

Coalitions Building and Networking

Introduction - vocabulary and typology

Cooperation (or collaboration) is an act whereby people, initiatives and NGOs work together for a common purpose and benefit. Collaboration is almost always necessary for any people-driven advocacy campaigns or for the implementation of projects. Building networks and coalitions of organizations and groups that care about the same issues is a must in order to ensure the success of campaigns.

Coordination is when we organize different elements into subsystems of a system or people into a team that enable them to work effectively.

Networks

A network consists of individuals or organizations who share information, ideas, resources or goals to accomplish individual or group goals (Jackson, 1991). Networking is the process of acquiring resources and building power by using or creating linkages between two or more individuals, groups, or organizations. It provides a valuable tool for getting things done (Wells, 1989). Information and resources are obtained from others and it is the lack of information and resources that can hinder us.

Networking

Networking is the ongoing process of meeting new people, organizations, politicians or experts and developing new relationships. Network contacts do not always share a common set of principles or values, but may nevertheless gain benefits through their association.

Coalition

A coalition is a group of individuals, representatives or organizations working together for a common cause, to achieve a common goal or to resolve a common problem.

Coalition building

Coalition-building is the ongoing process of cultivating and maintaining relationships with a diverse network of individuals and organizations who share a common set of principles and values. In addition to sharing a common set of values, a coalition will often work together towards a **common goal** or to execute a specific campaign. Because of these shared values and goals, coalitions may be stronger and more enduring than more informal networks.



Cross-sector Cooperation as a Way for Reaching Change in Community *¹

Improvement and Empowerment

Success of the majority of community initiatives is closely related to ownership of the process of social change that starts within the community. There are only a few equally important characteristics of the process that have considerable influence on whether or not the initiative survives and will bring about long-term change to the community. Ownership of the process is influenced by the way in which cooperation between the initiator and the community is designed and realized. It also reflects the ability of a community to solve its own problems independently. We can observe two basic approaches to cross-sector cooperation: cooperative improvement and the collaborative empowerment of the community. Each of these approaches has concrete consequences on the community's perception of ownership of the process of change, possibility of self-determination and willingness for long-term cooperation.

Cooperative improvement arises outside of the community in public, private or non-profit institutions. The process and its goals are usually brought into the community from the outside. Community participation, designed and managed by bigger institutions, is perceived to be important, but it has a pre-determined form. This approach to cooperation can bring about changes in public policy, and improve social services rendered by public management, but it does not create long-term ownership of the change process in the community and it does not increase the community's ability to influence solutions or to set its own goals.

Collaborative empowerment arises from initiatives within a community and then moves towards public, private or non-profit institutions. In this context, empowerment relates to the ability to set priorities and control resources necessary for self-realization in a community. Strategies of empowerment include two basic activities (1) organizing community cooperation through the realization of a goal or aim that it has defined, and (2) facilitating a process of involving outside institutions to support this goal. This approach can bring about change in service rendering and program improvement at the local level. It can create long-term ownership of the goal and process and will increase the community's ability to realize its own goals.

In practice, there is a scale of processes that can be placed on a continuum somewhere between improvement and empowerment. They can, but do not have to have all the characteristics described in this text. Characteristics mentioned in this text can thus provide guidance for assessing consequences of a chosen approach, and not as the only possible approach. Of course, if reaching long-term social change is important to you, then you should try to move from cooperative improvement to collaborative empowerment.

¹ Adapted from : Arthur Turov Himmelman: Communities Working Collaboratively for a Change in Resolving Conflict (ed. Margaret S. Herrmann), ICMA Washington,

Cooperative Improvement

Principles of Cooperative Improvement

In cross-sector cooperation, we mainly find improvement processes. This approach is similar to the approach of big institutions in community programs. It usually comes out of the following principles:

- Initiators are big and influential institutions – they start the process of problem identification and analysis.
- Management and administration of the process is led by institutions, although in a limited scope, chosen community representatives enter into the process with their suggestions and recommendations. Groups within the collaborative initiative are often intentionally separated so that decision-making for the initiative is made by those who are considered "community leaders" and implementation tasks are assigned to those who offer or use the services. Employees of the institutions are accountable to their own managers, even though they collect suggestions and opinions from people in the community, they do not account for their further steps.
- People from the community usually participate in the creation of action plans but professionals and experts connected with institutions managing the process have the last word/influence.
- Realization of action plans requires support and considerate involvement of people from the community but decisions on allocation of resources are in hands of the institutions.
- Although institutions take into consideration the opinions of the community, they are the ones who make decisions in regards to ending their own collaborative activities.

