

ACF COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

A practical guide for determined citizens to take collective action against pollution and destruction and for a more beautiful world.

How to change the story and **move people to action**



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**



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How to change the story and move people to action.

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Why telling powerful campaign stories matters

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

– DR SEUSS



STORIES MATTER.

They spark our imaginations and help us understand the world and ourselves. Through story, we make sense of complex situations and imagine what is possible.

Stories influence how we choose to act, the decisions we make and what we believe.

A compelling story can engage and grow a powerful community, reconnect people with our living world and move them to take action.

Compelling stories have a good plot with heroes, villains and protagonists. They are simple and believable.

They are 'action-worthy' – they have problems and solutions that really matter to people. The campaign action you're asking people to do is bold but winnable and makes sense as a bridge between the problem we face (such as Adani's mine), and the solution (such as our government rejecting the mine or banks ruling out financing it.)

LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Learn the core principles, tools and techniques to change the story in our *Narrative Handbook: How to tell compelling stories that move people to action*.

Download a copy of the handbook and 'words to embrace, words to replace' guide at www.acf.org.au/narrative-handbook



People's Climate March. Photo: James Thomas.

RESOURCES

Download posters and graphics and get printing

Check out the resources, posters and graphics at
 >> www.acf.org.au/action_resources

Pop up some posters

Stick some posters in your front window at home, ask your local cafe to stick them up or pin them on a public noticeboard in your local library or community meeting space.

Share the love on social media

Download social media shareables at >> www.acf.org.au/action_resources.

Make sure you tag us on Twitter [@AusConservation](https://twitter.com/AusConservation) and Facebook [Australian Conservation Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/AustralianConservationFoundation)

Good places to find free, high resolution, creative commons photos:

Unsplash >> unsplash.com/

Pixabay >> pixabay.com

Splitshire >> www.splitshire.com

The Stocks >> thestocks.im

How to use media to spread the word

"We live in a media culture and whoever controls and influences and uses media the best has the power for change.."

– PAUL WATSON

Irrespective of whether you get a meeting with your MP, coordinate a local action, or just want greater exposure for the message you're trying to convey, local media is a great medium to be heard.

WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR LOCAL PAPER

Letters pages in newspapers are a great way to respond to current issues and get an issue into public view.

Politicians often keep an eye on the letters page and have a file of opinions published in the community newspaper. It is an easy way for them to keep their finger on the pulse of what is happening in their constituency.

Find your local paper's contact details and send your letter through our 'letter to the editor' webpage:

>> www.acf.org.au/letter-to-editor

Capital city and national newspapers receive hundreds of letters to the editor every week. They have a bigger circulation and the competition for the space will be more intense.

Writing to a free, small community newspaper is also worthwhile. Editorial teams are generally small and often look for letters to fill the weekly space, so you will have a good chance of getting your letter published.

Tips to get published

- **Keep your letter short** – Stay under 200 words; some great letters are just 20-50 words. Make a brief, clear and punchy argument that grabs the reader's attention and focus on one important point. Remove every non-essential word. Don't say, "I think..." – it's obvious. This also minimises the chance of editors changing the letter.
- **Be relevant** – link pollution, the reef and clean energy to breaking news and articles published yesterday or today.
- **Try to get your letter in before noon** – it's more likely to get printed.
- **Be creative** – Funny or clever letters are more likely to be published, but avoid sarcasm. Use your own voice.
- **Keep it about the issue** – don't make personal attacks.
- **Include your full name, address and a daytime phone number** with your letter – the paper does not print all of this information but may use it for verification. If you email it, include the letter in the body of the text (not as an attachment).

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Things to avoid

- **Don't overstate or exaggerate your points** – one overstatement makes every following point suspect.
- **Don't get angry** – don't insult the editor, the newspaper, or the authors of previous letters
- **Avoid jargon or acronyms** – spell out any name the first time you use it, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

CALL TALKBACK RADIO

Talkback radio is a great way reach a large number of people from a wide range of backgrounds.

Be prepared!

Listen to the show before you call in. Check out the fix the system and campaign strategy toolkits, write down one or two main talking points about what you'd like to say before you call but don't read them out on air. Talk naturally!

