Glossary of Terms

How to Use This Glossary

This glossary standardizes the key terms used throughout the curriculum. Facilitators should introduce terms in plain language, connect them to concrete examples, and invite participants to restate definitions in their own words. Definitions may be adapted for age and context without changing the core meaning. The glossary is a living document and may be expanded as young people identify additional language that matters to their work.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Accessibility	Designing spaces, information, activities, and technology so people with different disabilities, languages, learning styles, transportation needs, schedules, and resources can participate meaningfully.
Accountability	Taking responsibility for decisions, actions, impacts, and commitments; explaining what happened; repairing harm when needed; and following through on next steps.
Act	A bill that has passed the DC Council and completed the Council process but may still be waiting for mayoral action, congressional review, or other conditions before becoming law.
Action	A step people take to advance a goal. An action may be a meeting, testimony, outreach effort, public event, creative project, direct action, or another tactic.
Activism	Visible action that challenges injustice, raises awareness, or creates public pressure and urgency.
Adult Ally	An adult who listens to young people, shares information and power, provides resources, challenges adultism, and supports youth leadership without taking over.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Adultism	The belief or practice that adults are automatically more capable, knowledgeable, or deserving of power than young people because of age. Adultism can exclude youth from decisions that affect them.
Advocacy	Actions intended to influence a decision, policy, practice, budget, institution, or public understanding of an issue.
Advocacy Strategy	A plan for building influence, support, access, and pressure so decision-makers act on a clear goal or demand.
Ageism	Stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination based on age. It can affect people of any age; adultism is the specific form that targets young people.
Agency Practice	The everyday procedures, choices, and ways a government agency carries out laws, regulations, programs, and services.
AI Disclosure	A clear explanation of how artificial intelligence was used in creating a document, message, image, analysis, or other work product.
Algorithm	A set of instructions a digital platform or computer system uses to sort information, make recommendations, or decide what people see. Algorithms can reflect bias in their design or data.
Ally	A person or organization that supports a campaign or community and is willing to use its relationships, resources, voice, or access to help advance the work.
Archive	An organized collection of records, photos, videos, stories, documents, decisions, and other materials preserved for learning, accountability, memory, and future use.
Base	A group of people who are directly connected to an issue, share an interest in change, have ongoing relationships with one another, and can act together over time.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Base Building	The ongoing work of identifying, recruiting, developing, and retaining people who are directly affected by an issue or committed to the campaign, then moving them into deeper relationships, action, and leadership.
Bill	A proposed law introduced for consideration by a legislative body such as the DC Council or Congress.
Brave Space	A space where people can discuss difficult issues, ask questions, make mistakes, experience discomfort, and grow while being treated with care and dignity.
Budget	A plan for how a government, organization, or group expects to raise and spend money. Public budgets show what leaders choose to fund and prioritize.
Budget Decision	A choice about how much money will be collected, allocated, reduced, or spent on a program, agency, service, or community need.
Call to Action	A clear request telling an audience what specific step to take next, such as attend, testify, contact an official, share information, join a meeting, or volunteer.
Campaign	A coordinated and sustained effort that organizes people, resources, messages, and tactics to win a specific change from a target.
Campaign Goal	The specific change a campaign intends to achieve within a defined period.
Campaign Strategy	The overall plan for building enough power to move a target, overcome opposition, and achieve a campaign goal.
Care Plan	A plan for supporting people before, during, and after advocacy activities through consent, rest, food, transportation, safety, accessibility, debriefing, emotional support, and clear boundaries.
Civic Engagement	Participation in the decisions, institutions, relationships, and actions that shape public and community life.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Coalition	A group of organizations, leaders, or communities that coordinate around a shared goal while maintaining their separate identities.
Collective Action	People acting together in a coordinated way to address a shared concern or pursue a common goal.
Collective Care	Shared practices and responsibilities that protect the well-being, dignity, safety, access, and sustainability of a group; not leaving care only to individuals.
Collective Power	The influence and ability people build when they act together through relationships, organization, shared leadership, and coordinated action.
Community Agreements	Commitments created by a group to guide how people participate, communicate, disagree, share power, protect privacy, repair harm, and care for one another.