Key Activities of Cooperative Improvement

Model of cooperative improvement can be illustrated by a description of its seven basic activities:

Activity 1: Initiating the discussion of institutions (agencies). Big or influential agencies and institutions in public, private or non-profit sectors initiate discussions (primarily among themselves) to consider problems and questions in their communities. Often, a strong leader from one of big institutions adds credibility to the initiative through their influence. Improvement initiatives are usually led by people connected with big corporations or important non-profit organizations, although, in many cases, public representatives can play the same role.

Activity 2: Exploring common problems and common missions. Based on researching problems that participating institutions find to be common among them, an agreement on sharing responsibilities to solve them is reached. Institutions continue by creating a collaborative initiative to solve problems. By that time, a common mission or goal is usually identified. Also financing of a collaborative initiative is already secured or designed.

Activity 3: Planning, management and administration. The process of planning, collecting data and information about a problem or important issue in the society, begins with the collaboration initiative. This process creates a managerial and executive structure for the initiative. Management and administration connected with the initiative's activity is usually delegated to one of the big or influential participating institutions. Although the majority of decisions are made by all participants, the key decisions are usually made by the "leading agency".

Activity 4: Involving community representatives. Community representatives or representatives of certain population groups (such as individuals or as organization representatives) are invited to join the collaborative initiative. These representatives are always in the minority and they rarely have decision-making authority. On the other hand, suggestions and recommendations of community representatives play an important role in the formulation of goals and in the preparation of the working plans for the initiative and often influence approved decisions.

Activity 5: Achieving agreement on action plans. As soon as the participation of important representatives is secured, the initiative needs to reach an agreement on how public, private and non-profit organizations will contribute to the problem's solution. The initiative defines concrete goals through action plans. At this time, it is usually necessary to involve other members of the community or influential institutions that do not yet participate in the initiative, into the action plans.

Activity 6: Implementation of action plans in community. The initiative realizes that the scope of work of the action plan is acceptable to the community. Community representatives that are members of the initiative are expected to help with advocating and implementing the plans, along with their fellow citizens. To an extent, plans are implemented by employees or professionals cooperating with collaborating institutions. Non-professionals and community members are involved only occasionally.

Activity 7: Ending activity of the initiative. As soon as the action plans were satisfactorily implemented from a management point of view, the activity of the initiative ends. The community has little (if any) influence on prolonging or ending activity of the initiative with the exception of using active confrontation. Community representatives have limited power to continue the initiative's activities because they do not have influence on the decision-making process and allocation of resources.

Collaborative Empowerment

The model of collaborative empowerment is different from less formalized spontaneous community approaches. It requires a **formally organized process of creation of collaborative initiative**. Both strategic and exactly defined models of cross-sector cooperation as well as spontaneously formed activities can be useful for community organizations. Cross-sector cooperation built on the empowerment principle has been found to be an effective way for reaching long-term social changes in the community. Accepting initiatives depend on the following: (1) excellent results reached by local community organizations that the community needs in preparation for the initiative; (2)

increasing and completing requirements in a timely manner; and (3) the best results were reached by community initiatives when members knew that they can influence them.

Key Principles of Collaborative Empowerment

- Process is initiated within community and supported by a community organization that brings in people. Discussions are focused on the opinions and values within the community.
- Identification of community problems comes both from gathering and the analysis of information as well as from stories from community members. Both sources have equal value.
- Intention and goals of collaborative initiative reflects community priorities. Community organization secures participation of community representatives who later negotiate with strategic partners from outside of the community (public, private and non-profit organizations and institutions).
- Initial negotiations with outside institutions create mutual agreements about cooperation by the community. Within this agreement, power is equally divided between community and outside organizations.
- Management and administration structure of the initiative consists of a strategic committee, executive committee, action groups, and employees that are 'acceptable' to the community and help organize meetings.
- Management goals and community goals are balanced.
- Goals are formulated in action plans fully supported by community members and by representatives of public, private and non-profit institutions out of the community.
- Public assessments and evaluations performed through the monitoring of accomplishments of the initiative are important.
- Control of resources necessary for continuing activities after ending the initiative activity.

