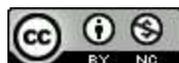




HOW-TO DRAFT: DISTRIBUTED ORGANIZING

This doc was designed to travel. Please feel free to share this around with other progressive campaigners. You can download this (look under File menu top left) in several formats or link to it / [embed it](#) on a web page.

Disclaimer / request for your help	2
Summary	2
Who's doing it?	2
Impact/ Why do this?	3
When this might not work for you	5
What this requires (people, resources, etc.)	6
Setup + stages	8
Tricky parts + fixes	14
Further resources	17
Who can help with this?	18
Attribution	18



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Disclaimer / request for your help

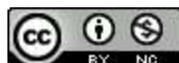
This doc is a work in progress that is meant to evolve over time with input from campaigners and organizers. At the moment, the tips and ideas here reflect the voices of the [contributors/reviewers listed below](#). We are always looking to add more voices of folks that have knowledge and experience on this topic. If this is you, please contact us here: blueprintsfc@gmail.com.

Summary

Distributed organizing (as opposed to community organizing or traditional political organizing) activates a network of self-starting supporters/campaigners in multiple locations, which can spread across geographical boundaries, interests and cultural groups. It draws on the initiative and energy of volunteer organizers to start groups and lead teams with varying degrees of autonomy. Though more horizontal when compared to traditional “command and control” leadership, distributed organizing often relies on a central coordination group to launch the network and to drive it towards common goals and milestones. When done properly, it can help a movement or campaign scale rapidly and channel huge amounts of collective power.

Who’s doing it?

Climate campaigners 350.org in all of their campaigns and notably fossil fuel divestment, [Hollaback!](#) - a global, people-powered movement to end harassment in all its forms, the Bernie Sanders primary campaign, undocumented immigrant rights campaigners [Movimiento Cosecha](#), [Support. Don’t Punish](#) - IDPC campaign for more humane drug policies, [Indivisible](#) chapters organizing U.S. citizens to oppose the Trump agenda, the Australian [Stop Adani](#) campaign (blocking a massive coal project). And many more....



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to’s and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Impact/ Why do this?

The benefits of rolling this way....

Tapping into the collective power of your supporters

The main benefit of distributed organizing is that it unlocks significant amounts of power among a group or campaign's supporter base. This is due to the fact that people want to participate more actively in shaping the course of the campaign or cause that they are supporting, and also because a wider group of supporters are now more self-sufficient and digitally savvy, which enables them to take on more important roles and responsibilities.

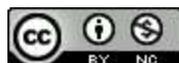
When these currents are tapped, great things happen! To quote [Becky Bond and Zack Exley](#), commenting on the explosion of supporter power during the Bernie campaign: "As it turned out, people were just waiting to be asked to do something big to win something big."

A more empowered supporter base

In most distributed organizing models, supporters have a lot more say and freedom over the branding and culture of their local group/chapter and ideally, the power to shape the overall campaign and how it is managed. Even giving a relatively small amount of local control and autonomy can go a long way. Tweaking logos, slogans and local action ideas may not seem like much but it engages supporters more deeply and builds a feeling of deeper involvement and empowerment. People come to see themselves reflected in the movement. The [customizable hubs model behind the People's Climate March](#) is a good example of this.

Building local power

Another advantage to distributed organizing is that it can give your campaign the kind of local expertise and competence that a really centralized operation can't. A group might be able to create deep partnerships with hyper local organizations that are well-known.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



They might be able to determine what kinds of tactics are most efficient in their own community or which individuals are influential and important to engage.

When people in their own backyards are paying attention to what one another has to say on social and political issues, that's an important first step in contributing to a national conversation and turning the tide on larger legislative battles.

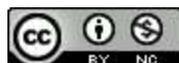
Rapid growth of supporter base and geographic coverage of campaign

From a campaign growth point of view, distributed organizing allows a supporter base to grow much more rapidly than traditional top-down chapter implantations because activation of distributed groups draws on existing local resources, not delegated and managed by HQ, so setup can happen quickly and independently.

From an efficiency standpoint, distributed organizing allows a campaign's supporter base to scale with a relatively small central staff count. As a proof point, consider that 350.org has activated over [4000 global groups with less than 100 paid staff managing the network](#).