Before you call:

- Have the radio station's **phone number ready**.
- **Find out about the show** – find out which calls work and what the presenter likes and dislikes.
- **Think about the audience** – who are this station's listeners at home, office workers, commuters, families, teenagers or retirees?
- **Prepare key points** but don't read them out; you want to sound natural.
- **Most stations prefer a landline to a mobile phone**. If you're on a mobile make sure you've got good reception.
- **Once you're in the queue, turn off the radio** – listen via your phone (most stations run talkback on a seven second delay and it is really distracting to hear yourself delayed in the background).
- **When you ring in**, you will first speak to a producer who will want to know what you plan to say. You will then either be placed on hold until there is a slot for you to speak or they might call you back.
- **Stay focused** – don't get caught daydreaming in the queue.



People's Climate March. Photo: James Thomas.

When you're on the air

- **Get to the point quickly.** Have your written points nearby as a prompt, but resist the urge to read them out. You'll probably only get about 30 seconds on air.
- **Speak slowly and clearly.** Being on air makes many people nervous. Breathe deep and wait for your turn to speak, don't interrupt.
- **Keep it friendly.** If you're polite even in the face of a presenter or guest who's being abusive, you will come off better for having not taken the bait.
- **Convince the listener, not the host.** It's the presenters job to be provocative – don't take the bait. Take a moment; think about different ways you could reply and what would sound best for the listener.
- **Avoid unduly personal comments** about the host, guest or other individuals. What you say about someone on air, even in the heat of the moment, may be defamatory.
- **Don't just rant or let off steam.** Be constructive and give listeners information about why this matters and what should be done about it.
- **Relax and be natural.** Don't think of it as an interview, but a conversation.
- **Wait until the announcer/guest has finished speaking** before you speak again. If you try to interrupt you may not be heard.
- **Don't overstay your welcome.** You don't have to stay on air for as long as you can. Make your point as clearly and concisely as you can, then be ready to say goodbye.

WRITE A MEDIA RELEASE

Sending a media release to local, state and national media can be a good way to tell journalists about your event, stunt or action..

If your media release is directed at news media, write in their style. Short, punchy sentences, a strong headline, good quotes are all important.

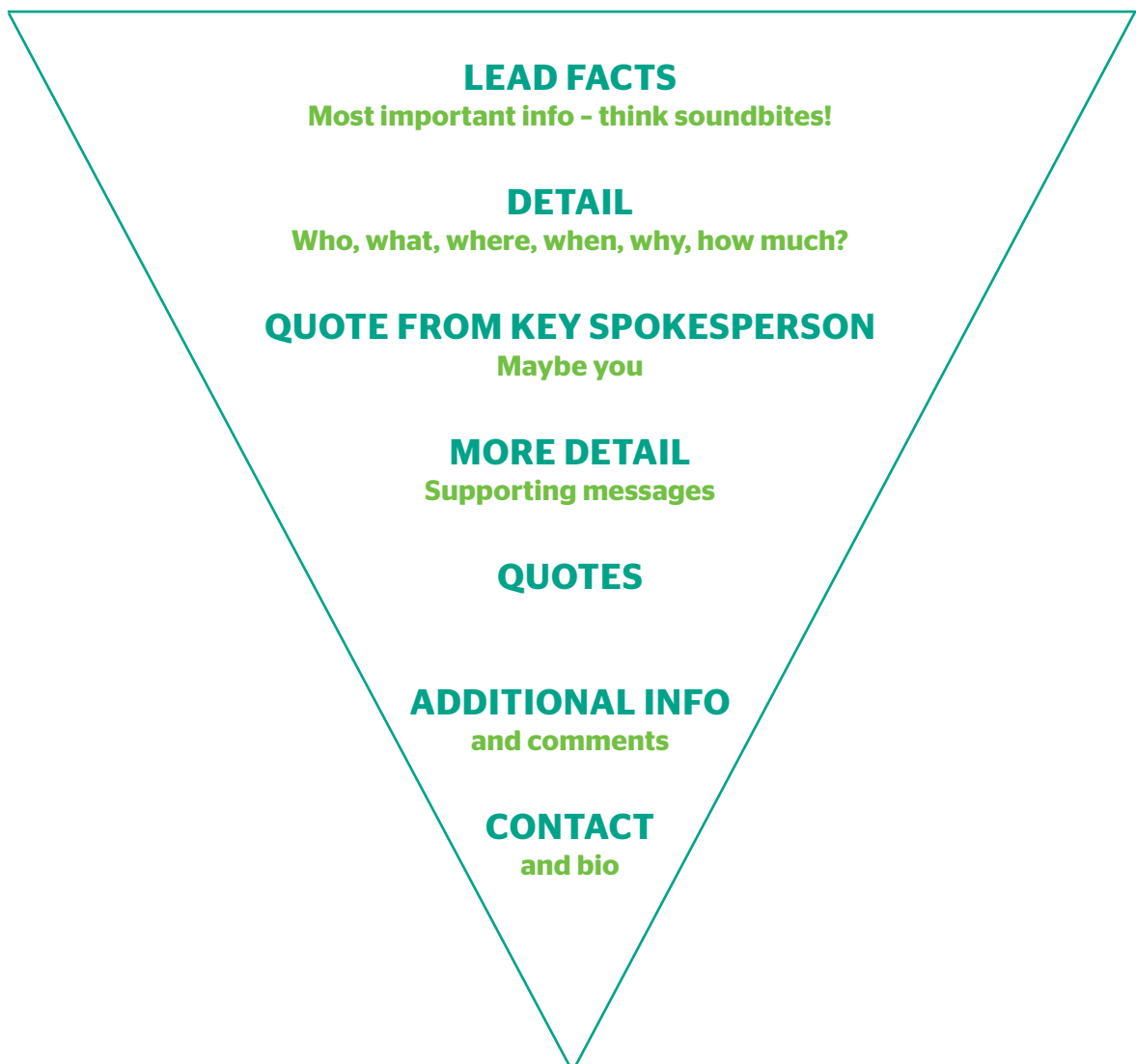
The inverted triangle method is a useful way to structure media releases. Always lead with the most important information right at the top, and include minor, background and less important info lower down.

