



Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions June, 2026



Introduction

This Guide is for people who value our democracy and want elections to result in leaders who will work to ensure a government that supports both individual opportunity and the public good. That means recognizing both our individual rights and our shared responsibility to promote the public welfare. It is not a partisan campaign playbook or strategy for electing a particular candidate. It is a guide for grassroots leaders to engage, educate, dialogue with, and inform voters and use their own relational and people-centered superpowers in doing so. It is based upon the following four key beliefs:

- ***Elections matter.***
- ***People vote their values.***
- ***Democracy is not a spectator sport.***
- ***Grassroots activism is key to an informed electorate and democracy.***

Simply put:

Elections are too important to rely solely upon candidates, political parties, consultants, and megadonors. Grassroots advocacy holds the key to preserving a vibrant democracy.

This guide emphasizes the unique and critical roles grassroots champions possess – beyond partisan campaign volunteers – to ensure elections reinforce our values and elect the public officials who support them. Each of its chapters addresses specific ways grassroots advocates and champions can do so – according to the relational and people-centered superpowers they possess.

People listen most carefully to those they know and trust: friends, coworkers, neighbors, fellow parents, fellow volunteers, and respected members of their community. When trusted people talk about shared values and the role government can play in supporting them, they create opportunities to inform and influence voting choices.

Many grassroots leaders also will contribute to and volunteer for candidates or work within a political party to canvass voters and get out the vote – but this is only one part of what needs to happen to create an informed and engaged electorate. There are many things that independent, grassroots advocacy does best (for a graphic description, see the charts at the end of this introduction).

This guide offers ideas and resources to help people use their own **grassroots superpowers**—their credibility, relationships, knowledge, and experience – to engage, educate, network, dialogue with, and ultimately influence voters. It doesn't require that everyone do everything, but it does encourage everyone to do something that works for them.

The guide is organized around seven chapters. These do not have to be read sequentially and should be adapted to reflect the skills of grassroots champions, the capacities of grassroots organizations, and the values of the community.

Chapter One: Know and Use Your Superpowers. Grassroots champions already possess superpowers—the relationships, experiences, credibility, and community connections that allow them to influence others. This chapter helps advocates identify their own strengths and the networks where they can have the greatest impact. It introduces relational campaigning and provides a worksheet to help grassroots champions inventory their superpowers and develop a simple game plan for using them.

Chapter Two: Use Shared Values to Engage Voters. Most voters respond first to values, not to policy details or partisan arguments. This chapter explores how grassroots advocates can begin conversations around shared values—fairness, opportunity, security, freedom, dignity, and community—and connect those values to what voters want candidates and government to do.

Chapter Three: Grow Your Influence While Keeping It Personal. Grassroots advocacy can grow over time as people build networks, invite others into conversations, and expand their reach. This chapter explores ways grassroots champions can strengthen and sustain their influence while keeping their work personal, positive, and rooted in relationships.

Chapter Four: Focus on Voters You Can Persuade. Grassroots champions do not need to reach everyone. In today's polarized environment, a one-percent shift in voting can be decisive. This chapter focuses on persuadable voters – those who are open to dialogue and who may reconsider their choices when trusted voices connect public issues to their values and everyday concerns.

Chapter Five: Get the Help You Need. Grassroots champions do not need to do this work alone. Many organizations – local, state, and national – offer research, training, messaging guidance, and tools to support relational campaigning. This chapter highlights resources available to help grassroots advocates strengthen their efforts and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Chapter Six: Cultivate Organizational Growth. While grassroots relational campaigning is based upon personal relationships, cultivating organizational growth requires thoughtful organizational design, strategy. This chapter discusses the mechanics of building strong grassroots organizations from the perspective of organizations committed to relational electoral advocacy and relying upon people power to achieve their goals.

Chapter Seven: Ensure the Right to Vote, Defend Democracy, and Preserve the Rule of Law. Grassroots engagement depends on a functioning democracy in which people can safely vote, speak, and participate. This chapter provides practical guidance for ensuring the right to vote, supporting peaceful civic participation, responding to misinformation, and addressing intimidation. Grassroots leaders do not

need to be legal experts, but they should understand basic civic rights, share accurate information, and connect people with trusted nonpartisan resources.

Two Paths to Electoral Impact

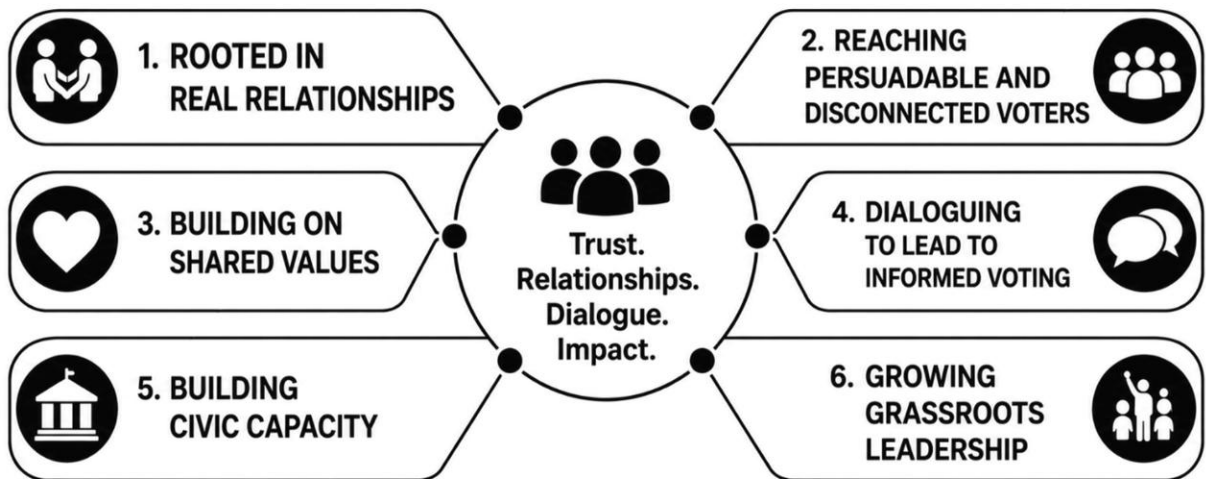
PARTISAN CAMPAIGNS

-  1. Mobilize the base
-  2. Raise money
-  3. Paid media & messaging
-  4. Canvass & phone bank
-  5. Promote candidates & parties
-  6. Rapid campaign response
-  7. Election-cycle focused
-  8. Broadcast communication

NONPARTISAN GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS

-  1. Engage persuadable voters
-  2. Build relationships
-  3. Personal conversations
-  4. Dialogue & listening
-  5. Start with shared values
-  6. Trusted local messengers
-  7. Ongoing community engagement
-  8. Person-to-person influence

The Unique Strengths of Nonpartisan Grassroots Campaigns



INTRODUCTION KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Elections matter because government and democracy matter.

Partisan campaigns play an important role in who is elected.

Grassroots nonpartisan advocacy contributes something distinct and indispensable: trusted relationships, dialogue, persuasion, civic engagement, and long-term democratic capacity.