

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

A Practical Guide for

Disabled People's Organizations

to Engage Political Parties

March 2024



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ABOUT NDI

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit www.ndi.org.

THE GUIDE'S DEVELOPMENT

NDI developed this guide with financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). To ensure this guide is responsive to the needs of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and grounded in the realities of diverse disability experiences, NDI convened an advisory group of seven DPO leaders and activists across six countries to provide feedback on the development and design of this guide. Over the course of five virtual meetings, advisory group members shared insights into their experiences engaging political parties across diverse country contexts, highlighting successful strategies and lessons learned. The advisory group not only provided knowledge critical to develop the guide, it allowed members to connect with activists in other parts of the globe, strengthening their overall networks and exposing them to new ideas they could integrate into their own efforts.

Once drafted, NDI partnered with two DPOs – Youth with Disabilities Forum (FMI) in Serbia and the Collective for the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPD) in Morocco – to test and validate the guide. FMI and CPD provided feedback on the guide during a series of virtual meetings, including a final joint meeting for the DPOs to exchange insights on their experiences using this resource to engage with political parties in their country. These contributions by FMI and CPD not only helped to strengthen the guide and ensure it is responsive to the disability community, but also provided DPOs with practical experience conducting outreach with political parties that they can leverage in their work to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities in Serbia and Morocco, respectively.

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Easy Read Summary



People with disabilities can use research to map political parties and identify allies.

This section gives ideas about how people with disabilities can influence policies that are important to their lives.

Policies describe actions a party plans to carry out.



One of the roles that political parties play is to choose people to run for office.

Another role that political parties play is to represent the interests of the public.

One way parties represent people is through their structures and platforms.

Platforms are the action plans the party carries out if they are elected.



Section 2 explains how people with disabilities can prepare to interact with parties.

One way people with disabilities can learn more about parties is through research.

People with disabilities can use research to map political parties and identify allies.



This section gives ideas about how people with disabilities can influence policies that are important to their lives.

Policies describe actions a party plans to carry out.

One way people with disabilities can influence policies is by sharing their experience and ideas with party leaders.



Section 3 explains the power of working in partnerships.

People with disabilities need to be involved in any decisions that will affect their lives.

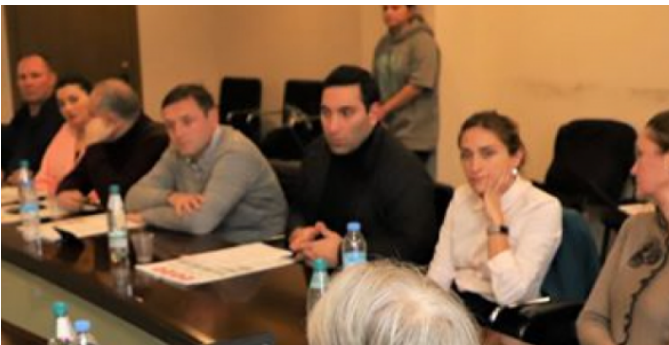
Political parties and disability organizations can work together to solve problems.



People with disabilities can explain to parties what is needed to make political participation accessible.

People with disabilities and parties can work together to address these challenges.

This guide gives ideas about the different ways people with disabilities and parties can work together.



Develop agreements between disability organizations and political parties.

Agreements can encourage political parties to include disability issues in their platforms.

Provide training for political parties on how to help people with disabilities take part in politics.



Use storytelling to shift attitudes about people with disabilities.

Monitor political processes to make sure parties keep their promises to people with disabilities.

Build relationships with parties between elections.

Political parties and disability organizations can develop a guide about voting for the public.

Introduction

Political parties are essential democratic institutions. Parties play an important role in aggregating and representing public interests, shaping political agendas, and developing government policies and programs. Parties are also a vehicle for contesting power and earning the right to govern through peaceful elections. In addition to governing, parties serve as opposition and have power to hold ruling parties accountable. Political parties are often the avenue for citizens to participate in politics and public decision making. Parties have significant influence over how citizens are represented in political processes and participate in decision making. In many countries, however, party mobilization and recruitment strategies are often not inclusive or effective in addressing the needs of marginalized communities, such as people with disabilities. Political parties often lack a basic understanding about persons with disabilities and how to make their organizing, campaigns, platforms, and physical spaces inclusive.

The exclusion of persons with disabilities from political parties can stem from a variety of attitudinal, institutional and social barriers. Despite this exclusion, persons with disabilities and disabled people's organizations (DPOs) have found that engaging political parties can be an essential aspect of advocating for disability rights and priorities. By expanding their engagement with political parties, DPOs have an opportunity to build power through access to new political spaces and relationships.

This guide seeks to improve the capacity of DPOs to engage political parties on substantive public-policy issues and disability inclusion priorities. It will help DPOs develop fundamental political knowledge and introduce practical skills, such as planning meetings with party leaders, communicating policy preferences, and monitoring party decisions and actions. DPOs will also learn advocacy approaches for encouraging parties themselves to be more inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, and more representative and responsive when crafting public policies.

How to Use This Guide

There are three sections.

- Section 1: Understanding Political Parties
- Section 2: Preparing for Engagement
- Section 3: Initiating and Sustaining Political Party Engagement

Each section provides brief guidance on relevant topics and is accompanied with practical and useful tools that organizations can pick up and easily use to initiate engagement or strengthen their ongoing engagement with political parties.

POLITICAL PARTY TERMINOLOGY	
By-Laws	<i>See Statutes.</i>
Candidate Selection	The way in which political parties choose individuals to run as candidates for elections.
Canvass	A type of voter contact in which the candidate or party workers go from one residence to another, talking directly to voters. When done by the candidate, this can be one of the most persuasive methods of winning votes, though it is time and labor intensive.
Clientelism	Involves an asymmetric relationship between groups of political actors described as patrons, brokers, and clients. In client politics, an organized minority or interest group benefits at the expense of the public. Client politics may have a strong interaction with the dynamics of identity politics.
Closed List	A form of a party-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system in which voters are restricted to voting only for the party and cannot express preferences for any candidate within the party list.
Constituent/ Constituency	A constituent can refer interchangeably with an elector. Constituency can also refer to either the electoral district or the electorate (ie, the geographic demarcation, or equally the collection of electors/voters of the electoral district).
Debate	A structured policy argument between political party candidates.
Faction	Describes a group of individuals that share a common political objective or purpose that differs from the primary interests of the rest of their party. In some cases, this leads to fragments within a party or a “party within a party.” While in other cases, it leads to the formulation of new political parties.
Ideology	A unified set of values and beliefs that help interpret and define how society should function. Ideology is the fundamental way to distinguish democratic parties.

Interest Group	A formal association of people with a narrow focus on a particular issue that concerns their members. Interest groups seek to influence policy choices made by decision makers and the platforms of political parties.
Legislation	A law or set of laws that have been passed by the government. Also describes the act of making a new law or set of laws.
Manifesto	<i>See Platform.</i>
Nonpartisan	Describes a group or individual that does not expressly support one political party or candidate over another. More broadly, the term nonpartisan may sometimes be used to describe a group or individual that does not promote a particular political ideology.
Open List	A List-PR system in which voters can express a preference for both the party as well as for one or more individual candidates within the party list.
Party List	The method of voting whereby the voter votes for a party and the party selects the candidates (from a list) based on the percentage of votes it receives.
Party-List Proportional Representation (List-PR)	An electoral system in which each political party presents a list of candidates for each electoral district, voters vote for a party and parties receive seats in direct proportion to their overall share of the vote in each district; winning candidates are then selected from the party list. This is the most basic form of a PR system. There can be variations on the type of List system employed. See, eg, Open Lists, Closed Lists and Free Lists.
Plank	A sub-component of a party's platform which speaks to a specific issue.
Platform	The program or set of policies, often in writing, that the political party or candidate will address if and when he/she is elected. Also known as a manifesto, it is a list of the principles which a political party supports in order to appeal to the general public for the purpose of having said party's candidates voted into office. This often takes the form of a list of support for, or opposition to, controversial topics.
Pluralism	In a democracy, pluralism is characterized by the distribution of power among various groups and organizations representing diverse views and interests. It promotes dialogue and compromise that ultimately lead to more inclusive and representative decision-making processes.
Policy	A formal response to a problem or issue that requires attention. A policy may take the form of a law or regulation enacted by the government.

