



PROTECT THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS.

AN ORGANIZING TOOLKIT.

WWW.ME-RAP.ORG/OPIOID-SETTLEMENT



A Note From Our Team.



We believe the people with lived experience of substance use, recovery, and survival have the answers. What's been missing is power and collective organizing. This toolkit is about changing that. This is not just a guide.

It is a call to organize.

Dear Organizers & Friends,

If you have picked up this toolkit you know that opioid settlement funds are a once-in-a-generation opportunity. But let's be real, nothing about this guarantees that the money will be used in ways that actually save lives. There is no automatic justice in this process.

That's why we built this toolkit. We believe the people with lived experience of substance use, recovery, and survival have the answers. What's been missing is power and collective organizing. This toolkit is about changing that. This is not just a guide. **It is a call to organize.**

We are asking you to show up in rooms where decisions are made, ask hard questions, demand transparency, and refuse to let this funding be quietly misused or redirected away from what actually works. Because we do not get a second chance at this.

Once this money is spent, it's gone. And if it is spent behind closed doors, on programs that punish instead of heal, or on strategies that ignore evidence and community voice, the consequences will be real. We will feel them in our neighborhoods, in our recovery spaces, and in the lives of people we love. But it does not have to go that way.

We can **organize**. We can **show up**. We can build **collective power** in every corner of the country. We can make it impossible for decisions to be made without us. This toolkit is here to help you do exactly that. To **map power**. To **bring people together**. To **take action**. To **insist on transparency**.

This is about protecting our communities. This is about honoring the people we have lost. This is about fighting for the people who are still here. And this is about building something bigger than any one of us.

We are in this with you. Every step of the way. **Let's get to work.**

In solidarity,

The ME-RAP Team



Scan for additional information on how to use the toolkit.

How to Use the Toolkit.

This toolkit is not meant to be read once and put on a shelf. It is meant to be used, shaped, and strengthened in real time by the people doing the work. Think of it as a campaign-building guide, one that comes alive through collaboration with people most directly impacted by substance use, recovery, and survival.

Every community is different. Every coalition will look different. That is by design. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this work. This toolkit offers a structure, a set of tools, and a shared language to help you organize. But the real power comes from how you adapt it, challenge it, and build on it together.

Use this toolkit to bring people into the process, not just as participants, but as leaders.

Use it to facilitate conversations, map power, set goals, and take action. Use it in living rooms, recovery spaces, community centers, syringe service programs, and public meetings. Use it to build something collective, something rooted in lived experience, and something that cannot be ignored.

Most importantly, do not do this work alone. This toolkit is strongest when it is used in collaboration. Build with people. Learn from people. Follow the leadership of those most impacted. Let this be a shared process of strategy, reflection, and action.

This is how we turn a moment into a movement.

Scan for additional information on how to use the toolkit.



Opioid Settlement Fund Advocacy Resources.

2026 National Roadmap for Opioid Settlement Funds.

The third annual edition of "A National Roadmap for Opioid Settlement Funds: Supporting Communities & Ending the Overdose Crisis" provides crucial guidance for elected officials, government agencies, and other entities and individuals tasked with the allocation of funds won in settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors. You can download the full roadmap at <https://opioidsettlementroadmap.org/>.

Opioid Policy Institute: Report Fraud & Waste of Opioid Settlement Funds.

This resource is a practical tool for community members and policymakers who want to ensure opioid settlement funds are used the way they were intended. It provides guidance on identifying and reporting waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, while also strengthening transparency and accountability in how funds are allocated and spent. You can find the resource at <https://opioidpolicy.org/osm-accountability>.

State Opioid Settlement Guides (OpioidSettlementTracker & Vital Strategies).

This resource is a comprehensive, state-by-state guide designed to help advocates understand exactly how opioid settlement funds are structured, controlled, and spent. Developed by Christine Minhee of OpioidSettlementTracker.com in partnership with the Vital Strategies Overdose Prevention Program, these guides break down complex funding systems into clear, accessible information for all 50 states and D.C. You can find the resource at <https://www.opioidsettlementguides.com/>.

Maine Opioid Settlement Fund Toolkit.

This resource is a clearing house about taking action in Maine around opioid settlement funding, including information on "Who Holds the Power" (a directory for each funded subdivision), how to provide public testimony at the Maine Recovery Council and other local public hearings, model ordinances and more. You can find the resource at <https://www.me-rap.org/opioid-settlement>.

Understanding the Problem.

Community: Who are you organizing with?

Problem: What problem or challenge is the community facing?



Creating a Shared Solution.

