The original grassroots training for student activists.

Contents
Introduction
GROW Session Overview
GROW Agenda
Application
Choosing a Site
Planning
Recruitment
Notes on Hosting
Contract and Timeline

United States Student Association Foundation • (202) 347-GROW
1413 K Street NW, 9th Floor • Washington, DC 20005 • training@usstudents.org
The GrassRoots Organizing Weekends (GROW) trainings were started by USSA in 1985 in conjunction with the Midwest Academy. The training is based on the premise that while the issues of concern to students evolve over time, there are certain techniques that lie behind all successful organizations and leaders. In the past, these techniques have been acquired by trial and error, however these skills can also be taught. The skills are not issue-specific and can be applied to a variety of campaigns on your campus.

Organizing on our campuses can be frustrating because of the cycles that destabilize our efforts to build an activist base, such as graduating leadership and unsophisticated strategy skills.

The GROW sessions developed by USSA and Midwest Academy train student leaders in proven organizing techniques and leadership skills. The principles of the training are to:

★ Develop students’ skills of organizing and leadership to enable them to obtain concrete changes on campus and build strong organizations
★ Teach students to build strong coalitions among different student groups and between student and community groups
★ Ensure long term individual participation in creating long term social change by helping students put their beliefs into action and making them aware of opportunities of organizing as a career

The two and a half day program is designed for active student participation, mixing lectures, exercises and several role plays. To date over 10,000 students have been trained across the country.

Participants are recruited from diverse constituencies within the student body, and special emphasis is placed on building bridges between groups—both on campus and in the community.

Trainers are skilled student activists with experience on a broad range of issues affecting students including: anti-racism, financial aid, voter registration, forming statewide networks, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights, affirmative action, women’s issues, and others.

We hope to work with your campus to organize a successful and empowering GROW!
All of the GROW sessions are designed to be interactive and build upon one another. Each topic is approached by first presenting the theory to participants, providing an exercise to put the theory into practice, and finally debriefing each session as a group.

**Introduction**
Introduces participants to the GROW training program, the United States Student Association (USSA) and Midwest Academy. The basic principles of Direct Action Organizing (DAO) and a broad context of what will occur during the weekend training session are covered here.

**Understanding the Realions of Power**
This session uses an interactive role play to lay the foundation for analyzing how power works, who has it, and what power we have as students.

**Choosing an Issue**
Here we look at the ways in which we can turn the often overwhelming problems that we face on our campuses into issues that have concrete, winnable solutions.

**Strategy**
Outlines a simple tool for setting goals, using organizational resources, mobilizing a constituency, and effectively wielding tactics over an appropriate target. This is the heart of Direct Action Organizing and GROW.

**Context of Our Work: Educational Access**
This session focuses on USSA’s work to expand educational access. We look at what students are facing on a national scale and link that to organizing on individual campuses.

**Recruitment**
Solid recruitment is the only way to ensure that your organization will last past graduation. Here we present and practice some tried and true guidelines.

**Coalitions**
Working in coalitions can be the most rewarding as well as the hardest part of organizing. This session offers time-tested guidelines for successful coalition building by addressing the challenges they often face.

**Actions**
This culminating role play brings participants face to face with the target to present (and hopefully win!) their demands.
Friday
5:00 - 6:00 PM On Site Registration
6:00 - 7:00 PM Introductions
7:00 - 10:00 PM Understanding the Relations of Power

Saturday
9:00 - 10:30 AM Choosing an Issue
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM Strategy Guidelines
12:00 - 1:00 PM Lunch
1:00 - 3:15 PM Strategy Exercise
3:30 - 4:45 PM Context of Our Organizing: Educational Access
5:00 - 7:00 PM Recruitment

Sunday
9:00 - 10:30 AM Coalitions
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM Actions Guidelines
12:00 - 1:00 PM Lunch
1:00 - 2:30 PM Actions Role-play
2:30 - 3:30 PM Wrap-Up & Evaluations

Important: Workshops involve all participants and build on one another. It is crucial that participants make a commitment to attend the entire weekend!
Application to host a GROW

Please fill-in the weekends you are interested in:

1st Choice:_________________________

2nd Choice:_________________________

Name of Campus contact

_____________________________________________________________________________

Address

_____________________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip

_____________________________________________________________________________

Office Phone    Home Phone    Cell Phone

_____________________________________________________________________________

Fax Number    e-mail address

1. Why do you want to host a GROW?
_____________________________________________________________________________

2. How did you hear about the GROW training and USSA?
_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

3. What organization(s) will be sponsoring the training?
_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

What is your role in that organization?
_____________________________________________________________________________

4. What issues are your currently working on?
_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
Planning for a GROW

Careful planning and active recruitment are the most important tasks in sponsoring a successful GROW training. As soon as you have confirmed your date, you should begin this process. Review the following guidelines and hints before you begin and follow the CONTRACT & TIMELINE carefully.

The GROW Team

When the dates of the training are set, you should assemble a small team of 3-5 people who will take responsibility for organizing the GROW. We suggest that this group include one team leader (the bottom-line point person) who has 2-3 hours a week to contribute in the six weeks leading up to the training, as well as 2-4 other members who can give a couple of hours a week. The GROW team should have check-in meetings at least once a week for the six weeks prior to the GROW where they can work together to plan, delegate tasks, and evaluate their progress.

Start Early

It would not be effective to begin asking people on Wednesday to attend a weekend-long training that starts on Friday. In order to have a GROW that runs smoothly and has at least 40 committed participants, it is essential to begin the planning and recruitment process at least six weeks before the training. Solid organizing ahead of time will make for a quality GROW that will energize and empower student organizers across your campus.

Scheduling

Deciding when to host a GROW is very important. Pick a date that does not conflict with major campus events—the homecoming game, conferences, holidays, midterm exams, etc. Also, you should check with groups who might be interested in participating in the GROW to find a date that is compatible with their schedules. Finally, think strategically about when it makes the most sense to host the training so that it can bring energy and inspiration to existing campaigns and organizing.

GROW trainers are experienced student organizers from campuses across the country.

GROW helps teach students to organize strategically. Tactics such as demonstrations work only when they demonstrate real power over a target and are steps to winning clearly defined, concrete goals.
Choosing a Site

This is something that should be done early, as room reservations on campuses often fill up months in advance. GROW needs three rooms:

★ One for 30-40 people, arranged as shown, with tables and chairs that can be moved.
★ Two other rooms for breakout sessions that can accommodate about 20 people.

**Main Training Room Set-Up**

- Easel w/ Paper and Markers
- Podium for Trainer
- Participants
- Participants
- Participants

When looking at possible rooms/sites, consider the following:

★ The **same room** should be used as the main training room for the entire weekend.
★ Make sure that the room is free from outside **distractions**.
★ **Accessibility to public transportation**
★ Near to student **housing and accommodations for travellers**
★ Easy access to **food**, preferably including veg/vegan options
★ The **building hours** must accommodate the times of the training and training clean-up:
  - Until midnight on Friday
  - 8:30am-9pm on Saturday
  - 8:30am-5pm on Sunday

*Find out now who will be responsible for opening and closing the building. It’s not fun to be locked out of the GROW on Sunday morning.*
★ **Close and affordable parking**
★ All of the above should be **accessible to students with disabilities**.
Solid, organized recruitment is essential for any successful event. That’s why we devote an entire session of GROW to talk about recruitment and organization building. GROW is most effective when there are about 40 participants. Getting them to attend the training is not a task to be taken lightly. Here are some tips to help out.

Ask them
Quite simply, people won’t come unless you ask them. Recruitment is a hands-on process, and it happens one person at a time. Don’t assume that people will show up just because they saw your poster or got an e-mail about the training. So get ready to hit the pavement and talk to people one-on-one. It’s grassroots, baby!

Self-interest
As you are approaching individuals or groups you want to attend the training, figure out why they would want to attend. You don’t want to talk at them about why you think they should go. Think about what will specifically attract them. How is it in their self-interest to attend the training? Listen to what their personal and organizational needs are. Are they having a hard time getting people to come to their meetings and events? Are they starting a campaign on campus and don’t know where to begin strategizing? Show them the agenda from this packet and point out that we devote time to exercises and discussions about the very skills that they are looking to develop!