Multiple points of entry for supporters

When distributed organizing is done at a larger scale, it can offer a variety of low-threshold actions that supporters can take on and manage. This allows campaigns to engage the energy of people with a range of capacities and skill sets. For example, some of your supporters may be comfortable coming out to a rally but others would not. Giving them the option to run a texting campaign from home, for example, makes use of their abilities while respecting comfort zones. Nicole Fairall from [ACLU's People Power Program](#) remarks that campaigns that make these options available benefit by activating a supporter base from a diversity of age groups and levels of physical ability.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Winning campaigns

This, of course, is a big motivator for campaign designers and distributed organizing has proven its power to build towards solid campaign wins in the field. One clear example here is how 350.org used distributed organizing to build up a global network of campus and local groups pushing their institutions to divest from fossil fuel investments. [To date, they have pushed an impressive list of targets to commit to divestment.](#) Given 350's initial staff size and resources, it would have been virtually impossible for them to scale up the the way they did so quickly through fundraising, global staff hires and management of all of the above. As 350 ramped up through distributed organizing, larger green groups who had been running top down, like Greenpeace, took notice and started rethinking their own organizing practices.

Because distributed organizing builds power at the local level, It also means that you can get really local wins on the board to create a better foundation for a national organization to build upon the in the future, if groups are autonomous enough to work on what's interesting to them personally, alongside what's interesting to the national organization. For example, some [Indivisible](#) groups have canvassed for really small local campaigns, managing to flip seats. This creates a better landscape for big groups to work with when it's time for a national general election.

When this might not work for you

Make no mistake, distributed organizing requires a serious amount of planning, time and supervision to run properly. Most organizations are more set up to mobilize (message their lists with light calls to action) rather than organize (work with teams of supporters and skill them up) so distributed organizing requires a commitment to build a support structure and to try out some new approaches. If this is already an impossibly hard sell, then it's a good time to reconsider.

The first major barrier to deploying a distributed organizing approach would be the internal culture of the organizing group. If your organization has a lot of trouble letting go of messaging and branding (not to mention some strategy and agenda-setting) and tends to micromanage supporters and their actions, then this way of organizing and mobilizing people will lead to a lot of headaches.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



It also requires a truly genuine belief in empowering others and a great deal of trust and respect. It works best when the centralized team treats their distributed networks as real peers, rather than an obedient army to command.

There are also some campaigns with conditions where distributed organizing will work better than in others. The best conditions for a distributed organizing approach are when the campaign issue has momentum and is already a shared and urgent concern for many people, when people power is an important lever for making change happen and where the campaign outcome is relatively straightforward (win an election, stop a project, flip a position on a policy etc.).

Distributed organizing is harder to run with when campaign goals are complex, not necessarily helped by grassroots pressure and when issues behind the campaign are less visible and understood by the average person.

What this requires (people, resources, etc.)

Internal alignment

Since distributed organizing requires a good amount of energy and involves the tensions of trying on new campaigning practices (at first), alignment throughout the campaigning group and if possible with top decision-makers is important.

It's worth taking the time to explain the benefits of going distributed to the uninitiated, as the growing pains of trying new stuff will inevitably come up and may lead to innovation-killing backlash if leadership has not bought into this.

Letting go of total top-down control

One of the toughest things about running a distributed network is letting go. If you are used to top-down management and controlling your organizational brand tightly, this will require some internal work on letting go and trusting the network.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org

Blueprints for Change

Some triggering questions to ask yourself and your group would include:

- Are you ok with empowering your supporter-leaders to talk to the press and tell their stories or are you requiring all comms get approval through central staff?
- Are you ok with letting local leaders plan and run events without going through and approving every detail of their planned actions?
- Are you ok with letting local leaders adapt your logo and brand and colors to suit local culture and preferences?
- Are you ok with local leaders planning a local campaign, alongside or instead of working on the national organization's priorities?

If the answer to one or more of the above is no, then think twice before going distributed as it will turn out to be a nightmare to manage.

On the other more positive side of things, letting supporters build something new on their own initiative is also one of the most beautiful things about distributed organizing. Who doesn't love the feel of watching someone in their organizing network shine and succeed from their own hard fought efforts?

