



## Ready to Vote! Vote at 16

**Purpose**

- To build awareness and political understanding of the movement to expand youth voting rights
- Center and prepare young people to lead on this issue in their community.

**Outcomes**

1. Participants understand how vote at 16 efforts contributes to large youth power building movements
2. Participants identify campaign strategies and tactics for local V16 movements
3. Participants practice connecting their story and V16 messaging

**Process**

- Group dialogue
- Triads and dyads

Agenda - total 2 hours		
<b>Welcome and Energizer</b>	5 min	
<b>Our Vote, Our Future</b> <i>Why Vote at 16</i>	30 min	Definition Game Sheet
<b>All We Do is Win</b> <i>strategies for winning vote at 16 in your community</i>	50 min	Scenario planning
<b>Your Truth Your Power</b> <i>Telling your story and Practicing talking points</i>	30 min	Madlib Sheet Talking points
<b>Call to Action</b>	5 min.	

**Handouts:**

- Definitions Game sheet
- Scenario sheets
- Madlib
- Talking Points

## I. Welcome and Energizer

Welcome everyone. Review Meeting Purpose and Goals. NOTE: Be sure to review any community agreements/guidelines you have with the group before you get started.

ENERGIZER: I love my people who... (5 min)

Instructions: Have participants get in a circle. One person should be in the middle to start off the game. The goal is for the person in the middle to make a statement that applies to them and others in the circle get folks to switch spots. You can only take the a spot where someone previous stood. There should always be only one person in the middle to continue the game.

Examples: I love my people who...

like horror movies.

- listen to Cardi B.

## II. Our Vote, Our Future

### THE CASE FOR VOTE AT 16 [30 MIN]

Does anyone know why the current voting age is 18?

- Part of a larger movement in the 70's during the Vietnam War where many young people asked "why are we old enough to fight but not old enough to vote?" In response, there was a series of court battles - where young people ultimately won lowering the voting age to 21 to 18. This was part of larger student movement efforts to secure Civil Rights, expose racism and sexism, and end war across the country - highlighting the importance that young people play in ensuring that our society is just and thriving.



Why lower the voting age to 16?

- Agreement spectrum: Introduce the activity and that you will read three statements - and for each statement line up from one end of the room with one side being strongly disagree and the other side being strongly agree. Once folks place themselves on the agreement spectrum. Have folks pair share for 2 minutes with a person next to them to



share how they feel about the issue. Bring the group back after each statement and ask the first person on the disagree section to share some of their views for each statement

- First statement: Voting doesn't matter
  - Sample responses:
    - Voting is one way to build power but is not the end all be all.
    - Voting and elections can change the conditions in which we organize
    - We need to pair it with organizing strategies to really win on the issues we care about long-term.
- Second statement: Young people don't care
  - Sample responses. I know young people care because you're in this room right now. You could be doing a million other things but you're here because you care about your community. Young people came out to polls last election and the volunteer, organize and lead every day.
- Third statement: Young people are not ready and are not informed on the issues.
  - Sample responses
    - How much of it is that young people don't care vs. the systems are not set up to teach us the real issues and prepare us to vote
    - We actually are the experts on the issues - immigration, healthcare, education - you and your family deal with that everyday.
    - We know our civic and government classes are not enough and not connected to real world issues
- Close out: This is what adults have been saying about young people for decades. We know it's not true. We know that young people have the energy, the foresight, and the real world experience to lead us into a better future. This is why we're here today and show up to organize and mobilize.

**III. All we do is win. Strategies to win vote at 16 locally**

**DEFINITIONS GAME [10 min]**

Next let's do a quick game to familiarize ourselves with key words. You'll have 5 minutes to pair the correct term with the definition.

