National Coalition of STD Directors

COALITION PLAYBOOK

Purpose of the Toolkit:

This toolkit is intended to help STD programs and their partners develop coalitions for the purpose of growing the reach and improving the results of STD and sexual health programs. The toolkit offers concrete steps and materials to help beginners and aficionados alike identify: (1.) the first steps in developing a coalition, (2.) how to support and foster a group of active members, and (3.) when and how to evaluate the coalition.

The National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) developed the toolkit after many requests from public health department employees and their partners for tips on where to start when thinking about building a coalition. Each of the four sections outlined within this toolkit—starting a coalition, building the coalition, holding a meeting, evaluating your coalition—has guiding language accompanied by templates that users can make their own as they venture into the world of coalitions. The language in each of the sections is intended as guide posts to explain the coalition building process, and the templates will help toolkit users put what they learn into practice.

While the four sections can be followed in sequential order, each section can also stand alone. Therefore, members can visit and revisit each part of the toolkit to fit their needs.

Thanks:

NCSD thanks the following organizations and coalitions for providing critical support in making this toolkit happen.

NASTAD

Tennessee Department of Health Trans Taskforce

Essential Access Health

Adolescent Sexual Health Work Group (ASHWG)

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA)

Prevention Access Alliance

GLSEN

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Connect to Protect (C2P) Philadelphia

COALITION PLAYBOOK

PART 1

Starting a Coalition

What Is a Coalition?

A coalition is a diverse group of organizations that come together around a common interest or goal. Coalitions convene for many reasons, such as to:

- Respond to opportunities, such as funding or implementation of new policy
- Respond to a threat or event, such as disease outbreak
- Work on a specific legislation or policy area
- Find new ways to expand outreach to the community or a key population

Think of a coalition as a balloon, where each participant is a different burst of helium. With only one burst, the balloon lies flat; with only a couple bursts, the balloon is only half blown up, and cannot float on its own; but with enough bursts the balloon rises and is able to successfully float.

Successful coalitions require a diverse group of participants who have the capacity, commitment, buy-in, and willingness to dedicate resources (time, human capital, financial capital, access to membership, etc.) toward ensuring that the coalition goals are met. A coalition usually meets regularly, with work taking place between meetings.

Why Build a Coalition?

Building a coalition can seem like setting yourself up for additional work; however, a coalition be a useful strategy to help government agencies and organizations alike, because a coalition demonstrates that an issue has strong support from a diversity of community voices. A coalition with a diverse membership also helps provide access to policy makers, community members, and expertise that a single entity may be unable to provide alone. Increasing access to policymakers is particularly important for state employees, who are otherwise restricted from engaging with policy makers, such as state representatives and their staff, around policy change.

A key step in building a strong coalition is assuring a diverse membership. This should include people, nonprofit organizations, agencies, and/or private businesses who:

- Can engage in advocacy
- Have policy expertise
- Have contacts within the agency or government body that the coalition is trying to engage and/or influence
- Have policy implementation expertise
- Are representative of the communities you are hoping to serve or influence

Sometimes, building a new coalition is not the right approach to achieve your goal. This may be because another coalition already exists that can help you achieve your goal, or because your goal is time- and product-bound, such as sending a sign-on letter from multiple organizations, to a state legislature to request support for a time-sensitive intitiatve.

Use the following checklist to determine if building a new coalition is the right move. If you answer "False" to any of the prompts, pause and carefully consider if a coalition is right, or if another approach would be better.

THE COALITION BUILDING CHECKLIST WILL HELP YOU DETERMINE IF BUILDING A COALITION IS THE RIGHT APPROACH FOR YOU.

Coalition Building Checklist	True	False
No other coalitions are working toward the same goal		
Achieving the coalition's goal requires sustained commitment, rather than a single action		
The issue you want to address is complex and requires expertise from other organizations and members of the community		
Other organizations see this issue as a priority		
The interested parties have a common vision and goal		
The purpose of the coalition will be to enact change, rather than to simply provide a place for people to share information		
The purpose this coalition will be to focus on education, advocacy, and action on behalf of a specific population or issue		

What Public Employees Can and Cannot Do

There is a misconception that public employees are not allowed to convene a coalition because it is viewed as an advocacy action. In fact, public employees are allowed to bring together community members, other public employees, nonprofits, and elected officials for the purpose of fulfilling a common goal. Coalitions can help you extend your reach and achieve broader goals than are possible as a public employee.

Coalitions can be particularly useful for public employees because, while you are not allowed to advocate or lobby individually, others in the coalition may not be restricted in that way.

Below are some key points to keep in mind about what public employees are **not allowed to do as part of a coalition**:

- Include the government agency or department name on any material that may be considered lobbying or advocacy — including asking for specific funding or supporting a specific bill
- Encourage anyone to contact their elected officials to support or oppose a specific bill or action
- Contact elected officials to express support or opposition to a specific bill or action
- Ask an organization to specifically lobby or advocate on a public entity's behalf
- Provide administrative support for lobbying activities of private or nonprofit organization that are part of the coalition
- Share confidential government information with the coalition

What public employees are **allowed to do** in a coalition:

- Explain how policies can be implemented
- Share contacts at the agency or government level
- Identify decision makers and implementers within agencies
- Develop model laws, including laws based on existing state or local laws
- Provide subject matter expertise
- Make public health recommendations even if this requires legislation in order to be implemented

Identifying the Right People to Join a Coalition

Some of the most common questions that people ask when first thinking about starting a coalition are:

- Which organizations should have a seat at the table?
- Who should I invite? Should participants be mid-level professionals or senior staff/top decision makers?
- What is the right number of coalition participants?

There is no single answer to these important questions. As the convener, you may want to explore answers to these questions one at a time.

1. Which organizations should have a seat at the table?

When considering who should be a part of the coalition take the following into consideration:

Those directly affected by the issue. Those whose work or lives are directly affected by the issue. This might include people who will not receive STD services due to a cut in funding or people who will be implementing a program, such as pharmacists participating in an expedited partner therapy (EPT) program.

