

## Friends, Allies and Enemies

**Type of activity:** Strategic analysis as part of building an action, campaign or coalition.

**Length:** Flexi - 45 mins – 2 hrs

**Purpose:** This tool is a useful way of sharpening our analysis of where different key individuals and groups are placed in relation to an issue on which we are taking action. Once the positioning of people and organisations is identified, tactics can then be designed to move people along the spectrum towards the group's desired goal. A useful secondary purpose of this exercise is that it can be helpful in building group identity and solidarity.

**Group:** This tool can be used effectively with groups of varying size, although 30 is probably the functional limit.

### Clarification of terms:

*Friends:* Completely aligned with the group's purpose.

*Allies:* Share some of the same views on a spectrum from very close to us on the issue, right through to being almost in the enemy camp.

*Enemies:* Those who are hostile to our cause and will try to stop us achieving our goals.

Note: some people find the use of the term 'enemies' offensive. A group discussion of this can in itself be illuminating, but other terms may be used if deemed more appropriate in a particular setting, for example 'opponents'.

**Facilitator knowledge and skills:** The facilitator needs to be skilled at asking questions which probe participants' knowledge and perceptions of where key players stand on the issue under consideration. Sectoral knowledge can be useful, but not essential.

**Resources needed:** A whiteboard and whiteboard pens, or newsprint, marker pens and tape.

### Instructions:

1. Ensure that the group is clear on the issue which they are addressing. This exercise does not work unless there is agreement in the room on one common cause for which the group is working.
2. Draw a simple 3 column table on the whiteboard or paper.

<u>Friends</u>	<u>Allies</u>	<u>Enemies</u>

It can be helpful to leave the most space in the 'Allies' column.

3. Invite the group to brainstorm who they think should go into each category. The more time that can be allowed for discussion of where a particular group or person sits in relation to the cause being advanced, the more useful and nuanced the results.
4. The analysis can include some individuals as well as groups, but such individuals should clearly be key to a particular place/sector (eg journalist for a particular media outlet, departmental official who will share insider information, particularly friendly MPs, church leaders etc).
5. It is important to point out that individuals and groups will be placed in different parts of the spectrum depending on the issue/cause. For example, a conservative Christian lobby group may be a 'friend' on a campaign to get rid of pokie machines from your community, and an 'enemy' on a campaign for a woman's right to choose.
6. The 'allies' section is the most fruitful part of the exercise, so it is worth taking time to invite people to discuss where a particular group or individual sits on the friends > enemies spectrum.
7. Once as full a picture as possible has been created in the time available, it is important to move discussion to questions including :
  - What does this tell us about how much support we do (or don't) have on this issue?
  - What might we do to persuade more people/groups to shift their position in our favour?
  - What are our next steps to achieve this?
  - If this analysis shows us that we have very little actual and potential support for this particular cause, is there another action/issue/campaign we should be working on to try and achieve our underpinning goals?

This session may well take place after a break, and be done in small groups, before bringing people back to a plenary to share conclusions.

**Facilitation tip:** The more detail that can be gained from this exercise, the better. Encouraging people to exactly name friends, allies and enemies can be slightly scary to start with, but it is worth persisting. Naming is a powerful and clarifying exercise. However, confidentiality can be important. This exercise works best where there is a high degree of trust in the room, and where there is confidence that confidentiality will be maintained around detail, as appropriate.

**Acknowledgements:** This exercise has been around in the same or similar form for many decades, all over the world, and in many settings. We acknowledge all involved in its development and use, especially in the context of participatory adult education for liberation.

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