Political Ideology	A way of identifying political parties based on their position within the right-center-left spectrum, with the right being more conservative, the center being more moderate, and the left being more liberal.
Political Party	A political organization that seeks to attain political influence and power within a government, usually by participating in electoral campaigns. Parties may be formed by a group of people who share many ideas about what a government should do and who espouse a certain ideology and vision, but may also represent a coalition among disparate interests.
Quota	Either: (1) the number of votes which guarantee a party or candidate to win one seat in a particular electoral district in a proportional representation system; or (2) a number of seats in an elected body or a proportion of candidates nominated by a party which are required by law to be filled by representatives of a particular group – often used to ensure a minimum number of women represented in the party or elected body.
Social Doctrine	Classification of parties' stances as conservative, neutral or progressive on specific issues, acknowledging that there is a combination of conservative, neutral and progressive stances within each party.
Statutes	A set of written rules by which political parties structure and organize their affairs. Writing statutes is one of the first tasks associated with establishing a new political party.
Wings	A structure within or affiliated with a political party that brings together specific party members based on common identifying factors to identify political issues and party policies that are most salient. Common wings include women's wings and youth wings.

Section 1: Understanding Political Parties

This section provides an overview of political parties and the various roles they play in politics and public decision making. It also describes the different ways in which political parties can be structured and how decisions are made within parties.

What Are Political Parties?

A political party is a group of individuals who share similar beliefs about how their government should be run and the trajectory of their country. By organizing into political parties, people have more power to make their voices heard than if acting alone. Political parties are often powerful organizations that seek to influence public policy to get the government to act in ways the political party believes is best. Often organized at every level of government (i.e., national to local), political parties promote specific policies, and coordinate candidates to compete in elections. It is common for democratic elections to feature competitions between political parties that support different ideological positions, such as liberal, conservative, and socialist parties.

Political parties often adopt colors and symbols to identify themselves with a particular ideology. However, some political parties may have no ideological affiliation and, instead, are engaged in clientelism. In other instances, they may focus on a specific cause, such as environmentalism. Parties are important in the politics of autocracies as well as democracies, though usually democracies have more political parties, while autocracies often have a single party that governs the country. Competition between two or more parties is often considered to be an essential part of democracy. Political parties have become a major part of the politics of almost every country. It is extremely rare for a country to have no political parties.

For a political party to officially register and stay in good standing, there are often legal obligations they must fulfill. One obligation is a party statute which is a set of written rules by which political parties organize their affairs. Statutes help political parties to define:

- Their **label** including their legal name, authorized abbreviations and alternative names, logo, flag and colors, and authorization of who can use the party label should a faction emerge.
- Their **philosophy and purpose** which seeks to differentiate a party's goals from other parties.
- **Membership eligibility, rights, roles and responsibilities** which may include a minimum age, prohibition of membership in other parties, opportunities for participation, paying dues, different categories of membership, and procedures for dismissing a member.
- **Party structures** which define a party's basic subunit, including geographic branch or functional unit, such as a women's or youth group.
- **Decision-making bodies** including their composition, mandate, lines of communication authority and checks and balances mechanisms.

- **Platform and policy development process** including how policies will be adopted.
- Process for **selecting of party leadership and candidates** which establishes eligibility, qualification requirements, nomination mechanisms and the role of national versus local branches in these processes.
- Procedures for **financial management** for the proper use of funds and financial reporting and audits.
- **Dispute resolutions** as a way to promote internal debate while containing intra-party debate and conflict.
- **Management of transitions** including procedures for amending party statutes.

Many parties regularly revisit and adapt their statutes, as they grow in size or seek to broaden their appeal. Changes also coincide with the need to follow a country's laws that govern campaign finance, or the need to set quotas for party representation of women, young people, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Party statutes should stipulate respect for universal human rights and freedoms relating to equality and non-discrimination.

Role of Political Parties

Political parties, although primarily viewed as a means of helping candidates run for political office, can play a variety of roles in democratic processes and advancing political participation. These roles include:

- 1. Recruit, Nominate and Support Candidates** - Political parties are responsible for selecting candidates who will run for political office. The parties choose candidates who believe in the party's platform. These candidates represent the party's members and help to spread the party's message during elections.
- 2. Organize Electoral Participation** - Political parties can play an important role in organizing voter registration drives, recruiting volunteers to work at polling stations and utilizing campaigns to stimulate interest in elections to increase participation.
- 3. Influence Legislative Policymaking** - Members of parliaments, congresses, and national assemblies are also political party members. These elected leaders work to create and pass laws that support their party's platform.
- 4. Create Balance** - The party with the most members elected to office makes up the majority, meaning the party sets the agenda and can direct the government's attention and resources on issues of most priority to the party. The party or parties with the least members elected to office makes up the minority, who works hard to oppose the majority party and keep it in check. Depending on the minority party's strength, the majority may need to compromise with the minority to get laws passed. In some contexts this can lead to further divisions or stall legislation, however it creates a balance necessary for discourse and democratic processes.

- 5. Educate and Inform Citizens** - During electoral campaigns, political parties utilize a variety of media platforms in combination with rallies, speeches and debates to educate and inform citizens about the political issues and where a party stands on those issues. Some parties also engage in “Get Out the Vote” processes. However, most information from a political party is biased towards that party’s platform and therefore should not serve as the sole source of information. Some political parties may involve people with disabilities in their electoral campaigns and include questions concerning the impact of public policies on people with disabilities.
- 6. Represent Constituents** - When holding office, political party leaders are responsible for representing the residents in their constituency and serving as the vehicles for political expression that seek a role in public decision-making. Elected officials must not only reflect the concerns of their own political party, but must also reflect the constituencies they wish to attract. This is essential in order for political parties to gain the credibility they need to speak and act on behalf of those constituencies.

Political Party Structures

Political parties can be structured in many different ways depending on laws and regulations. However, many parties tend to be built around a traditional management system which includes:

- A senior team organized around the party leader that works on strategy and communicating to regional or local party branches, activists, and the wider membership.
- A parallel bottom-up democratic structure where activists elect delegates to a party congress or a national executive committee.

