



## **Spectrum of Allies Tool<sup>1</sup>**

### **Process, Definitions and Tactical goals**

The *Spectrum of Allies* tool is used for further understanding Sun Tzu’s directives regarding “**Know the Terrain**”, “**Know Yourself**” and “**Know Your Adversary.**”

It is not humanly possible to work on every identified relationship on your tactical map at the same time. We, personally as well as our organizations, have limitations of time, energy and resources. This is why the tactical map and the spectrum of allies tools can be so useful to your decision-making process. The visual map now gives you a “birds-eye view” of the many potential relationships involved and each of these is also a potential target for action.

The “Spectrum of Allies” provides a critical opportunity to define the stakeholders involved in an issue. In addition, we often assume that everyone in an institution, organization, group or community will respond in the same way. In reality, this is not true. The “Spectrum of Allies” tool helps us to better understand this reality and examine our potential course of action.

Objectives:

- To encourage more optimistic and realistic efforts by narrowing the focus.
- To identify the stakeholders – people, groups, organizations and institutions that are already involved in the issue.
  - To identify those who are most likely to be allies and opponents.
  - To help participants realize that tactics need to be planned in relation to how much they do or don't attract key allies.
  - To understand that it is not necessary to “win over” opponents to have successful movement on your issue.
- To narrow the focus for realistic action (resources, capacity, time, etc).
- To clearly identify and agree upon a specific target for action.

New Tactics combines the tactical map with an adapted “Spectrum of Allies” tool to provide a concrete way to use all the relationships identified on the tactical map and consider where each might position themselves on a ‘spectrum’ – ranging from an active ally to an active opponent. New Tactics has found the spectrum tool to be particularly helpful in raising awareness to the diversity of positions and the possibilities for gaining new allies.

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<sup>1</sup> The original “Spectrum of Allies” from Training for Change ([www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org)) identified seven segments: 1) Active Allies; 2) Passive Allies; 3) Friendly Neutrals; 4) Oblivious Neutrals; 5) Hostile Neutrals; 6) Passive Opponents; and 7) Active Opponents. New Tactics modified the spectrum to five segments and including only one “Neutral” segment.

The Spectrum of Allies tool assists advocates in being as specific as possible regarding their target. This in turn makes the identification of potential tactics more realistic. For example, a group may identify a specific institution to be targeted (e.g., the department of education). It is important to remember that an institution is made up of *people*. The “tactical map” tool can be used again to “map” the institution itself and identify the people who have:

- Positions of power
- Influence with or over those people with power
- Personal relationships with those identified on the previous tactical map
- Personal relationships with the advocates to help them gain introduction and access to the people inside the institution.

This process can further clarify how collaborative efforts among organizations can proceed. Organizations can explore together:

- An overarching strategic goal (but even this is not essential for collaborative efforts).
- Different targets that fit each organizational strategy and resources available to their organizations.
- Organizational goals on the issue and their rationale for choosing a specific target(s).
- How they can avoid duplication of efforts as well as enhance the ability of other organizations to provide support and resources to each other when needed.

**Time:** 1 hour

**Materials needed:**

- Completed tactical map from the previous exercise.
  - Participant Hand-out with the “Spectrum of Allies” diagram (provide to small groups following the overview of the process), Pages 35 - 37
  - Large sheets of flip-chart, newsprint, or construction paper that can be taped together to make larger sheets
  - “Post-its” (at least 4 colors and at least 3X3 size) – or small size pieces of different color paper
  - Markers or crayons
  - Masking tape
  - Floor or table space for working on the maps and wall space to display the Spectrum of Allies beside the Tactical Maps.
1. Demonstrate the meaning of the tool by using a large piece of paper or a white or black board. Draw a horizontal line. Then draw a half-moon or half a pie with wedges (See the figure above or Figure 9 in the Methodology Guide, page 23 for more in-depth information) but leave the “wedges” un-named at this point.
  2. Use the issue from your previous tactical map demonstration. Suggest a demand we might have and ask who in society might be inclined to be most supportive, least supportive, and in the middle.
  3. Describe the idea that in most social change situations there is a struggle between those who want the change being proposed and those who don't. Those who want the change (allies) are represented by a + (plus sign) at one side of the sheet, say, on the left side of the paper, and those who don't want the change (opponents) represented by a – (minus sign) at the other side of the paper.

