

# Step-by-Step

## Organizing a Town Hall Meeting

**A town hall meeting is a large public meeting where community members are allowed to share their views with their elected representatives present. Elected representatives have the opportunity to hear from their constituents and to share their own views and positions in return.**

The following is a suggestion on how to organize a town hall meeting. You will want to modify it to fit your circumstances.

- Decide who the sponsoring organization(s) should be. To draw a large group it may be good to invite other organizations to co-sponsor.
- Decide on a choice of 3 or 4 possible dates for the town hall meeting.
- Call potential co-sponsoring organizations to solicit their interest. Each co-sponsoring group should commit to bringing 10 people to the town hall meeting (or whatever number of people you decide.) When you know who will be sponsoring the event call the appropriate legislators in your area to see if they will participate and what dates would work for them.
- Secure a location to hold the town hall meeting. If you think you will be able to recruit 100 people to come to the meeting, pick a room that holds more than 100. If you expect a big crowd arrange for a sound system.
- Decide which topics you want covered in the panel discussion. For example:
  - School funding/ Equity
  - School Climate
  - Culturally Responsive Curriculum

- Invite people you want to speak. Co-sponsoring groups can also divide up topics to cover. Based on previous experience it's important to be realistic about the time you have and don't invite too many people to speak. (The entire town meeting, including questions and discussion, should not last more than 2 hours.)
- Promote the upcoming Town Hall meeting around the community. You need to get enough people to come. A poorly attended meeting can communicate to the elected officials that our cause has little support.
  1. Produce and distribute a flyer
  2. Send an e-mail and post on social media
  3. Make phone calls
  4. Get listed in community calendars
  5. Send out a press advisory. Follow up with calls to ask the media to cover the event.
- Select a moderator, who has the skill to move the town hall meeting along; who can cut off long winded speaker; who can deal with hecklers or opponents who might show up; and who can adjust the timing if needed. Also provide a timekeeper to assist the moderator.
- Prepare the agenda for the event:
  1. Welcome and introduction of event and elected official(s) **5 minutes**
  2. Prepared Remarks/ Speakers or Panelist **40 minutes**
  3. Audience Remarks/ open mic with each person limited to 2 minutes. **40 minutes**
  4. Elected official remarks **15 minutes**
  5. Closing summary of the meeting and next steps/ call to action in the campaign **10min**
- On the night of the town meeting, set up with a large banner with your meeting theme. Have a registration table for people to sign in; set up a literature table. Start the meeting on time.