Those with power or influence in implementation of the policy: These are the people who will influence program success, such as department heads who will need to write implementation plans or organizations that will provide direct services or trainings as result of the policy.

Nonprofit organizations, community groups, and organizations currently or previously engaged on this topic: This includes nonprofits whose mission is specific or adjacent to the topic, such as maternal and child health groups working on congenital syphilis or HIV groups implementing pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) guidance who will be testing for STDs as well.

Key Stakeholders to Consider:

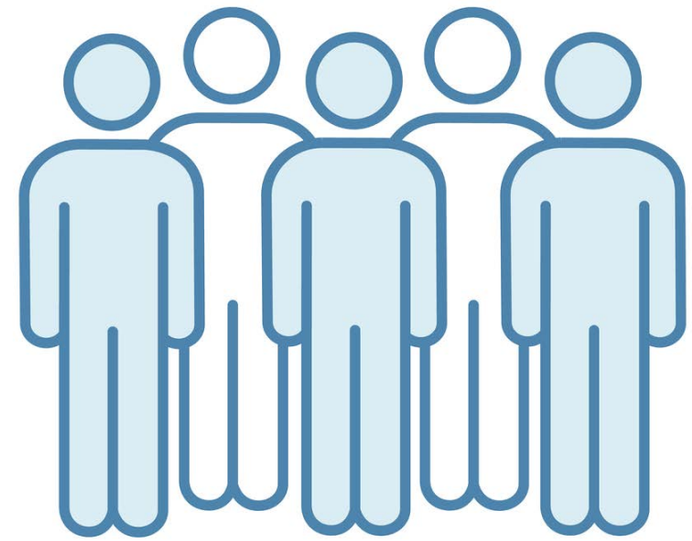
Political actors (e.g., members of state legislatures, members of Congress, state and federal health committee staffers) These are the people who have the power to write and pass legislation that affects your coalition's issue. Ask another member of your core group who is not a public employee to invite political actors to join the coalition. Once they are part of the coalition, it is perfectly fine to interact with them, as long as you are not advocating for a particular piece of legislation.

Regulatory agencies (e.g., health boards, pharmacy boards) These groups can be crucial for ensuring that policy is implemented correctly by physicians and other providers. This is particularly true for ensuring that EPT is implemented correctly.

Implementers (e.g., health department directors, clinics) These are the people who will develop implementation plans and implement policy. As a public employee, you are most likely an implementer of new policies.

Interest groups (e.g., unions, community action groups) These are the individuals and communities who are directly affected by a problem or policy shift. It is crucial to hear their voices to ensure that you address the problem in a meaningful way that they will support once the policy is implemented.

Nonprofit organizations and individuals (e.g., nonprofit health care providers, community organizations) These groups can bring a wealth of knowledge and subject matter expertise to your coalition. Because they have fewer restrictions on advocacy, nonprofits can help the coalition educate policy makers.



2. Should participants be mid-level staff or senior staff/top decision makers?

It's the age-old conundrum: should you invite someone who will be able to dedicate their time and be an active member of the coalition, or should you invite a decision maker who may not be able to dedicate as much time, but who is the direct implementer of policy? While there is no correct answer to this question, many coalition members who we interviewed for the toolkit voiced their support for having the middle-managers at the table with the decision makers informed and brought in periodically to provide their perspective.

One special group that needs additional consideration when determining who to invite are the "political actors." While having the actual politician at the table can seem exciting, it might not be the best decision for advancing the coalition's mission. Instead, the health staffer for the politician is a better choice, because they are often more familiar with the topic and have some influence in determining on what health topics the politician will focus.

3. What is the right number of coalition participants?

Start by identifying a core group of three to ten individuals. This will allow for an environment that supports negotiating and developing the coalition purpose and vision. Think of the old idiom, "too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the soup." We don't want so many voices and opinions that a decision on the direction of the coalition will never be made.

Once the coalition's initial vision and structure are developed, the core group can share them with their contacts to engage others in the process and ensure that a diverse set of voices is brought to the coalition. However, as you grow be sure that the group is not too big to support successful meetings and that each participant shares the mission, vision, and goals of the coalition.

Coalition Members: Essential Stakeholder Communities

In making sure these groups can be a part of the coalition you may need to plan for providing additional resources and/or support to help overcome any additional barriers these groups may have around access. NCSD suggests the following communities/populations for consideration, with suggestions for how to best engage them in coalition building.

Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING THIS GROUP – Men who have sex with men (MSM) face a sexual health crisis, especially when it comes to the STD epidemic, and they must be part of any coalition addressing STD policy and programs that affect their community. Although MSM are often targeted by messaging campaigns and policy changes, they do not always have a seat at the table when decisions are made about addressing STD rates in their own community. This is especially true for MSM of color, who are disproportionately affected by STDs. Work to include the full diversity of MSM in your community—racial, cultural, socioeconomic, geographic, etc.—as members of your coalition.

HOW THE MSM COMMUNITY HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN ENGAGED IN COALITIONS – Although MSM have a long history of leading HIV-focused groups, they have been less visible in STD and other sexual health coalitions, and their roles in sexual health coalitions have often been advisory, rather than primary decision making roles.

Due to a variety of structural and societal determinants, MSM of color do not always have leadership roles within coalitions. There should be a more targeted outreach to members, particularly non-white MSM, who reflect the specific needs of populations given that they make up a disproportionate number of new STD cases.

WHAT ENGAGING MSM IN YOUR COALITION SHOULD LOOK LIKE – Sexual health coalitions should be more representative of the communities that are adversely affected by the epidemics. Therefore, MSM from all backgrounds, including MSM of color, and MSM in rural areas should be engaged within a broad reaching STD coalition. It is also important to encourage MSM to take on leadership roles in your coalition. When reaching out to this population you should develop a clear ask, including what you want or expect their role to be in the coalition. This can make it clear that you value that person's participation on the coalition. It will also hold you, and other coalition members accountable to ensuring that those most affected by the rates of STDs have a strong say in how to address and prevent new infections.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REACHING THIS COMMUNITY –

- Use data to identify the groups and subgroups of people most affected by the problem your coalition will address, and engage those groups of people, rather than the groups with the loudest or most powerful voices.
- Get buy-in from local community leaders who are often the gatekeepers to members of the community. These leaders can help build trust in the coalition among disenfranchised communities who do not trust the health care community.
- Reach out to people of various ethnicities, houses of worship, and centers of higher education.