**Key**

Term	Definition
Charter City	This is a community in which the governing

	system is defined by a document rather than by general law. In California there are over 100 of these. Vote at 16 can only be passed locally in cities ruled by this document and not in general law cities.
School Board	a local board or authority responsible for where students learn. For vote at 16 this body can only pass resolutions to ask the city council to support Vote at 16.
City Council	This legislative body governs a city and authority to pass ordinances and appropriate funds. For vote at 16 this body is the only one that can put the vote at 16 measure on the ballot.
County Board of Supervisors	A governing body that oversees the operation of <b>county</b> level services. This body can only pass resolutions asking the city council to support vote at 16.
Ballot measure	a piece of proposed legislation to be approved or rejected by voters. We get this legislation by collecting signatures or by getting the city council measure to approve to put it on the ballot.
Canvassing	A coordinated plan to go door to door to talk to registered voters about a given issue and convince to vote a certain way on a policy or issue.
Resolution	A type of policy passed in cities, counties, or school boards to support a policy. Often times is more of a way to show support for something but not change systems directly.
Op-ed (Opinion Editorial)	A letter to the editor of a newspaper to express an opinion on an issue. Can be written by anyone in the community and even co-authored. Often times it around 750 words.
Campaign	A coordinated set of activities and strategies to



	activities to win a short-term goal, which can be a policy or action that improves schools, communities or systems.
Public Opinion Poll	A poll is a survey of community members usually by phone to determine how they feel about an issue. This is then used to figure out who supports the work and how to structure campaign.

After 5 minutes ask 1 group to share what it is. Reveal the key. Make a few points

- We can only pass vote at 16 in charter cities
- Only the city council has authority to add vote at 16 to a ballot
- Passing resolutions within school boards and county supervisors are tactics to put pressure on the city council
- The ultimate goal is to get 50% of the voters to approve the ballot measure
- Winning all of this will require us to develop a campaign plan that thinks about canvassing, op-eds and using polls to change the public's mind.

**SCENARIO Huerta Heights [40 min]**

Now that we've familiarized ourselves with the definition. Let's actually look at example and strategy for winning this policy. Have folks break off into small groups and read the scenario. Take 30 minutes to discuss and respond to the questions.

Large group discussion: bring folks back together and share out. [Recommendation to facilitator: have a follow up session specific to campaign planning - curriculum coming soon]

**IV. Your Truth, Your Power - 30 min**

Hand out the talking points  
Madlib sheet

Mock City council meeting: Have folks break off into pairs and choose one to two talk points. Using the madlib sheet give folks 10 minutes to complete it and practice with their partner. Taking turns to say it out loud and have their partner give feedback. Bring the group together and ask for volunteers to share it with the group. After 2-3 folks have volunteered. Have the remainder be city council officials and the mayor who will listen and provide feedback after each volunteer.



**V. Call to Action - Collective Poem - 5 min.**

Thank folks for being here today and sharing their wisdom. Schedule follow up campaign strategy session if needed. Have folks take 1 minute to write one sentence on why they want to be a part of expanding voting rights. Then have each person read their sentence to make a collective poem with each person getting louder and louder to create a collective poem.

**Handout A: Definitions game**

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## Handout B: Huerta Heights Vote at 16

*Determine if your group wants to read silently or read aloud together. There are discussion points to help guide the discussion at the bottom. Finally, develop a short skit with your group that is no more than 2 minutes to share out what you would do differently.*

In 2014, Huerta Heights (HH) youth commission decided to run a campaign to win vote at 16 in their city to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote. The first goal was to get a majority of the City Council elected officials to agree to put the policy on ballot so that all of the voters in HH could decide whether or not they approved. They started by meeting with their local elected officials. First they set up meetings with their school board officials to make the case for vote at 16. The goal was to get the school board to pass a resolution to ask the City Council to support it. They did the same with County Board of Education. They even met with the Mayor to ask him to put pressure on the city council. In 2015 all eyes were on the City Council now with so much support and pressure from other elected officials across the city and county - they caved and introduced the resolution. On the evening the measure was to be discussed - dozens of young people and adult ally community groups showed up to support. Young people shared their personal stories, used data, and strong arguments to convince the council. The resolution passed! This meant that it would be put on the 2016 ballot for voters to decide on the policy. This was their next battle - to changes the hearts and minds of voters in HH.

At first they were discouraged - after conducting a poll the numbers showed that only X people supported it. But they got together and made a campaign plan to win. They went to many public meetings to make the case. They shared their stories and had sharp responses to every argument people made. They canvassed and walked door to door to voters in a few neighborhoods on the weekends to talk to voters directly. And wrote op-eds in the Huerta Heights Times. They also grew their team by having weekend trainings to bring on more volunteers and youth to lead on the issue. Finally, the big day came on November 7th - Election day! They gathered together as the results came in - each hour the numbers kept rising and rising - it looked like they were going to get the 50% of votes needed to win! At the end of the night they were at 45% but more votes still needed to be counted. Finally, the election results came in and the final result was 48% just 2% shy of what they needed. The leaders were determined to not give up and plan to run it again in 2020 - what should they do differently?

