

Community Power

Definition

Strengthening the ability of residents, especially those most impacted, to influence decisions, shape narratives, and secure resources that affect their lives.

What This Means

Community Power Building helps local people have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their lives. It focuses on leadership, partnership, and shared control over change.

Key Steps

- Build relationships by bringing neighbors together around shared goals and values.
- Develop leaders by training residents to speak up and take action.
- Form partnerships among community groups, organizations, and policymakers.
- Change the story by lifting up real community experiences.
- Plan for the future with funding and structures that keep the work going.

How Do We Achieve This

- **Leadership Development** - Building skills and confidence so community members can lead meetings, analyze data, testify, and negotiate.
- **Partnerships and Alliances** - Purposeful relationships between grassroots groups, service providers, schools, faith communities, and agencies.
- **Narrative Change** - Centering lived experience to reshape public understanding and policy frames.
- **Sustainability** - Maintaining people power and infrastructure over time with diversified funding and leadership pipelines.

Examples

- In Newark, NJ, local residents, many with lived experience, were trained as outreach workers and “violence interrupters.” They mediate conflicts, support trauma recovery, and strengthen police-community trust.
- In Camden, NJ, parents organized to have a voice in school decisions, joining boards and forming parent councils to improve learning conditions and resource access.
- In Bronx, NY, community members, youth groups, and city agencies partnered to clean and restore the Bronx River, turning a polluted area into a public green space.
- In Detroit, MI, residents organized to ensure new city developments included affordable housing, local hiring, and fair wages.
- Faith in Action National Network trained clergy and community leaders to advocate for justice in housing, policing, and healthcare.

In Short

Community Power = Voice + Action + Ownership

It's when communities move from “we've been left out” to “we're leading the way.”

“Nothing about us without us!”