Transgender Community:

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING THIS GROUP – The transgender community is often overlooked and unrepresented in sexual health policy and programs. For example, sexual histories and other means of determining STD risk typically are based on assumed gender, and transgender patients may be uncomfortable outing themselves to providers in environments that are not perceived as safe spaces. For these reasons and many others, the transgender community provides an important perspective for your STD or sexual health coalition.

HOW THE TRANS COMMUNITY HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN ENGAGED IN COALITIONS – The trans community is often forgotten when coalitions are formed. When they are engaged, it is usually in an advisory role specific to the trans community rather than as advisers and decision makers about the work of the coalition as a whole.

WHAT ENGAGING THE TRANS COMMUNITY IN YOUR COALITION SHOULD LOOK LIKE – The trans community can provide a unique perspective on how to make sexual health services more inclusive. Therefore, when thinking about building your coalition, don't only think of the trans community when the issue is specific to that sub-population, but include them as an important leadership voice in how to provide better care for everyone. Include members of the trans community as you are forming your coalition and in the strategic planning process.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REACHING THIS COMMUNITY –

- Connect with local trans-pride organizations to identify possible coalition members.
- Develop and foster a trusted relationship with the trans community and organizations.
- Reach out both to trans-serving organizations and to individual members of the trans community who will be affected by the work of your coalition.

Young People:

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING THIS GROUP – Young people between the ages of 15-24 makeup half of all new STD infections in the U.S. Yet, sexual health services often are not youth friendly, because they are developed without reference to the perspectives and experience of young people. A coalition addressing rising STD rates will not be effective unless young people are engaged in meaningful ways.

Invite young people to join your coalition who reflect the full diversity of the community or geographic area that the coalition will serve.

HOW YOUTH HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN ENGAGED IN COALITIONS – Traditionally, youth have been engaged in stand-alone youth coalitions, rather than as members and lead voices in broader STD and sexual health coalitions. Young people on coalitions also have been treated as a lone token voice for all youth, and youth perspectives have not been a priority.

WHAT ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD LOOK LIKE – Young people have competing interests in their lives. Therefore, be specific about what you are asking young people to do as part of the coalition, including why they are invited, the time commitment, the boundaries of the relationship, their role as part of the coalition, whether and how often they will be expected to travel to participate in meetings, and a clear description of any compensation and support the coalition will offer in return for their participation.

Commit to assuring that young people are active, valued coalition members. This commitment—which should be made to all community representatives—can be part of the coalition's founding documents and process materials. Young people—like the MSM and transgender communities—encompass a wide range of identities (LGBTQ, people of color, rural or urban, etc.), Invite a diversity of voices within their community to join the coalition.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REACHING THIS COMMUNITY –

- Be clear about any compensation or other support your coalition will offer youth members, including money, access to mentors, funded meetups, employment or college references, etc.
- Respect the chosen pronouns and names of LGBTQ and non-binary youth.
- Check yourself for assumptions and stereotypes, such as you, as an adult, know more than young people do about sex, identity, or health.

Inviting Coalition Participants:

Choosing the right people and organizations to build your coalition can be a daunting task, but often finding one person leads to finding other strong prospects through that one person. Here are a few tips to help get you started.

- Invite people you know personally who have the skills, experience, or connections that the coalition needs to succeed. These may be people you have worked with in other coalitions or at a previous job.
- Use ***the mapping tool*** on the next page to identify some of the individuals, organizations, and agencies that are essential to the coalition's success. Look at agency and organization websites to identify people whose positions seem to fit with the coalition's area of focus.
- Consider people or organizations that sit on other coalitions with similar goals.
- Ask colleagues within your agency or department to suggest key people and organizations that are necessary for the coalition to succeed.

ONCE YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS TO INVITE, USE THIS TOOL TO INVITE MEMBERS TO JOIN YOUR COALITION.

Email Tool

Use this template after you have identified members for the coalition, and want to begin inviting them to join. This tool is intended to be edited by you, the user. Below is some suggested language the user can use, with highlighted areas for the user to put in their own information to make the letter personalized to their work, and who is being invited.

Dear [FIRST & LAST NAME],

As you may know, [THIS BILL RECENTLY PASSED, THESE RATES ARE HIGH, THIS WAS RECENTLY IMPLEMENTED]. We are interested in building a coalition with other organizations that are affected by [RECENT ACTION] to identify opportunities to [CHANGE THE POLICY, FIND THE BEST WAY TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY, IDENTIFY WAYS TO REACH THE COMMUNITY]. We could really use your organization's voice in this effort because [ORGANIZATION] is [INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THE ORGANIZATION IS AN IMPORTANT VOICE IN THE COMMUNITY, THEIR EXPERTISE ON THE ISSUE, OR ANOTHER REASON FOR THE INVITATION].

Would you, or someone from [ORGANIZATION NAME] be willing to attend an intial meeting on [DATE, TIME, and LOCATION] and participate in future coalition meetings around this topic?

Sincerely,

USE THIS TOOL TO IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONS OR AGENCIES THAT WORK IN A SIMILAR FIELD AND MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN JOINING.

Mapping Tool

Possible organizations or people	Stakeholder area	Resource mobilization power	Knowledge and expertise	Potential organizational or personal conflicts	Relationship to the person or organization	Recommendation

Identify potential coalition members by asking current or past partners and colleagues for suggestions (i.e., other coalition's members, orgs. with similar missions, businesses with something to gain)

On what issues does the individual or organization work?

What resources can the potential member bring to the coalition?

How important are the coalition's issues to the individual or organization? Have they worked on these issues before?

Is there anything in the potential member's work or mission that might conflict with the coalition's goals?

What is your relationship to this potential member? Can you contact them directly, or do you need to go through someone else?