Key Activities of Collaborative Empowerment

Even though the following description of 16 activities can be perceived as unalterable, please take the model of collaborative empowerment as a guideline, not as one that has to be strictly followed. For realizing the process, it is best to take the following descriptions as planning frameworks open to change and improvement depending on the circumstances and community needs.

Activity 1: Discussion about attitude, beliefs and values. Process of empowerment begins by showing respect to community members and to their opinions. It can start, for example, via discussions with people and community representatives about their attitude, beliefs and values that motivate them. These discussions can be oriented to understanding the importance of own community for its members. They prepare people to share their opinions on community problems and to look for opportunities for change. Dialogues build trust that is important for the creation of a 'common vision'.

Activity 2: Discovering trends. When the discussion shows that community members share common values considering the community and a need to change within the community, it is the right time to discuss trends influencing said community. Trends can come from stories or experience, as well as from information analysis. This moves community members to a more concrete base for common activity.

Activity 3: Connecting priority areas or problems with opportunities. Trends can discover problems or areas that need change. Problems can be solved in the best way if they are connected with opportunities and possibilities for change. People often present problems in a way that offers little or no possibility for a solution. That's why it is important to direct discussions in a way that facilitates connecting problems with opportunities.

Activity 4: Clarifying purpose of community and vision of collaboration. After an agreement on priorities is reached, members can incorporate them into the formulation of the mission. Mission defines intention and purpose of the initiative in community. For example, community members can decide that their highest priority is to increase and improve healthcare for children from families with low income. Their definition of mission inviting actions related to this priority could be:

To create and advocate for strategies and programs to respond effectively to complex needs of healthcare for children from families with low income from infant age to six years of age. Creating the mission statement for the initiative is very important because it increases a sense of ownership. As the initiative develops, the mission can be adjusted, so that it better reflects wider consensus on purposes of functioning of the initiative. There is a connection between the mission and vision of the initiative. Vision should describe desired future of the community providing energy and power for process of change in community.

Activity 5: Researching what was done by others. At this stage of initiative development, it is useful to gather information (during visits or via phone) on how other communities or neighborhoods created and organized their cooperative initiatives. Knowledge of wide scale of experience of other initiatives in similar or in the same areas increases chances of our initiative succeeding. It is good to get an overview of similar activities of cooperative initiatives at national and international levels, if possible.

Activity 6: Increasing power of community. Mission of the initiative should be shared by as many members of community as possible. The goal is to gain widespread support for the common activities. This support is very important at the moment when community members ask community organizations to involve public, private and non-profit organizations out of the community - in the initiative. Support of community members makes requirements of community organizations or community representatives legitimate in negotiations with institutions.

Activity 7: Strategic identification of partners. Steering committee evaluates which public, private and non-profit organizations (according to the specified mission of the community), should be invited to participate in the collaborating initiative. The community needs to find organizations that correspond to the diversity of its members. When this list

is completed, the steering committee will meet individually with representatives from each of the selected public, private and non-profit organizations. These meetings will determine which outside organizations will participate in activity of the initiative.

Activity 8: Convening meeting and formal approval of initiative. As soon as the participation of all cross-sector cooperation is ensured and confirmed, the community calls for a meeting of all partners, in order to achieve a formal approval of agreement on implementing the community mission. At this meeting, all partners get enough time to introduce themselves, to discuss their own motivations for joining the initiative, to share initial questions and expectations and to comment on topics during the discussion.

Mission of the initiative should not be negotiated by representatives of community organizations. They should share risks, responsibility, resources and rewards in all aspects of the initiative, including administration, management, determining goals, defining action plans and evaluating results.

Activity 9: Agreement on administration and management. After a sufficient number of meetings that can help to overcome any barriers and or any reservations against the participation of a partner, community organizations offer a plan of management and administration that includes: (1) committee for strategic issues, (2) executive committee, and (3) action groups. It is recommended that each person working in strategic and executive committees be an official representative of their organization and that he/she has decision-making authority for this organization in the initiative. Committee for strategic issues meets quarterly to provide overall leadership in long-term activities towards the initiative and to advocate for strategic changes that the initiative wants to realize. Executive committee meets once in a month (between committee meetings for strategic issues), to secure administration and program management. Action groups – each is convened by a member of the executive committee and is responsible for a specific goal – meet based on needs to formulate specific action plans (goals/activities) of the initiative. To secure wide participation of a community, all action groups are open to anybody from or outside of formal members of the initiative. In order to ensure sound management and responsibility for mission and goals of the initiative, most plans of action groups are approved by executive committee and confirmed/ratified by strategic committee.

