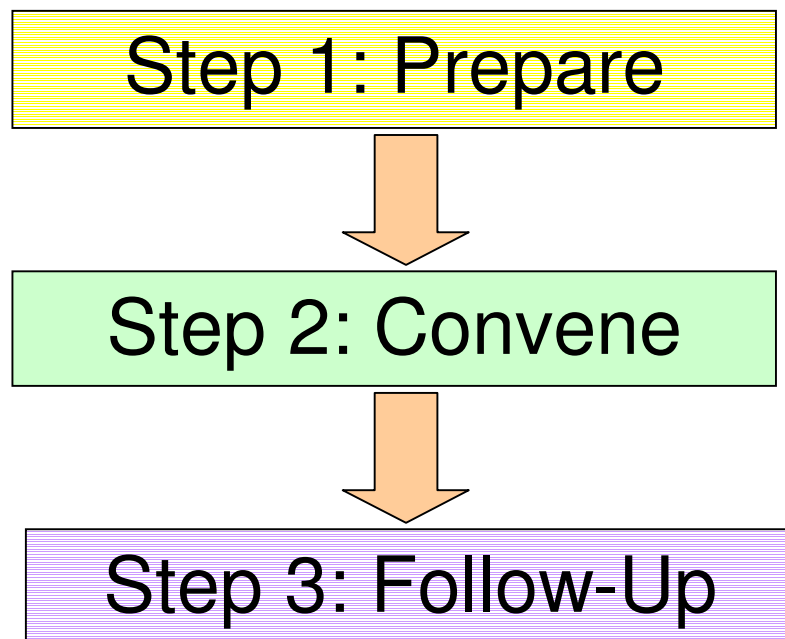




How to Host a Visioning Circle

We are the change we've been waiting for. It is **OUR** responsibility to create our vision for the future.

It's easy! This guide will walk you through piece by piece, but basically it all boils down to three steps:





Step 1: Prepare

Friends,
Are you yearning for a better Colorado, U.S., world? Are you ready to transcend the ways society divides us, and work together to create a proactive, independent movement for change?

I'm hosting a gathering at [INSERT LOCATION], on [DATE] at [TIME]. We'll be envisioning the kind of community, Colorado, and U.S. we want to see.

This event is part of an independent, grassroots campaign, where people like us are meeting all over Colorado to engage in this process. It's being coordinated by a new community group called Let Us Rise. When we're done with the visioning process, we'll publish our ideas on www.letusrise.org, and eventually the results will be coalesced into a unifying collective vision for change. We'll have a chance to give feedback on it, and take coordinated action.

So please come and spend a couple of hours with me. Worst case scenario, you spend a couple of hours eating good food and engaging in a deep conversation that brings us closer together. Best case, we can become part of a movement that is much bigger than us, and help to bring positive change to Colorado and the world. The first step to changing the world is trying a new idea.

Please RSVP to me at [YOUR EMAIL OR PHONE] by [DATE].
Thanks!
[YOUR NAME]

Who? Decide which group of people you want to invite (friends? members from your church? an entire organization?) and make a list of the names. We recommend no more than 15 people per circle. In most cases for personal networks, you can count on one out of every three or four people you invite to show up. That means if you invite 40 people, you can count on 10-13 to attend. If you're hosting this Circle as part of a regularly scheduled event, such as a book club, you can expect the usual number of people to show up.

Where? Home? Office? Church? A local café? Make sure there will be room for everyone to sit comfortably, and ideally a place to post big sheets of paper for brainstorming.

When? Choose a date and time. Many people need 3 weeks notice.

What? Create and send your invite. Decide whether you want to send emails or cards. See the sample invitation at left. The most important thing is to write in your own voice, and to communicate your passion for this movement.

Follow up with a phone call

In this era of too much email, you'd be amazed at the difference a personal phone call makes. It won't take you as long as you think – you'll get people's voicemail most of the time anyway. Call people a few days after you send the invite, and then the day before your circle.

