

# A How-To Guide for Conducting Opposition Research on Health Care Profiteers

This packet is intended to help organizers and advocates for universal, publicly financed, single-payer health care make use of opposition research—especially research on the insurance, hospital, and drug industries—in their campaigns. There are three sections:

- I. Campaign Strategy: Identify how opposition research can serve your larger strategies and goals.
- II. Research Plan: Determine your research questions and research process.
- III. Communications Plan: Decide how to communicate your findings for maximum effect.

The three sections are designed to be completed in sequence. It is important to first clarify the larger goals and strategies of work, then determine how research can serve those goals, and then go about communicating our research findings. But of course if your organization has already defined some of what's covered here, feel free to skip ahead.

If you have questions about anything in here, please email Ben at [ben@nesri.org](mailto:ben@nesri.org).

# I. Campaign Strategy

## Problem Statement

*Why don't we have universal, publicly financed, single-payer health care already?  
Name the obstacle(s) that your particular work is designed to remove.*

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## Strategies for Change

*Which of the following strategies best describes your organization's role in the movement for universal health care? Check all that apply.*

<b>A. Building People Power</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>1. Base Building:</b> Finding, activating, aligning, training, and mobilizing people directly affected by the health care crisis.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2. Leadership Development:</b> Supporting members in developing individual and collective leadership (clarity, competence, commitment, and mutual connection to one another).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3. Coalition Building:</b> Finding institutional allies and building broadly inclusive and/or deeply committed partnership.

<b>B. Pressuring Decision-Makers through Insider Influence</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>1. Professional Advocacy:</b> Pressuring legislative decision-makers through lobbying, publications, press engagement, voter engagement, and other institutional channels.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2. Rational Persuasion:</b> Developing evidence-based arguments, frameworks, and policy solutions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3. Personal and Institutional Pressure:</b> Targeting individuals and institutions who have influence over legislative decision-makers.

<b>C. Defanging and Demobilizing Opponents</b>	
	<b>1. Revealing and shaming hardcore opponents:</b> Digging up dirt on health care profiteer, Fox News, and other die-hard opponents and making visible how they hurt patients, communities, health care workers, employers, and American democracy.
	<b>2. Quieting soft opponents:</b> Quelling opposition from neoliberal media, think tanks, and other “nonpartisan” policy influencers by revealing and poking holes in their assumptions, revealing their financial interests, reframing conversations, etc.

<b>D. Building Narrative Power</b>	
	<b>1. Telling Personal Stories:</b> Humanizing health care debates by telling our personal health care stories.
	<b>2. Changing the Terms of the Debate:</b> Move the public discourse away from the neoliberal story focusing on cost savings and narrowly defined economic rationality to a new story that speaks to shared values, evokes emotions, makes the invisible visible, and positions everyday people as heroes standing up to health care profiteers.

