



Values to Votes Guide for Grassroots Champions June, 2026



Preface: A Guide on Grassroots Superpowers and How to Use Them

Across Iowa and the nation, grassroots leaders are recognizing that “democracy is not a spectator sport” and taking independent political action – many with a focus upon the upcoming 2026 elections. This guide is for you.

Most guides to electoral campaigning begin in the same place: with partisan campaigns, candidates, messaging strategies, fundraising, and turnout operations. They emphasize raising money that is largely directed to paid media and mobilizing the electoral base to get out the vote of political supporters. They assume that influence flows downward—from professionals to volunteers and from institutions to individuals. They emphasize professionally designed partisan messages and repetition of talking points.

This guide is different. It begins with the simple truth that the most powerful force in a democracy is not the professional campaign – it is the active participation of people at the grassroots. This involves sharing your views and dialoguing with, educating, and influencing those you know.

It recognizes that grassroots leaders can do things that partisan political campaigns cannot and have superpowers in doing so:

- The values you hold about the way elected officials and government need to respond to defend and advance those values
- The trust people place in you in practicing those values
- The relationships you’ve built over time
- The credibility you carry in your community
- Your ability to listen, to ask, and to connect with others around those values.

Simply put, the guide emphasizes that campaigns are too important to be left solely in the hands of candidates, parties, and political consultants. It offers practical tools, ideas, and advice to enable grassroots champions to realize your own superpowers in the ways that make sense to you, those you seek to engage, and their communities.

/s/ Charlie Bruner, former Iowa legislator and nonpartisan advocacy group director (Child and Family Policy Center) and grassroots electoral activist for fifty years.

Guide Chapter Summary

Chapter One: Know and Use Your Superpowers. This chapter helps advocates identify their own strengths and the networks where they can have the greatest impact and provides a worksheet to help grassroots champions inventory their superpowers.

Chapter Two: Use Shared Values to Engage Voters. This chapter explores how grassroots advocates can begin conversations around shared values and connect those values to what voters want candidates and government to do.

Chapter Three: Grow Your Influence While Keeping It Personal. 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 Upon Persuadable Voters. This chapter focuses on engaging 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. This chapter highlights resources available to help grassroots advocates strengthen their efforts and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Chapter Six: Cultivate Organizational Growth. This chapter discusses the mechanics of building strong grassroots organizations, from the perspective of organizations committed to relational electoral advocacy.

Chapter Seven: Ensure the Right to Vote, Defend Democracy, and Preserve the Rule of Law. This chapter provides practical guidance for ensuring the right to vote, supporting peaceful civic participation, responding to misinformation, and addressing intimidation.

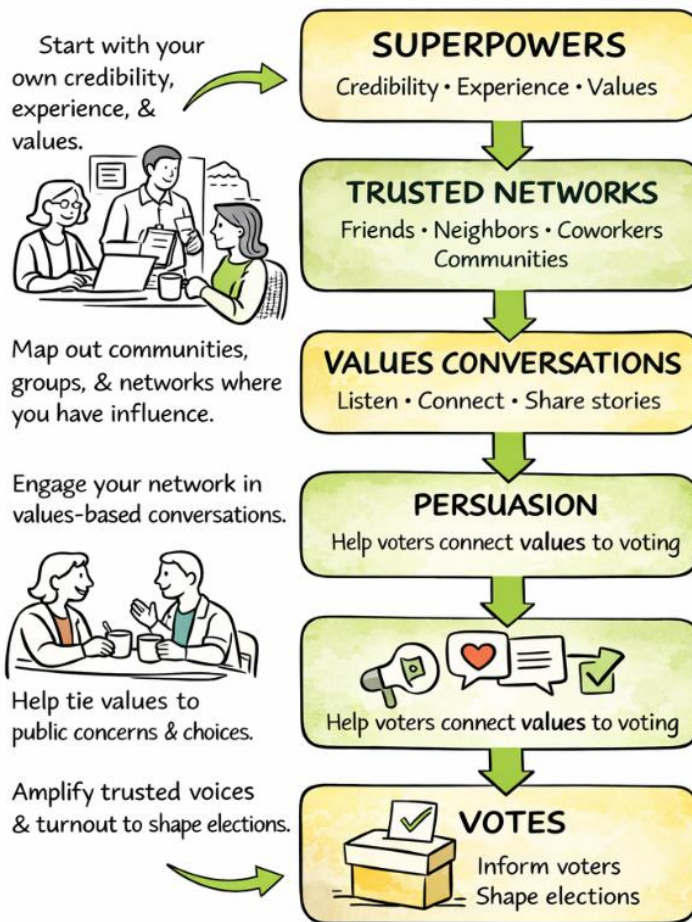
Appendices. Different chapters reference different appendices, which are not published in the guide as a whole but are available on the Values to Votes website (www.valuestovotes.com)

Select Charts

The Grassroots Influence Model

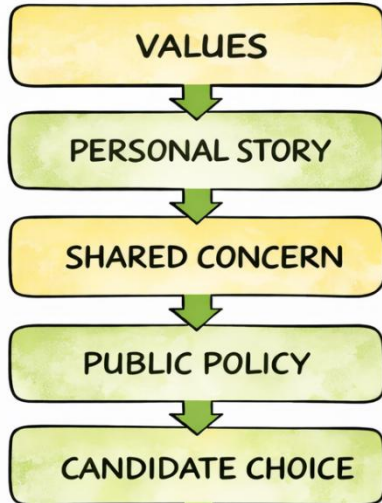
Elections are too important to be left solely in the hands of politicians, parties, megadonors, and consultants.

Grassroots champions can **influence elections** from the ground up by engaging trusted networks in **values-based conversations**.

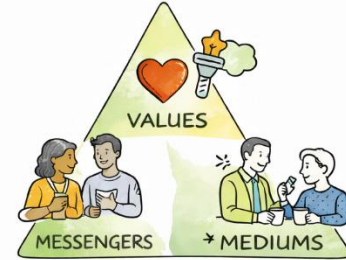


People power grows from the inside out.

Values-Based Persuasion Path



Elements of Values-Based Relational Campaigning



Successful voter persuasion needs three things::

- ✓ Shared values
- ✓ Supportive settings
- ✓ Trusted messengers

The Unique Role for Grassroots Advocacy

Two Paths to Impact in Elections