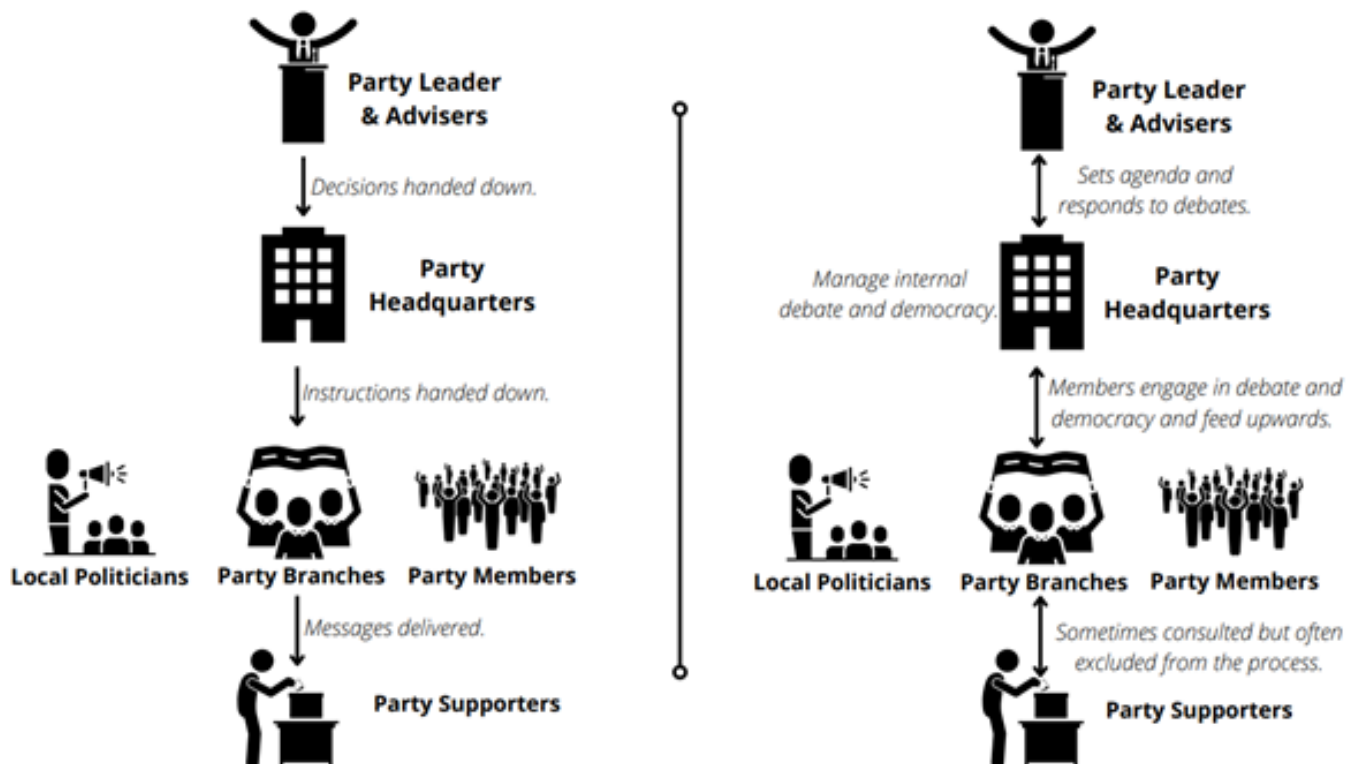


Figure 1 - Visual representation of political party structures

Political parties usually include a party leader, who has primary responsibility for the activities of the party and setting the party's agenda; party executives, who may select the leader and who perform administrative and organizational tasks; and party members, who may volunteer to help the party, donate money to it, and vote for its candidates. Decision-making within the party tends to take place among party leadership. However, if a party has more of a bottom-up structure, party supporters, members and local branches can influence decisions being made.

In most parties, the highest decision-making body is a congress, conference or convention. This structure often approves changes to primary party documents and policies, has certain leadership selection responsibilities and makes other significant decisions.

There are many different ways in which political parties can be structured and interact with the electorate. The contributions that citizens give to political parties are often regulated by law, and parties will sometimes govern in a way that favors the people who donate time and money to them. Parties are organized at every level of government and take on different roles and responsibilities based on that level. At the local level, political parties focus on identifying and supporting candidates for municipal, state or county elections.

To improve their ability to earn citizen trust, parties can evaluate their internal procedures and practices around issues of integrity (e.g., transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making), and identify and implement actions to increase integrity within their party. When parties choose to design their systems, purpose and ethos around the principle of integrity they can realize meaningful changes in the way that political parties are regarded by voters. As such, "political party integrity"¹ is broadly defined as acting in the best interests of citizens and requires parties to embrace inclusive decision-making as well as ethical, transparent, and accountable behavior and practices. Party integrity builds and enforces mechanisms that ensure all party members (including historically underrepresented communities) and branches within the party structure have the opportunity to deliberate options, contribute ideas and influence party decision-making. To better understand how decision-making happens within political parties, DPOs can research the formal and informal processes the party uses to adopt and amend statutes and bylaws. This information can then be used to map out where there are opportunities to influence the decision-making processes and key stakeholders.

Being inclusive does not only mean ensuring the equal participation of women, for example. It also means ensuring the involvement of other underrepresented groups, like young people, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI+ communities and persons with disabilities. If political parties do not reflect the constituencies they wish to attract, they lack the credibility to speak and act on behalf of those constituencies. Societies are becoming increasingly diverse, requiring political parties to develop external and internal policies that reflect the concerns of underrepresented groups.

¹ For additional information on political party integrity and why it is important, see NDI's resource on [Win With Integrity: Earning Citizen Trust in Political Parties](#).

In addition to the above structures, parties may also have “wings” which serve as an extension of the party to provide space for certain members, often grouped by identity, to participate and develop their skills alongside the main party. Traditionally, party wings have focused on young people and women, however some parties are starting to establish wings for persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Wings serve four different functions, all of which seek to enhance the participation of certain groups, and, in some cases, counter the decline of their participation in parties. These functions include:

Networking and the formation of personal and/or issue-based alliances.

- Supporting members who seek to grow within the party as activists, leaders and possible candidates. These might include training and mentoring programs.
- Developing skills and tactics for influencing internal party policy and platform development as well as leadership selection. This helps to ensure parties remain relevant and provide new outlooks on outdated policies.
- Facilitating outreach to voters from certain identity groups (e.g., women, young people, persons with disabilities), in a bid to make the party more credible to those communities. Wings can ensure appropriate language, platform and materials when communicating their messages during elections and recruitment campaigns.

It’s important to note that political party leadership does not always take their wings seriously, especially when there are differences in opinions about policies.

Political Party Platforms

A party platform is a set of principles, goals, and strategies designed to address pressing political issues. Each party’s platform is broken down into declarations or “planks” that speak to each specific issue. Party platforms are very important to the electoral process. They give the candidates a clear political position with which they can campaign. They give voters a sense of what the candidates believe in, the issues they think are important, and how—if elected—they will address them.

Developing a Party Platform

To develop a platform ahead of an election, the political party will convene a platform-writing committee consisting of party leadership and interest groups closely linked with the party. If the party has members elected to leadership positions within government, they too will influence what goes into the platform, especially when those elected members are seeking reelection. Parties may also hold listening sessions around the country to hear from the public and their members on specific issues. Once feedback is collected through a variety of stakeholders, the platform committee takes on the task of developing platforms that strategically blend ideology with public interest so that it appeals to a broad segment of voters. Once drafted, the platform is reviewed, debated and adopted, providing candidates a foundation on which to build their campaign strategies.

The goal is for the platform to appeal both to a broader electorate while ensuring specific pledges to organized groups. Stirring, values-based and action-oriented language is utilized to solidify the support of current members while corralling non-members to the side of the party and their perspective. Platforms, like other information produced by a political party, will be biased and skewed toward their beliefs and ideologies. It's important to keep this in mind when reading and deciphering party platforms. At the same time, platforms don't necessarily bind elected officials, yet they do have meaning. Platforms can provide voters and party members insight into how a party's elected officials will behave in office and utilize resources, while changes in platform can be a good indicator of change within the party.