Your media release should be A4 at most.

Include a short case study if you can – news stories in print media often include a case study as a breakout.

Include your contact information (name, title, group name, mobile number, email, website).

If you have key spokespeople available for interview, include their names and contact details too.



Get the word **out** in your local community

"If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together."

— **AFRICAN PROVERB**

INVITE YOUR COMMUNITY TO GET INVOLVED

Promote your local campaign and invite people to get involved on a community notice board or newsletter

Pop up a poster or flyer on community noticeboards in libraries, community centres, neighbourhood houses, sporting clubs, kindergartens, churches, shopping centres and cafes. Check if you need permission first.

Invite people in your community to your local campaign events in school, church or community newsletters.

Download posters and graphics and get printing

Check out the resources, posters and graphics at
>> www.acf.org.au/action_resources



WRITE AN EMAIL ASKING PEOPLE TO DO SOMETHING SPECIFIC

Sending emails to a list of people is a great way to keep in contact and ask them to specific things like signing petitions and coming to events.

Plan your email

Before you start writing, make sure you know what you're asking for and why:

- **The moment** – is there a reason you're writing this email?
- **The challenge** – what is the problem or issue?
- **The hopeful outcome** – what's our dream or ultimate goal?
- **The ask** – what specific thing are you asking people to do?
- **Your theory of change** – How will we get from here to the world we want to see? Why us? How will the ask make change?
- **The audience** – who are you sending your email to? Do they have diverse interests? Do they share concern about one key thing?
- **The tone** – should this email make readers feel outraged? Inspired? Motivated? Hopeful?

Before you press send

- Ask someone with fresh eyes to proof read your email
- Check all the details (dates, times, contact details) are correct
- Make sure all hyperlinks work



How to structure a campaign email

FROM: Jane Smith

SUBJECT: Brunswickians unite!

SENDER
SUBJECT LINE

Hi [Firstname],

SALUTATION

Begin with the first sentence, to grab your attention.

THE HOOK

Next comes a brief paragraph explaining why you are receiving this email. Is this an urgent moment in our campaign to change the world? A story about something moving? A critical issue that really matters?

**WHY YOU'RE
RECEIVING THIS
EMAIL**

This paragraph explains how together we can make a difference. What's our opportunity? The choice we need to make?

**THE THEORY OF
CHANGE**

Next, I ask you to do a SPECIFIC thing to make the biggest difference for the moment or challenge described above.
Hyperlink this and make it bold.

THE ASK

If I'm inviting you to an event, include details like:

DETAILS

Where:

When:

What:

Give some background or additional information on why it's important to take action together. Maybe bullet points or a quote about what we can achieve. If we all do this thing, then:

**BACKGROUND
INFO**

- We can make this thing happen
- This thing too!
- Which will make this domino fall.

You might include another paragraph if you need to – maybe explain your theory of change in more detail – why doing this thing I'm asking you to do matters now and how together we can make the world a better place.