Would you recommend inviting this person to be a part of the coalition?

Budget and Money:

While there are many benefits to having funding to support a coalition, there are also some disadvantages that can limit the coalition's ability to get things done. A few pros and cons to consider when thinking about funding for a coalition are outlined below.

Pros

- Funding can support resources, such as paying for staff time dedicated to running and managing the logistics of the coalition.
- Funding can bring access to people and spaces that otherwise would be difficult to reach, and can also be used to help raise the coalition's collective voice.
- With financial capital, the coalition can provide small grants to community organizations that may not otherwise have a seat at the table or assist with travel costs for key populations.

Cons

- Funding can be limiting depending on who it comes from and what the funder's goals are. The coalition might be at risk of needing to respond to their funder's goals at the expense of the coalition's own goals.
- Charging dues can limit coalition membership to individuals and organizations that can afford the dues.
- Funding management and allocation will need to be considered by the coalition and can detract from achieving the primary mission and goals.

If you decide that the coalition needs financial support, the following are some areas to consider when developing a coalition budget:

- **Member Dues:** Before deciding that coalition members will be required to pay dues to be a part of your coalition, make sure that your core members are on board for this strategy. Other things to consider include implementing a sliding scale for the dues based on member organizations' budget and creating a list of benefits that members get for paying coalition dues. Ask members to write coalition dues into their organization's budgets.
- **Grant Funding:** Foundations sometimes support coalitions that work to make a difference in the community or work on issues that interest the foundation. Do some research to see if there are foundations or organizations that support coalitions like yours. Use these websites as a starting place to look for grant funding and to learn about grant writing: ***Foundation Center***, ***Foundation Directory Online***, ***GrantStation***, ***Regional Associations of Grantmakers***.
- **Other Support from Members:** Ask coalition members to write coalition support into their organization's work plans or budgets. This will allow money to be allocated to their participation in the coalition and may free up additional funds for overhead and coalition support.

Challenges to Developing a Coalition:

Building and running a coalition is challenging. Anticipating some of these challenges can help you be ready for them when they arise. From conversations with successful coalitions, we identified the following challenges and solutions:

- **No organizational capacity:** Building a coalition and keeping it running takes time and can eat into your other work. It may be necessary to pay someone to coordinate the coalition, but that can be difficult if funding is limited or unavailable.
  - POSSIBLE SOLUTION: Write the coalition work into your job description or annual work plan to ensure that a guaranteed percentage of your time is designated for the coalition.

- **Leadership vacancy:** A coalition needs leadership to ensure that meetings run smoothly and that the coalition stays on track to meet its goals and objectives. If no one is willing to step into the leadership role, the coalition will not succeed
  - POSSIBLE SOLUTION: You may be the right person to lead the coalition. If not, identify the right person and encourage them to take on the leadership role.

- **Turf wars:** Some organizations that join the coalition will have some history over competing for the same funding or for visibility on the same issue. Working together in the coalition where they are expected to share their work or access to their members can be difficult.
  - POSSIBLE SOLUTION: Establish ground rules from the beginning. Every coalition member must agree to abide by those rules. For example, the use of information shared by coalition members can be restricted to the purpose of advancing the coalition.

- **Managing personalities:** Managing different personalities can be one of the primary challenges of a coalition.
  - POSSIBLE SOLUTION: Try some of the team-building activities suggested in the next section of this playbook.

COALITION PLAYBOOK

PART 2

Building the Coalition

Identifying the Mission

Once the purpose for the coalition has been discussed and developed, the coalition may decide on a mission statement to guide the coalition's work and be a grounding force for members. A mission statement can be a useful tool to re-center priorities in times of confusion or conflict.

The mission statement should be clear, concise, and not be so confining that the coalition is unable to grow and shift with the environment. It should also not be so broad that it provides no clear direction for the organization. Additionally, the process of writing a mission should be one that allows for full member participation. This will increase buy-in to the final mission.

Here are a few key elements of a mission:

VALUE – answer the question: what value does this mission bring to the community?

PLAUSIBLE – create a realistic mission, something that is achievable and not too high to reach

SPECIFICITY – be sure the mission statement ties back to the purpose of the coalition

TO HELP GET YOU STARTED ON HOW TO WRITE A MISSION USE THIS TOOL.

Identifying the purpose/mission of the coalition:		
Problem/ Issue	What is the common problem or issue that brought this coalition together?	
Possible policy solutions	What are some possible solutions that could help to address the problem?	
Possible outcomes of that solution	If the policy suggestion is enacted what do we expect to see happen? How will this policy suggestion be beneficial?	
Resources each organization brings	What resources does each participant in the coalition bring that can help to ensure that positive change happens?	
Mission	How will the coalition address the problem by working toward a solution?	

Action Planning

After the coalition's mission is developed, the next step is to create an action plan to carry out the mission. An action plan will help the coalition think through the necessary steps to achieve the mission of the coalition. Action plans should include clear activities and steps. Therefore, developing this plan can provide roles for members and actions for the coalition to take. Identifying these will help to move the coalition past planning and into doing. If the coalition's mission is the guide post, then the action plan is the road.

When developing an action plan, the following components should be considered:

- **Mission of the coalition**
- **Goals to achieve the mission:** Broad statement of what you hope to accomplish. In this case it would most likely be the adoption of your policy.
  - *EXAMPLE: Have condoms implemented in all D.C. public schools.*
- **Objective:** Measurable end product that once completed will help to achieve the goal. Objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-framed.
  - *EXAMPLE: By October 2020, the coalition will work with the DC Department of Health to develop an implementation plan for the provision of condoms at public schools. The plan includes costs, responsible parties, and possible roadblocks.*
- **Activity:** Steps that will be taken to achieve the objective, otherwise known as the "HOW". Activities that can be done throughout the policy process include draft problem statement, do a stakeholder analysis, develop a policy brief, develop and invite people to a coalition, craft messaging, and meet with decision makers.
  - *EXAMPLE: Invite Mothers for Safe Sex, Students Demand Condoms, and the Department of Education to join coalition meeting.*
- **Target date:** Date activities should be completed.
- **Person(s) responsible:** The responsible party for each activity.
- **Resources required:** What will be needed to implement each activity. This could be staff time, money, space, or tools.
- **Anticipated outcome:** Direct, tangible, and measurable results of the activity.
  - *EXAMPLE: Mothers for Safe Sex, Student Demand Condoms, and the Department of Education join our coalition.*
- **Progress notes:** Updates on how planning and implementing activities is going.