Community Media	Media created with and for communities especially people most affected by an issue to tell their own stories, challenge harmful narratives, build skills, and support organizing.
Consent	Freely given and informed permission. Consent should be specific, understandable, voluntary, and able to be withdrawn when possible.
Constituency	The people who share a concern, are affected by an issue, or have a direct stake in the outcome and should help shape the campaign.
Counternarrative	A story or frame that challenges a harmful, incomplete, or dominant narrative by adding missing context, centering affected people, and showing dignity, agency, and possibility.
Court Decision	A ruling by a court that interprets a law, resolves a dispute, or determines whether a government action is legal.
Credible Source	A source that is relevant, transparent about where its information comes from, supported by evidence, and appropriate for the question being asked.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Data	Information collected to answer questions, understand patterns, make decisions, or evaluate change. Data may include numbers, stories, observations, documents, images, or other evidence.
Data Minimization	Collecting only the information that is truly needed for a clear purpose and avoiding unnecessary personal or identifying details.
Demand	A clear statement of what a target or decision-maker should do to address the issue.
Digital Organizing	Using digital tools to build relationships, recruit people, share information, coordinate action, develop leaders, and move online participation into sustained collective power.
Digital Safety	Practices that protect people, accounts, devices, locations, personal information, and communities from harassment, surveillance, misuse, or unwanted exposure.
Direct Action	A public tactic that directly interrupts business as usual or creates pressure on a target, such as a sit-in, boycott, walkout, disruption, blockade, or other coordinated action.
Disinformation	False or misleading information created or shared deliberately to deceive people or cause harm.
Dominant Media	Large or influential media systems that shape widely accepted stories and public understanding. Dominant media may reproduce the interests and assumptions of powerful institutions.
Effect	A visible result or consequence of a problem, policy, system, or condition.
Equity	Fairness that recognizes people face different barriers and may need different resources, opportunities, or supports to participate and thrive.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Escalation	A planned increase in pressure, participation, visibility, or disruption when earlier tactics have not moved the target. Strategic escalation connects each step to the campaign goal, risk, capacity, and care.
Evaluation	A structured process for understanding what happened, what changed, who benefited, what did not work, what was learned, and what should happen next.
Evaluation Question	A focused question an evaluation is designed to answer.
Evidence	Information that supports, challenges, or helps answer a claim or question. Evidence can include data, testimony, records, observations, research, and lived experience.
Executive Action	A decision, directive, order, or administrative action taken by a mayor, president, governor, or another executive official within their legal authority.
Facilitation	Guiding a group process so people can participate, learn, make decisions, address conflict, and move toward a shared purpose.
Fact	A statement that can be checked and supported or disproved using reliable evidence.
Formal Authority	Official power to make or carry out a decision, such as voting on a law, approving a budget, issuing a regulation, deciding a court case, or managing a public program.
Frame	The way an issue is presented so people understand what is happening, why it matters, who is responsible, what values are at stake, and what should change.
Goal	A specific result a group intends to achieve.
Grassroots Organizing	Organizing led by people directly affected by an issue and rooted in local relationships, leadership development, and collective action.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Grievance	A harm, unfair condition, or unmet need experienced by a constituency.
Home Rule	DC's limited local self-government created by federal law. Home Rule allows elected local government while Congress retains constitutional authority over the District.
Impact	A broader or longer-term change in conditions, systems, power, or people's lives.
Implementation	The process of putting a law, policy, budget, program, or decision into practice.
Indicator	A sign or measure used to understand whether progress or change is happening.
Influence	The ability to affect what a person or institution thinks, decides, or does, even without formal authority.
Informational Interview	A conversation with someone about their career, role, field, organization, or experience for learning and relationship-building—not a job interview.
Inside Advocacy	Working through formal decision-making channels and relationships, such as meetings with officials, hearings, advisory bodies, public comments, negotiations, or agency processes.
Issue	An actionable way of addressing a broader problem. An organizing issue includes a constituency with a grievance, a clear demand, and a target with authority.
Issue Identification	The process through which a group examines needs and experiences, researches conditions, and chooses a specific issue around which to organize.
Issue Tree	A visual tool that places the core problem in the trunk, visible effects in the branches, and deeper systems, conditions, and root causes in the roots.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Lateral Reading	Checking a claim by leaving the original page or post to investigate the source, compare other credible sources, and locate original evidence.