Recommended number of members of strategic committee is around 21, unless there are strong reasons for a bigger committee. Executive committee should consist of 9 to 11 members, including 4 to 6 officials, 3 conveners of action groups for 3 main goals and maximum 2 to 4 representatives of committee for strategic issues.

Activity 10: Ensuring power sharing. It is recommended to start negotiations of a relatively small number of community organizations with a small number of institutions from outside of the community. At the beginning, this small group can create an executive committee of the initiative within which basic rules are agreed upon, mutual trust is built and initial management processes are formed. Then, this executive committee can agree on goals of cooperation and can create action groups to realize them.

Such a slow process enables one to build a common culture of cooperation in the decision-making process within the initiative. This culture should ensure that the power in decision-making process is not measured by authority/competence of a member but by the scope of 'participation' that a member can reach. If power is more shared than controlled, behavior of members that was originally more hierarchical than cooperative. The bigger and more traditional partner institutions are the more important ones to build the culture of cooperation.

To emphasize the 'empowering' character of the initiative, the president or vice-president of the executive committee should be a representative of a community organization. Also, at least two members of strategic committee should come from community organizations.

Activity 11: Offering contributions and overcoming barriers. When community organizations and partners from institutions agree upon an administration and management structure, they begin to discuss the contributions of each member to support the initiative mission, and also the barriers restraining the contribution of any member. Understanding barriers or problems as opportunities for finding common solution is strengthened in the initiative. This approach strengthens cooperation ethics within the initiative and its style of work. It shows that the initiative effort not only improves capacity of individual organizations but can also solve specific problems.

Activity 12: Formulating goals. There are two basic kinds of goals in model of cooperative empowering:

- (1) Specific goals depending on a concrete mission and issues; or
- (2) 'Universal goals' that are applicable to missions.

The following examples illustrate application of these possibilities to initiative dealing with children care.

In one case, goals of the initiative could be: (1) to create community centers of children care; (2) to increase integration of various services of child-care; and (3) to improve the participation of the community in proposing and realizing services of children care.

In other cases, the initiative could state wide, general or universal goals: (1) to ensure exploring, information and education of the community (in the area of child-care); (2) to support innovative programs and services demonstrating an improved implementation of the program (child-care); and (3) to advocate policy changes (that could improve health and welfare of children and families).

Universal goals for empowering the initiative should concentrate on:

- (1) Researching, informing and educating the community,
- (2) Innovation and program presentations, and
- (3) Policy advocacy or its change.

The main advantage of universal goals is that in connecting with specific action plans (tasks), they will still be able to focus on individual issues.

Activity 13: Connecting goals with tasks or action plans. It is necessary to connect goals of the initiative with clear tasks and realization strategies (i.e. "action plans" in the model of

cooperative empowering). Action plans for each goal are prepared by separate action groups. Each action group is convened by a member of the executive committee of the initiative and is open to all initiative members as well as to anybody from the wider community who wants to join it.

In this model of cooperative empowerment, all action plans are directly connected with an organization involved in the initiative. For example, if an action plan states that the spokesman's office should be established to provide information and education to the community, then the task or activity should relate to a specific organization within the initiative. Appointed organization then either accomplishes activity with its own resources or, more probably, takes responsibility for accomplishing activity using its own sources and also sources of other organizations.

Team leader of each of the action groups reminds members that regular reports for each action plan should be distributed to all. Further, they provide a summary of these reports to executive committee monthly and to strategic committee quarterly. They should contain information about achieved progress and difficulties in restricting success. Convener's reports to executive and strategic committees ensure permanent communication and serve as a source of recommendations for how these committees can assist the action groups in their efforts.

Activity 14: Implementing plans and staffing. To increase involvement and ownership of community members, action plans of the initiative are continuously discussed both in public forums as well as with community members. Such an approach enables one to gain community support of the action plans. In the empowerment processes, action plans are not implemented without the support of the community. To ensure good communication, all action plans should definitely display timelines, evaluation criteria and data on financial requirements. It is also helpful when action plans contain the assessment of staffing needs and information about whether these needs can be met within the initiative or from outside sources. Employees of the initiative should be chosen for their expertise and experience, and not simply because of their recommendations. Employees provide quarterly reports to the strategic committee and monthly reports to executive committee. Reports for the president of the strategic committee are prepared according to his/her needs.