Accept a certain level of messiness when volunteer self-starting leaders take charge of actions. Not everyone will be on time and 100% on message but the scale and impact will be so much greater.

Exaggerated [concerns about rogue chapters](#) often come up here. See below.

Basic digital infrastructure

- Online resources made available to supporters (See toolkits below). Google docs is a good way to start this on the cheap
- Communications systems including e-mailers like Mailchimp, a web conferencing system like Zoom or Jitsi, a public-facing interactive platform where members of your base can post their accounts (This can be a simple blog platform)
- Team chat software such as Slack (to help local supporters stay in touch and share tips) - but if your base aren't confident with trying new platforms or already using this, you may be better off organising where they are, for example through Facebook groups or even direct messaging via Facebook or Twitter



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Self-starter types among your base

The extent to which you will find motivated and disciplined people driven by your cause will largely depend on the cause you are campaigning on.

A distributed movement runs on the energy and initiative of its self-starting leaders. Their motivation is half the battle and their digital communications savvy and self-management capacity is the other. If you can't find autonomous "do it yourself" supporters willing to get things started, you can't go very far with the distributed model.

Time and spaces for real or virtual check-ins and team convenings

A distributed network of supporters and local leaders is a living community that needs to be maintained and nourished over time or relationships, group cohesion and morale will suffer. Those with experience managing these networks stress the important of time spent on relationship-building activities that help self-starters achieve their goals. At the very least, central organizers need to have time to chat with distributed network leaders and to field questions, troubleshoot and give group pep talks to keep the whole thing moving forward.

If distances are too vast and resources too thin, make sure that time is left for larger online group check-ins with the network so that the scattered leaders of the campaign feel like they are part of a larger whole from time to time.

Kunoor Ojha has this to share on [Indivisible](#)'s video conferencing practices:

Video conferences are my fave ever. It's great to see facial expressions in real time, as well as people's living rooms, offices, and pets. There's also always a party in the chat box :) creating space for joy is so important, so i'm always clowning around misbehaving on these.

If regular physical gatherings every few months or once a year are possible, make sure that room and resources for this is baked into the plan.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Regular organized trainings are also a good way to bring people together while building supporter capacity at the same time.

Setup + stages

Establish a “mobilizing frame”

Behind all successful distributed campaigns is an issue that naturally resonated with its supporter base.

Campaign planners who want to go distributed should think about how their issue does (or doesn't yet) plug into people's first order concerns (ex. fear for safety of self and loved ones) or passions (ex. fighting injustice, hope for a better future) and pain points (ex. A political villain making life hell for everyone).

Marisa Franco, B Loewe and Tania Unzueta frame the above as having “[Action-worthy problems and solutions](#)”. The questions they ask are: “Does the problem you are trying to solve really matter to anyone? Is the solution you propose realistic and effective?”.

**Suggestion: Test this quickly on your network...

Take your current cause framing and call out to a segment of your supporter base asking for a show of hands on who wants to organize locally on this. This will help gauge the level of spontaneous energy for your issue as currently presented. If the energy is not there, you may need to work closely with your base to find an angle that will get them motivated for self-starting actions.

Here is an example of how the No Red Button Campaign (now [Beyond the Bomb](#)) tested the enthusiasm of their supporters for various distributed actions. [Link to screencap of their google form questionnaire.](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Create a distributed action plan

This is kind of like reverse-engineering if considered from the traditional practice of thinking up what you want your campaign to achieve and then calling out to your base as cheerleaders and amplifiers of your messages and actions.

In distributed organizing, campaign design starts with the question: “What would our base be motivated to do to build the campaign with us and how can we design a campaign to include them and give them key roles in this?”

Think of the campaign as an engagement journey, where group participation is just as important as the milestone folks are mobilizing towards. In the Bernie campaign, this path started with volunteers raising their hands to help out with local organizing and then, through a series of planned interactions with other organizers, brought the willing to become local trainers and managers of new recruits over time.

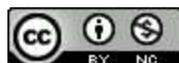
Once you have defined a broad participatory path for your supporters, define the range of actions that local leaders can take on organizing themselves.

Think through the process that a local leader will go through from stepping into their role, to organizing and executing the actions. Consider whether it is a reasonable ask. Experienced distributed organizers usually try going through the actions themselves to understand what resources and time are required.