INSPIRATION

To reinforce the importance of the ask, ask it again.
Underlined and hyperlinked.

ASK AGAIN

Express solidarity in closing

Jane

SIGN OFF

Tips on writing your email

TO	To respect the privacy of people you're emailing, BCC everyone's email addresses.
SENDER	Use your name, or Jane, ACF Community Brunswick
SUBJECT LINE	Your email will sit among hundreds of other emails in an inbox, so think about what would make you open the email. Keep it clear, concise and compelling.
THE HOOK	Keep this short to grab your attention and pull the reader in. The average email is read for just 11.1 seconds before being archived or deleted.
WHY YOU'RE RECEIVING THIS EMAIL	Why are you receiving this email? Be friendly and to the point – don't include too many details, facts or quotes. Keep it focused but evocative. Remember: people are busy and distracted. Why should they care about this now?
THE THEORY OF CHANGE	This is the cause-and-effect. Say what the reader can do and how this will help solve the problem. Why us, why now?
THE ASK	Be as clear as possible. Only include one kind of ask in the email – not 'sign a petition' and 'come to an event.' Ask people to do the specific thing, with a hyperlink to where they can take action/sign up/find out more.
DETAILS	If you're inviting people to an event, include all of the details. Check they're correct!
BACKGROUND INFO AND INSPIRATION	Explain why it's so important for your readers to take action – reinforcing the case. Include personal stories and background info. Be concise and punchy, unless you're painting a vivid picture.
ASK AGAIN	Reinforce your email by repeating the ask. Add a hyperlink.

HOW TO WRITE A PETITION

Petitions are a great way to engage people in your local community and demonstrate public sentiment to decision makers.

Elements of a successful petition

A compelling, achievable goal

This is something specific the decision maker can do. *A more responsive government in Adelaide* is too vague, whereas *fix the potholes on Smith Street* is clear and specific.

Delivered to the decision maker directly

The petition target needs to know how many people care, so try to deliver the petition in person.

Promoted online and offline

Successful petition creators take advantage of the power of the both local communities and the Internet to promote their campaigns.

Taking your petition door to door or inviting people to sign it at a market stall are great ways to connect with your community, have meaningful conversations about the issue and grow people power.

Facebook, Twitter, and online communities also help you reach people who you might not meet in person.

Tips on writing a good petition

The headline

The title is the first part of your petition people will see -- and if it doesn't catch their attention, it may be the last! That's why it's so essential to come up with a few words that are clear, intriguing, and really capture the essence of the petition.

A good petition headline has:

- Less than 10 words – like a newspaper headline

Example: "Buy organic, free-range eggs for your restaurants"

Not: "Stop the inhumane treatment of chickens in battery farms that are force-fed..."

- Attention grabbing with an immediate emotional connection
- Creates urgency
- Include the solution

The petition target

Choose someone directly responsible who actually has the power to make change – a person, rather than a group or an organization.

It's often more effective to target the people who can give you what you want rather than more senior, public figures. Someone directly responsible can make a decision and implement your solution faster. They are also more sensitive to public pressure because they aren't used to it.

- Check spelling, use their proper title
- Keep in mind – the target might visit the petition page (especially if you're creating a lot of pressure), so be respectful.

Tell a story!

Start by going straight to the thing that needs changing without beating around the bush. It may be helpful to articulate it as a crisis that demands our response (this is the story of now).

Resist the temptation to give a long introduction instead of cutting straight to the problem (it's hard!). When in doubt, cut – if you can't tell whether something is essential to include, it probably isn't.

- Be clear and concise. Avoid clutter and unnecessary information.
- Keep your petition short and include paragraph breaks and bulleted lists to make it easy to read (150-200 words).

The ask

Tell people why they should sign and make sure to invite the reader to take your action. It's also helpful to describe any further specifics here of ask.

The stakes

Having high stakes means that participants have a lot to gain or lose from the petition's outcome. Think about the arc of your petition story – What if we win? What if we lose? What will happen?

For example, "I hope I get a coffee, I fear I won't" is a story with low stakes.

However "I hope I get a coffee because I'm exhausted, my dog is sick, and I have no job so can't afford to visit the vet. Without medicine my dog will die. I have a job interview today, but without coffee I'll be foggy and unconvincing. If I get this job, my dog won't die."

There is urgency in this story and a big gap between the hope and the fear. The stakes are high.