Activity 15: Evaluating initiative functioning. For many reasons, it is difficult to evaluate such a complex process like cross-sector cooperation. When the cooperation process is designed with clear goals and action plans (that may include specific results and time frames), the evaluation plan can be created more easily. In the model of cooperative empowerment, community organizations are important evaluators because they render regular and public monitoring of all processes.

Activity 16: Ending functioning of the initiative without losing local capacity. Ending of the initiative functioning should be done in a way that can secure rise of self-sufficiency and self-confidence of community. If it is possible, community tries to keep combination of financial, human and technical resources that can be retained after ending activity of the initiative. Potential indicators showing whether initiative was successful in empowering

community can include the following: (1) permanent operation support and better access to development financial packages were ensured; (2) technical competency has increased; (3) reliable connections between affordable housing and associated social services for community members were created or improved; and (4) more community members made better decisions about the future of their community.

Networking

We can have a greater impact on our goals by using networks and coalitions as major tools to multiply our power and efforts. If your network has ten individuals, and then those ten networks turn into ten more, you have increased the number of individuals with whom you can exchange information and resources with from ten to one hundred. We can do a great deal when we join efforts with those of other individuals.

We network every day of our lives, whether it's informal or formal. If one individual lacks the information you are seeking, he or she can refer you to another individual. The more individuals you know, the more individuals will know you and the greater the probability of accomplishing your goals. As a result, your visibility and network of individuals increases. The aim is to meet as many individuals as possible.

As you network with individuals, you will need some basic tools, such as: (1) an address book or Rolodex to record and keep track of contacts' addresses, notes of meetings, commitments and any detail information; (2) an appointment calendar to set up meetings; and (3) business cards that contain your fax number and electronic mail address.

Using and Expanding Networks

Decide whether your current goal is related to money, power, or society. Examine your list and contact the most powerful and influential individual to help achieve your goal. During your networking, discuss what you have in common, your skills, the type of information you are seeking as well as the available resources. The more you share ideas, the more you will increase your clout.

Another aspect of networking is involvement in professional associations that can provide a wide range of contacts. Attend as many association meetings and conferences as possible. Make yourself visible and establish a reputation. Circulate at the meetings and exchange business cards. Talk to everyone you know and meet new contacts and proceed to follow-up with a phone call or note. Also participate in organizations other than professional associations where you can develop a wide range of contacts with people who share your ideas and concerns. Remember, it's a two-way street.

You may want to establish a formal network with a specific interest or field. This can provide opportunities to: meet individuals with a broad range of experiences and expertise; obtain current information; and meet specialists in the field and develop relationships.

We can also observe some different types of networks and networking, connected directly with the development of new information and communication technologies, which enable one to collect various expertise in one place even if people work in separate cities or countries.

Collaborative Networks consist of a variety of entities (e.g. organizations and people) that are largely autonomous, geographically distributed, and heterogeneous in terms of their operating environment, culture, social capital and goals. They collaborate to better achieve common or compatible goals, and their interactions are supported by computer networks. The discipline of collaborative networks focuses on the structure, behavior, and evolving dynamics of networks of autonomous entities that collaborate to better achieve common or compatible goals (typical example is Wikipedia). Using collaboration and a network of people, we can make full use of **crowdsourcing** or **crowdfunding**.

Personal networking

When we meet first, we often don't meet as organizations, but as individual people - so networking with NGOs starts as networking with people.

After the introduction, sharing contacts and specifying what is important for us and where there is a possible overlap of interests, it helps to offer something to the partner (e.g. recommend an article, a good web page, skilled graphic designer, important information or a contact that creates an opportunity for relationship growth, etc).

It is important to maintain our contacts by using new technologies and applications (**LinkedIn**). Social media can be a good way to stay in touch, share information, and follow what's going on and spread our messages.

Networking - how to begin

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You may want to establish a formal network with a specific interest or field. This can provide opportunities to meet individuals with a broader range of experiences and expertise. This can also help you to obtain current information, meet specialists in the field and develop friendships.