FOR HOW TO PUT THESE STEPS INTO ACTION USE THIS ACTION PLANNING TOOL.

Action Planner

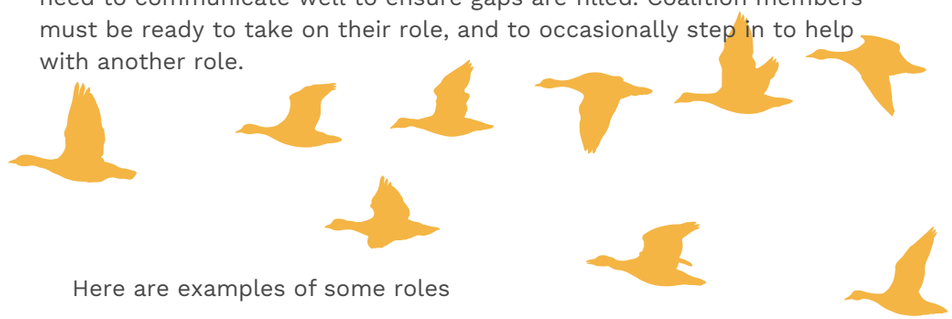
Mission	
Goal	
Objective	

Activity	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Required	Anticipated Outcome	Progress Notes

Duties of a Coalition Member

When identifying members to join a coalition, it can be helpful to also lay out in what coalition roles they will be asked to partake. All members should be willing to offer feedback on implementation plans, provide strategic direction of the coalition, offer resources and attend events on behalf of the coalition.

Imagine the coalition as a flock of birds; to get to the destination everyone must have a role to help the flock fly in formation. Furthermore, the leader of the flock of birds, or the top of the "v", will occasionally need to take a back seat and another bird will need to step up. In order to keep the flock moving in the right direction everyone will need to communicate well to ensure gaps are filled. Coalition members must be ready to take on their role, and to occasionally step in to help with another role.



Here are examples of some roles

- **Content Expert:** This role is often filled by multiple members. Members bring their own areas of expertise from their work or experience; in fact they are often asked to join the coalition because of that expertise. It is expected that members will bring their knowledge and understanding of a topic to the table.
- **The Leader:** This member is visionary, and is interested in seeing the bigger picture and thinking creatively for the coalition. They often offer new and creative ideas that lead the coalition to a better place. They are also seen as an important voice in the coalition to whom other members listen. This position usually translates into the Chair of the coalition.
- **The Timekeeper:** This member makes sure that the coalition meeting stays on track, that all the agenda items are covered during a meeting, and that the overall goal of the meeting is not lost on the participants. This person also ensures that the meeting starts and ends on time.
- **The Cheerleader:** This person is always there to welcome new members, to encourage quieter members to participate and to encourage members to take on leadership roles. This member is often a listening ear for other members and an optimistic presence in the coalition.
- **The Detailer:** This person takes the big ideas from the coalition and puts them into actionable steps.
- **The Volunteer:** This member is always offering their time and resources. They are the first to raise their hand when asked for someone to help out with an event, developing a document, or stepping into a new role.
- **The Moderator:** This member is good at weighing the pros and cons of any subject or topic. They can see all sides of an argument, and will raise concerns that other members might not see.
- **Recruiter:** Coalitions often go through transitions with people coming and going or gaps in expertise may be identified. Therefore, it is important for the coalition to consider new membership. This role may not fall on one person. Everyone in the coalition will have a network and may know someone who would be a good fit for the coalition.

You may be more than one of these, or your role could change throughout your time on the coalition, but you should always weigh the pros and cons of this role. Use the ***member-type tool*** on the next page to help identify what role you fit into.

Once a potential new member has determined that they can commit to being an active member of the coalition, the ***commitment letter tool*** (on page 19) can be used to create a shared agreement between the member and the coalition.

USE THIS TOOL TO HELP IDENTIFY WHAT ROLE YOU FIT INTO.

Member Type Tool

Do you consider yourself to be good at seeing the bigger vision for the coalition and good at thinking of creative ideas?

YES → You might be the **"Leader"**

NO →

Do you like to keep meetings on track and ensure that all agenda items are covered and the broader goal for meetings are met?

YES → You might be the **"Timekeeper"**

NO →

Do you like to be the person to welcome new people and encourage others to take on a leadership role? Do people consider you to be optimistic?

YES → You might be the **"Cheerleader"**

NO →

Do you like to take big ideas and put them into actionable steps? Are you someone who gets caught up in the details of a project?

YES → You might be the **"Detailer"**

NO →

Are you the person who is always offering your time and resources? Are you first to raise your hand when asked to help with an event or creating a document?

YES → You might be the **"Volunteer"**

NO →

Are you good at seeing all sides of an argument and weighing the pros and the cons of any topic?

YES → You might be the **"Evaluator"**

Commitment Letter

Coalition Name

Commitment Letter

I ,_____, agree to be an active member of _____ (coalition name). I am committed to the vision and goals of the Coalition and am willing to do what I can to ensure that those goals are realized. By signing this document I understand that I will receive the following from the Coalition:

- Connections to other organizations that share my vision
- Access to the Coalition's resources and tools
- Connections with administrative government members

In return, I am willing to provide the following to the Coalition:

- Staff time during the Coalition meeting dates, and time to complete additional tasks as necessary
- My subject matter expertise, knowledge, and connections to relevant organizations
- Reading of minutes and reports and provide my feedback
- Access to my members and constituencies
- Informing the Coalition of my organization's related activities

Name of New Member _____

Name of Organization they represent _____

Name of Chairperson _____

Date _____

USE THIS TOOL TO CREATE A SHARED AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MEMBER AND THE COALITION.