Agitate
A little emotion can go a long way. Getting people riled up can be a great way to motivate them to attend the GROW. Connect the training with current issues on campus. Say things like: “Did you know that the Board of Regents is raising our tuition by 10% next year? That’s why we’re hosting this GROW training so that we can learn to organize strategically to keep our education affordable,” or “Did you hear about the recent attacks on affirmative action in the state legislature? We need to or-

The Flake Factor
Always recruit more people than you actually want to attend. You should count on a certain percentage of people saying that they cannot come at the last minute. Don’t get mad—we’ve all had that test, that paper due on Monday, or forgotten about commitments before. So plan for it! Set a goal of building an attendance list that has twice as many names as you want to attend one week prior to the training. Here is a rough model:

- Ultimate goal: 40 people
- Firm commitment: 80 people
- Talk to/ask: 160 people

Diversity
GROW participants don’t just learn from the trainers; they learn from one another, share experiences, make new friends, etc. To achieve that end result, recruit a diverse group of people from different backgrounds, organizations, and constituencies. GROW focuses one session on coalition building, and bringing a diverse group of people together for the training is a perfect way to build relationships for future campus organizing.
Mass marketing
It is important to hit people from all angles. Although they aren’t enough in themselves, posters, flyers, newspaper ads, and mass e-mails can be helpful for spreading the word about the training and raising interest, as well as reminding people who you’ve already talked to directly about the training.

Get a commitment
People are far more likely to show up at the training if they’ve made a firm commitment. Using an application that interested students have to fill out is one useful tool. Filling out an application makes the participants’ commitment more serious (it’s not just something they are thinking about doing), provides the recruiter with a realistic view of the numbers that they can expect, and gives a feel for the diversity of the group. Make sure that you set up a system for distributing, collecting, and reviewing applications, and for notifying applicants that they have been selected to attend the training.

Follow-up
It is essential to contact participants the week before the training to reconfirm their commitment, and to let them know about the training location and other important last minute information. You should do this both with personal phone calls and e-mails. Be sure to send a list of confirmed participants to the USSA office two weeks in advance of the training. GROW trainers will also call as many participants as possible to talk to them about the training.

Organizations
Asking people to come to the GROW doesn’t mean you have to just hit up random people on campus (although that’s ok, too). Think about where you can access larger groups of people who might be interested in attending. Make a list of organizations that would benefit from a GROW training. Set up meetings with their leadership first, and then arrange a time to make a presentation at a larger group activity or meeting. Specifically, reach out to:

- Multicultural, student of color, and ethnic organizations
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender groups
- Women’s organizations
- Environmental groups
- Labor and labor support organizations
- Political party campus chapters
- Student government
- Graduate employee unions
- Non-traditional or returning student groups
- Any other political, activist, or social justice organizations and academic departments
Notes on Hosting

Hints

While following the above plan will help lead to a successful GROW, here are some other hints for making your training ‘extra super special’:

★ Make a map of nearby restaurants, including prices and types of cuisine, to ensure an efficient lunch break.
★ Make a map to the site, accommodations, and parking for out of town participants.
★ If you are unsure about being able to drum up enough interest on your own campus, consider co-hosting a GROW with another school in the area.
★ Provide food for lunch. This can be as easy as buying some sandwich fixin’s and chips, or ordering a few pizzas. Eating in will help ensure the training stays on schedule.
★ Consider having a GROW retreat. If you have the resources, spending a weekend away from campus can be a wonderful opportunity to build group cohesion and encourage people to stay for the duration of the training.