Understanding and Interpreting Platforms

Platforms consist of a preamble followed by a combination of appeals, pledges and commitments organized by thematic area. The **preamble** serves as an executive summary of sorts for the platform. It highlights the major challenges, based on the party's perspective, facing the country, calling out any harmful laws if the party is not in power and highlighting positive steps forward if the party is in power. Preambles paint a picture of the trajectory of the country, again highlighting ways the country is doing well or poorly based on who is in power. The preamble also provides an overview of the policies or actions the party would take if elected. Preambles often end with a call to action for voters as a way to encourage voter turnout for the party. Following the preambles are the 'planks' or declarations of the platform. **Planks** are often grouped into categories by themes such as the economy, education, healthcare, immigration, foreign policy, and civil and human rights. Planks may also cover relevant global topics, such as the trade relations or the impacts of climate change. Within the planks, parties provide specific details on how they will achieve the designated outcome of each plank. For example, an economy plank may cover topics such as minimum wage, job creation and workers' rights while a plank of civil and human rights may speak to the protection of fundamental freedoms and the rights of specific communities, such as women, persons with disabilities and Indigenous communities. As mentioned above, parties have the ultimate say of what is and isn't included in a platform. However parties, in the hopes of winning elections, seek to ensure their platforms appeal to a broader electorate which can lead to opportunities to engage and influence platform development.

As it relates to disability inclusion within a platform, parties may seek to **mainstream** disability throughout the platform, seeing it as a cross-cutting theme or have a **dedicated section to advancing disability rights** and priorities. Ideally platforms should take a dual-track approach, mainstreaming throughout while having dedicated planks specifically for advancing disability rights and inclusion not only through legislation, but within representation in government should the party be elected. In order to be responsive to the needs of the disability community, political parties must rely on the expertise of people with disabilities regarding the issues that concern them and that they wish to integrate into the party's platform. It is also important for parties to ensure their platforms are accessible to people with diverse disabilities. This means producing and disseminating the platform in multiple formats, such as Easy Read for people with intellectual disabilities or low literacy, local sign language for Deaf constituents, or braille for blind constituents. Platforms disseminated through party websites should be accessible to persons with disabilities, in compliance with international web accessibility standards.

Section 2: Preparing for Engagement

Given the role political parties play in serving as a bridge between society and the political system, it is often essential to engage parties to advance social change. However, this is never straightforward, particularly for communities experiencing marginalization. To engage political parties strategically and in a way that will have benefits for all involved, requires preparation and consideration of the different political interests. This includes understanding party ideology, doctrine, and the actors behind the scenes influencing a party's position on issues. In addition, parties tend to be more responsive when provided with data and practical information, such as policy briefs, that they can easily incorporate into their platforms.

Mapping Political Parties

An initial analysis of political parties operating in the country can be useful in developing an understanding of which parties may be disability-inclusion allies or opponents, and will help guide where to target more active engagement. The **Political Party Mapping Tool in Annex 1** seeks to categorize and map parties based on four categories:

- 1. Political ideology** - Classifies parties based on their economic and role of government positions on a left-center-right spectrum.
- 2. Social doctrine** - Classifies parties based on their stances to various political issues on a progressive-neutral-conservative scale.
- 3. Social sectors** - Classifies parties based on the priority levels of their electoral base.
- 4. Geographic regions** - Classifies parties based on the location and prioritization of their electoral base.

This strategic mapping exercise can help to understand how party members operate individually and in a group. By dedicating time to learn about the political party landscape in your local context, you may find that some arguments may be more effective when used with one party compared to another. For example, to improve accessibility in society a political party to the left might focus on solidarity while a liberal party might focus on every individual's right to have equal access to exercise their rights. Although these arguments may yield the same result, they differ in nature from one another.

Research Methods to Inform Engagement and Policy Proposals

Parties can be incentivized to engage when provided with useful research and data that defines an issue and can inform solutions that the party can support in their platforms and when governing. Research can help to explain causal relationships between social, political, economic, and cultural factors that discriminate against persons with disabilities and impact society more broadly. By organizing useful information ahead of time, it establishes the professionalism of the DPO, and signals to the party the value of building and maintaining a relationship with the organization.

There are a variety of methods that can be used to conduct research to inform engagement and policy proposals. In most cases, causal research is more useful to political parties than descriptive research. This is because political parties are interested in examining “work works” in order to solve or prevent a problem, or scale up progress. Therefore, research that focuses on what causes an outcome, rather than simply describing an issue, is often most useful to inform engagement and action. The most commonly used research methods can be divided into three categories:

- 1. Qualitative research** - Uses methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies to understand peoples’ experiences and perspectives surrounding an issue.
- 2. Quantitative research** - Uses survey techniques and statistical methods, such as sampling, to generate representative numerical data for mathematical analysis.
- 3. Mixed methods research** - Combines qualitative and quantitative methods to generate both narrative information and numerical data, which can provide a more complete picture of an issue.

Conducting research is often the first step in developing a policy proposal. Both qualitative and quantitative research can be used by DPOs to identify a problem, assess why it is an issue, and help to inform action and interventions. For example, a DPO could implement a survey to investigate the impact of a government policy on people with disabilities. The organization could also organize focus groups with people with disabilities to collect narrative accounts on how the policy impacts them.

When conducting background research, DPOs should start by reviewing any relevant resources that might already be available. This may include identifying existing research which highlights major opportunities and barriers for the political participation of persons with disabilities, as well as factors that influence those opportunities and barriers. This research can be used to inform the development of policy proposals, as detailed below.

Policy Proposal Development

What is a policy?

- Policy is made in response to or in anticipation of a problem requiring government attention.
- Policy is what the government chooses to do (actual) or not do (implied) about a particular issue or problem.
- Policy is ultimately made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public.
- Policies are created and enacted on behalf of the public, typically by the government; however, policies can be co-created and co-implemented between government, civil societies, or citizens.
- Policy might take the form of law, or regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern a particular sector.
- Policy is oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem.
- Policymaking is part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about funding, who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed, revisited and revised.

General Stages of Policy Development

1. *Defining the Problem and Agenda Setting*
 - a. What is happening and why is it an issue?
 - b. Debate about what the policy should look like takes place during this stage.
 - c. Solutions are put forward by all interested parties.
2. *Placement on the Government Agenda*
 - a. This is politicized, as it involves many stakeholders and a need to build consensus among those who will be responsible for adoption and implementation.
 - b. Agenda setting has four stages:
 - i. Systemic agenda - all issues public officials feel are worth addressing are presented.
 - ii. Institutional agenda - distilled from the systemic agenda list, these issues are chosen as the ones policymakers should analyze and consider acting on.
 - iii. Discretionary agenda - this list comes directly from lawmakers, not from the systemic and institutional agendas.
 - iv. Decision agenda - the final list of issues that policymakers will consider for action that combines the institutional agenda and discretionary agenda.
3. *Formulation of the Policy*
 - a. Debate about what the policy should look like takes place again during this stage.
 - b. This is where the scope of the policy will narrow and certain options excluded.
 - c. Different parties attempt to have their favored policy rank high among the remaining options.
 - d. Will lead to a decision on a particular course of action for a policy.
4. *Implementation of the Policy*
 - a. The stage for moving the policy forward, taking action and spending money.
 - b. Use of public administration tools.
 - c. May lead to creating new agencies or hiring new personnel.
 - d. A policy is most likely to stall here due to lack of funding, lack of political will, lack of personnel, etc.
5. *Evaluation*
 - a. Interested parties within and outside of government monitor the impact of the policy and determine if it is achieving its intended goal.
 - b. This can lead to changes in that policy.
6. *Adaptation*
 - a. The policy is adapted based on findings from the evaluation to improve the policy's overall impact.

Civil Society/DPO Engagement

DPOs and other civil society actors can play an essential role in policy development, from problem identification to evaluation. DPOs are the experts on a variety of problems and can ensure policies properly include the perspectives and needs of the disability community. Although most policies are enacted by the government, policies can be co-developed and co-implemented with civil society. For example, DPO input can ensure that policies are not causing harm and can play a prominent role in monitoring implementation of policies and holding governments accountable. Independent institutions, such as Ombudsmen, Commissioners for the Protection of Equality or similar institutions, can be important partners in monitoring policy implementation and providing a platform to raise human rights issues or concerns.