Coalitions building

Coalitions can be **local**, **regional**, or **national** in nature. In view of the character of advocacy and project activities, they may be composed of similar types of non-profit organization (oriented towards youth, social issues, the environment, for example), or a variety of organizations.

Types of Coalitions and Collaborative Organizations

	Information Network	Association	Coordinating Council	Campaign	Ongoing Coalition
Purpose	Sharing info between like-minded groups	Promoting advancement of specific groups or individuals	Coordinating work on specific issues between groups with similar goals	Collective action towards a goal over a specific timeframe	Advancement of a group of related issues over a longer timeframe
Membership	Open to all interested	Open to all with member dues and services	Can have formal members or just a loose alliance of active leaders	Strategic partnership between diverse groups with few common interests	Longer term commitment of diverse, allied organizations
Structure	Loose. System for communicating between members	Defined structure. Volunteer or staffed.	Structured like a network with one or more leaders driving work	Steering Committee and committees often staff-driven.	More structured with own board. Lead groups may provide staff.
Financial	Little cost to	Dues, grants,	Various. May	Often	Higher dues or

Arrange-ments	members. Grant funded or volunteer	various fund raising strategies.	or may not have member dues.	dependent on external or grant funds	large in-kind contributions from member groups. May seek grants collaboratively.
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(Wendy Wilson, River Network, 2006)

Creation of alliances and coalitions

In the area of public policy, the success of the majority depends upon the extent to which your efforts are supported. Anyone can become an ally (regular or influential individuals, citizens' groups, various types of organizations, etc.). Anyone who shares your interest in the solution or elimination of a given problem to a greater or lesser extent can help. Obtaining allies and sympathizers has a positive impact on the success of advocacy activities.

However, experience teaches us that wherever they take place in the world, most advocacy efforts are dependent upon small, dynamic groups of people serving as the catalyst. The creation of coalitions between non-profit organizations in advocacy activities is one of the most important and most complex issues. In post-communist countries, representatives of political parties, as well as advocates, are learning to live in a pluralist environment - to negotiate, and to achieve a mutually beneficial consensus. In a decentralized third sector, comprised of a number of independent organizations, coalitions and partnerships are achieved with difficulty. It appears that this is easier in crisis situations.

Although the most important reason for creating a coalition of non-profit organizations is to increase the power and ability to achieve objectives, good co-operation within a coalition has a number of advantages.

Coalitions of non-profit organizations:

- provide a forum for the joint consideration of a problem
- combine financial, material, and human resources
- reduce competition for access to resources
- mobilize the interest of other people and groups
- attract the attention of the media and people in influential positions
- strengthen solidarity and unity in the third sector
- build the image and significance of the third sector in the eyes of the public.

Why coalition building?

A strategy that includes coalition-building benefits NGOs by leveraging the additional ideas, energy and resources of coalition partners for the common cause. Effective coalitions can improve efficiency by reducing the duplication of efforts, minimize unhelpful competition, and magnify visibility and impact beyond the scope of any single coalition member.

Moreover broad goals—such as major legislative, political or cultural changes – generally require the combined efforts of a number of stakeholders and are generally unattainable

through individual efforts of any single academic, advocate, university or NGO, no matter how accomplished. People need coalitions to build and sustain the conditions in which civic society and freedom can flourish.

Challenges and benefits of working in a coalition

Despite its many undeniable advantages, working in a coalition also has its drawbacks. Some of the problems include: a more complicated organization and logistics issues, a lack of consensus in dividing competencies and in directing the activity, and possible rivalry between the participants.

In establishing a coalition, it is a good idea to understand, and continually repeat, the reasons why you are trying to form the coalition. Essentially, there are three main reasons:

- The power of coalition through **strength in numbers**. The more entities involved in advocacy and lobbying on public issues, the more powerful the effect. This is not an area for petty squabbles; it is self-destructive to become insulted in disagreements and say, “OK, so we’ll go it alone”.
- The power of coalition through the **diversity of its members**. Various types of organizations have various natural groups of supporters, and therefore various bases for public and political support. A coalition is much stronger if it associates groups that are usually not regarded as partners.
- The power of coalition enables the **diversification of competencies, capabilities, and expertise**. Various groups have various knowledge, capabilities, and talents, which they can provide for a joint project. Know-how, contacts, and experience possessed by any member of the coalition (in working with the media, in organization, creating strategies and tactics) that can enrich the coalition as a whole.