4. Give the good news: In most social change campaigns it is not necessary to win the opponent to your point of view, even if the power holders are the opponent. It is only necessary to move some or all of the “pie wedges” one step in your direction. For example, you can use the illustration of a childhood game, “see-saw” or “teeter-totter” that illustrates this concept of “tipping the balance.” (See Figure 11, in the Methodology Guide, page 24) If we shift each wedge of the spectrum one step in the “allies” direction, we are likely to win, even though the people on the other side don't budge.
5. Then complicate the picture slightly: Sometimes polarization happens, and the people, organizations, institutions in the wedges closest to the opponent move away from you and toward the opponent. You can still win, if enough of society – the people, organizations and institutions in the wedges - takes a step in your direction.
6. Now, use your “spectrum” to NAME the “wedges” or categories and describe each of these segments.
7. Use your sample tactical map and the “post-its” of the relationships developed. Pick a “post-it” and discuss with the group where it should be placed on the “spectrum”. Show the process of making a NEW “post-it” (to keep your tactical map in place). Choose a number of relationships from your tactical map that will show how they would be placed in the different “wedges” of the “Spectrum of Allies” tool (Active Allies; Passive Allies; Neutral; Passive Opponents; Active Opponents).
8. Ask for any questions and discussion on the tool before the group creates their own Spectrums.

## **Spectrum of Allies – Descriptions of each segment:**

**#1 Active Allies:** these are the “actors” you feel ALREADY support the goal/objective you are trying to reach.

NOTE: If you are targeting those in this area, you want your tactics to strengthen the solidarity, unity, joint activity, etc with those in this area of the spectrum. Your goal is to keep them in the “Active Allies” area on the spectrum and even increase how active they are in working toward your goal/objective.

**#2 Passive Allies:** these are the actors you feel are LIKELY to support or have some similar goals/objectives to those you are trying to reach.

NOTE: If you are targeting those in this area, you want your tactics to increase the ways in which you can create more interest and investment to build more solidarity, unity, joint activities, etc with those in this area of the spectrum. Your goal is to move them into the “Active Allies” area on the spectrum.

**#3 Neutral (Passive):** these are actors that may not have a clear investment, interest, or perhaps knowledge of the situation so they don’t take a stand on your goal/objective one way or the other.