Don't be too pessimistic on people's willingness to take stuff on, though. Nicole Fairall from ACLU's People Power Program notes that a surprising amount of people on their list were up for organizing a local event, when asked to do so via text. If folks are in charge of running their own actions, a good number of natural leaders seem to come out of the woodwork.

[>>Here is a sample distributed action plan created for a group working on voter registration.](#)

****Suggestion: Keep the participatory plan simple**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



If this is your first time rolling out a distributed network, limit the range of self-starting actions asked of supporters in your first wave of distributed actions. This will allow you to better support and manage the network and fine tune the process for the next round. (See scope blowup in the Tricky parts and fixes section below).

Define your mission, values and what is left open

Distributing leadership means that your campaign will be shaped and spoken for by people who have not gone through the thorough org culture intake process that core campaign staff typically experience. To keep everyone aligned, it is important to put the spirit of the campaign approach on paper in some way so that remote supporters have something to buy into.

To help with this, define, through a charter, or public mission document, what the values of your overall movement and its local groups are. A quick list of “do’s and don’ts” is always good here.

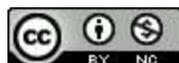
Also, consider a “roles and responsibilities” doc that establishes expectations and a code of conduct/ community agreement for local leaders.

[Jolt](#) has a great chapter guide that outlines the roles of local leaders and includes a code of conduct. [Link to their guide here.](#)

In your documents, leave space to define what is left open and free for local leaders to decide and create and what is left up to central coordinators to decide. (For more on this, see Balancing local autonomy and central control in the Tricky parts and fixes section below).

Plan for the recruitment and activation of local leaders

Consider that recruitment of local leaders may be a job in itself.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org

Blueprints for Change

To kick off the recruitment process, most orgs start with lists of “high action takers” that have been gathered through previous actions. These are supporters who have shown interest in doing more to help the campaign and are natural first contacts to reach with an appeal for local leadership.

If you need to widen the net, consider public events or convenings that would bring out some fresh faces and opportunities for direct recruitment.

During the Bernie Sanders primary campaign, organizers Zack Exley and Becky Bond set up a series of “Barnstorm” events, essentially pep rallies that brought together supporters and quickly transitioned from speeches to outlines of supporter actions needed to help the campaign and direct recruitment of interested people present through paper signup sheets later uploaded as images to a central database. In this way, the campaign regularly inducted thousands of volunteers across the country.

Before you bring hundreds or thousands of new eager supporters onboard, make sure you have thought through what the activation process will be. Think through the path a new supporter needs to take from first contact through to first actions and responsibilities and consider how you and your central staff will support this and communicate with them.

An activation process should include [starter tools](#) for new leaders but you should plan to have some central staff on hand to support induction and setup of local leaders.

If you have the time and resources, activating and setting up new leaders is always best done face to face in small gatherings. Experienced distributed organizers like 350.org in Europe, for example, went beyond digital calls out and toolkits when forming new chapters. Instead, staff travelled to meet groups with mutual interest and invested time in coaching new leaders.

If you are starting up a larger distributed system where face to face meetings with all supporters may not be feasible, do you have a step-by-step set of instructions for would-be local leaders who want to get active starting a local group or planning a local action? Getting this down will save countless hours of back and forth coordination.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



The more tools that you can set up for self-starters to get going on their own, the better. However, a totally hands-off approach does not work great. [See further below on Hollaback's experience with digital toolkit only and resulting drop-off.](#)

Create a management plan / structure for the distributed network

Activating local groups is an important first step but if you want your distributed supporters to move together with you to achieve campaign objectives, a group management plan is essential.

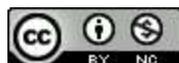
The following are considerations for creating a management plan:

- How will you keep distributed teams on track?
- Do you have staff time allocated to managing the network?
- Do you have communications capacity to reach out to remote leaders regularly?
- Do you have a yearly timeline of actions and collective prep sessions leading to actions?

Are you planning ahead for certain milestones, where you will be driving everyone towards simultaneous actions? Typically, these 'days of action' bring the network together and focus collective power on targets in a visible way, especially if collective actions are documented and communicated.