Bylaws

Bylaws are official regulations or guidelines that outline the operations of the coalition and relay the way the coalition conducts its internal business. To create order, as well as to document for perpetuity, bylaws should be created. Once bylaws are created, they should be shared with future members to assist them in understanding why the coalition was formed and what they should expect.

Bylaws should be created after the core group and mission of the organization are identified to help to document the agreed upon language. Please note, however, that after the bylaws are created they can be revisited and changed as the coalition grows and priorities shift, or new rules come into place. Usually, to adjust the bylaws a ¾ majority is needed, but that can also be decided on by the coalition members.

THIS TOOL CAN AID COALITIONS IN CREATING BYLAWS.

Bylaws Worksheet

ARTICLE 1: Name of the Coalition: This will include other names that might be used to refer to the coalition. List all names, but indicate the official name with "The official name of the organization is..."

ARTICLE 2: Statement of Background: Describe why the coalition was founded and by whom.

ARTICLE 3: Mission or Purpose of the Coalition : List what the coalition's mission is that you have identified during the initial meetings with members. (Refer to ***Action Plan Worksheet***)

ARTICLE 4: Coalition Goals: Describe the outcomes the coalition wants to achieve in an effort to reach the goals.

ARTICLE 5: Membership: Describe what the members' rights and limitations are. This will include their voting rights, any membership terms and what the member is expected to provide as a part of the coalition including dues and sub-committee requirements. If the coalition decides to have dues, describe here how much the fee is, if and when dues are assessed and what the dues are to be used for.

ARTICLE 6: Leadership: Describe what leadership looks like in the coalition, including if there is a Chair and Co-chair and their term lengths, position duties, and the processes for election, transition, and removal.

ARTICLE 7: Structure: If there are work groups or subcommittees describe how those will operate, what the leadership for those groups will look like and how they will be formed.

ARTICLE 8: Meetings: Describe here how often meetings will be held (i.e. monthly, quarterly, biannually). It should also explain who has the authority to call meetings and how members will be notified of upcoming meetings. Finally, describe the process for developing subcommittees and their operating procedures, including who has the authority to develop those subcommittees.

ARTICLE 9: Voting: List how many people are expected to be present before voting can happen (quorum). Describe how many votes an organization is allotted. This is an important discussion as coalitions may have many members from one organization. Describe the voting mechanism (majority, consensus, etc.).

ARTICLE 10: Dissolution Clause: Explain what circumstances would allow for the dissolution of the coalition. If the coalition dissolves, what happens to any coalition assets.

ARTICLE 11: Amending bylaws: Describe the procedure for changing the bylaws. Include who has the authority to propose amendments, and how many votes are required for amending or revising the bylaws.

COALITION PLAYBOOK

PART 3

Holding a Meeting

** NOTE: WHILE THIS SECTION FOCUSES ON HOLDING YOUR FIRST MEETING, MANY OF THESE PRINCIPLES TRANSLATE INTO HOW YOU THINK ABOUT HOLDING FUTURE MEETINGS AS WELL.**

Logistics

The thought of holding the first coalition meeting may be daunting, but with preparation the meeting will run smoothly! Part three of the Coalition Building Toolkit covers some of the initial planning details for coalition meetings.

1. **Agenda:** When preparing for Coalition meetings, a well-thought out agenda should be created to keep the meeting on track. The agenda should be given to all the participants with ample time to review it prior to the meeting.

   When thinking through what you should have on your agenda try to keep it largely focused on the purpose of developing the Coalition. The initial meeting will not be as substantive as other meetings, but it will offer the opportunity for members to become acquainted with the coalition and each other. Make sure the agenda has space for introductions and, if time, an ice breaker. Depending on how many members will be attending the meeting, it may be useful to allot time for a group discussion (or small group discussions if the meeting is larger) around individual members' goals.

   If the initial meeting includes speaker(s), internal or external from the coalition, reaching out to them well-ahead of the meeting is important. The speakers should know how much time they have to speak and when they will be speaking, who will be in attendance, and your expectations of them.

USE THIS TOOL FOR GUIDANCE IN CREATING AN AGENDA FOR YOUR FIRST COALITION MEETING.

Agenda Tool

__(Coalition Name)__ Meeting Agenda

[Day, Date, Time (ET/CT/MT/PT)]

Call-in information / Address

1. Welcome, Introductions: [Time, Person Responsible for item]
2. Adoption of Minutes: [Time, Person Responsible for item] *Note: This will not usually happen in the first meeting, because there will be no minutes to adopt, but for future meetings this will be a standing item*
3. Agenda item 1: [Time, Person Responsible for item]
4. Agenda item 2: [Time, Person Responsible for item]
5. Agenda item 3: [Time, Person Responsible for item]
6. Review of action items identified from last meeting, and check-in with responsible parties.
7. Adjourn: [Time, Person Responsible for item]
   - Next Meeting: [Date and Time (ET/CT/MT/PT)]

2. **Identifying Space:** Identifying the right meeting space can be challenging, especially if there are monetary concerns. When determining a meeting location, consider the following three things:
   - **Budget:** Think about picking a space that will fit what you can and are willing to pay. If you do not have funds to pay for meeting space, ask your partner organizations if they have a meeting space that you can use. If no one has space think of some other areas that might be free including the YMCA or YWCA, City Hall, a community center, a high school or college, or a local religious center.
   - **Size:** Just like in the Goldilocks fairytale, the space should not be too big or too small, but just right. If the space is too large it can feel discouraging that the space was not able to be filled and depending on the number of seats could lead to a distance between participants, making it more difficult for conversation. If a space is too small it can be difficult to ensure that everyone has a "seat at the table," and can create for an uncomfortable environment.
   - **Location:** The location should be easy for the members to get to. While a free space with the perfect size may present itself, it will not matter if the location is difficult for members to access. Remember to take into account that members have busy work and personal schedules that could make travel to distant location difficult. The location of the meeting space should not be a barrier to participant engagement.