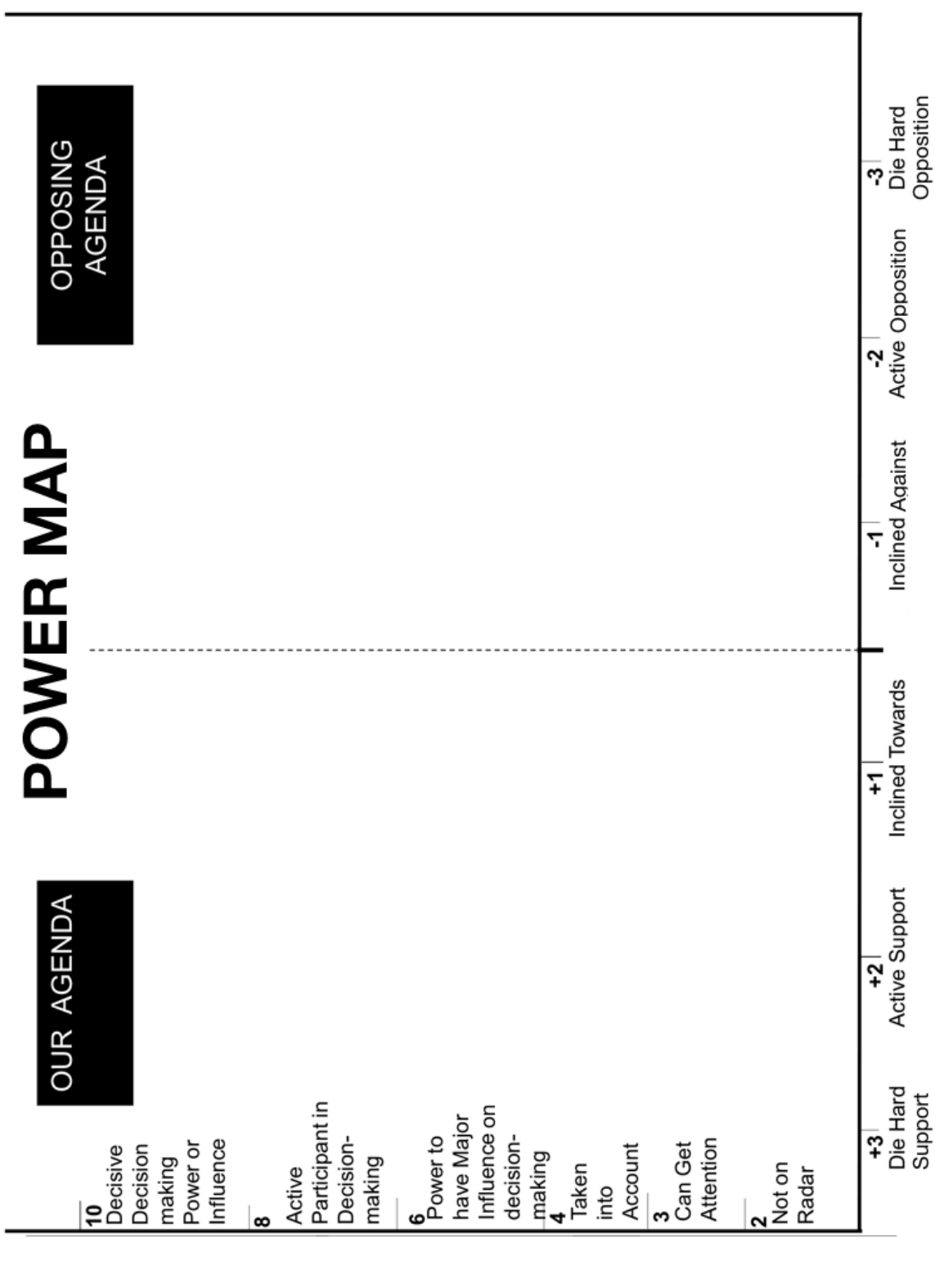
## **One-Year Campaign Goals**

*These are the overarching goal(s) guiding all of your work over the next 12 months or so. These goals should measurably advance the strategies you checked off above. They will determine why you’re doing research, what you research, and how.*

*Be as specific as possible. “Winning Medicare for All” and targeting “Congress” or “the public” are too broad. A target is always a person; it is never an institution. Name the individual decision-makers you are targeting and what action(s) you want them to take. If you do not hold sufficient power over your primary target, you should name a secondary target as well.*

To help articulate your one-year goals, fill out the following table. The Power Map on the following may also be a helpful tool for refining your goals.

	<b>Primary Target(s)</b> <i>(individual decision-makers who hold the power to give you what you want)</i>	<b>Secondary Target(s)</b> <i>(individuals who hold influence over your primary target)</i>
Who are your targets?		
What action do you want them to take?		
What do they care about that would move them to take that action?		
What power do you have over them?		



Source: SCOPE (Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education). For instructions, see <https://trainings.350.org/?resource=power-mapping-activity> and <https://network.progressivetechnology.org/system/files/SCOPEpresentationonPA.pdf>.

*In one sentence, sum up your one-year campaign goals. Your goals should name your target and the action you want them to take.*

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## **Sharpening Campaign Strategy**

**Honing Targets and Tactics:** *How can you use your research findings to further hone who you are targeting and what tactics you employ to move them?*

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**Organizing Members and Allies:** *How can you use your research process and research findings help build commitment, alignment, and energy among your members and/or coalition partners?*

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**Neutralizing Opposition:** *How might you be able to limit the influence of health care profiteers, right-wing media, and other hard core opponents and demobilize or discredit opposition from centrist Democrats, think tanks, media, etc.?*

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## II. Research Plan

*In one sentence, sum up how you intend to use opposition research to meet your one-year campaign goals.*

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*Now elaborate on that. Your answers below may change as you learn more, but it's a good idea to begin with set of intentions before starting the research process.*

**Research Questions:** *Name the questions you want to answer through your research. Your research questions could be about facts (how much was Aetna's CEO paid last year?), processes (how are insurance-rate hikes determined in my state?), or people and relationships (what is my legislator passionate about? who do they listen to?).*

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**Information Sources:** *List information sources where you can look for answers to your research questions. Possible information sources included news articles, press releases, websites, policy reports, industry publications, industry earnings reports, databases, legislation, court cases, business licenses, social media, asking people questions, personal experience, etc. Universities and public libraries sometimes have good lists of resources. The UCLA Library's Sectoral Analysis guide (<https://guides.library.ucla.edu/sectoranalysis>) is one good list. Not all of the databases it links to are open source, but you may be able to get access your public library, a local university, or a member or ally who is affiliated with a university.*

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**Timeline:** *Key dates by which you need to produce your research.*

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**Participants:** *Who should be involved in designing your research process, conducting the research, and assessing your findings?*

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### III. Communications Plan

*It's a good idea to develop a sense of how you want to utilize your research before you begin conducting it. In one sentence, sum up how you intend to communicate your research publicly in order to meet your one-year campaign goals.*

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*Your answers below may change over time as you learn more, but thinking through your communications plan up front will help make sure you're starting out on the right track.*

<p><b>Primary Audience</b> <i>Who's the main audience for your research findings?</i></p>	<p><b>Secondary Audiences</b></p>
<p><b>Action You Want Your Audiences to Take</b></p>	
<p><b>Emotional Response You Want to Evoke in Your Audiences</b> <i>What emotions will move people to take action (hope, anger, etc.)?</i></p>	<p><b>Emotional Response You Want to Avoid</b> <i>What emotions will demobilize people (hopeless, confusion, etc.)?</i></p>
<p><b>Your Values</b> <i>Core values you want to appeal to (caring, social solidarity, public health, community, etc.)</i></p>	<p><b>Opposition Values and Assumptions</b></p>

<p><b>Master Narrative</b></p> <p><i>The larger story you're telling about the world that explains problems, your vision, and solutions.</i></p>	<p><b>Opposition Narrative</b></p>
<p><b>Your Messages</b></p>	<p><b>Opposition Messages</b></p>
<p><b>Messengers</b></p> <p><i>Who is an effective messenger to tell your narrative and messages?</i></p>	
<p><b>Formats</b></p> <p><i>What formats will reach and help move your audiences?</i></p>	

*The following organizations all provide tools for developing values-based and story-based strategic communications: the Center for Story Based Strategy: <https://www.storybasedstrategy.org>; Frameworks Institute: <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>; Marshall Ganz: <https://marshallganz.com>; Opportunity Agenda: <https://www.opportunityagenda.org> ; Our Story Hub: <http://ourstoryhub.org>; and Topos Partnership: <https://www.topospartnership.com>*