

Campaign Skills Handbook

Module 11 Getting on a List *Setting Personal Political Goals*



Introduction

The quality of any democratic system of government is directly tied to the abilities and commitment of those elected to public office. Because societies, economies and demographics are always shifting, representative forms of government constantly require innovative ideas, different perspectives and renewed energies. These come from bringing in new people to participate in elections and governance as candidates and elected officials.

Sometimes, the political climate calls for renewal, change, or a fresh start, often personified by new individuals moving into political leadership. In these situations, political parties revive their legitimacy by putting forward candidates and leaders who are perceived as offering a new beginning, or who simply don't carry the burden and responsibility of past decisions which may have failed.

But getting onto a political party's candidate list, or officially being selected as a candidate in a winnable position, is easier said than done. There are only so many viable seats in every country and there can be a lot of competition for them, and those currently holding the seats aren't usually keen to leave them.

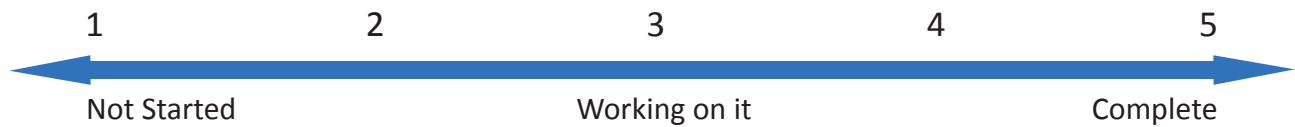
Additionally, those who have the power and authority to decide who gets to be a candidate on behalf of a political party may be more inclined to make selections based on loyalty rather than ability. And, for many parties, the selection process for candidates is far from transparent, making it especially difficult for a new candidate to strategize and campaign for support.

It is important, therefore, that any potential candidate prepare herself or himself strategically, both for the experience and process of being a candidate, and for the challenge of marshaling enough support to be selected by the party in a winnable position (e.g., high enough on the list in a proportional representation system, or in a district where the party can win in a constituency-based system).

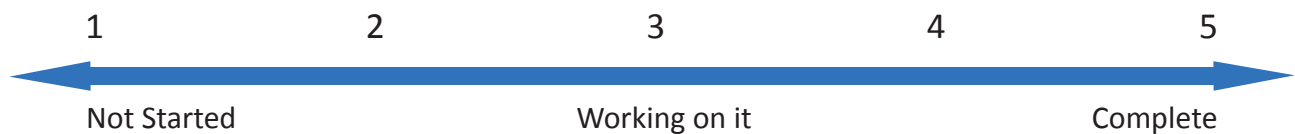
This module will walk you through these preparation steps. Topics include:

1. [Self-Assessment – Are You Ready to Run?](#)
2. [Situational Analysis – What Challenges Do You Face?](#)
3. [Power Mapping – Identifying Barriers and Opportunities](#)
4. [Personal Action Plans – Planning for Success](#)

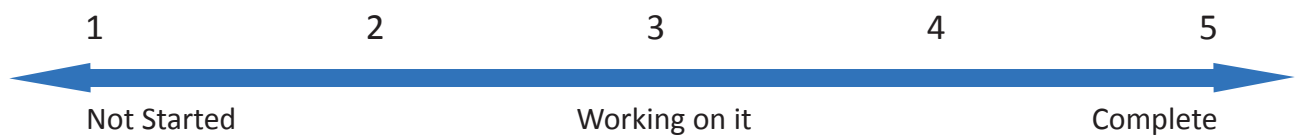
4. I have a list of at least 10 people I can contact for financial support.



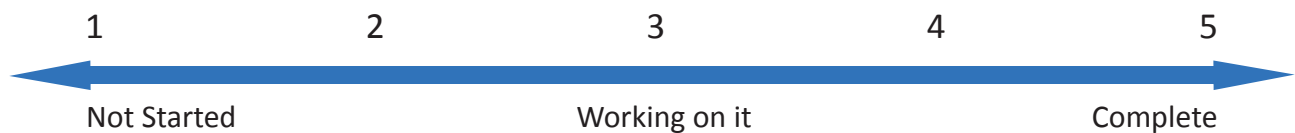
5. I have estimated the costs of running for office in a draft budget.



