



COALITION BUILDING

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Coalition building

Q. What are the benefits of working in a coalition?



Coalition building

Coalitions are groupings of different organizations pursuing a common cause in a coordinated fashion.

Coalitions are useful in advocacy work because they enable organizations to:

- Share resources;
- Involve a larger number of actors to widen outreach and have a bigger impact on the policy process;



Coalition building

- Achieve synergy ($1+1=3$). This is achieved through scale economies, more efficiency (reduced wastage of resources), more effective use of resources (better targeting of resources) and louder voice;
- Reduce competition for funding and support;
- Benefit from strength in diversity because different groups bring different skills, knowledge and resources to the coalition.



Coalition building

Coalitions are a good way of creating successful change within a community because they represent an array of local interests and bring together organizations and individuals to build a power base that works to influence social change of a Mutual concern. They help build consensus on a particular policy issue.

Coalitions could be:

- permanent or temporary;
- single or multi-issue.



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Although coalitions are useful, they may have **handicaps/limitations** as well:

- It may take longer to agree on issues;
- They may mean partners organisations have to give up something (time, resources, control, etc);
- Have to deal with conflicts.



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Why do people get involved?

People will be interested in a coalition because they believe:

- The issue is important to them;
- They have something to contribute and their participation will make a difference;
- They will be listened to and their contributions respected;
- There are multiple opportunities for participation at different levels and in different ways.



Coalition building

Successful coalition building entails:

- Analyze the program's objectives and determine whether to form a coalition.
- Recruit the right people.
- Devise a set of preliminary objectives and activities.
- Anticipate the necessary resources.
- Define elements of a successful coalition structure.
- Maintain coalition vitality.
- Make improvements through evaluation.



Coalition building

Analyze the program's objectives and determine whether to form a coalition.

Consider:

- Whether or not a coalition is the appropriate tool to serve the organization's needs;
- The resources needed, from the lead agency and from coalition members;
- Whether this is the best use of resources;
- Clarify the objectives and appropriate activities;
- Assess organizational strengths and weaknesses;
- Determine the costs and benefits for each organization.



Coalition building

Recruit the right people

- *Membership type:* Determine the membership type based on the coalition's goals. Diversity may be necessary. Start by identifying organizations that already work on the identified issue and look for others who should be involved.
- *Competitors and adversaries:* Decide whether to include or exclude potential competitors and adversaries, based on the sincerity of their commitment to the coalition's goals and whether they will be more of an impediment to the coalition if included or excluded;
- *Organization representatives:* Consider who will best represent each organization on the coalition. Agency directors are often more effective at making policy decisions, establishing credibility and in networking. On the other hand, line staff are frequently more committed, enthusiastic, and more available.



Coalition building

Devise a set of objectives and activities for the coalition

It is important to meld the objectives of members. Create options that mutually satisfy the objectives of all coalition members; propose mutually productive activities; structure both objectives and activities in such a way that other coalition members feel included in the decision making process.



Coalition building

Anticipate the necessary resources

- Effective coalitions generally require minimal financial outlay for materials and supplies, but require substantial time commitments from people.
- When this resource is discussed during coalition meetings, commitments are sometimes made in response to the enthusiasm of the meeting and seem less realistic when members return to their regular jobs. At other times, coalition members will fulfill their commitments but may resent the extra work. Both situations can have a long-term, destructive impact on the coalition. Periodic discussions about resources, support, and time limitations of the members can minimize potential problems.



Coalition building

Define elements of a successful coalition structure

- The technical details of the coalition's structure are vital to achieving success. As with other coalition considerations, it is important to have well-developed ideas as well as the flexibility to allow for input and modifications by coalition members. Structural issues to consider are: a) coalition life expectancy; b) meeting location, frequency, and length; c) membership; d) decision-making processes; e) meeting agendas; and f) participation between meetings. There are no set rules about how a coalition should be structured, but be pragmatic.



Coalition building

Maintain coalition vitality

Coalition building requires a broad vision and careful attention to detail. Good leadership is key to coalition success. It is important for leaders to work hard at maintaining the vitality and enthusiasm of the coalition.

- ***Addressing coalition difficulties:*** Indications of coalition difficulties could include decline in coalition membership; meetings which consist primarily of announcements and reports; meetings which become bogged down in procedures; significant failures in follow-through; ongoing challenges to authority and/or battles between members; etc.



Coalition building

It is important to:

- *Share power and leadership:* Many coalition members will readily defer power to the lead agency in order to facilitate smooth functioning. However, if the coalition solidifies as an independent entity and develops a body of work that it performs or creates collectively, members will expect greater involvement in decision-making;
- *Develop leadership skills in the coalition:* Remember good leaders are effective communicators; good listeners; team players; accepting of constructive criticism; motivating; delegate and build others; are decisive.



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- *Recruit and involve new members:* Membership changes are to be expected. Sometimes an organization's mandate will change; other times staff members simply have personal interests and priorities that draw them away from the coalition. But efforts to recruit new members as the need arises should be pursued;
- *Promote renewal by providing training and by bringing challenging, exciting new issues to the group;*
- *Celebrate and share in successes and failures.*



Coalition building

Make improvements through evaluation

- Coalition evaluations can provide important feedback to coalition members. Components of coalitions that should be evaluated include objectives, activities, processes, and unanticipated events. By assessing the processes, outcomes, and impacts associated with coalition activities, staff can improve their outreach and coordination skills, and members can determine which strategies help the coalition achieve its ultimate goals most effectively.



Coalition building

Exercise: Participants spent time to determine whether a coalition would be necessary on the selected problem:

- *Who would be best to work with?*
- *For what specific benefits?*
- *What would be the limitations/challenges of working in such a coalition?*