Build Your Team: Who are the 5 to 10 people you will recruit to help create a shared solutions and lead this campaign? Set a date and time!

Goals: What is your shared solution to the communities problem? What are your clear, specific, and measurable goals? How do these goals reflect community needs and evidence-based strategies?

Leverage Communications.

Core Message: What is your clear, compelling message?

Story & Impact: How will you highlight lived experience and community impact?



Leverage Media.

Communications Plan: How will you get your message out? Social media, email updates or newsletters, community storytelling, letters to the editor or opinion pieces? Something else?

Media Relationships: How will you build relationships with local reporters?

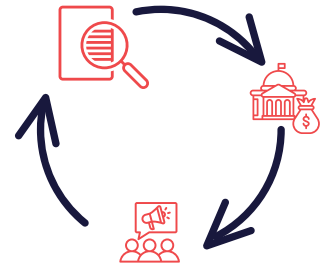
Identify Power Holders.

Decision-Makers: Who controls or influences opioid settlement fund decisions in your community?

- Local elected officials (city council/county commissioners):
- Public health departments:
- Advisory boards or task forces:
- Councils or commissions:
- Other:

Research & Context: What do you know about these decision-makers?

- Priorities:
- Timelines:
- Budgets:
- Past spending decisions:



Identify Stakeholders and Targets.

Stakeholder Mapping: Where do key stakeholders stand?

- Allies (likely to support your goal):
- Opponents (likely to resist):
- Undecided (could be influenced):

Identify Targets: Where should you focus your efforts? Who are the best target(s)?

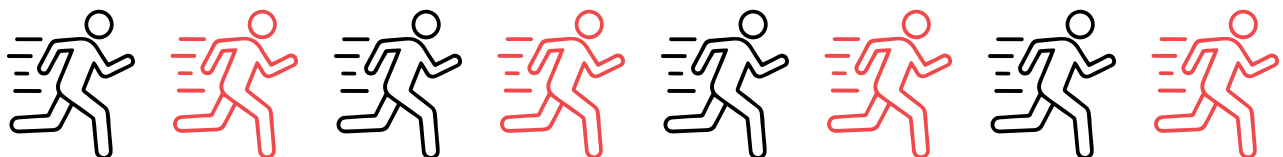
Create an Action Plan.

Strategies & Tactics: What actions or tactics will you use to build support or pressure? Public comment, listening sessions, sign-on letters, protests, submitting funding requests, writing letters to the editor, or something else?

Timeline: What are your key milestones and deadlines?

Team Roles: Who is responsible for what?

Progress & Adaptation: How will you track progress and adjust your plan?



Sustain Momentum.

Wins & Momentum: How will you celebrate wins, big and small, to build energy and keep people engaged?

Community Engagement: How will you keep your community informed, connected, and actively involved?

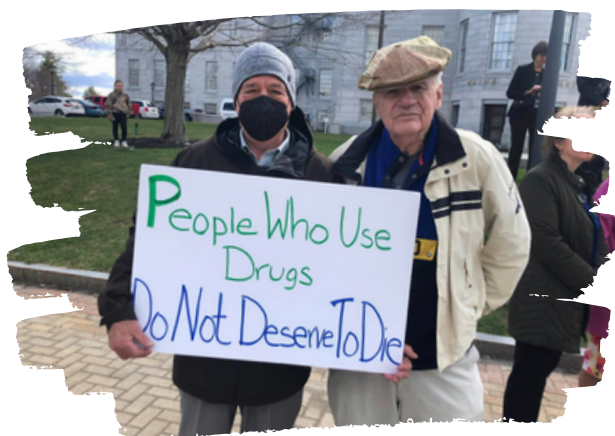
Recruitment: How will you continuously bring new people into the campaign?

Evaluation & Learning: How will you track impact, learn from what's working, and adjust your approach?

Long-Term Power: What structures or systems will you build now to sustain this work beyond this campaign?



Dedicated to Our Elders.



We dedicate this toolkit to the organizers who came before us, the ones who stood on the front lines and fought to bring opioid settlement funds back to our communities.

The trailblazers who refused to accept a system that ignored our people, who organized, spoke out, and pushed forward even when the odds were against them.

We honor those who are still with us, continuing the work, and those we have lost along the way, whose lives and legacies fuel this movement.

This toolkit exists because of you. We carry your work forward with urgency, with purpose, and with a deep commitment to getting this right.

The ME-RAP Team



Contact



Email Address
info@me-rap.org



Office Address
47 Water St,
Augusta, Maine 04330

Donate

Everything we do comes
from the grassroots up,
including our funding.
Please consider a
donation today!



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