Make the stakes of your petition concrete and specific. Think about:

- What do we hope for in the story and what do we fear?
- Why should I care? Why should I sign this petition?

Visual appeal

Add photos or video to your petition to tell a story and create emotional connection.

- Choose photos with a clear, obvious focal point
- Photos of people and animals often work well
- Use large images, not small ones

Good places to find free, high resolution, creative commons images:

Unsplash >> unsplash.com/

Pixabay >> pixabay.com

Splitshire >> www.splitshire.com

The Stocks >> thestocks.im



People's Climate
March. Photo:
James Thomas.

Make your
campaign
visible and **fun**
with creative
activism 

“The way we see the world shapes the way
we treat it...that is the challenge, to look at the
world from a different perspective.”

— **DAVID SUZUKI**

Art can change the world

Some of the most successful campaigns are still remembered for their bold and beautiful imagery and stunts. Creative activities are also a great way to get more people on board with your group – people love making art. Grab a pencil, instrument or soapbox and build some buzz and momentum for your campaign. This is where things get really fun!

COME UP WITH CREATIVE CONCEPTS

Get your group together and brainstorm creative ideas for expressing your campaign. How will you turn your campaign into a visual display? What will your creative action try and achieve? Do you want to attract media? Send a message to your MP? Get your community on board with your campaign? Or come up with core creative imagery so people know and recognise your campaign? Think about your

audience and what you want to achieve, then tailor your concept around that. Come up with a core message or punchy tagline and creative tactics to match.

Create an identity for your campaign so people in your community can recognise it. What kind of images and symbols represent your campaign? How will they attract your target audience? What's your key message?



People's Climate March. Photo: James Thomas.



Reef snap action, Melbourne. Photo: James Thomas.

CREATE A SPECTACLE WITH A PUBLIC STUNT

A visually striking performance or display can really attract attention from the community, your targets and the media. It's a great way to put your campaign on the front page and it's lots of fun!

Create an action plan

Where will your action have the most impact? On social media, outside your MP's office or in public space? On the steps of the local library?

How will you attract your community's attention? How will you disrupt your target? Will you wear costumes? Will you sing? Will you have some people dress up as suns and follow your MP around? Will you deliver your MP coal for Christmas?

Create materials

What materials do you need to make your concept a reality? Banners, costumes, placards, social media

graphics? A giant piece of coal? Big sun costumes? Hold a creative workshop with your group to make props for your campaign. Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

>> art.350.org/resouces/

Capture your stunt

You can reach a far wider audience with your stunt, if you capture it and share it with your networks. Take lots of photos and video and share it on social media or in an email to your supporters.

If you can't get media down to your stunt, try sending a post-action media release with a great photo. You might get coverage if they like what they see.

MAKE YOUR OWN POSTERS AND BANNERS

Posters and banners are a great way to get your message across and spread the word.

Check out these step-by-step instructions on making posters, banners and flags:

>> issuu.com/350.org/docs/artist-guide

Step 1:

Think about what you want to say – keep your message simple, large and legible

Step 2: Gather supplies

- Paint and containers
- Brushes
- Jars of water (to dilute paint and wash brushes)

- An old sheet or tarpaulin to protect the floor/surfaces
- Rags and smocks
- Fabric (calico or cotton work well) or cardboard
- Wooden for poles (lightweight and recycled!)
- Pencils, tape, string, drills, scissors

Step 3: Sketch it out

Hot tip! If you have access to a projector, pin up your banner material (e.g. calico) on a wall and project the image you want on your banner onto the calico. That way you can trace the image straight onto the calico and fill it in later.

Step 4: Get painting!



MAKE SOME PROPS FOR EVENTS

If you're running an event, rally or staff, having some colourful props can be a great way to attract attention and set the tone.

Paper mache is an easy (and wonderfully messy) way to make props – the earth, sun, waves, wind turbines, animals, doves, people. Put them on sticks and hoist them above the crowd.

You don't have to make something big to make an impact. Make many copies of something simple and create a strong and consistent story.

Pick an iconic, recognisable symbol that tells a story and make as many you can. Share them with your friends or bring them to the rally and hand them out.

Make sure your group sticks together, as the many people carrying it become just as important piece of the art as the symbol itself.



START A COMMUNITY ART SPACE

Start a banner making club in the lead up to a big local event or set up a more permanent collaborative creative space.

Creating a space to make art together isn't just about making art, it's a massive movement generator!

Get people working shoulder to shoulder, painting, cutting, sewing and making friends.

