

## Coalition Building for Healthy Communities

The work of coalition building is a thoughtful and intentional process to bring together diverse interests and assets within communities to affect change in ways that cannot be achieved singly. Through this process, internal and external resources both human and financial, are mobilized and magnified to create long term change. Coalition building invites fundamental principles of operation, constituency building, and tools and processes to engage its members. A core set of practices and skills are necessary to guide the coalition's work and are identified as follows.

### Creating a shared vision

A shared vision takes people from self-interests to common good.

Specific issues include:

- Identifying self-interest – personal/organizational motivations
- Action Visioning- Building on personal vision/interests to collective vision  
Answers questions such as: What will our work as a coalition achieve? What will the future look like as a result of our work?
- Identifying outcomes from action visioning

*Possible venues:* Workshop, Facilitated Tele-workshop with materials (conference call)

### Governance, Structure and Operations

Effective coalitions function in a transparent, open, and inclusive structure but has clear roles and responsibilities and systems for operations. Key issues and components of concern include:

- Leadership – Shared leadership and responsibilities
- Organizational Culture - a culture that values learning, embraces diversity, acknowledges and respects differences
- Shared Decision-Making - Decision-making methods, Who makes decisions? Consensus Process, Shared accountability and credit, Utilizing data to inform decisions
- Communication – Among members and outside of the coalition
- Resource Building and Allocation – How does the coalition allocate its resources?
- Staffing – Roles and responsibilities, coordination activities
- What are the principles (ground rules, shared norms, partnership credo) and practices (MOUs, grievance procedures, rotating chairs) that will guide the coalition's behaviors and actions?
- Coalition Structure - What kinds of systems and structures will the coalition create to get the work done? What does the coalition's organizational chart look like?

- Self-Assessment and Organizational Learning – Method for assessing form and function of the coalition which have implications for the coalition’s effectiveness and long-term success including viability of coalition strategies and structures and its influence on policy and systems change

*Possible venues:* Self-study with materials with possible teleconference, Workshop

#### Inclusive and Engaged Membership.

Effective and inclusive coalitions embrace specific strategies and opportunities to outreach and engage the diversity of peoples and communities who may be impacted by the decisions and actions of the coalition. In doing so, particular attention needs to be paid to key principles of community organizing and community development practices:

- Membership Recruitment – Assessing self-interests and creating community ownership
- Supporting volunteer structure
- Community Representation – How to engage community leaders, Beyond Tokenism
- Minimizing power differences
- Mapping and utilizing assets of members
- Structures and tools for meaningful engagement (transportation, child care, meeting location and environment, language, materials development)
- 6 R’s of Participation (Recognition, Respect, Role, Relationship, Reward Results)
- Trust Builders and Trust Blockers
- Celebrating Successes

*Possible venues:* Workshop, Some applicable for self-study with materials

#### Active Communication

Ongoing and consistent communication within the coalition as well as with those outside of the coalition allows for exchange of information, problem-solving, marketing of coalition successes, and sustained presence in the community. The ability to share stories and results with other stakeholders will bring new energy and investment into the coalition’s priorities. Core areas for learning include:

- Development of a communications plan - promotes and supports communications among members as well as between the coalition and the larger community
- Accessible tools for information sharing, problem-solving, and mobilization (multiple languages, technology, newsletters, meetings)

- Avoiding the “insider” phenomenon – jargon, language differences
- Communications styles and preferences
- Listening skills
- Communication conflicts – Assumptions, biases, interpretations, and motives
- Communications that promote and market coalition work and presence in the community
- Telling your story
- Media relations

*Possible venues:* Workshop, Tele-workshop

### Shared and Facilitative Leadership

Creating structures and processes for shared power – avoiding the “inner circle” – will ensure that the work, responsibilities, and accountability are shared across the membership. Practicing leadership that is about facilitating the development and use of member and community strengths brings about ownership and trust. It also avoids “burn-out” and allows for new leadership and ideas to grow. The critical areas for learning are:

- Developing diverse leadership positions and ways for leaders to work together
- Mapping assets of coalition and its leaders
- Creating space for diverse leadership styles and behaviors
- Supporting leadership development of community members and leaders
- Practicing facilitative leadership – creating shared vision, enable others to act modeling the way, challenge the process, and encourage the heart

*Possible venues:* Tele-workshop with materials, Self-study

### Facilitation Skills

Sound facilitation helps coalitions stay focused and moving towards their vision and goals. The ability to manage the group’s process, behaviors, and dynamics allows for relationship building and collective learning. It also ensures that the diversity of communities represented in the coalition has opportunity to contribute ideas and assets to the table. This opportunity is essential for sustained community engagement and buy-in. These skills may include:

- Fundamental skills for gifted facilitators – creates an environment where people want to work together, is available to mentor and nurture the group, is concerned with the group’s learning, is organized, makes the group’s process understandable to all members, and honors and protects the group’s process

- Learning styles and preferences
- Dealing with conflict – Types of conflicts, Underlying Causes of Conflict, Behaviors of people in conflict, General approaches to dealing with conflict
- Conflict Resolution Process (Diagnose, Plan/Strategize, Implement, and Evaluate outcomes)
- Dealing with challenging behaviors and participants
- Making meetings work including conference call etiquette
- Methods/tools for thinking and creating (cardstorming, open space)
- Public speaking skills

*Possible venues:* Workshop, possible tele-workshop with materials

### Participatory Strategic Planning

Coalitions recognize that in order to act, they must also plan.

Participatory strategic planning creates space for coalition members to discover possibilities for addressing an issue but also to link assets of the community to work on community concerns. The process allows for opportunities to not only plan and act but also to reflect in order to improve and make even greater change. Components include:

- The Participatory Strategic Plan Components – Vision (What do we want in the future? What are the outcomes we desire?)
- Issue Analysis (What challenges, barriers are keeping us from getting to the vision?)
- FOCUS: Using stories and photos to share community assets and concerns
- Assets and Resource Mapping (What do we have that will help us get there?)
- Developing Content and Culturally Relevant Strategies (What can we do with the resources we have?)
- Action Plan Development (Who will do what by when?)
- Methods for prioritizing strategies and actions
- Evaluation (How do we know we've been successful?) – Plan, Act, Reflect

*Possible venues:* Workshop, possible tele-workshop with materials