Establishing a New Coalition

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Who Should Initiate a Coalition?
The people who lead, participate in and eventually implement the activities of the coalition will affect the growth and development of the group. Individuals who initiate a coalition must be committed to the success of the group and must be able to cope with competing external pressures. The initiating organization must also demonstrate their commitment to the collaborative effort.

Who Should Belong to the Coalition?
A coalition is composed of individuals or groups who share a common concern and goal. Questions to consider when seeking individuals or groups to invite to join the coalition include the following:
- Who can help the situation? Who might hurt the situation?
- Who has experience in dealing with the issue?
- Who is affected by the issue?
- Who might stand to gain by supporting the issue?

Potential individual and groups to consider include the following:
- Civic groups
- Nonprofit organizations
- Allies from the private sector
  » They are often interested in helping to improve the health of their communities and may have resources to share.
- Policy makers
  » They can provide valuable advice, assistance with evaluation and endorsement of plans or policies.
- Key decision makers in the community
  » They can help to increase the credibility of the coalition. Bringing key decision makers on board during the formation of the coalition gets them interested in the issue and helps to keep the coalition alive through constant visibility with community leadership and the press.
- Individuals who possess less common skills such as evaluation and advocacy
- Individuals and groups who can provide technical support and assistance to the coalition on topics such as leadership development, meeting facilitation, action planning and community assessment

How to Recruit Members
Member recruitment requires good communication skills. Potential members will want to know how they will benefit from the collaboration. It is helpful to develop a strategy for selling potential members on the idea of organizing a coalition around a specific issue.

Potential topics to address when recruiting members for a new coalition include the following:
- How the activities of the coalition will relate to the interests and activities of the potential member’s organization.
- How the issue to be pursued by the coalition will be best served through collaboration as opposed to existing organizational efforts.
- How, in specific terms, the potential member’s organization will benefit from the coalition’s efforts.
- How the potential member can contribute to major decisions that must be made about the coalition and its goals.
- The resources that will be needed from potential members in order for the coalition to function adequately.
- The shared resources that will be available to coalition members.

It is important to note that coalition membership can sometimes be affected by community demographics and economic conditions (Kegler et al., 2010). Potential barriers to coalition membership include the following:
- Long working hours or multiple jobs
- Competing family responsibilities, especially for families with young children
• Discomfort with joining a coalition due to lack of familiarity with business processes
• Lack of reliable transportation; or, in rural areas, lack of time to travel long distances for meetings

It is also important to note that having a full range of representation from community sectors is not always possible in rural areas due to the limited existence of different agencies (Kegler et al., 2010).

References


Additional Resources
The Asset-Based Community Development Institute. "Downloadable Resources." Publications on community assessment and community mobilization. abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable

Coalitions Work. "Tools and Resources." Resources for a variety of coalition processes and coalition evaluation. coalitionswork.com/resources/tools

University of Kansas. "Community Tool Box." Toolkits on a variety of topics related to partnership building and community change. ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents


Iowa State University, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Vision to Action: Take Charge Too. Publication about community assessment, vision development, action planning and evaluation. soc.iastate.edu/extension/ncrcrd/ncrcrd-ddd182-print.pdf