Prepare refreshments and other materials

- Food
- Drink
- Plates, utensils, cups, napkins
- At least 20 big pieces of paper (you can buy flipchart paper at office supply stores. You can even get flipchart paper that is like a huge post-it-note, so you will stick to your walls.
- Tape (if you didn't buy sticky flipchart paper)
- Pens that show up from several feet away – flipchart and dry erase markers work great. It helps people to read the writing if you get at least two colors and alternate with each idea.
- Your agenda (see below)
- Sign-in and demographic sheets (included with sample agenda below.)
- Digital camera and video camera (optional)
- Chairs or cushions for everyone
- Donation basket or hat



Step 1: Prepare

Preparing Your Agenda

1. **Read through the sample agenda** carefully, making sure you are clear on each piece. Make notes and practice speaking on key points – it is important that you be able to convey each point without just reading from the paper. Make it your own!
2. **Agenda item 3:** this is especially important. Prepare what you want to say to explain the Visioning Campaign, and make notes right on the agenda. Remember that the most important thing is to use your own words and to speak from your heart.
3. **Guided visualizations:** practice aloud a couple of times. Your goal is to read it through smoothly. Feel free to change the language so it comes from your own voice.
4. **Multi-media?:** Choose whether you want to include video or audio recordings in your Visioning, and pull together the necessary equipment. Practice using your equipment so it goes smoothly. Refer to Agenda Item 11 for one easy way to do this.
5. **Practice Generosity:** Choose whether you want to pass the hat to help support this movement (#10). If you are uncomfortable asking for money, ask yourself this: who benefits, when we are unable to ask for resources that will create change? If you want to transcend this block, work with this resistance, remembering that the only way this movement will become sustainable is if we all overcome this together. If you decided to do this step, know that people give when they are asked with clarity, integrity and heart. People *want* to support projects that will lead to real change. Rehearsing what you want to say, and make some notes.
6. **Fill in the start and end times for each agenda item** based on the start time for your Circle. Consider when it is realistic to start. For example, if you asked people to arrive at 6, you can aim to start by 6:15. (If it is a potluck dinner, you may be safer starting at 6:30.)
7. **Print** out your agenda, demographic form and enough copies of the sign-in sheet to accommodate all your guests
8. **Don't forget to call and remind people to come!**

Setting up the Space

The circle is, in our experience, the spatial arrangement which best encourages community and honoring every voice equally. It works even better without a table.

Unless you have a flipchart stand, you will probably want to arrange your circle so it touches a wall. You can tape the flipchart paper to the wall in advance and then write up people's ideas easily.

Facilitation and Leadership

What are do great leaders and great facilitators have in common?

- A genuine desire to listen to every voice, to honor every contribution.
- Know that real, long-lasting change comes from this kind of inclusion, rather than suppressing or ignoring opposing points of view.
- Draw people out and invite them to rise into their best selves.
- Don't have a need to talk a lot. When they do speak, it is to provide information or a new direction that will be empowering to the group.
- Are willing to risk trying new things for the good of the whole.
- Egos do not get in the way of the process.

This means that your leap into facilitating a Visioning Circle will also develop your leadership skills. Consider how much more powerful you can be as a leader if you learn to listen deeply to the hopes and dreams of your community.

If you aspire to these traits, take some time before your circle to visualize yourself hosting your Circle. Look at each of the traits above and see yourself embodying them in your Circle.

Facilitation is an art that requires practice, and doing this simple exercise is a powerful first step!



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

A Secret to Great Meetings: Clear Intentions

Take a few moments before people arrive to clarify your intentions for the evening. Some ideas:

- Generate positive visions for our society
- Take people to a new place of hope and connection
- Empower the group to take action together
- In your facilitation, honor every voice

1. Welcome (recommended time: 1-3 minutes)

Write in start time here:

Say a few words about why you invited people to this circle. You help create the space if you speak from your heart.

2. Council Practice to reveal the values we aspire to live by (15-20 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:20-6:35): _____

Council Practice comes to us from many indigenous traditions from around the world. The basic values behind this practice: the group is not complete until every voice is heard, and that true wisdom comes from opening our hearts. We offer four basic guidelines:

Speak from your heart. This is an invitation not to present arguments, but rather to speak from your own personal experience and honor your passion.