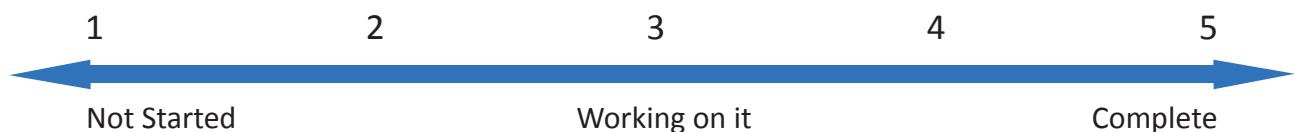
6. I have developed contacts with the relevant print, broadcast and social media.



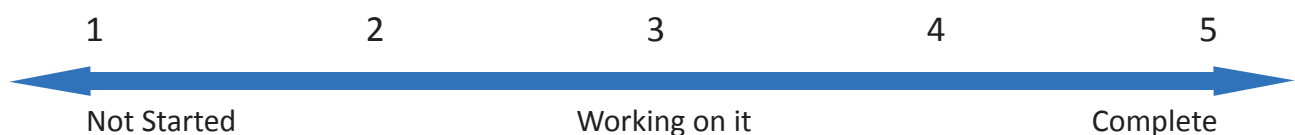
7. I have conducted an assessment of my likely opponent(s) in terms of how many votes they will get and their financial resources.



8. I have conducted a voter analysis of the area.



9. I have conducted a vote count for the area and determined that there will be sufficient votes for me to be elected.



Step 2: Qualitative Assessment

Answer the following questions, in your own words:

1. Why do you want to run for office?

2. What ideas or experience would you bring to elected office that is new, different or better?

3. Can you name three things that you want to work on or accomplish while in elected office?

Step 3: Qualitative Analysis

Review your answers to the questions above. Is the language you have chosen more about you, or more about the people you hope to serve while in office and/or the benefits you hope to bring to them?

If you had only 30 seconds or less:

Could you use these words to explain clearly to a friend why you are running for office? If not, what changes would you make?

Could you use these words to make a case to a party leader why you should be selected as a candidate in a winnable position? If not, what changes would you make?

Could you use these words to explain to a potential donor why they should contribute to your campaign? If not, what changes would you make?

Could you use these words to explain to a voter why they should support you? If not, what changes would you make?

Situational Analysis

Now that you have conducted an assessment of your own readiness to stand for elected office, the next step is to analyze the environment in which you will be running.

There are a number of key factors in conducting a situational analysis for an electoral campaign. These include what the law says about candidate eligibility and candidate selection, the candidate selection process exercised by political parties, and the realities of what actually happens in practice (as opposed to what the regulations say should happen).

Step 1: The Law

What does the law say about who is eligible to stand for office? What are the requirements or disqualifications for candidacy?

Age _____

Citizenship _____

Residency _____
(e.g., do you have to prove you have lived in the country or the district for a certain amount of time?)

Income or financial status _____
(e.g., free from bankruptcy or claims of financial wrongdoing)

Education _____

Criminal record _____
(e.g., free from serious criminal convictions for a certain amount of time or indefinitely)

Party membership _____

Are there any other legal requirements for declaring yourself a candidate? For example, do you have to gather signatures of support, produce financial records or file registration papers?

What is the filing fee, or cost, to register as a candidate?

