



DEVELOPING AN ACTION STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Taking action is possible for everyone, regardless of ability, age, background, or experience. There’s a role for each person—whether organizing, spreading awareness, offering support, or direct action. We don’t need vast resources; small, consistent efforts from many people create real impact. However, activists often jump into action without assessing if their chosen tactic aligns with their goals. A thoughtful strategy ensures impactful activism. The key is working smart.

Thoughtful planning strengthens effectiveness, resilience, and long-term change. When we prepare, we become stronger, more adaptable, and better positioned to sustain our movement.

WHO THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR

This guide covers how to identify your strengths, discover your activist role, and take steps to support abortion access. It includes self-assessment questions, descriptions of activist types, and practical advice for plugging into existing networks and building sustainable activism.

WHAT’S INCLUDED

This guide is for anyone interested in supporting abortion access. It’s designed for activists at all levels, whether you’re new to activism, looking to strengthen your involvement, or exploring new ways to contribute. It’s also for people who want to better understand their own approach to organizing and how they can use their strengths to make a meaningful impact.

PROBLEM > GOAL > STRATEGY > TACTIC > ACTION > EVALUATION

STEP 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

These questions focus on identifying their strengths, comfort levels, and preferred ways of engaging in activism.

1. What issue are you trying to address?

Example: Lack of public knowledge about the availability of abortion pills through the mail.

2. Who is most affected by this issue?

Example: People in rural areas, low-income individuals, young people.

3. How do these problems manifest in real life?

Example: People not knowing they have options, misinformation about legality and safety, fear of seeking information, stigma around self-managed abortion.

STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR GOAL

What specific outcome do you want to achieve?

Example: increase awareness about safe and legal ways to access abortion pills through the mail.

2. Is this a short-term or long-term goal?

Example: immediate awareness campaigns vs. Building a culture of accessible reproductive health knowledge.

3. What does success look like?

Example: More people knowing about online resources and trusted providers, increased access to accurate information.

4. Who is your target audience?

Example: are you trying to reach people who need abortion pills, healthcare providers, policymakers, or the general public?

STEP 3: DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

1. What is your overarching approach to reaching your goal?

Example: if the goal is increasing awareness, the strategy might be education-based outreach via community events and digital engagement.

2. What's the best pathway to change?

Example: if misinformation is the biggest issue, the strategy may focus on trusted messengers and peer education.

3. Who holds power over the issue, and how can you shift it?

Example: Are you trying to educate the public, pressure policymakers, or change cultural narratives?

4. What's your theory of change?

If we do X, then Y will happen because Z.

Example: If we make abortion pill information visible on campuses, then students will be more likely to access it because they'll receive accurate, stigma-free education from trusted sources.

STEP 4: CHOOSING YOUR TACTIC

1. What resources do you have available?

Example: You may not have a million dollars for a commercial campaign, but you may have access to social media networks, a group of friends, access to a printer, etc.

2. What unique opportunities present themselves?

Example: A media event you could crash, a nearby billboard accessible for wheatpasting, an influential politician holding an open meeting, or a public forum where your message could gain traction.

3. Is this tactic feasible given your resources?

Do you have enough people, time, and funding to execute it effectively? If not, what needs to change?

4. Does this tactic match your goal?

If you need to increase awareness, are the tools you’re using to do so reach the most people?

5. What’s your risk tolerance?

Are you comfortable with legal risks, media exposure, or civil disobedience? Do you need to take security precautions to protect yourself and others?

STEP 5: ACTION

1. What are the steps to implement this tactic?

What’s your timeline to complete this action?

2. Who needs to be involved?

Volunteers, legal advisors, media contacts, other organizations?

3. Assigned roles:

Who is doing what?

4. What resources are needed?

Funding, software, physical space, posters, time?

5. Potential barriers and risk assessment:

What obstacles could arise? Are there security concerns? How will you mitigate risk?

6. How are we communicating (if it's a group project)?
Signal chats? Emails? Shared Documents? In-person meetings?

7. How will you document and measure success?
Example: Attendance, press hits, distribution numbers, photos, video, screenshots?

STEP 6: EVALUATION

If you are doing an in-person action, it's a good idea to plan a time and place to meet for a debrief. Ideally, the space will be private and you will all come together shortly after the action (the same day is great) while impressions are fresh.

1. Did you achieve your goal?
Example: Did awareness about abortion pills increase?

2. What worked well? What strategies had the most impact?
Example: Was social response stronger or was in-person events more effective?

3. What didn't work or had limited impact?
Were there resource or logistical challenges?

4. What feedback did you receive?

5. How can you improve for next time?
Should you adjust messaging, shift focus, or try a different tactic?

6. What are the next steps?
Will you scale up, modify, or pivot your strategy?

7. How is everyone feeling about today? Can you think of things the group might do differently in the future? What would make you feel more supported?

STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOLS

If you want to go deeper, SWOT and SMART are helpful tools for planning an action.

SWOT ANALYSIS	SMART GOALS
<p>SWOT Analysis helps you evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of your tactic or campaign.</p> <p>It helps you identify internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities and threats, so you can anticipate challenges and sharpen your approach.</p>	<p>SMART Goals ensure your plan is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, helping you stay focused and accountable as you move from idea to action.</p>

You can find more information and examples of both frameworks online to support your planning process.

No single action will solve an issue overnight, but thoughtful, strategic efforts create lasting change. Whether you're just getting started or refining your approach, keep learning, adjusting, and supporting others in the movement. The key to sustainable activism is working together and taking consistent, meaningful action.

KEY WORDS

Action: The execution of a tactic, when plans are put into real-world practice.

Accessibility: Ensuring that organizing spaces, events, and materials are inclusive and usable by all, including those with disabilities, language barriers, or other needs.

Activism: Taking action to bring about social, political, or environmental change through organizing, advocacy, direct action, or education.

Advocacy: Promoting or supporting a cause, policy, or change through communication, lobbying, or public campaigns.

Community Organizing: Bringing people together to collectively address social issues, usually through grassroots efforts and collective decision-making.

Direct Action: A tactic used to create immediate change, such as protests, sit-ins, blockades, or strikes, rather than relying on institutional processes like voting or lobbying.

Evaluation: The process of assessing the effectiveness of an action, tactic, or strategy and making adjustments for future efforts.

Goal: The specific change you want to achieve through your activism. A well-defined goal guides all strategy and tactics.

Landscape Analysis: A research process used to map out who is working on an issue, what resources exist, and where gaps in organizing efforts may be.

Mutual Aid: A solidarity-based support system where people help each other meet needs, often outside of traditional charity or government assistance.

Power Mapping: A strategy to identify key decision-makers and stakeholders who have influence over an issue, and how activists can strategically apply pressure to them.

Problem: The issue an activist or group is addressing, which requires a clearly defined scope and understanding of its impact.

Risk Assessment: Evaluating potential risks (legal, safety, security) before taking action and developing strategies to minimize harm.

SMART Objectives: A framework for setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals to ensure clarity and effectiveness.

Strategy: The overarching plan that determines the best approach to achieving a goal.

SWOT Analysis: A strategic tool for evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to a campaign or tactic.

Tactic: A specific action taken to implement a strategy, such as a petition drive, media campaign, or direct action.

Tactical Brief: A short, action-focused guide that provides clear steps and considerations for activists planning a strategy or action.

Theory of Change: A framework explaining how and why a particular strategy or set of actions will lead to the desired outcome.