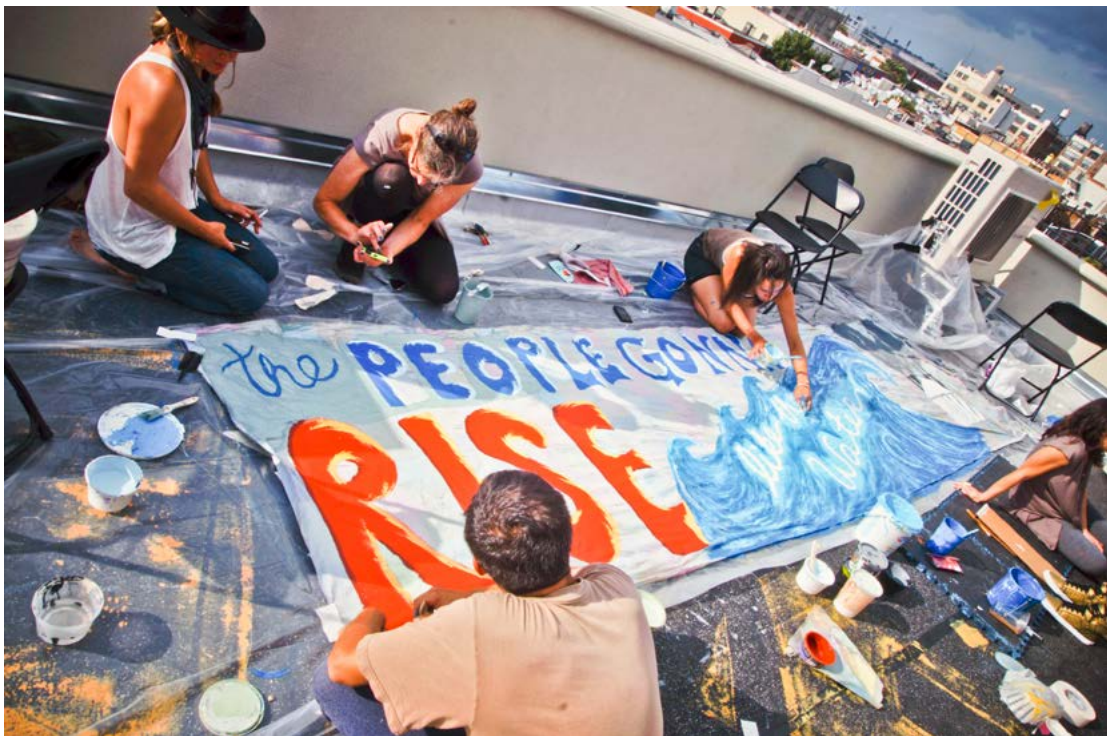
Find a space like a garage, a warehouse or a school or university art room.

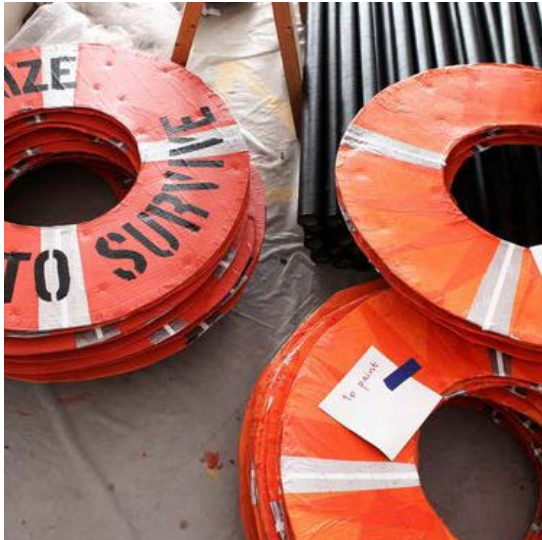
Get some materials – try ebay or op shops, warehouses selling recycled art and craft materials or ask your local craft shop for a donation. Depending on what kind of art you want to make, look out for:

- Cardboard, old corflute signs, fabric, old bed sheets, wooden or plastic stakes, plastic for making stencils
- Paint, brushes, rollers, thick permanent markers
- Smocks, rags, jam jars, plastic containers for paint and water
- Tape, glue, staple guns

Follow this fantastic guide for step by step instruction:

>> www.art.350.org/activist-guide





Creating a world
where **forests,**
rivers, people,
reef and wildlife
thrive 