3. **Room setup:** The arrangement of the room can encourage or hamper participant engagement. Before the meeting, think about the best way to arrange seating so that it is most effective and fits the goal of the meeting. Here are a few different room configurations:
   - **A long table:** The most common meeting spaces are set up with a long table that everyone sits around. Choosing this option could help to limit how much the room needs to be moved around. However, this arrangement usually allows one person to be at the head of the table, and naturally the de-facto leader. If you want the coalition to feel like there is more equality around members then this set-up might not be right for you.
   - **Circular table:** This set up allows for there to be more of a feeling of equity for the members, however, it can be difficult to set up tables in a circle or find a big enough circular table, and therefore chairs arranged in a circle would make more sense, however, this would mean that there is no clear space for people to write and take notes.
   - **Several small tables:** This is a great set-up if you are planning on doing some small group work because it limits the amount of people needing to move around, and creates the opportunity for groups to speak in a more intimate setting. However, if group work is not planned this set-up can also lead to separation among the group when having a shared discussion and can lead to a disjointed feeling.
   - **Classroom style:** This set-up works better if the meeting will be largely led by one or a small group of people or if there will be presentations. This can also be useful if the coalition is planning on having a community meeting, to get community input and share any key findings. This style may not be the best for every meeting.

4. **Choosing a meeting facilitator:** Running a first coalition meeting before a chair or leader has been identified can be a challenge. The first meeting will help to set the tone for future meetings and so it is important to select the right facilitator. Whoever runs the first meeting should have some "clout", meaning that people will listen to them as they speak, and will recognize them as a leader for the cause. The facilitator should also be good at creating an open environment, i.e. they listen and ask for feedback more than talk themselves. Finally, a facilitator will need to be able to move the meeting along, and keep track of the agenda so that the meeting does not go over time.

   Some people to consider to be the facilitator:
   - An executive director of one of the organizations
   - A community leader who is affected by the issue
   - A member of the core group
   - An outside facilitator

5. **Minutes:** Keeping minutes during the first meeting (and future meetings) can help to keep track of what was discussed and the history of the coalition which is useful for new members to get caught up. Until a regular secretary is decided on, if that is what the coalition chooses to do, someone will need to take the minutes. One of the best options is a member of the core group who feels comfortable taking minutes. Once the meeting is over, the minutes should be typed up, edited, and shared with all coalition members. The minutes should also be shared with new members when they join the coalition.

Minutes Tool

Name of Coalition
[Date and Time]

Date:
Attendees:
Recorder:
Discussion Topics:

Topic 1

-
-
- Next Steps + Person Responsible

Topic 2

-
-
- Next Steps + Person Responsible

Topic 3

-
-
- Next Steps + Person Responsible

Process of the First Meeting

As mentioned in earlier sections of this toolkit, the first meeting should be relatively light and about familiarizing members to the coalition's purpose and getting to know each other. The first coalition meeting will be similar to the first day of school. The first day of class was not filled with substantive work usually, but instead the teacher introduced themselves, went over the syllabus or plan for the year, and what tools would be needed in the class to be successful. A first coalition meeting should follow a similar process.

Timing of the first meeting:

Because the first meeting will require time for introductions, as well as the space to discuss and make decisions on important topics, the first meeting may need more time than subsequent meetings. The organizers will want to budget for anywhere from two hours to a half day meeting to ensure all topics are covered.

To run a successful first meeting here is an outline of suggested topics:

1. **Introductions:** Ask everyone to introduce themselves, what past work they have done on topic, and why they joined the coalition. Asking for this information will help to create a common understanding among all participants of what each person is hoping for the coalition.

2. **Define the mission:** This is a crucial first step for ensuring that the coalition has a clear purpose moving forward. Work with coalition members on this step to ensure that everyone is involved in the process. This particular topic may take longer than just one meeting, so allow yourself the flexibility to begin this discussion during the first meeting, and make final decisions in future meetings.
3. **Identify meeting structure:** Identifying how the coalition meetings will be run in the future can help to create a sense of a secure environment, and can help lay some ground rules for everyone.
4. **Request suggestions/nominations for officers:** Ask for volunteers, nominations, or suggestions for who would be a good Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary/note taker, Treasurer, etc., or anyone else that was decided on to be an officer.
5. **Review next steps:** While holding this meeting is the first step of convening a coalition, there are many other tasks and action items that will need to be completed and determined including:
   - Electing Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
   - If there are going to be subcommittees
   - Action planning
   - Goals and objectives

   This meeting should start to identify what the next steps will be, and by when they need to be determined, and if tasks should be assigned to certain people.

6. **Schedule the next meeting and regular meeting days/times:** At the end of the meeting determine when the next meeting will be (if possible schedule a standing meeting time), so that members know that they can count on the coalition to meet regularly on a given day/time).

Follow-up After the First Meeting

After the first meeting, be sure to follow-up with members via email or through individual calls. This can help to ensure that each member feels involved in the coalition and its process. It also provides an opportunity for open dialogue and relationship building among members. The follow-up should include:

A thank you: Thank the member(s) for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in the meeting.

Reiterate the mission: Restate the reason for forming the coalition, the coalition's purpose and mission, and remind members that they are a crucial part of achieving the mission.

List of action items: Provide the list of decided on next steps and action items, including the person(s) responsible and due dates, if necessary.

Meeting minutes: Share the minutes with the members to see if they have any questions or concerns about what was discussed.

Questions or concerns: See if anything came up for the member during the first meeting that could be addressed during the follow-up , or at the next meeting.

COALITION PLAYBOOK

PART 4

Evaluating Your Coalition

Why Evaluate:

After a coalition is successfully up-and-running, it is important to have annual "check-up" of the coalition. Think of it like an annual exam at the doctor, to ensure that every part of one's body is staying healthy.

In the case of the coalition check-up, think of it in the following way:

Head: This should be an evaluation of the coalition's leadership. The leadership can reflect the mission of the organization in the ways in which they determine activities and present themselves to the coalition. Does the leadership listen to and reflect the concerns and ideas of the coalition members as a whole? Are they able to inspire other members of the coalition and be a listening ear?