Policy Papers

Purpose:

- Provide decision makers with expert analysis, recommendations, and research findings. Policy papers should avoid unsubstantiated opinion and guesswork. Policy papers may also take the form of a briefing paper, which typically provides a decision maker with an overview of an issue or problem, targeted analysis, and actionable recommendations.
- Shape perceptions around issues
 - Brings the issue to policymakers' attention
 - Frames the issue and solution for them
- Provides text that be used memos of used for debate
 - Useful for policymaker support staff
 - You want them to lift your words directly as much as possible

Components:

- Executive Summary/Purpose Statement (staff members working for an elected officials may only read this)
 - Body
 - Background – what is the current policy, if there is a current policy?
 - Analysis – why is the policy not working? Why is it necessary to find an alternative?
 - Policy options – discuss alternatives and their implications
 - Recommendations – provide recommendations and how they can be implemented
 - Conclusion – summarize analysis and recommendations
 - Appendices – attach any relevant figures, maps, graphics, etc.

Guidance on Developing Policy Papers

When developing a policy paper, it is important to keep the following guidance in mind:

- Define the issue in terms of your preferred solution. Highlight the urgency and state significant findings based on data. Objectivity is your priority, so resist the urge to exaggerate.
- Analyze—do not merely present—the data. Show how you arrived at the findings or recommendations through analysis of qualitative or quantitative data. Draw careful conclusions that make sense of the data and do not misrepresent it.
- Summarize your findings or state recommendations. Provide specific recommendations or findings in response to specific problems and avoid generalizations. Make sure recommendations make logical sense with evidence provided.
- If you are producing recommendations, analyze the options and tradeoffs according to their feasibility. What are the pros and cons? What is feasible? What are the predictable outcomes?
- Address—and when appropriate rebut—counterarguments, caveats, alternative interpretations, and reservations to your findings or recommendations. Your credibility as a policy advocate relies on your ability to locate and account for counter arguments. You should be especially sensitive to the likely counterarguments that a decision-maker would face in implementing or acting on your recommendations or findings.
- Distill the conclusions succinctly in a concluding section and remind the decision maker of the big picture, the overall goal, the necessity of the investigation, or of the urgency for action. This answers the “Who cares?” question that reminds the reader of the value of the research and recommendations. If you are targeting a decision maker, you should reflect the decision-maker’s primary concerns.
- Don’t assume that everyone shares the same ideas.
- Ensure policy papers are persuasive, evidence based, and written efficiently.
- Ensure policy papers are clear and concise – there is no need to use sophisticated vocabulary.
- Remember the “Bottom Line Up Front” principle – begin paragraphs with concluding statements.
- Ensure the policy paper covers the issue thoroughly so policymakers and staff don’t need to go to other sources.
- Show how a policy will impact constituents and tie back to priorities and national interests.
- Don’t argue for an ideology.
- If there are risks involved, identify those risks and propose risk mitigation tactics.

Section 3: Initiating and Sustaining Political Party Engagement

Accessibility and Inclusion Audits

Disability leaders across diverse contexts noted that an initial form of substantive political party engagement can be an offer to undertake an accessibility and inclusion audit of parties. These audits can take on a variety of formats and seek to assess different components of a political party. The **Accessibility and Inclusion Audit in Annex 2** provides a set of questions that can be utilized as a platform for dialogue between DPOs and political parties. DPOs can use the audit questions to raise awareness and build knowledge among political parties about how to expand their disability inclusion practices, such as those relating to accessibility and participation of people with disabilities in political life. The inclusion and accessibility audit is intended to evaluate the following components of a political party:

1. Accessibility
2. Campaigns
3. Knowledge
4. Participation
5. Platform
6. Evidence-Based Action Planning

Engaging Parties with Policy Papers

Policy papers can be a powerful tool for disability leaders to initiate and sustain engagement with party members. Across the political cycle, there are multiple opportunities for DPOs to engage political parties using policy papers. Entry points for engagement on policy papers include in the lead up to annual party meetings, prior to an election when a platform is being developed and when legislative bodies are sitting. The strategic use of policy papers at different points in the political cycle raises the profile of disability issues and helps lay the foundation for ongoing engagement with party representatives.

Shifting Mindsets and Attitudes Through Storytelling

As a complement to policy papers, storytelling can be a powerful way to draw attention to policy issues and a crucial component of effective engagement. A personal story can add life to a complex issue, create a platform for public discussion and inspire people to confront discrimination. Telling stories has a unique potential to build understanding and empathy in relation to difficult problems. Storytelling is also an effective way to shift mindsets and attitudes around disability, enabling positive representation of people with disabilities as activists and leaders within their community. This type of training helps to break down attitudinal barriers and combat negative perceptions of persons with disabilities among political party members. In addition, it can empower the individual affected and their

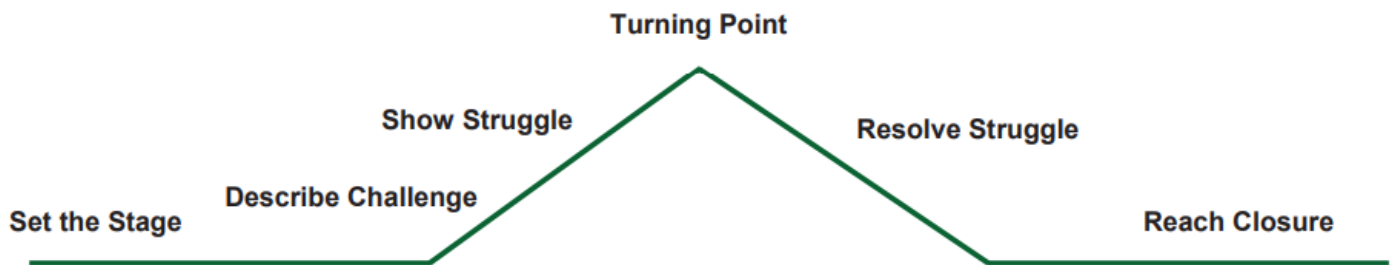
community, recognize their expertise and promote their agency. Storytelling isn't just a form of publicity but also a means of organizing. For example, storytelling can be an effective way to attract different audiences, including a range of political parties.

It's important to remember that storytelling is about meaning. What makes a story powerful or impactful is how the facts and personal experiences come together and resonate with its audience and convince people of what they already know. Stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts and help make the case for why a decision maker should take a stand on your issue. There are two key components when choosing the story that will resonate most with decision makers:

- **The Ask** - Why are you there and what do you want the decision maker to do?
- **The Audience** - Familiarize yourself with your audience. Frame the story based on values, relevance to the decision maker's constituents and how the story might reflect broader community issues.

To tell an effective story, consider the following components:

Figure 2 - Storytelling Components



- **Set the Stage** - Lay the groundwork for the story, describing the setting and context and establishing the stakes. Where does the story take place? Who is involved? What will happen if action is not taken?
- **Describe the Challenge** - Describe the main conflict of the story and utilize a few sentences to “hook” the audience, making them want to know what happens next. What did you see, hear, feel, smell?
- **Show the Struggle** - Struggles can be internal, physical, philosophical or emotional programs that move the story forward and create tension, suspense or excitement. When describing the struggle use vivid and strong objectives. How did the issue impact you or the individual? What challenges did you or the individual face?
- **Highlight the Turning Point** - Explain a moment of discovery or the point of highest tension.
- **Resolve the Struggle** - Describe how the conflict was resolved and link the story to a broader context that connects to policy and possible opportunities for success.
- **Reach Closure** - Craft a final sentence to leave with the decision maker while reemphasizing the importance of the story and the “ask.”

For additional guidance on storytelling, see the Leading Change Network's [Guide to Public Narrative](#) and NDI's resource on [Developing a Decision Maker Engagement Plan](#).

Developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) can be an effective tool to promote collaboration between political parties and DPOs on ways to improve inclusion and accessibility. An MoU is a formal agreement which establishes the relationship between groups, defines mutual roles and responsibilities, and lays the groundwork for fostering a strong partnership between stakeholders. MoUs can be used to structure equitable and respectful working relationships between partners by outlining roles and expectations and establishing a framework for mutual accountability. The process of negotiating the MoU can help to build trust and set the stage for open and accountable follow-on actions and decision-making.

Before making an agreement with a political party, DPOs should identify what they want to achieve through the partnership. Written agreements can help increase accountability and sustain relationships when there is turnover within a political party. Such MoUs between a party and a DPO usually involve the party guaranteeing that the DPO gain access to documents, meetings and other public gatherings, whereas the DPO guarantees political impartiality, agreeing not to damage the institution or the process with baseless criticism, and committing to offer constructive recommendations. Finding entry points and supporters within the system can be crucial to push through such MoUs.

It is important to acknowledge that every relationship between groups is different and therefore MoUs should be structured according to the specific needs and context of those involved. When partnering with one or more political parties to develop an MoU, consider the following components:

- MoU Introduction/Purpose
 - Describes the purpose of the MoU, the partners involved, and why this partnership is important. Keep this section simple and concise.
 - Questions to consider include:
 - Why is this MoU being created?
 - What groups or individuals are participating in the MoU?
 - Why is this MoU necessary?
 - What agreements are set forth by this MoU?
- MoU Scope
 - Describes the relationship between the groups involved.
 - Questions to consider include:
 - What are the goals and objectives of each group/individual involved?
 - What are the intended activities and outcome(s) of the relationship?
 - How will the relationship be structured?
 - How might the relationship evolve over time?
 - What is the timeframe for the relationship?
 - What are the responsibilities and roles of each group/individual involved?
 - What accountability mechanisms should be used to ensure that each group/individual fulfills their responsibilities and roles?
 - What group/individual will serve as the main point of contact for the agreement?

Strategies for Engagement between Elections

Understanding the electoral calendar and when general or local elections are scheduled to take place helps to determine which strategies for engaging political parties will be most effective. DPOs and people with disabilities should not limit their engagement with parties to only focus on election periods. The time between elections is often when parties review, reform, and strategize how to shape their political agenda moving forward. DPOs can effectively engage with parties during this time in numerous ways.

- Train party members on disability inclusion. DPOs can engage with parties between elections by raising their awareness of disability rights and encouraging party members to include input from people with disabilities in their platforms.
- Invite political party members to DPO activities, regardless of the theme. This helps political parties to understand DPOs are working on or care about, and contributes to building relationships. It also helps to raise the visibility of people with disabilities as active and concerned citizens, and combats negative stereotypes.
- Public dialogues require parties to reflect, exchange views and seek consensus on the complex issues. Intra- and inter-party dialogue also contributes to building trust and cooperation both within and between parties. Public dialogue can help DPOs navigate political systems, engage with parties between elections, and better understand the party's doctrine.
- Encourage parties to make their political party platforms and websites accessible. The case study below provides lessons learned on how DPOs can effectively engage political parties to advance disability inclusion between elections.
- Monitor and assess the impact of public policies on people with disabilities. Develop recommendations to ensure representation and inclusion of people with diverse disabilities in policy-making processes.
- Encourage and support people with disabilities who want to join political parties and run for office.

CASE STUDY: ENGAGING POLITICAL PARTIES BETWEEN ELECTIONS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Between elections in North Macedonia, Inkluziva, a local DPO, worked with NDI to develop a survey to assess the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities within six political parties across the political spectrum. The survey demonstrated that website accessibility was a consistent, yet surmountable, gap that could be addressed through online training. Inkluziva also worked with each party to identify and adopt basic, but significant, modifications such as screen magnification and color contrast. Ahead of the July 2020 parliamentary elections, Inkluziva monitored parties' campaigns and found during the month-long campaign period, all six partners adopted accessibility and inclusivity recommendations by using subtitles in their videos, sign language interpretation for larger events, and more.

Strategies for Relationship Building After Turnover

Transition within political parties can create new entry points for engagement. DPOs can leverage the post-election period to identify new supporters and champions of their priorities within parties. This can also be a critical time for DPOs to establish and develop constructive relationships with newly elected officials. DPOs can use the results of their political party mapping to identify supporters or champions within parties. Using these entry points, DPOs can use the engagement strategies outlined in this guide to build relationships.

Raising Awareness of Disability Rights among Political Parties

There is often a lack of awareness among political parties regarding disability rights, including legal frameworks that protect the rights of people with disabilities to participate in political and civic life. To address these gaps, DPO partners can work with political parties to develop and lead training on disability rights for campaign staff, volunteers, and party officials on supporting and interacting with voters and candidates with disabilities. Training initiatives can raise awareness among political parties of international legal frameworks including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which promotes the rights, dignity and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of public life. Training efforts can also sensitize parties to relevant regional and national legal frameworks to protect and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. DPOs can also play a key role in familiarizing parties with key disability rights principles and practices – including accessibility, reasonable accommodation, the principle of “Nothing Without Us,” the social model of disability, intersectionality and diversity within the disability community, and the use of appropriate etiquette and rights-based language – to ensure parties uphold the right of persons with disabilities to fully participate in society on an equal basis with others.

This type of training helps to break down attitudinal barriers and combat negative perceptions of persons with disabilities among political party members. It also helps to show party members that people with disabilities are impacted by and care about many of the same issues that concern their fellow citizens, such as corruption, unemployment, security and healthcare. If political parties have an accessibility committee, working group, or accessibility officer(s), party members can partner with DPOs to provide in-depth training on the party’s accessibility policy, the international and national regulations affecting disability inclusion, the different types of accessible measures available, and how to arrange for reasonable accommodations.

Engagement based on Diverse Identities

When raising awareness of disability rights, it is also critical to remind political parties that there is a lot of *diversity within disability*. People with physical, sensory, psychosocial, intellectual - or multiple and severe disabilities - may even consider themselves to be part of distinct communities. For example, a young Deaf woman may have a unique set of perspectives from a man with a physical disability from an underrepresented ethnic community. These important differences can result in differing priorities and power structures within the disability community itself, and can impact how people with disabilities engage with political parties.

While persons with disabilities may share common barriers that inhibit their participation, there are also variations in age, socio-economic status, gender or geography that can pose additional challenges. Members of an already marginalized population may face multiple forms of exclusion based on their diverse identities. This is associated with “intersectionality,” which creates power disparities within and across the disability community. When developing their campaign strategies or political party platforms, DPOs can encourage political parties to apply an intersectional lens to ensure these activities are intentional in reaching the furthest behind.

Producing Voter Guides

A voter guide compiles electoral candidates’ biographical information, policy positions and priorities, and any public commitments made as part of their campaigns. The guide is shared widely with voters in the lead-up to an election to help them make choices by providing comparative details about political parties and candidates. Voter guides also serve as a public record that monitoring groups can use to benchmark performance once an elected official takes office.

These guides can be produced either as online resources or as print copies. Traditionally, voter guides were printed publications physically distributed to the voters, but in today’s digital world, they are more often distributed via websites or mobile apps that voters can access online. While moving voter guides online can increase the scale of distribution, internet access must be widely available, and websites sometimes exclude populations, especially people with disabilities or with other factors that limit access. Therefore, accessibility standards² are important to consider when implementing websites or mobile apps. Voter guides have also been used in the form of briefings or infographics for the media to disseminate to voters and to challenge candidates during television debates in the election campaign period.

