meeting with the principal decision makers after the event and work to have them adopt your proposal.

It is possible that other methods for convincing and moving the administration to make a decision may be necessary. For ideas and help planning other targeted actions—and there are a myriad of options—contact Sam from AID at sam@aidemocracy.org