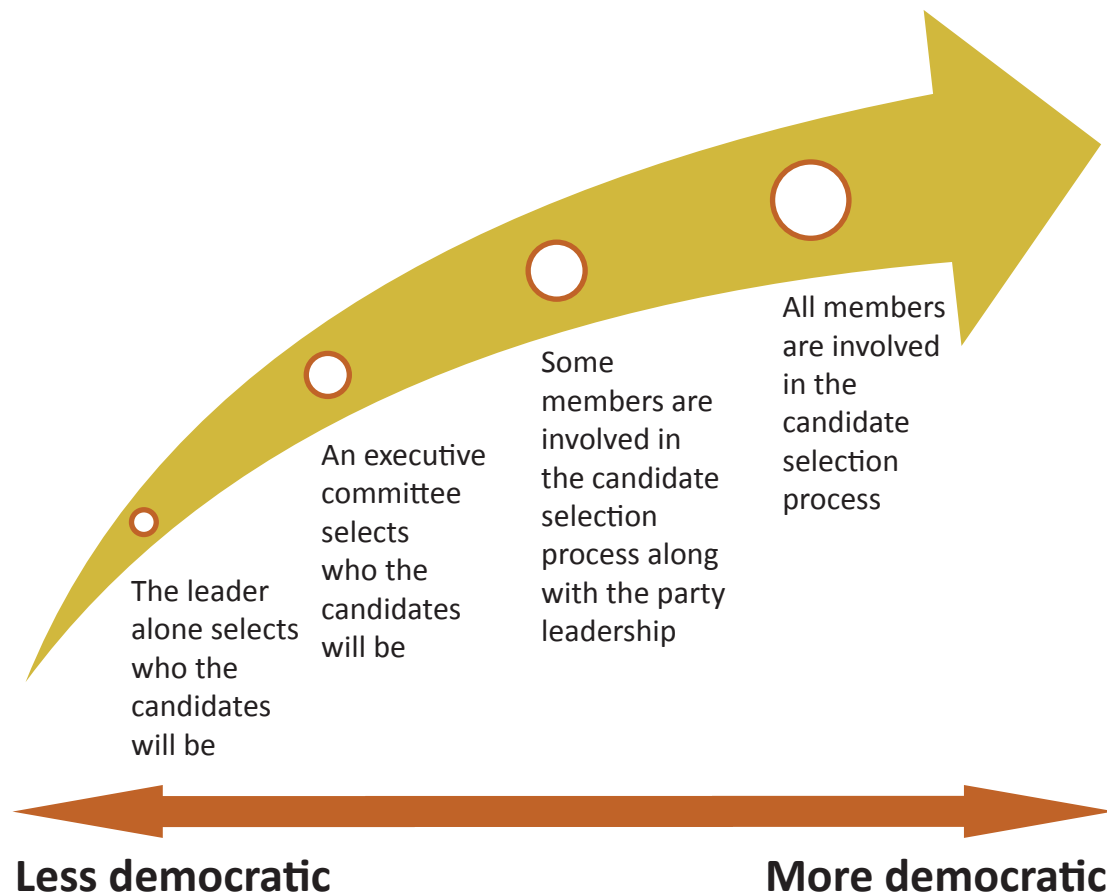
Step 2: The Political Party

Some countries' electoral laws define the system of elections and requirements for candidates, but leave it up to the legally registered parties to decide how they will choose their candidates. What is the situation in your country? Does the law say anything about how political parties should chose their candidates?

Are these provisions enforced by the courts or electoral commission?

Every political party selects candidates in its own way. A party's candidate selection process typically evolves over time, depending on the internal culture of the organization and the degree to which party officials and members expect and demand to be involved.

Every system of candidate selection has its benefits and disadvantages, but it is important to understand what the system is if you aspire to be a candidate in a winnable seat. Candidate selection processes fall somewhere on this spectrum:



How are decisions made within your political party about who gets to stand as a candidate? Is the process transparent and competitive, or are candidates selected in a restricted process (behind closed doors)?

The next matter to deal with is **who** actually makes the decisions about candidate selection. In most political parties, there are primary and secondary decision-makers.

- **Primary decision-makers** are those individuals with the official authority and position to determine what will happen within the political party.
- **Secondary decision-makers** are those individuals who **influence** primary decision-makers and therefore can also have an impact on what choices are made.

Consider the following diagram. At the center of the circle is the official decision-maker who has formal authority over the party's choices. These individuals are typically senior party leaders and elected officials.

In the outer ring are the secondary decision-makers. These are individuals who make up the personal and professional networks of the primary decision-maker, and who have the ability to influence that primary decision-maker.



