

## **Analyzing the Political Climate**

As we all know the political environment in a community can have a huge impact on any initiative, whether it is in the school district, city, parish, or county governance. There are many reasons why you need to understand the political environment of your community before you spend too much time and energy promoting a new agriculture education program.

There are many questions that have political implications that you need to ask yourself before pursuing the initiative:

- Who are the decision makers?
- Who has the political clout?
- Who has the greatest influence in the community?
- Who has the greatest financial influence in the school district?
- What is the financial situation of the school?
- What is the history of student leadership opportunities?
- What is the focus of the administration for student activities and curricular programming?
- Are there other opportunities that meet the need in the community?

Each of these questions can have an impact on the students, the school, and the community if they are not addressed. These are only a few examples of the issues that affect the political climate in your community. There are many more that may be more specific to your particular community. Identifying these issues and connecting with people are critical to your success. If you properly plan ahead of time and identify the people or groups of people that may offer support or who may present barriers, you will increase your chances for success.

We have created two worksheets that will help you in the planning of your strategies. The first one, [Partner Priority List](#), will help you determine where to begin your partnership efforts. It will ask you to think broadly about the composition of your community and help you identify partners or potential barriers that you may otherwise overlook. Note that this list is not all-inclusive and has blank spaces where you can add other partners in your school and community.

The second form, [Core Partner Action Plan](#), is derived from the [Partner Priority List](#). You will need to identify the names of those people with whom connecting is a priority, whether they will be supportive or non-supportive. You will need to identify major challenges and develop key messages for each. As you make progress, utilize the action plan to ask, involve, recognize and report to those on the list. Continue this process until the final decision is made.