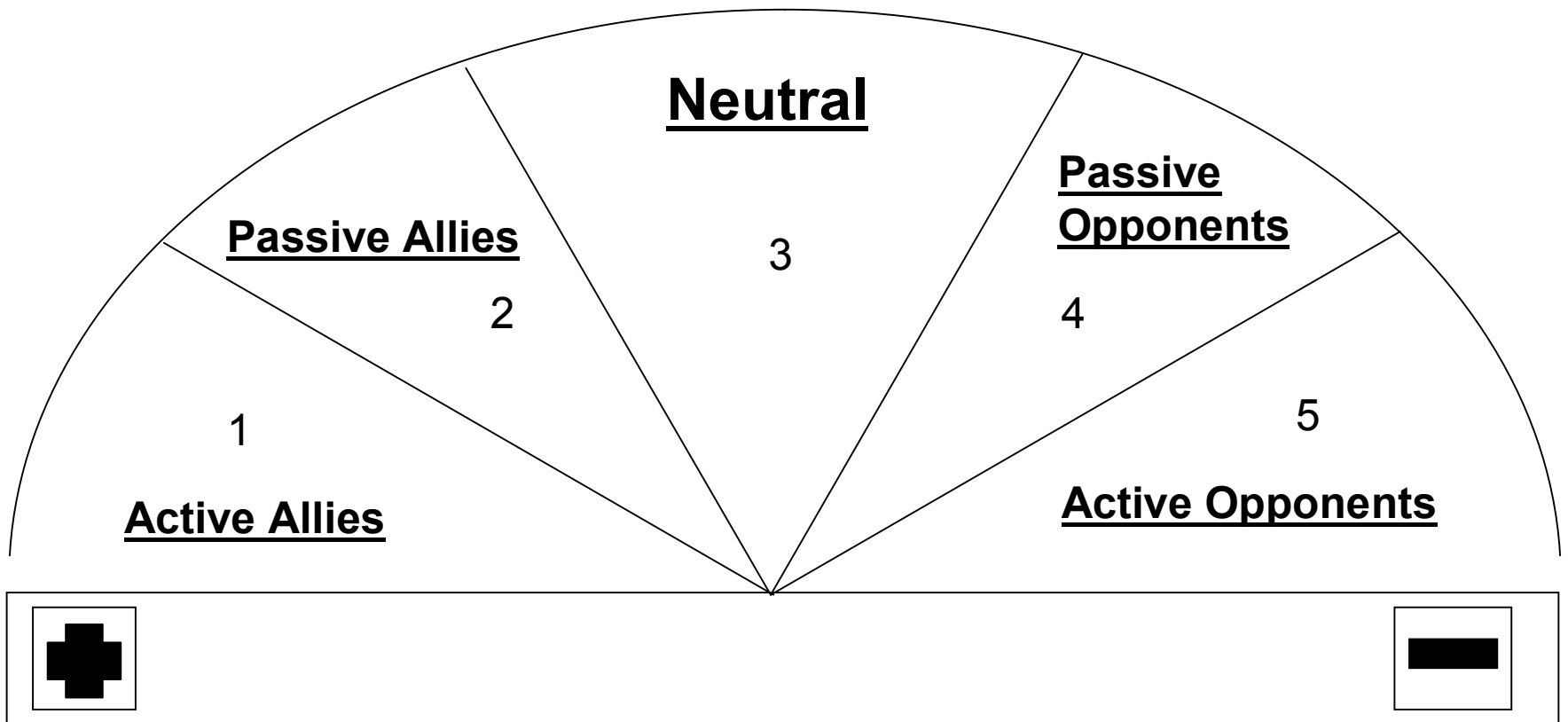
NOTE: New Tactics adapted and compressed this category. The original spectrum from Training for Change indicated 3 segments within the Neutral range. New Tactics believes that those placed in this position, will likely not move in one direction or another until you actually choose a tactic and move to engage them. Therefore, if you are targeting those in this area, you want your tactics to educate, appeal to, and move people to take a *favorable position* on your goal/objective—with the goal of moving them at least into the “Passive Allies” position on the spectrum. You want to win over or at least neutralize uncommitted parties so they don’t become your opponents.

**#4 Passive Opponents:** These are actors that have a significant enough level of doubts about your goal/objective that they do not support what you are doing. They are not yet actively opposing you, but they are not necessarily neutral about what you are doing.