Listen from your heart. Give all your attention to the person who is speaking. In our culture this is unusual. You may find yourself rehearsing what you want to say rather than listening. If you notice yourself doing this, simply let go, and bring your attention back to the speaker.

Speak spontaneously. Trust what is alive in you the moment it is your turn to speak. Even if you have rehearsed something else, go with what is alive right *now*. People will find it easier to listen to you. TRUST THE PROCESS – SOMETHING **WILL** COME TO YOU!

Speak leanly. This isn't about an actual length of time, but an invitation to use only the words you need, to convey what is alive in you in the moment.

Council Question, Round 1: Share your name, and something you did in the last week or so that embodies the way you want to live in this world. (It does not have to be a big deal. Change is made up of a lot of little actions.) [HOST: MODEL THIS BY GOING FIRST, THEN GO AROUND IN A CIRCLE]

Council Round 2: Reflect on what you shared in the first round, and share 3 or 4 values that underly that act. (You don't need to explain – just share the values.) If someone else has already named your values, it's okay to repeat them. [HOST: AGAIN, MODEL THIS BY GOING FIRST.]

(QUIETLY WRITE UP VALUES ON FLIPCHART)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

3. Explain the Visioning Campaign (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:35 – 6:45): _____

Please take some time to read about this campaign at www.letusrise.org. Figure out what you want to say and how you want to say it. Below are some key points to cover, and you can jot down some notes in the extra space:

How and why the Visioning Campaign started

Let Us Rise and the Visioning Campaign:

- groups all over Colorado and the US are hosting these Visioning Circles
- multi-media website
- All are welcome to participate: individuals, organizations, churches, other groups.
- It's easy to participate – all you have to do is get your friends or organization to envision the kind of society we want to see
- You publish the results of your circle at www.letusrise.org

Next Steps: Let Us Rise will work with us to find the common ground in our visions, coalesce the results into an independent, proactive vision for change, and then figure out what action we want to take

Why I care, why I am hosting this Circle:



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

4. Introducing the Visioning Process (3 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:45 – 6:50): _____

Our culture tends to value analysis more than creativity. In this two-step process, we will make room for both of these sources of inspiration.

In step 1, we will be doing a silent, guided visioning exercise that invites the more creative, intuitive part of you to participate. There is only one guideline for this part of the process: **trust what comes**. Some of you may see actual images; some may “sense” images; some might feel a certain way and some folks may not respond to this part of the process at all, or may only have a glimmer of an experience. All of this okay. Trust that whatever comes to you is perfect, and that the collective wisdom of our group and other groups will generate all that is needed.

(Hosts: if you really don't want to do this part at all, that is alright. We encourage it, because it elicits answers that are very different from brainstorming alone, but it is not required.)

In Step 2, we will share the visions we had as well as brainstorm new ideas. There is only one guideline for this portion of the process: **There are no bad ideas; all ideas go up on the paper**. If you hear something you don't like, try to figure out how to share *your* vision, rather than arguing with the other person about his/her vision. If people start to argue, let's all remember this rule and re-direct the conversation to sharing our positive vision.

5a. The Community We Want To Live In: Guided Imagry Process (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:50 – 7:00): _____

(Read slowly in a calm, centered voice:)

Get in a comfortable posture, feet on the floor, hands relaxed in your lap or in front of you.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. As you breathe, become aware of your body and feel yourself relaxing. Breathe normally and relax, with your eyes closed.

(Wait a minute for the room to become still.)

Now picture yourself in your house or apartment on a relaxed Sunday morning. Your apartment is comfortable and reflects you. You have had a deep sleep, have woken up to a bright sunny day and look forward to a whole day that is free.

(Wait some seconds for these thoughts to settle)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

Community Visioning, cont'd

You are at your front door, about to walk out of it. You have been working for a long time with your community to make it a better place, to heal it, to reflect the life-giving values you cherish. Your work has been successful, and your community has changed over time to become a place that reflects and supports the best in all of you. Your community now is a place that helps everyone develop the gifts they have to offer. This community is a place that is attractive, pleasing to be in. It is a healthy place for people and the planet. It fosters respectful relationships between very different people. You are about to take a walk in that community. (wait a moment)

Open the door and step onto your front porch. What do you see on your street? Take a minute to envision the best street you can imagine, a street you want to live on. What do you see on it? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? (wait a moment)

Is there any traffic? What kind of traffic is there on it? (wait a few moments) Are there people? What are they doing?