In the lead-up to an election, DPOs can create voter guides by:

- Organizing public forums or dialogues in order to collect information on citizen priorities and identify the most pressing of those issues;
- Creating a “voter guide information packet” that includes questions regarding candidates’ positions on citizen issues;
- Distributing the voter guide information packet to the candidates to review and answer the questions;
- Recording interviews with candidates about their policy positions and then posting them online;
- Collecting candidates’ responses to the voter guide information packet questions; Posting the candidates’ biographical data and their responses to the voter guide questions online or in print; and
- Publicizing the voter guide through postings on websites, email listservs, social media platforms, newspapers, radio and public forums.

² “Accessibility, Usability, and Inclusion,” World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative, accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-usability-inclusion/>.

After an election, DPOs can follow up on their pre-election voter guide activities in two ways:

- The first is post-election monitoring and reporting based on the information collected for the voter guide. DPOs can use this information as benchmarks or indicators when monitoring elected officials' behavior post-election, advocating for change, or working with newly elected public officials to enhance their accountability to constituents. For example, DPOs can use voter guides to monitor elected officials' follow-through on campaign promises related to inclusion to inform their advocacy campaigns and maintain public pressure on elected officials in both the majority and opposition parties.
- The second way DPOs can follow up on a pre-election voter guide is to continue producing such guides over a series of elections in order to monitor how political party and candidate positions, as well as citizen priorities, change over time. The continued use of voter guides can help DPOs identify trends and contribute to fostering more systemic change. As voter guides become a part of the political landscape, candidates and political parties will begin to expect that groups will monitor and record their actions and promises, and that they will be held accountable if elected. When operating under a constant spotlight, it is more likely that public officials will alter their behavior to become more accountable to citizens.

Evaluating and Sustaining Engagement

Change takes time and requires constant follow-up and long-term relationship building. Therefore engaging with a political party once is not enough. When developing engagement and outreach strategies, it's important to identify and map multiple opportunities that will allow for consistent and frequent engagement. Don't always rely on emails, attending public forums, or in-person meetings but rather mix it up and take a multi-pronged approach to engagement. Using a variety of strategies to engage with parties can help you to identify and prioritize methods that are most successful. Another good practice for sustaining engagement is to plan your activities in advance and within predictable intervals to ensure continuity. Each engagement should also result in clearly defined outcomes. It is nice to meet, but without a clear purpose, sustaining engagement becomes challenging.

After each engagement, continue to apply pressure via social media, press releases and media engagements. This will ensure your issue stays on the radar of the party member or leader you have engaged with and makes it clear to them that this is a priority that won't go away until they act.

In addition to targeting individual decision makers within parties, you should also build relationships with their staff and other relevant individuals in their networks. Outside of meetings and other forms of communication, be sure to invite party leaders and members to your organization's events and activities throughout the year to deepen your relationship and build opportunities for future engagements and addressing other issues together.

As your organization engages decision makers, it's important to regularly debrief with staff after engagements to discuss what went well and what could be improved. In addition to debriefs on each engagement, regularly revisit the short- and long-term goals and assess any progress made. If a goal hasn't been achieved, it may need to be updated to be more actionable, practical or relevant to the context. It may also require a change in approach. After reflection sessions, make any necessary updates to the outreach strategies and keep engaging with the party.

Annex 1: Mapping Political Parties³

Introduction: The below five-step mapping process will provide users with relevant information to differentiate between parties and identify those most likely to support their initiatives as supporters and/or allies. Results from the mapping will also provide users relevant information when developing strategies for engagement and advocacy. The goal of mapping is to categorize political parties **objectively** based on available party documents, rather than seeking to rank and/or rate parties. In some cases, it may be useful to engage a political analyst to support the mapping process and provide reliable information.

Step 1: Preparatory Work

Ahead of the mapping exercise, conduct a desk review of relevant party documents including:

- Political platform/manifesto
- Party website
- Party statutes/bylaws
- Campaign materials including videos of campaigns, social media posts, radio and TV clips
- Party speeches
- Legislative agenda

Many of the above materials will be available online, however consulting party members may be required to fill in gaps.

Step 2: Mapping Party Political Ideology

Once the desk work is complete, fill out the below table in order to classify parties based on their political ideologies. **Political Ideology** is associated with a party's position in relation to the economy and role of government. General premises of classifications are offered below, however it's important to remember that notions of what is considered "right" versus "center" versus "left" will vary greatly from region to region and across country contexts.

- **Far Right** - Tend to promote agendas based on the construction of societies based on class, race, ethnicity, religion, or other cultural and identity-based differences. Parties adhering to a far right ideology tend to favor the interests of businesses as well as uphold nationalist views based on supremacy of a specific social strata. Democracy is often seen as a way to gain power rather than a tool to promote social cohesion and they are suspicious of human rights when seen as contradictory to their political platforms.

³ Adapted from the International Planned Parenthood Federation's **Handbook for Political Analysis and Mapping**

- **Moderate Right** - Tend to promote agendas that uphold or maintain the privileges of a dominant social and/or economic strata. Parties adhering to a moderate right ideology tend to be in favor of a market economy to balance out social inequalities rather than through the use of government-provided social services. Moderate right parties believe in a small, anti-interventionist government and will promote human rights insofar it supports and is not contradictory to their political platforms.
- **Center** - Tends to promote agendas that strike a balance between right and left ideologies, believing in the free market while also supporting government intervention when necessary. Parties adhering to center ideologies tend to believe in broad democratic values and human rights but are not always proactive in upholding these values. During elections, parties may move toward a more center ideology given it is where a majority of the electorate tends to concentrate themselves. However, it is common for parties to shift more right or left as the election circumstances change and evolve.
- **Moderate Left** - Tends to strike a balance between a market economy and government intervention to tackle social imbalances. Parties adhering to moderate left ideologies believe strongly in representative democracy as a way to tackle social injustices. Moderate left parties promote human rights but only marginally incorporate the demands and participation of certain communities.
- **Far Left** - Tends to want to rebuild the structures of government and its relationship with citizens. Parties adhering to far left ideologies see capitalism as an enemy and believe the state must control the economy and public and private businesses to maintain equal distribution of wealth. Far left parties accept human rights but generally in the sense of human rights as a tool to achieve an egalitarian state. In some extreme cases, far left parties can be linked to popular and separatist movements.

Party Name	Far Right	Moderate Right	Center	Moderate Left	Far Left
<i>Ex. XYZ Party</i>				x	

Step 3: Mapping Party Social Doctrine

Upon completion of mapping parties by ideology, fill out the below table in order to classify parties based on their social doctrines. **Social Doctrine** is associated with a party's position in relation to social orders. General premises of classifications are offered below, however it's important to remember that notions of what is considered "conservative" versus "progressive" will vary greatly from region to region and across country contexts.

- **Ultra Conservative** - Party platforms are entirely based on religious doctrines and are grounded in gender and other social norms as well as family values. Ultra conservative parties are intolerant, and sometimes hostile, towards human rights movements and tend to rigidly control freedom of expression, especially in cases that question the established order.
- **Moderate Conservative** - Party platforms are significantly, but not entirely, based on religious doctrines and will superficially include gender equality in their platforms. Moderate conservative parties maintain their distance from human rights movements and tend to only promote freedom of expression as a value of democracy but rarely support legislation that bolsters and expands freedom of expression.
- **Neutral** - Party platforms tend to not be influenced by religious doctrines and only tangentially address issues of human rights. Neutral parties tend to emerge during electoral periods and will seek alliances with larger parties that allow them to remain officially registered. Given their tendency to take on the doctrine of their alliance members, classifying them can be difficult and requires looking at the current circumstances.
- **Moderate Progressive** - Party platforms are based, but not entirely, on human rights as well as cautious acceptance and support of social movements, such as feminism and "controversial" issues such as reproductive rights and the rights of LGBTQI+ communities. Moderate progressive parties support and foster freedom of expression, but are wary of some forms of expression.
- **Ultra Progressive** - Party platforms are entirely grounded in the advancement of human rights and the promotion of "controversial" issues. Ultra progressive parties promote alternative lifestyles and defend freedom of expression in all its forms.