Regular check-ins with remote chapters are important to maintain momentum. Aside from calls to action or group action reports, these can be crowdsourcing sessions where you are asking local leaders for input on future strategy.

Finally, keep in mind Zack Exley's advice on "the tyranny of the annoying", or the certain types of supporters who will join and begin to dominate the group and bring it down with their own bad energy. This requires readiness from central organizers to diplomatically relieve folks of their leadership functions if things start to go sideways. It's hard to plan for this, as each case that comes up is nuanced, but central staff should be made aware that excusing volunteers from their duties is sometimes an option.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Mirror-back collective actions and maintaining group morale

Most distributed networks naturally want to show off the diversity of the movement they have brought to life and its spread across time zones. Aside from legitimate boasting, this does a lot to maintain group morale and is a validating moment for local organizers when they see themselves as part of a larger whole.

A classic way of doing this is to generate country-wide or global digital maps of distributed actions/groups with pins representing each instance of a local action.

Some groups also put together visual mosaics of locally-produced campaign content, which can include images, videos or written testimonies.

Encouraging everyone to drop a common hashtag into their online posts is a good way to facilitate curation of supporter-generated content. There are even some affordable online apps that bring together all posts in a visually pleasing way, like <https://walls.io/>

Testimonies from local supporters are especially important here as they let all distributed network members know that the campaign/movement is made up of people just like them and that individual efforts count for a lot.

To bring all of this together, consider assigning the curation role to a bottom-liner on your team as this task needs regular focus. For more pointed advice on sourcing and managing supporter content, see our [Crowdsourcing how-to here](#).

Note that this is both a morale-building exercise but also a collective show of force if you are trying to move the needle on a big issue and putting pressure on corporate or political targets.

Measuring success

Distributed organizing is an emergent practice that is just now getting wider adoption. Because of this, performance metrics and methods for evaluating how successful a distributed organizing system is have not been created and spread in any definitive way.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



One place to start evaluating success and demonstrating it to team members, boards, funders etc. is to look at the ratio of paid staff employed to manage the distributed process vs. the amount of total actions completed, chapters created, supporters engaged etc... This kind of calculation would show clear advantages of distributed approach over a traditional top-down and staff-intensive system from a resource-management + efficiency perspective. To put it another way, think of the same amount of actions generated in a distributed organizing structure if paid staff was required to manage it at all levels. Compile the time and salaries of all staff in a traditional system vs. the costs of staff managing distributed leadership and the savings should speak for itself.

Tricky parts + fixes

Not enough oversight and support, chapters dying out

While it is tempting to focus all energies on a digital toolkits to equip self-starting leaders, real-life experience has taught distributed organizers that this is not enough.

[Hollaback!](#) for example started out by incubating chapters around the world with a good idea, a call to action and a “self-serve” digital toolkit for new chapter leaders. What they found, however, is that leaving groups entirely on their own with just these resources did not sustain the network and led to a good number of chapters shutting down.

To correct for this, Hollaback’s leadership set up a mandatory webinar series for new would-be leaders that gives them more extensive training before they get started. This commitment also weeds out self-starters with a weaker commitment that may not be able to follow-through with their responsibilities.

Think of how you plan to support your larger network through regular contact and capacity building. At its simplest form, as practiced by 350, this takes the form of regular web-conferences where local leaders share experiences with central staff and collectively give each other pep talks.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Scope blowup: Too many different actions being sparked

Some distributed campaigns become too successful for their own good when they leave the creative scope entirely open for remote leaders. This happens when a central staff group commits to supporting any action that gets sparked remotely. If local leaders come up with hundreds of different action plans with hundreds of separate support needs, this can become overwhelming for central coordinators.

Common practice is to start a distributed campaign by driving all leaders to perform one or two starter actions collectively or to focus a variety of actions on a single “day of action”. This cuts down management and coordination noise and makes the network manageable until greater capacity is built in.

Another way to manage this, courtesy of Nicole at the ACLU, is to divide distributed actions into tiers of priority for ex.

Tier 1 - Urgent, do ASAP

Tier 2 - Action-oriented events related to our main campaigns

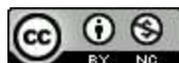
And then... other actions can still be proposed on a menu of possibilities but are presented as lower priority.

