

# 13. PETITIONS

## MOBILISE

### IN A NUTSHELL

A petition is a collection of signatures from people supporting your cause. That petition is then presented to decision makers – like government or education officials – that have the power to create the change you want.

### REMEMBER

Before getting started on planning, it's important to verify that this activity is in line with your national and local laws and to check what legal permits, if any, are required. You should also let your parents know what you have planned. If you're not permitted to carry out this task, please refer to our other youth activities.

### HOW DO YOU SET IT UP?

- 1. Decide on your objective:** What are you trying to accomplish? Who is the petition aimed at and what are you asking for? Be clear about what it is you want done and who needs to do it. Ensure that there is significant support for your cause in the community.
- 2. Decide whether it will be offline, online, or both:** The exact regulations for legitimate petitions vary from authority to state to country. Be sure to know yours!
- 3. Identify your target:** Decide if it's the government, a university, a corporation, a political party, an NGO and so on.
- 4. Research:** Obtain the relevant facts before you start. Be knowledgeable and clear about the topic you are petitioning about and key arguments from all sides.
- 5. Wording:** The wording should be clear and concise. It should describe the relevant issue – like what's wrong with it – and suggest what's needed.
- 6. Gathering signatures:** Every signature matters. Recruit people to take your petition to their friends, family and communities.
- 7. Deliver your petition:** Organise your delivery strategy before collecting signatures on your petitions. You could e-mail the recipient of your petition, but consider taking the petition offline for an in-person delivery.
- 8. Promote your petition and follow up:** Be sure to thank signatories.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

#### Designing and promoting petitions

**Offline/paper petitions:** Have more pages photocopied than you think you will need. Your signature page should have some columns that will probably include things like the name, address, phone number and, of course, the signature.

**Online petitions:** You need to publicise your petitions. Link your petition URL to as many websites and forums as possible for maximum exposure.

#### Get your bearings: Petitions aimed at the government

Governmental petitions have their own rules and procedures – so follow the rules set out by your governmental authority. Find out, for example:

- How many signatures will you need?
- Must all signatures be on certified/official petition sheets?
- How should people's names be signed (printed, by signature, or both)?
- Do signatories have to be over 18 (for example), or on the electoral roll?
- What information must be included by the signatory, or by the submitter?
- When must the petitions be returned, and to whom?
- Do the jurisdictions you are targeting permit/recognise internet petitions?

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#### WHY DO IT?

- Petition writing isn't especially time-consuming or demanding. It's also cost-effective.
- Petitions can heighten community awareness about your issue and help bring about the positive changes you want.

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#### YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Make sure there is strong or significant public support for your issue before starting.
- A good petition is logical, compelling, and backed up with good research and facts.
- Petitioning can be an overused tactic. Consider partnering with an organisation to give yours more credibility and weight.
- Online petitions, whilst easy to get going, are competing with hundreds of other online petitions. Consider keeping the petition tailored to your community to stand out from the noise.

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### IDEA IN ACTION

#### Vanuatu: Youth Petition

In 2011, Youth against Corruption Vanuatu organised an event under the theme "Unite and Fight against Corruption". Organisers asked participants to sign a petition calling on the government to end all corrupt practices. All signatures were quickly collected and a final petition was presented to Vanuatu's minister of justice and social welfare two days after the event closed.

Find out more: [www.yacv.org/yacv/archives/minister-of-justice-social-welfare-receives-a-petition-from-yac](http://www.yacv.org/yacv/archives/minister-of-justice-social-welfare-receives-a-petition-from-yac)

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### RESOURCE

#### Change.org

Change.org is the world's largest petition platform. There are more than 40 million change.org users in 196 countries and the site has been translated into 11 languages. Every day, people use the platform to transform their communities – locally, nationally and globally.

Find out more: [www.change.org](http://www.change.org)