Now you walk to a special place in the community. This is a space where you frequently find the things you need in your life. What does this place look like? What do you find there that helps you live the way you really want to live? Who is there with you? What are you doing? Take a minute to envision yourself finding the things you need most in your life, whatever they are. (Wait some minutes for these images to appear)

Now let your mind visualize the community systems and processes you have created, that make all of this possible. (wait a few moments)

What is the culture of the community? How is it created? (wait a few moments after each of the questions that follow)

What systems are in place to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education? What do these systems look like?

How are children raised? What do families look like? Do they support each other?

How is the land treated?

How are visitors treated?

How are community decisions made? Are there laws?

When you are ready, open your eyes. (When everyone has opened their eyes, proceed.)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

5b. Sharing our Vision and Brainstorming the community we want to live in (20 min.)

Write in start and end time (7:00 – 7:20): _____

Now we are going to share what we envisioned. And, if **any new ideas come to you, about the kind of community you want to live in, please share these as well.**

WRITE VISIONS ON FLIPCHART. You may want to identify someone to help you write these, to ensure writing doesn't slow down the group. When you fill up one sheet of paper, tape it to the wall and start on another.

Don't allow the group to go over 30 minutes!

If people are still full of ideas, remind them that these visions will be posted online, and you can comment on the vision to add more ideas.

This is a great time to take some digital photos for the internet.

6a. The Country we want to Create: Guided Imagery (20 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 7:20-7:25): _____

(Read slowly in a calm, centered voice:)

Now once again, get in a comfortable posture, feet on the floor, hands relaxed in your lap or in front of you. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. As you breathe, become aware of your body and feel yourself relaxing.

(Wait a moment for the room to become still.)

Now imagine that your community is one of thousands of communities all over the U.S. which have participated in this community renewal process over the last several years. (take a moment for this idea to settle.)

After these local processes, the various communities then convened in a national gathering, to launch a process to remake America. The goal was to remake America so that it reflected our deepest values. So that our country, and the systems in our country, our foreign and domestic policies, all reflected these values. (take a moment)

The process involved listening to everyone and bringing out the best in all of us. It invited all people to participate in creating this change. The change was rooted in authentic relationships and a network of healthy communities. It came from the bottom up. It was hugely successful. (wait a moment)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

6a. The Country we want to Create: Guided Imagery (cont'd)

You are now going to a gathering in _____ (insert your state), one of many identical gatherings being held around the country, to celebrate the achievements of this process. You are excited and happy about what it has accomplished. You feel great pride in your country, and deep gratitude to live here.

You eagerly walk toward the space where this gathering is to be held. You see many people milling around, all of them excited as well. You take a seat, the lights dim, and images of a renewed America flash across the screen. (wait a moment)

What are those images? (Wait some minutes for these images to appear before going on to specific questions below)

You see images of government. What does the government look like? Who is participating? How do they participate? How are decisions made?

You see images of our relationships with other countries. What do they look like?

You see images of our economy in operation. What are these images?

You see images of various forms of media. What do they look like?

Keep allowing yourself to see images of various national systems, renewed. (wait a few moments)

When you are ready, open your eyes. (When everyone has opened their eyes, proceed)

6b. The Country we want to Create: Sharing Visions and Brainstorming (15 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 7:25-7:40): _____

Now share what you saw, and any ideas that come to you now, about the kind of country you want to create.

WRITE VISIONS ON FLIPCHART. (You may want to identify someone to help you write these, to ensure writing doesn't slow down the group. When you fill up one sheet of paper, tape it to the wall and start on another.)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

7. How do we get there?: Guided Imagery and Brainstorm (20 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 7:40-8:00): _____

(Read slowly in a calm, centered voice:)

Close your eyes one last time. Breathe. Feel your feet on the floor.