Balance between local autonomy and central control

A classic question in distributed organizing is deciding how much freedom to give local organizers vs. central control.

Most successful distributed organizing campaigns are not free-for-alls but rather, they run on a hybrid of grassroots creative freedom and control (in some areas) and top-down leadership, ie. some things are decided by a central command group.

Below, for example, is how 350.org and Hollaback! have managed this divide. Your group may choose to divide power and responsibilities differently, of course, but keep in mind that a healthy balance of local freedom and central control is what energizes the network.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org

Blueprints for Change

Excerpt - *Balancing autonomy the 350 and Hollaback! way*

Strategy, training and facilitation are all managed top-down by central staff	Local groups have tactical and creative freedom in the following areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Framing the “action-worthy” cause and the approach to it ● Creating overall campaign strategy ● Planning collective actions that mobilize local groups ● Creating central communications for collective mobilization ● Creating a digital hub structure and digital action kits for local organizers ● Continually building capacity with local organizers ● Curating and mirroring local content back to the collective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local groups can self-activate ● Local group chapter leaders appoint themselves ● Local digital hubs can be customized to reflect local flavor ● Local groups are free to create their own messaging ● Local groups can devise and execute their own actions

Suggestion: Map out roles in black and white and keep this reference handy when briefing new self-starting organizers or central staff.

Rogue chapters....

This is mentioned here because people bring it up a lot when distributed organizing is proposed as a course of action. In fact, it is the biggest fear that holds back more organizations from going distributed. Put simply, this is the fear that opening up leadership of local groups to people who are not vetted org staff will result in numerous groups going sideways and doing crazy things in the name of the larger campaign or movement thus discrediting the whole network.

Actually, it is something of a non issue. The groups that have run networks with hundreds of chapters report that, once in awhile, one of those chapters will say or do



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



something that departs from the spirit of the campaign. So anecdotally, the rate of something going mildly sideways is less than 1 percent. At this level, such cases were easily dealt with by organizers who contacted the local leader and worked things out quickly and directly.

To make sure you lower the (already small) chances of something disruptive happening in a distributed chapter, establish clear public codes of conduct for local chapters and a campaign or movement values statement. Ask all self-starting leaders to opt into these and to share them with new local supporters.

Further resources

For a deeper dive into the nuts and bolts of distributed organizing, we recommend the following:

Articles:

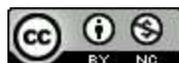
- [How we make change is changing: Open source campaigns for the 21st century](#)
- [The social strategy that is super-sizing the climate movement - Mashable](#)
- [350 and Hollaback! build distributed campaigning power](#)
- [A critique of distributed team support after the People's Climate March](#)

Books:

- [Rules for Revolutionaries](#)
- [Engagement Organizing](#)
- [This is an Uprising](#)

Sample distributed toolkits:

- [Hollaback! How-to guides](#)
- [350.org organizer toolkits and trainings](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org



Who can help with this?

Providers, consultants, trainers....

- [PowerLabs](#) (consultants, trainers)
- [NetChange Consulting](#) (consultants, trainers)

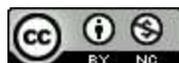
Attribution

Input and resources for this draft were provided by:

Thelma Young and Jon Warnow from [350.org](#), [Emily May](#) at [Hollaback!](#), Marisa Franco, B Loewe and Tania Unzueta, Jamie Bridge at [Support. Don't Punish.](#), Nicole Fairall with [ACLU's People Power program](#), [Tania Mejia](#) at [Jolt](#), [Kunoor Ojha](#) with [Indivisible](#), [Tasha Adams](#), Becky Bond and Zack Exley (via [Rules for Revolutionaries](#)), as well as [Mobilisation Lab](#).

This draft was prepared and reviewed by:

[Tom Liacas](#), [Meredith Horowski](#), [Tania Mejia](#), [Kunoor Ojha](#), [Tasha Adams](#), [Michael Silberman](#), [Emily May](#), [Matt Price](#) [Jason Mogus](#), [Ethan Cox](#), [Nick Allardice](#).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For commenting permissions and other feedback, contact us at: blueprintsfc@gmail.com

Full library of how-to's and more info at: www.blueprintsfc.org