Coalition building - how to start

Increasingly, the problems that communities need to resolve are complex, requiring comprehensive solutions. Addressing various issues requires the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Working in partnerships, collaborations and coalitions can be challenging but a powerful tool for mobilizing individuals to action, bringing community issues to prominence and developing policies.

Coalitions are often best equipped to utilize the resources and findings of participants and to apply them more effectively than any single group or organization. But before any coalition starts working, it’s necessary to engage individuals, organizations and governmental partners invested in addressing common (community, national) concerns. You have to undertake

concrete steps towards building effective partnerships and make collaborations and partnerships work.

Rather than creating new projects or programs, effective coalitions can harness existing resources to develop a unique community approach and achieve results beyond the scope of a single institution or organization.

8 steps to effective coalition building

1. Discuss and analyze the group's objectives and determine coalition need(s)

A coalition is a prevention tool, so groups must be specific about what needs to be accomplished. After the needs have been determined, the group must consider if a coalition is the best approach to meet the identified needs. Groups must ask the following questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What are our community's strengths and needs?
- What are the pros and cons associated with the proposed collaboration?
- What are our objectives and what types of activities seem logical?

Cohen suggests using the Spectrum of Prevention to help define a group's possible actions.

2. Recruit the right people

The group's objectives will prescribe the type of coalition developed. Some groups may choose to start small to accomplish specific tasks and then strategically expand. Depending on the needs of the coalition, either program directors or front-line staff should be encouraged to attend. In addition, invite community members, youth leaders, politicians or experts. The size of the group matters. It takes large groups longer to define and agree on common objectives and activities. Yet larger groups may have access to greater resources that may be required for accomplishing certain tasks.

3. Adopt more detailed activities and objectives suiting the needs, interests, strengths, and diversity of the membership

A key to a successful coalition is the early identification of common goals and benefits of working together. The coalition must avoid competing with its members for funding. An important consideration for adopting specific coalition activities is to identify some short-term outcomes. For example, if a coalition's objective is to increase public knowledge about chronic disease as a preventable community problem, a short-term outcome could be the publication of two editorials in the local newspaper.

4. Convene coalition members

A coalition can be convened at a meeting, workshop, or conference. The lead agency should plan the first meeting using a time-specific prepared agenda, a comfortable and well-located meeting area, and adequate refreshments. It is appropriate to prepare a draft mission statement and proposal for coalition structure and membership. Anticipate that not all invited members will become coalition members.

5. Develop budgets and map resources and needs

Lead organizations usually provide staff with the time to keep the coalition up and running. Though coalitions can usually run on a minimal budget, each member's time is a valuable contribution.

6. Devise the coalition's structure

Structural issues of the coalition include: how long the coalition will exist, meeting locations, meeting frequency and length, decision-making processes, meeting agendas, membership rules, and participation between meetings by subcommittees or planning groups. Templates of different coalition structures should be collected prior to the meeting and presented for discussion to reduce the time needed to make management decisions.

7. Plan for ensuring the coalition's vitality

Methods for noting and addressing problems, sharing leadership, recruiting new members, providing training on identified needs, and celebrating success can help ensure a coalition's viability and success. It is very important to recognize both the individual and organizational contributions to a coalition each step of the way.

8. Evaluate programs and improve as necessary

Each coalition activity and event should include evaluations. This can be as simple as a satisfaction survey or it could be the more formal use of pre- and post- tests on specific subject knowledge.

Adopted from: Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight-Step Guide, written by Larry Cohen, Nancy Baer and Pam Satterwhite.

Coalition Start-Up Checklist: Is a coalition right for you? http://coalitionsworld.com/wp-content/uploads/is_a_coalition_right_for_you.pdf

The following represent a set of questions to help your group decide whether or not a coalition is the right organizational structure for your goals.

- Are the issues complex, requiring information and expertise from various sectors of the community, state, region or country?
- Does a gap in services or programs exist, such that no existing organization is clearly mandated to take on this work?
- Do other organizations see this issue as a priority?
- Are other organizations willing to work together to address this issue?
- Is this issue best addressed through joint ownership and responsibility of a number of organizations?
- Are there resources that can be shared or obtained to assist with the work?
- Is there a true commitment to work together to produce results, irrespective of funder commitments for collaboration?