Women, young people and other demographic groups that are less represented in politics often find that they have fewer connections at the center of these circles, i.e., among the primary decision-makers, but they have much stronger networks among secondary decision-makers. For challengers, the best way to a more powerful position is often through the unofficial decision-making route.

Keep in mind the self-interest and future ambitions of these decision-makers as you decide how to approach them. For example, some of the secondary decision-makers may aspire to one day become a primary decision-maker, and be more inclined to endorse you if they believe that you will later support their own ascent in the party hierarchy.

Consider your own ambitions to be a candidate in a winnable position. Identify all the primary decision-makers who could be involved in deciding whether or not you are selected. Do you have their support now?

Primary Decision-Maker

Do I have her/his support now?

Review the list of primary decision-makers on the list above whose support you do not have now. What is the most persuasive argument or message you could make to this person about why they should support you?

Assume you are about to have a meeting with each of these individuals. In the space below, construct some talking points for yourself and, thinking about their interests or perspectives on the issue, define the most persuasive message you could present to them on why they should support your ambitions.

Primary Decision-Maker

My Message

Now, think about the secondary decision-makers who influence these individuals. Who do you know who is in their circles of influence who would respond, either positively or negatively, to your bid to be a candidate?

Secondary Decision-Maker

Do I have her/his support now?

Review the list of secondary decision-makers on the list above whose support you do not have now. What is the most persuasive argument or message you could make to this person about why they should support you?

Assume you are about to have a meeting with each of these individuals. In the space below, construct some talking points for yourself and, thinking about their interests or perspective on the issue, define the most persuasive message you could present to them on why they should support your ambitions.

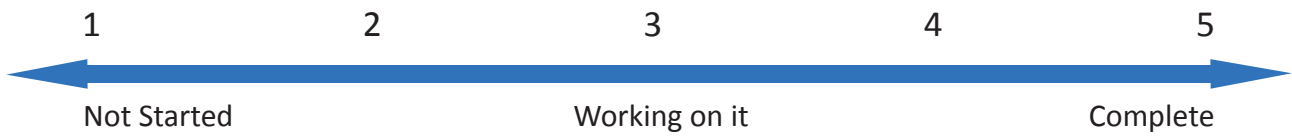
Secondary Decision-Maker

My Message

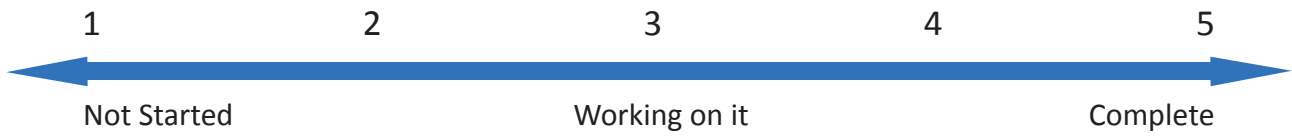
Step 3: Final Analysis

Based on your answers in this section, how would you rate your likelihood to be selected as a candidate under current legal requirements in your country and political conditions in your political party? Rate the veracity of each statement below.

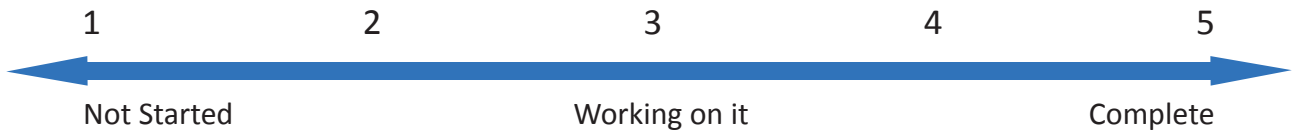
1. I currently meet all the legal requirements to be a candidate for elected office in my country.



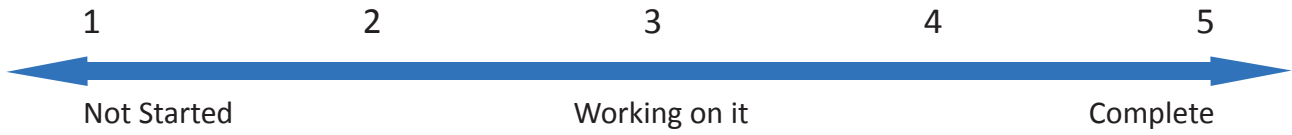
2. The candidate selection process in my party favors my selection as a candidate.