### *Discussion Questions*

- 1) What were the key strategies they used during the campaign?
- 2) What could have been strengthened?
- 3) What do you think might be different or the same in your community?

### *Skit Directions*

Following your discussion take 10 minutes to develop a 2 minute skit on what you would do diff.



## Handout D: Talking Points

### KEY FRAMING

- Young people of color are already leaders in their families and communities..
- Young people are ready to vote and politically engaged -- our voting systems and civics education need to be more accessible and relevant
- A 16 year old in 2019 possess wisdom and maturity that comes from 2019 hardships, challenges and threats.
- It's critical to our democracy that young people make voting a habit earlier and often.

### NOTES

- Key is to talking about “expanding voting rights” not “lowering the voting age”
- Using key larger campaign framing of “Ready to Vote”
- Never want to reinforce negative messages around young people not voting and not caring about civic engagement

### HASHTAGS

- #readytovote
- #16tovote

### TALKING POINTS

- I am a part of a national movement to expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds that is supported by many elected officials including governors, congressional leaders, and presidential candidates.
- Evidence shows that at 16 and 17 we have the same civic knowledge as 21 year olds when it comes to voting. In many other countries and in several U.S. localities young people already vote at 16 and demonstrate that we're ready to vote.
- At 16, we can drive, pay taxes, and work without major restrictions for the first time. Even before 18 we can join the military and obtain federal loans. We have a stake in the game and should be able to vote.
- In the last 2 years 200,000 16 and 17 year old Californians pre-registered to vote. In 2018 we saw a 329% increase from 2014 turnout in young people 18-24 -- this demonstrates that we're ready to engage in our democracy right now!
- We're already leaders in our families and communities - we play critical roles like translating for parents, contributing financially, taking care of siblings, and even serving



on community boards and commissions - it's clear we are and should be trusted with major responsibilities.

- 16 is a more common sense age to vote than 18. At 16 and 17 we're learning about civics and government in class, which makes it a better time to learn about voting for the first time.
- Data from other elections show that when 16 and 17 year olds vote, we vote at higher rates than 18-21 year olds. If we vote in our first few consecutive elections we can become lifetime voters. Allowing us to vote earlier and often will have dramatic long-term benefits for our democracy.
- California is home to more than 2 million undocumented individuals. If our families are made up of parents that are undocumented or non-citizen residents - entire families may lack elected representation in schools and communities. Allowing those of us that come from mixed-status families to vote is critical to ensuring representation.
- There will be initial increase in costs for ballot production but we do special elections all the time and incur similar costs. It's hard to weigh these costs against the potential to dramatically strengthen our democracy for generations to come.
- We are independent and form our own opinions shaped by our own experiences that in many cases are very different from our parents and other adults. Concerns around adult influence over our votes are overstated. For example, in the Scottish elections 60% of 16 and 17 year olds voted different than their parents.



**Handout E: Madlib Worksheet**

**Vote at 16 Story Worksheet**

**Identify your target audience:**

**Select a top frame you think will be most effective with your audience**

Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_. And I am a (insert 1-2 sentences that describes yourself and that connects with your audience) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

As a \_\_\_\_\_, I am concerned about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I am supporting Vote at 16 because (insert message from one top three frames or supplemental talking points) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Vote at 16 will allow 16 and 17 year olds to exercise their voice on issues that impact their future and (insert additional talking point relevant to your audience) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*Example: Audience: School board members, Top Frame: I'm already a leader in my community*  
Hi my name is Maria I'm 16 and I am a student at Mendez high school. I work a part-time job at the library, pay taxes, and am active in our local city youth commision. I am worried about the future of our state - most especially housing, unjust immigration policies, and the environment. Many adults and electeds are making decisions now that will affect my future and generations to come. I am supporting Vote at 16 because I'm already pre-registered, understand the issues affecting me and my community and am ready to vote. Me and many other young people I know are already leaders and this would be the next step in ensuring we can become civic leaders and healthily engage in our communities and larger democracy.