Remember the community you envisioned. Remember that you were involved in a multi-year process with other community members to recreate your community so that it reflected your deepest, most cherished values. Remember that the *process* of renewing your community was in line with these values at every step of the way. It honored every voice, it brought out the best in everyone. It created the change you were yearning for, in every action you and your community took.

See yourself in the midst of this process. See yourself at an event that is part of this process. (wait a moment)

If an event isn't coming to you, here are some ideas: you might be at a community meeting, planning a next step. You might be at a construction project. You might be at a gathering where people are sharing their hopes, fears and vision (wait a moment, and then wait a moment after each of the following questions).

How are people relating to each other in that space?

How are *you* acting in that space? What are you giving to the process?

How did this renewal process get started?

How did you get involved?

How did you reach out to others and get them involved?

What action steps did your community take?

What gifts do you contribute?

When you are ready, open your eyes. (When everyone has opened their eyes, proceed.)

Now please share what you saw, how you brought this change about. You may share any new ideas that come to you now as well.

WRITE ACTION IDEAS ON FLIPCHART.



Step 2: Convene Visioning Circle Agenda

7. Reflections (5 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 8:00-8:05): _____

Thank you for participating! Please reflect on this process. What worked for you, what didn't work? (allow a few minutes of discussion)

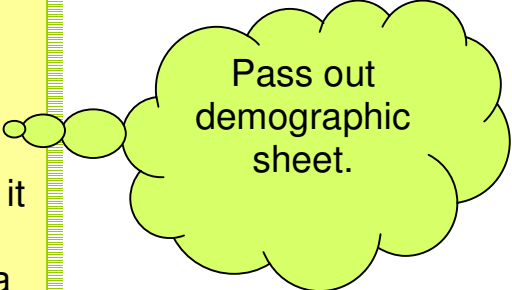
8. Publishing Our Vision (5 min.)

Write in start and end time (8:05-8:10): _____


I will publish our vision on the website,
www.letusrise.org.

In order to check how we're doing in reaching all people, Let Us Rise is tracking demographics. This is an optional form – if you are uncomfortable filling it out, you don't have to. Just put a tally next to every group you identify with – and multiple tallies within a single category are okay.

Our vision will be more powerful if we are willing to put our names by it. I am passing out a sign-up sheet, please put your name down, but if you don't want your name to appear by our vision, just make a note by it on the sheet and I'll be sure it is not published. You can also check boxes if you want to receive monthly email updates on the visioning campaign, and if you are interested in hosting a Visioning Circle yourself.



Pass out
demographic
sheet.



Pass out the
sign-up
sheet.



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

9. Action and Commitment to your Vision! (15 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 8:10-8:25): _____

The Visions you created tonight are beautiful. Now that we have given voice to these visions, we have an opportunity to make them reality. Let Us Rise suggests a two-part action plan, that can be repeated as many times as we want:

- 1. Choose one of our visions that we actually have the power to make a reality in our community, and then work together to make it real.**
- 2. Facilitate this Visioning process with others who have not had a chance to go through this process.**

This two-step process supports us in developing our leadership: we first empower ourselves to create positive change in our community, and then we empower others.

So this Visioning Circle now has a choice: do you want to let this process end here? Or do you want to meet again, in a week or two, to pursue these action steps?

(Allow a few minutes for discussion. This time is NOT to discuss which vision to implement, but whether the group wants to meet again to decide which vision to implement. It is best to let all the new ideas sit for a week or two, so the group can come back refreshed—and so that individuals are not overly attached to their own ideas.)

If the group decides to meet again:

- Let Us Rise is founded on a commitment to sharing power, and empowering everyone. In this spirit, we need someone new to host and facilitate the next meeting. (Ask for volunteers and nominations, and have group choose a new host/facilitator.)
- Choose a meeting date and time within two weeks, and venue.
- Go around the circle and get firm commitments from everyone who wants to continue with the process, that they will attend this next meeting.

The new host is responsible for sending out a follow-up email with date, time, venue, and for calling people to remind them. Make arrangements so that the new host has all the contact info, and get their commitment to do this within three days.

(This process for setting next meetings will work over and over again!)