3. Primary decision-makers in my party favor my selection as a candidate.



4. Secondary decision-makers in my party favor my selection as a candidate.



Step 4: Informed Response

You have now conducted an assessment of your own readiness to stand for office, as well as a review of the legal requirements you must meet and an analysis of the internal political challenges you face in your own political party.

The next step is to figure out what your strategic response should be to this situation. Based on the work you have done in the previous sections and your own understanding of the challenges and opportunities you face, what do you think you should do next?

The next sections of this module will walk you through some options to inform your strategic response to this situation. Even if your final analysis suggests that there is a very good chance you will be selected as a candidate, there are likely to be a few obstacles that still stand in your way. It is important to think through how you will deal with these in order to build this goal into a reality.

If your analysis indicates that it will be a real challenge for you to get into a winnable position as a candidate, then it is even more important that you construct a strategic response which has the potential to alter this situation and improve your electoral fortunes!

Power Mapping

Power Mapping is a classic tool for charting the way forward in a challenging political environment. Power Mapping involves figuring out who has power and influence, and then sorting these decision-makers according to their likely response to and effect on a proposed action. In this case, the proposed action is your intention to become a viable candidate for elected office. Power Mapping allows us to identify the best response to a situation, including identifying ways to maximize the assistance of supporters and minimize the impact of opponents.

Review the lists of primary and secondary decision-makers that you made in Step Two of the previous section. Think about how each individual would respond or react to your plans to become a candidate in a winning position. Are they likely to respond positively or negatively to the idea? How strong will their response be? Chart them in the Power Map below.

		Direction of Influence	
		Positive	Negative
Strength of Influence	Strong		
	Weak		

What has your Power Map revealed? Do you have more people potentially supporting you than you thought? Is the opposition stronger than you had realized?

Your next task is to think through how you are going to handle this situation. Who do you need to move into a different quadrant in your Power Map? What is it going to take to do that?

A general strategic response for each quadrant is outlined below. Will any of these work in your situation or are you going to have to find other options?

Direction of Influence

		Positive	Negative
Strength of Influence	Strong	Keep involved and engaged in the effort Ask to state their support publicly Recruit to lobby undecided or Strong Negative decision-makers	Engage and actively seek to influence Use peers to attempt to influence
	Weak	Monitor and inform as necessary, with minimum effort Seek to move into Strong Positive quadrant if Power Map is heavily Negative	Keep informed so that they do not move into Strong Negative

Personal Action Plans

One of the ways that you can invest in your personal political goals is to connect your success to the success of your party. This means tying the work that you are doing to build your own profile as a potential candidate to the essential work of building the party's profile and improving its chances of winning more seats.

Ask yourself whether there is a specific project that you can implement within your political party which is likely to have multiple outcomes, namely:

1. Raising your profile and essential contribution to the party
2. Improving the party's operational or electoral performance
3. Improving your own leadership and communication skills

Examples might include:

- Building the party's base of support in new areas through a grassroots voter contact effort
- Organizing and implementing a formal training program for party campaign staff and volunteers
- Creating models and options to improve internal communication
Developing a stronger external communication, press and media department
- Expanding the party's outreach to new demographic groups, including women, young people and ethnic minorities
- Demonstrate high level of expertise in a specific field; appear often on media with interviews and participate in debates

The intended outcome of each of these is to improve the party's overall performance, enhance your political and leadership skills, and to raise your profile as someone making a real contribution to the party.

Consider some of the challenges for your party that you have identified in this training. Can you think of a specific project that would address some of these issues and potentially deliver benefits to you as well? The project should be something that is achievable within a realistic timeframe and which addresses an issue that your party's leadership believes is a key development area for your party.

Use the following planning sheet to map out how you might further develop and implement this project.

Planning Sheet

Practice to address	Improvement goal	Action items	Measures of success	Completion date	Support required
Party Development Project					
1.					
2.					
Personal Development Aspects					
1.					
2.					