If any of answers is "no", you should re-consider creating a coalition.

If answer is yes, you may start preparing for next steps.

5 Stages of Coalition Development:

- pre-formation,
- formation,
- implementation,
- maintenance
- Institutionalization.

Rules for coalition building

There are tried and tested rules for composing and maintaining a functional coalition.

The ideas about “coalition etiquette” were formulated by Z. Miller (1983) almost 23 years ago, but they are still fresh and valid.

Community outreach and coalition-building on the local and national level can be politically complex and sensitive. The stakeholders may want to influence your decision-making, and may judge you based on the behavior of others in your coalition. Seek out partners who share not only your values and goals but also who agree on what are suitable methods for achieving them.

You may need to make small compromises with regard to your desired goals but make sure these are compromises that you can live with and that do not undermine your central objectives.

Before joining or forming a coalition, thoroughly research the working practices and past statements of the groups involved. Talk with others who have worked with before, about their experience. Your credibility and reputation are at stake.

Before approaching a coalition or partner, prepare your message for them. Similar to preparing a media message, clearly articulate the reasons why your situation should be a matter of urgent concern for them or the constituencies that they represent.

If time permits, a good opportunity is networking and developing relationships for possible future coalitions (which may include public awareness initiatives, advocacy work or other projects).

Coalition etiquette: The basic rules for building unity [1]

Understanding

First area is linked with the psychological background, importance of mutual understanding and relationships development:

1. Each member of the coalition should understand not only the way in which other members make decisions within their own organizations, but also the impact that this has on procedures and the functioning of the coalition.
2. Members of the coalition should clarify the areas in which they have similar interests – i.e., those in which they want, and are able, to cooperate with – as well as those that they do not agree with and with which they have conflicting interests.

Standards

Second area stresses the rules for mutual communication and ways of peaceful solving the necessary internal conflicts:

1. Accept the diversity and division of tasks. A coalition cannot expect uniformity from its members in their actions and beliefs, but must respect their diversity and learn to utilize it.
2. Before causing a commotion, collect and verify information. Do not depend on one source of information – listen to various viewpoints before you make decisions. Issues are rarely simple and uncontroversial.
3. Learn to politely disagree. If you are to work together, you must learn to disagree in a way that allows your future cooperation.
4. Strictly divide your role as a member of an organization from that as a member of a coalition. It is particularly important to avoid speaking in the name of the coalition (or sounding as if you are) if you, as an individual or an organization, have not been entrusted with this role by the coalition.
5. Do not use the media to express your disagreement with the coalition. If you disagree with it, resolve this problem within the coalition itself.
6. Share the credit and successes. If people and organizations work diligently, they should also receive praise. It is better to praise people too often than too infrequently.

Procedures

The third area is linked with the decision-making procedures inside the coalition:

1. Early on, decide upon the method of decision-making within the coalition. Each member should be familiar with the decision-making procedure; it should be clear, accepted by everyone, and thoroughly applied.
2. Decide on the method of directing meetings of the coalition's steering committee (the length of the meeting, regularity, basic rules, the minimum number of participants, etc.). Procedural issues of this type may lead to sharp conflicts despite the goodwill of its members. It is therefore a good idea to prevent them with clear and mutually accepted rules.
3. In advance, clarify the areas and levels of decision-making freedom for the executive arm of the coalition. According to this decision type, divide them into areas in which the steering committee must decide, and those in which the executive arm may decide.
4. Agree upon the decision-making process in situations where a sharp conflict arises or persists between members. If these are important differences between members, which you are not able to resolve alone, you may use an independent mediator,

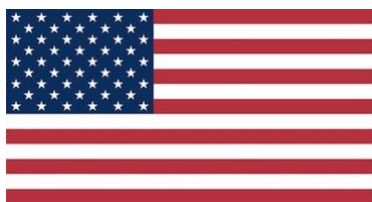
arbitrator, or panel. It is a good idea to agree upon procedure before such problems arise.

5. Agree upon the conditions under which it is possible to re-discuss an already-approved decision. Effective decision-making is very important for the effective functioning of the coalition. Part of this is a common awareness of when it is appropriate to return to an approved decision and when it is not.

[1] Adapted from Miller, S. M. – Coalition Etiquette: Ground Rules for Building Unity. Social Policy, 17 Fall 1983

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