GROW materials

The host campus/organization is responsible for providing the following materials for the training:

★ One folder for each participant
★ At least 70 sheets of butcher paper or blank newsprint
★ Masking tape
★ One set of colored markers (the Mr. Sketch variety works the best)

Fundraising

While we wish we could provide GROWs free of charge, it does cost money to put on a training. Here are some suggestions for grassroots fundraising:

★ Ask other campus organizations to co-sponsor the event. As well as sharing costs, this will ensure that the organizations are really invested in bringing a GROW to campus.
★ Apply for money from your student government. Bear in mind that this process should be started well in advance.
★ Ask for grants from the office of student affairs and from academic departments. Individual professors are even sometimes willing to make a small donation.
★ Talk to local labor unions and community activist organizations. In exchange for their support, we can include them in one of the training sessions to talk about their campaigns and make connections with student organizers.
★ Consider charging a small, sliding scale participant fee of $10-20. This can also serve as a way of ensuring students’ commitment to attending the GROW.
The USSA Foundation is pleased to sponsor a GROW Training with __________________________(organization/school) on ______________________(training date).

The USSA Foundation agrees to:

- Send two trainers from our training staff to conduct the GROW training.
- Provide all the necessary materials for the training not listed in the logistics sheet.

It is understood by all signers that:

- Recruitment for the GROW is primarily the responsibility of the campus host. They are to recruit at least 40 participants and make sure that all participants understand that they are committing to a full weekend and are expected to participate in each session of the training. USSA Foundation staff will assist with this but no money will be refunded if fewer students participate than expected. Trainers reserve the right to adjust the agenda if there are too few participants for particular sessions.
- While participants from the host campus or co-sponsoring campuses can be given preference, students from other campuses should be encouraged and welcomed to come to the GROW training (although cost should be as little a barrier as possible).
- It is the responsibility of the host campus to provide the USSA Foundation with a campus directory of the host campus and the names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of campus leaders, to aid in recruitment for the training.
- The payment schedule is set to ensure that the USSA Foundation can begin recruitment early on and to purchase plane tickets for trainers in advance. If a GROW is requested by the host campus with less than 21 days notice, the campus is responsible for paying the extra costs of transportation. In addition, payments must
be made on time or the difference in transportation costs will be paid by the campus host.

- The USSA Foundation Staff has the right to reschedule or cancel a GROW if the terms in this contract are not met. If the training is rescheduled/canceled due to unfulfilled contract specifications, the host campus/organization is responsible for the costs accrued.

The Host agrees to:

- Recruit a minimum of 40 people two weeks prior to the GROW training date.
- Arrange housing for participants traveling from other campuses.
- Provide facilities and materials for the training as listed in the packet.
- Pay the USSA Foundation $2500 member/$3250 non-member at least six weeks prior to the training date.
- Follow and complete the following **planning and recruitment timeline**:

**Six Weeks Out (Dates:_______)**

- Return signed contract with payment
- Finalize GROW site team (3-5 people)
- Finalize Recruitment Plan
- Reserve training room
- Meet with organization leaders and set up meetings to make a GROW presentation for their groups

**Five Weeks Out (Dates:______)**

- Finish design and printing of recruitment materials (posters, brochures, ads)
- Make presentations at organizational meetings and pass out applications
- Begin compiling a list of people interested in attending GROW (goal: 40 names)
- Mass marketing: newspaper ads, e-mails, posters on campus, class raps, tabling

**Four Weeks Out (Dates:______)**

- Continue organization presentations
- Continue mass marketing
- Continue building interested participant list (goal: 80 names)
- Finalize trainer accommodations

**Three Weeks Out (Dates:______)**

- Applications due!
- Review applications for diversity: where do you need to do more outreach?
- Follow up with interested people who did not turn in applications
- Call participants to let them know they have been accepted to participate in the GROW
Two Weeks Out (Dates:______)
- Send list of registered participants to the USSA office (goal: 40 committed participants)
- Have a check-in call with the GROW Coordinator and trainers
- Arrange travel for trainers from/to airport
- Order/compile on-site materials

Week of the Training!
- Make reminder calls and send e-mails to all participants
- Assemble folders with materials included in the GROW box

Day of Training!
- Pick up trainers from the airport
- Set up training room

___________________________________________________________
Organization/College/University Authorized Signer Date

___________________________________________________________
USSA Training Coordinator Date

*Please sign and fax this contract immediately back to 202.393.5886 and mail a hard copy along with a check for $2500 member/$3250 non-member campus fee, payable to:

**USSA Foundation**
1413 K Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Please call the USSA office at 202.347.USSA to confirm that the FAX and mailing were received.