Step 2: Convene

Visioning Circle Agenda

10. Optional: Practice Generosity, Build a Movement (3 min.)

Write in start and end time (8:25-8:30): _____

WRITE NOTES ON WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY. SPEAK CLEARLY FROM YOUR HEART!

(For example: Let Us Rise is funded entirely by people like you. We want to be accountable to a grassroots movement, and so we are asking everyone who participates in a visioning circle, if you believe in this process, please give generously, so that you “own” a piece of this movement. This is why I am supporting Let Us Rise, and am donating \$____. It’s also a chance to transcend the way we are taught to treat money in our culture – hoarding it! – and instead practice generosity and funding our values.) **If you’d like to write a check, please make it payable to Community Resource Center, and write Let Us Rise in the memo line.**

(Pass the hat. Or, invite people to leave money in a hat placed by the door.)

11. Optional: Multi-Media Soundbytes! (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 8:25-8:35): _____

You’re welcome to do whatever you want, we welcome your creativity! Video, audio, or even digital photographs will add a lot to your vision submissions.

Here is a very simple way of adding video to your vision with nothing more than a digital camera with video capability and literally a couple of extra minutes of time:

- 1) Ask each person to think of their favorite idea from the visioning
- 2) Prepare each person to say their name and then the idea (“Hi, my name is _____ and my favorite idea from tonight was...”)
- 3) Let people know you’ll film one person after another, around the circle.
- 4) Record each person in one take – don’t hit stop on the record button. Then you don’t have to edit the video or audio, you can upload it just as it is.

11. Close (5 min.)

Write in start and end time (8:35-8:40): _____

Suggested closing process: go around in a circle, and ask people to share a sentence or two about how they’re feeling.

Thank you for participating!



Including Everyone

Without full participation from diverse communities, the People’s Platform will not be complete. We invite you to help create a truly inclusive People’s Platform by including demographic information about yourself. This allows us to see how we’re doing. Your information will not be displayed publicly.

This is optional.

Put a tally mark next to all that apply to you.

Demographic Info	Put a tally in this column if you identify as...
Race	
Latina/o, Chicana/o, Mexicana/o	
Black and/or African American	
White	
Native American, Indigenous	
Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander	
Middle Eastern	
Gender	
Female	
Male	
Trans	
Other	
Age	
Under 18	
18-25	
26-40	
41-54	
55-65	
66+	
Sexuality	
Straight	
LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning...)	
Other	
(more, see next page)	



Including Everyone

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Income/Class	
Low Income	
Working Class	
Middle Class	
High Income/Wealthy	
Religion and Spirituality	
Christian – Protestant	
Christian – Catholic	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Buddhist	
Hindu	
Atheist or Agnostic	
Native American	
Earth-Centered Spirituality	
Spiritual but not strongly identified with a particular tradition	
Other	



Step 3: Follow-Up

FOLLOW-UP

To make sure all of your great work doesn't go to waste, complete these steps **within one week** of your circle:

1. **Follow-up on the action.** If your group decided to pursue action steps, ensure the new host/facilitator has all the contact info s/he needs, and that s/he sends out a follow-up email with the meeting info within 3 days of the Visioning Circle. It is also a good idea to call people the day before the follow-up meeting to remind them. Note that there is no guide to hosting this second meeting. You are creating this process as you go! The one recommendation we have for you, is to choose a vision that feels doable, that you can actually accomplish in a few weeks' time.
2. **Publish your work to letusrise.org!** This includes values, visions, action ideas, names, contact info, demographic info, any photos, video or audio submissions. Go to www.letusrise.org and click on the Participate section. For each category, create questions that capture the essence of what your group did. For example, for the Council Practice exercise, you might write "What values do we aspire to live by?" as the question, and then list the values as your answer. For the community visualization and brainstorming process, you might write, "What does the community we want to live in look like?", and then list everyone's visions and ideas.
3. **Send donations** to Let Us Rise, c/o Community Resource Center, 655 Broadway, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80203. If people donated cash, please pool it together and write a single check for that amount. Make checks payable to Community Resource Center, and write Let Us Rise in the memo line.
4. **Send a thank you email** to the folks who participated, with a link to your vision on letusrise.org.