Party Name	Ultra Conservative	Moderate Conservative	Neutral	Moderate Progressive	Ultra Progressive
<i>Ex. ABC Party</i>		x			

Step 4: Mapping Citizen Representation

A. Social Sectors

Upon completion of mapping parties by social doctrine, based on existing knowledge of the country's political parties and the desk review findings, identify the social sector(s) each party seeks to represent and their priority level to that party. When thinking through social sectors, consider things such as education and income levels, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, geographic location, linkages to the private versus public sector, and profession. In cases where a sector may be too broad such as "youth" or "women" consider adding descriptors to narrow down the scope such as "college-education youth" or "stay at home mothers."

Sector and Priority			
Party	Low	Medium	High
Ex. LMN Party	Upper class men, women, youth; businesspeople; business sectors	Religious people; LGBTQI+ communities; Indigenous Peoples; persons with disabilities	University students; civil servants; union members; lower income men, women, youth

B. Geographic Representation

Next, based on existing knowledge of the country's political parties and the desk review findings, identify the regions where parties hold or aim to obtain a base of support and their priority for each geographic location.

Geographic Region and Priority			
Party	Urban	Semi-Urban	Rural
Ex. LMN Party		X	

Given the diversity within each geographic region, consider breaking urban, semi-urban, and rural into further subcategories based on income level and access to public services. For example:

- Urban A - High-income with full access to services
- Urban B - Middle-income with partial access to services
- Urban C - Low-income/extreme poverty with little to no access to services

Step 5: Analysis

With data in hand, overlay the results and identify how the political ideologies and social doctrines of each political party poses opportunities or obstacles to the progress of the community you represent or your advocacy issue. Analysis of the citizen representation mapping allows you to identify the population sectors that make up the electoral base of each party. This in turn will help to understand what messages tend to resonate most with parties as well as to look internally about possible access to these constituents.

Annex 2: Accessibility and Inclusion Audit

An accessibility and inclusion audit can take a variety of shapes and forms - surveys, focus group discussions, one-on-one conversations, etc. Ideally the audit should be done collaboratively with political parties as a way to create dialogue and provide relevant context to questions. For example, a political party member may not know what is considered “accessible” versus “not accessible.” If a collaborative audit is not possible, ensure questionnaires provide ample context and definitions where necessary. In addition, some questions below can be answered through desk research - reviewing party websites and party and platform documents that are often available online. Below is a list of questions that can be utilized to develop an audit specific to the organization’s audit objectives. The list is not exhaustive, but may spark ideas for other questions to raise.

Accessibility

- Is the physical headquarters of your political party accessible for persons with disabilities? Please clarify. (Follow up questions may include whether the building has enough accessible seating, sufficient space for wheelchairs to move around easily, hallways that are clear of obstacles, toilets that could be accessed by people with disabilities, etc.)
- Are the physical headquarters of your local branches accessible for persons with disabilities? Please clarify. (Follow up questions may include whether the building has enough accessible seating, sufficient space for wheelchairs to move around easily, hallways that are clear of obstacles, toilets that could be accessed by people with disabilities, etc.)
- Is the party’s website accessible and in-line with **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG)? (Explain that these guidelines are a globally adopted standard to make websites, apps, electronic documents, and other digital assets accessible to people with a broad range of disabilities.)
- Does the party produce external documents in a variety of accessible formats? (Braille, audio, Easy Read, simple language, etc.) If yes, which formats?
- What means of communication does the party use most frequently to communicate with members and constituents? Are those communications accessible and available in a variety of formats? (Braille, audio, Easy Read, simple language, etc.)
- What types of language does the party use in communication materials when referring to persons with disabilities? For example, does the party use rights-based language in alignment with the social model of disability and international standard set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?
- What types of challenges does the party face when interacting and communicating with persons with disabilities? Are these challenges different based on the type of disability?

Campaigns

- Are campaign materials available in a variety of accessible formats? (Braille, audio, Easy Read, simple language, etc.) If yes, which formats?
- What types of language does the party use in their campaign materials when referring to persons with disabilities? For example, does the party use rights-based language in alignment with the social model of disability and international standard set by the CRPD?
- Do campaign strategies incorporate engagement and outreach to persons with disabilities and DPOs? If yes, please provide an example.
- Are campaign events accessible to persons with disabilities?

Knowledge

- What is the understanding of persons with disabilities within the party?
- Is the party familiar with the articles stipulated within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?
- Is there training available for political party staff at all levels on disability inclusion and accessibility? If yes, is this training mandatory?

Participation

- Can you provide examples of barriers persons with disabilities encounter when seeking to participate politically? Do any of these barriers exist within your party structures?
- Are there beliefs within the party that prevent the party of proactive outreach, engagement and inclusion of persons with disabilities as members, leaders and candidates?
- Has the party ever fielded a candidate that openly identified as a person with a disability? If yes, did that candidate receive equitable financial and resource support during their campaign?
- Are there members within the party that openly identify as a person with a disability? If yes, please explain their roles and responsibilities.
- Are there leaders, and/or advisors within the party that openly identify as a person with a disability? If yes, please explain their roles and responsibilities.
- What measures, if any, is the party taking to promote disability inclusion within party membership? Within leadership? Among candidates?
- Are there strategies to institutionalize articles of the CRPD within the political party?

Platform

- Does the party cooperate with, partner with and/or consult DPOs and persons with disabilities when developing party platforms?
- Does the current party platform mainstream disability inclusion throughout? If yes, please provide an example.
- Does the current party platform include targeted interventions towards advancing disability rights and inclusion?
- Does the party have a signed MoU with any DPOs? If yes, what are the results of that cooperation?

Evidence-Based Action Planning

The results from the audit should be used to develop an action plan to provide the party with a clear road map and next steps for strengthening disability inclusion. The audit can be a one-time process or regularly repeated to monitor progress against the action plan and identify new areas in need of strengthening. Results from the audit can provide a key entry point for DPO engagement, creating space for discussion with parties on how to improve inclusion of people with disabilities in their policies, processes and practices. DPOs can support parties during their evidence-based action planning by identifying areas for improvement and raising awareness among parties about recognized best practices for disability inclusion. Useful guidance questions and examples of action steps can be adapted from NDI's resources on creating **Global Action Plans** with political parties and other tools from **Win With Women: Building Inclusive 21st Century Parties**. CIVICUS' Action Planning Toolkit⁴ also provides step-by-step guidance that can be used by civil society organizations, including DPOs, to assist parties in preparing a comprehensive action plan.

4 CIVICUS, Action Planning Toolkit, <https://www.civicus.org/view/media/Action%20Planning.pdf>

Resources

1. **Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes** - National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems
2. **A Compilation of Political Party Statutes** - National Democratic Institute
3. **Module for Training on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities** - World Federation for the Deaf
4. **The State of Political Inclusion of Persons with Disability within Political Parties in Kenya** - World Federation for the Deaf
5. **Public Policy and Research in Africa** - Susan Mbula Kilonzo and Ayobami Ojebode
6. **Supporting Inclusive Early Party Development** - National Democratic Institute
7. **Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion in Political Party Development** - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the National Democratic Institute
8. **Win With Women Political Party Assessment** - National Democratic Institute
9. **Political Process Monitoring Guidebook** - National Democratic Institute
10. **Action Planning Toolkit** - CIVICUS
11. **Guide to Public Narrative** - Leading Change Network
12. **Developing a Decision Maker Engagement Plan** - National Democratic Institute
13. **Win With Integrity: Earning Citizen Trust in Political Parties** - National Democratic Institute