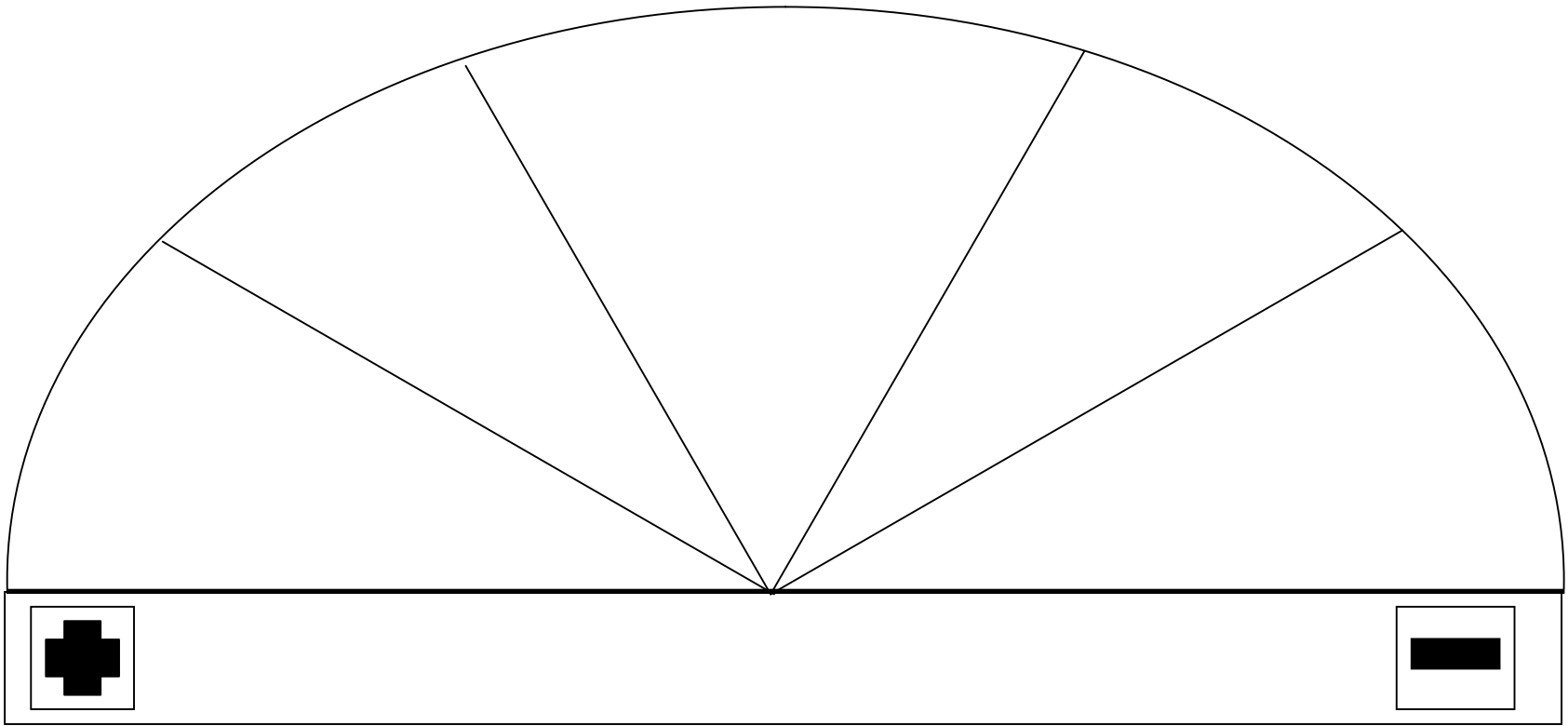
NOTE: If you are targeting those in this area, you want your tactics to at least arouse doubts about their own position or interests regarding your goal/objective—with the goal of moving them into the “Neutral” area of the spectrum. You want “Passive Opponents” to be “neutralized” and not create opposition to your goal/objective or increase the power of your opponents.

**#5 Active Opponents:** These are actors that have a significant opposition to your goal/objective, so much so that they are ACTIVELY working against you. They have an investment and stake in defeating your goal/objective.

NOTE: If you are targeting those in this area, you need tactics that would “divide and conquer” the opposition or significantly raise the stakes of their opposition in order to move them into the “Passive Opponents” area. You would be looking for tactics that would create situations that would be very costly (politically, financially, morally, etc) for your opponent if they actively oppose your goal/objective.



New Tactics adapted Spectrum of Allies (original from [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org))



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