Law	A rule adopted through an authorized legislative process and legally enforceable by government.
Leader	A person who helps others understand an issue, build confidence, take responsibility, act together, and develop their own leadership.
Liberated Space	A space people co-create where everyone's humanity, culture, joy, healing, dignity, and power are valued and the group practices the values it is fighting for.
Lived Experience	Knowledge developed through directly experiencing a condition, system, identity, place, or issue. Lived experience is a form of expertise but should never be demanded or extracted.
Media Literacy	The ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and respond to media while considering source, evidence, purpose, audience, ownership, representation, and power.
Mentor	A person who offers guidance, feedback, encouragement, knowledge, and support for someone's growth.
Message	A clear statement that communicates what is happening, why it matters, what should change, and what the audience should do.
Milestone Win	A meaningful achievement that moves a campaign closer to its long-term goal and shows that the balance of power or policy is shifting.
Misinformation	False or misleading information shared without necessarily intending to deceive.
Mixed Methods	Using more than one kind of evidence often both quantitative and qualitative to understand a question more fully.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Movement	A broad and sustained effort involving many people, organizations, campaigns, ideas, and actions working toward social, political, cultural, or economic change.
Narrative	A connected story or set of ideas that shapes how people understand an issue, a group, responsibility, and what change seems possible.
Narrative Power	The ability to shape the stories, values, assumptions, and public understanding that influence culture, policy, and action.
Objective	A specific result or step that contributes to a broader goal.
Opposition	People, organizations, institutions, or interests that may resist a campaign's demand or lose power, resources, or control if the campaign succeeds.
Organizing	Building relationships, leadership, structure, and collective power so people can act together over time to improve lives and transform institutions or systems.
Outcome	A change in knowledge, behavior, relationships, decisions, policies, conditions, or power that happens because of an activity or effort.
Output	An immediate product, service, event, or reach created by an activity, such as the number of meetings held, people trained, testimonies delivered, or materials produced.
Outside Advocacy	Building a base, public participation, narrative change, visibility, and pressure outside formal decision-making spaces.
Participatory Action Research (PAR)	Research conducted with community members as co-researchers to understand a problem, take action, reflect, and improve future action.
Participatory Evaluation	Evaluation in which people affected by the program or campaign help define success, choose questions, gather and interpret evidence, and decide how findings will be used.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Policy	A law, regulation, budget decision, executive action, court decision, procedure, rule, or official practice that shapes what happens.
Policy Goal	The specific law, budget, regulation, practice, or institutional decision a campaign wants to create, change, fund, implement, or stop.
Policy Implementation	The staffing, funding, rules, procedures, communication, services, and accountability needed to carry out a policy.
Political Education	Collective learning that helps people understand history, systems, power, current conditions, and possible strategies for change.
POP	A planning framework that identifies Purpose (why the activity matters), Outcomes (what should result), and Process (how the group will get there).
Portfolio	A collection of work samples, reflections, skills, accomplishments, and learning products that shows what a person can do.
Power	The ability to influence decisions, control resources, shape ideas, create conditions, or determine what happens.
Power Mapping	A tool for identifying a decision-maker, the people and institutions that influence them, allies, opposition, relationships, and pathways for moving power.
Power Over	Power used to control people, choices, information, rules, or resources.
Power To	The ability to act, create, decide, solve problems, or make something happen.
Power With	Collective strength created through relationships, solidarity, shared leadership, and coordinated action.
Power Within	Confidence, dignity, identity, awareness, and belief in one's own ability and worth.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Power-Building Goal	A specific change in relationships, leadership, participation, organization, skills, public support, or leverage that increases a group's ability to win now and in the future.
Praxis	The cycle of reflection and action: learning from experience, applying ideas in practice, reflecting on results, and acting again.
Primary Source	Original information created by someone directly involved in an event, decision, study, or experience, such as a law, interview, dataset, testimony, government record, or firsthand account.
Primary Target	The person or institution with the formal authority to meet the campaign's demand.
Privacy	A person's ability to control access to their personal information, identity, images, location, experiences, and communications.
Problem	A broad social condition, system, or pattern that harms a community.
