

Tip Sheet: Building Successful Coalitions

Coalitions can be a powerful force in advancing legislative or advocacy goals, bringing different strengths, areas of expertise, and stakeholders together for greater impact. It is important to enter into coalition work with a clear idea of expected outcomes and how the coalition can better move your organization towards those outcomes. Here are some tips to forming a successful coalition:

- Articulate the goal(s) of the coalition.
- Identify who will lead the coalition; this can be a single organization or multiple organizations.
- Determine what resources are needed for the coalition's work, what the lead organization(s) will commit, and what participating organizations will commit.
- Clearly outline decision-making processes that emphasize consensus building.
- Invite potential coalition members. Ensure that the coalition represents diverse and trusted voices who bring relevant expertise, are connected to the community and/or decision-makers, and who are committed to the coalition's goals.
- Develop a timeframe for the coalition's work and an action plan with clear objectives and responsibilities.
- Announce the coalition and, if desired, invite other organizations to join.
- Establish regular communications via meetings and updates.
- Maximize the power of collaboration by tapping into the unique strengths of various coalition members.
- Monitor the coalition's progress and adjust the action plan as needed.
- When success is achieved, evaluate whether the coalition should continue towards a related goal or disband.
- Throughout the work, recognize the contributions of coalition members and celebrate achievements.

There are some instances where an organization can be most effective by participating in coalitions led by others, particularly when the issue is not in the primary portfolio of the organization. Similar considerations should guide the decisions about joining a coalition.