Professional Biography	A short written description of a person's role, experience, strengths, interests, and accomplishments for a specific audience or opportunity.
Public Comment	Written or spoken input submitted to a government body or agency during an official decision-making process.
Public Policy	Decisions and actions taken by government or public institutions to address issues, distribute resources, regulate behavior, or provide services.
Public Testimony	A spoken or written statement submitted to a government body or decision-maker during a hearing or other public process.
Qualitative Change	Change understood through experiences, meaning, relationships, behavior, stories, or descriptions rather than numbers alone.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Qualitative Data	Non-numerical information such as interviews, stories, observations, open-ended responses, photographs, or documents.
Quantitative Change	Change measured using numbers, counts, rates, percentages, or other numerical indicators.
Quantitative Data	Numerical information that can be counted, measured, compared, or analyzed.
Regulation	A detailed rule created by a government agency under authority granted by law.
Relational Organizing	Building power through intentional one-to-one relationships that connect people's values and experiences to shared action and leadership.
Research Question	A focused, answerable question that guides what information should be collected and why.
Resilience	The ability of people or communities to adapt, recover, learn, and continue through difficulty. Resilience should not be used to excuse harmful systems or deny people needed support.
Root Cause	A deeper system, policy, institution, belief, or condition that helps create or maintain a problem.
Root Cause Analysis	A process for looking beneath visible effects to identify the systems, policies, institutions, and conditions that create or maintain a problem.
Safe Space	A space where people are welcomed, respected, and protected from personal attacks, ridicule, and denial of their humanity.
Secondary Source	Information that analyzes, explains, summarizes, or interprets primary information, such as a report, article, textbook, or documentary.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Secondary Target	A person or institution that cannot directly meet the demand but can influence or pressure the primary target.
Self-Care	Actions a person takes to support their own physical, emotional, mental, cultural, or spiritual well-being.
Self-Determination	The right and ability of people and communities to understand their values, make meaningful choices, shape their own lives, and determine their future.
SMARTIE Goal	A goal that is Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
Social Movement	A sustained effort by many people and organizations working together to change systems, institutions, culture, policy, or public life.
Sponsor	A person with influence who actively opens doors, recommends someone for opportunities, and uses their credibility to support that person's advancement.
Stepping-Stone Win	A smaller achievement that builds information, access, skills, relationships, confidence, participation, or momentum toward a larger goal.
Story Ownership	The principle that people should have meaningful control over whether, how, where, and for how long their experiences, words, images, or identities are shared.
Strategy	The overall theory and pathway for building enough power to achieve a goal and improve the lives of people affected by the issue.
Supporter	A person who agrees with a cause or campaign and may take occasional action but is not yet in an ongoing leadership or membership role.
System	A connected set of institutions, rules, relationships, resources, beliefs, and practices that produce patterns or outcomes over time.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Tactic	A specific action used as part of a strategy to build power, influence a target, recruit people, shift a narrative, or advance a demand.
Target	The person or institution a campaign seeks to influence because they have authority or strong influence over the decision.
Tokenism	Including young people or another group mainly for appearance, representation, or approval without giving them meaningful preparation, influence, resources, or decision-making power.
Transferable Skills	Skills developed in one setting that can be applied in another, such as facilitation, research, public speaking, project management, outreach, writing, teamwork, and problem-solving.
Truth-Telling	Naming experiences, evidence, history, harm, responsibility, and possibility honestly, while respecting consent and avoiding unnecessary exposure.
Vision	A description of the future a group wants to create.
Youth Voice	Young people expressing their ideas, experiences, analysis, creativity, and recommendations about issues that affect them. Meaningful youth voice includes real opportunities to influence decisions.
Youth-Centered	An approach in which young people's needs, dignity, safety, development, culture, and well-being guide the design and delivery of work.
Youth-Informed	An approach in which adults seek and use youth feedback to shape a program, decision, policy, or evaluation and report back on how the input was used.
Youth-Led	An approach in which young people hold primary leadership and decision-making roles while adults provide support, resources, access, and accountability without taking over.

Term	Youth-Friendly Definition
Youth–Adult Partnership	A relationship in which young people and adults share information, responsibility, resources, and clearly defined decisions while recognizing adults’ greater institutional responsibility.