Temperature: This is an evaluation of the feel of the coalition, and how members interact and engage. Here you want to think about if members are fully engaged in the coalition meetings, outcomes, and activities. Do the members feel comfortable engaging with each other, and do they like how the coalition is structured?

Heart: This is reviewing the coalition's reason for being – the mission. Since the forming of the coalition has the mission changed? Are there new areas that the coalition has expanded into that is not reflected in the mission? Is the mission realistic?

Joints: The joints of a coalition are how it operates, and the operating principles. This is a review of the bylaws and meeting structure. Are the rules reflected in the bylaws? Are there clear voting rules and leadership rules? Does the way that the meetings are held, including when and where, work?

Eyes: This is the vision of the coalition. Is the vision statement still relevant? Does it reflect where the coalition is going?

Body Mass Index: This is how the coalition is funded. Does the coalition have enough funding to ensure that it is able to operate at its current state? If it needs more funding how can that be acquired? Is the current funding for the coalition hindering any work that should be done?

Each of these areas should be reviewed with an eye towards strengths and weaknesses. When the coalition reviews each of these areas the members should think about how they can better improve on each of the above areas in the new year and put it into action.

Creating a Plan to Evaluate

When it comes to evaluating the coalition make sure to have a plan put in place for how often to evaluate, who will be responsible for evaluating, and how to implement the results. Determining these steps early on will ensure that the evaluation process goes smoothly. Below are a few suggestions to assist with the creation of an evaluation plan.

- **How often to evaluate:** This decision can include a broad range of options for how frequently evaluation occurs. Most coalitions usually choose between quarterly, annually, or biennially. Each have positives and negatives.
  - Quarterly will allow for the coalition to more thoroughly and frequently correct course, but change also takes time, and therefore doing an evaluation quarterly may not actually accurately reveal how changes put forth earlier are actually working.
  - Annually is a common timeframe for coalition evaluations. This gives opportunity members to re-center every year. Once a year is a good marker for reviewing successes and downfalls over the course of said year, but doing so every year may not be fruitful as a vision or mission may not change or turn around that quickly.
  - Biennially provides more time for change to occur between reviews. However, waiting every two years could mean that issues may not be caught or addressed in a timely manner.
- **Who is responsible for evaluating:** This is an important decision for determining who will be leading the process, executing the evaluation, and disseminating the results to coalition members. There are a few options for who should take on leading the process these include:
  - OUTSIDE SOURCE: Getting an outside source will allow for there to be a set of neutral eyes on the work of the coalition. This will mean that the evaluator will not have any bias for or against any process, activity, or person in the organization, and can truly be neutral. Additionally, the outside source may make members more open to fully expressing any concerns they have about the coalition, which will capture a fuller picture of what needs to happen. However, an outside source will also require funding. The outside source may not be familiar with the coalition and will require more time for getting up-to-speed with the work of the coalition and its members.
  - LEADERSHIP: The chair and co-chair may seem like natural choices for leading the evaluation because the members of the coalition elected them as leaders. These leaders already knows all the ins-and-outs of the coalition and therefore can understand some of the pitfalls and positives immediately. However, coalition leadership will often have biases and therefore will not be a neutral evaluator of the coalition's work.
  - VOLUNTEER: The coalition could ask for a volunteer evaluator . This could ensure that the person is fully bought into the process, and that they have the time to fully and adequately evaluate the coalition. However, a volunteer evaluator may not be able to prioritize unpaid work or go as in-depth as a paid or evaluator or coalition member.
  - SUBCOMMITTEE: In addition to a volunteer, the coalition could appoint a small subcommittee to lead the evaluation process. This would allow for more hands on the evaluation process, and could also allow for more neutrality with more voices. However, with more people also comes more complication, which could hold up the process.
- **How to implement the results:** Finally, once the results are in, there should be a plan on how to implement the results. All members of the coalition must agree to implement reasonable and realistic recommendations resulting from the final evaluation. To do so a few suggestions are below:
  - Appointing a subcommittee to implement the suggestions: The committee can decide on a specific subcommittee or working group that is responsible for regularly reviewing the suggestions and creating plans for the implementation and activities for implementation.
  - Make it a standing part of each coalition meeting: Reviewing the suggestions that come out of the coalition and discussing activities for implementing them could become a standing agenda item each meeting to ensure that the coalition is adequately addressing them.

- Appoint each member a different task to oversee: The coalition could also appoint, or ask for volunteer members, to be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the suggestions from the evaluation.

Processes for Evaluation:

It is important to have a clear process for how to collect feedback about the coalition for the evaluation. This can be done in a formal (specific process, time, and place for a review) or informal way (no clear process or time and place for review, but can ask for feedback just through email, or one-on-one meetings). Whatever process the coalition decides on, the use of anonymous or de-identified information can help members feel more comfortable in giving thorough and honest feedback.

Below is a suggested process for how to receive feedback.

- Interview coalition members or ask them to fill out a survey. In a more formal process, time will be scheduled for interviews in which coalition members are asked specific questions for their feedback. In an informal process, coalition members would send in feedback via an email form.
- Review the past quarter, year, or two years, and areas for improvement during a special retreat or longer meeting. A formal review process could take place during a pre-planned retreat or special meeting. An informal process could be during a regularly planned meeting, as a separate agenda item.
- Have the evaluator summarize the meeting and individual results. Use the suggested point-person for evaluation above and have them collate all the results from the interviews and meetings for review by the membership.

- Create recommendations for change: In a formal process the evaluator will make recommendations for change after the evaluation has been finalized (this should also be part of the evaluation document). In an informal process the coalition as a whole will create recommendations.

USE THIS TOOL TO COMPILE INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE MEMBERS ANONYMOUSLY, AND THEN USE THE RESULTS TO DISCUSS OPTIONS FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE FULL MEMBER MEETINGS.

EVALUATION TOOL

Strong or Always 5 4 3 2 1 **Weak or Never**

Coalition's vision and goals:

____ The coalition has a clear mission

____ The mission and vision of the coalition are in writing

____ The coalition's actions and goals are directly related to achieving the coalition's mission

____ The coalition's goals are responsive to what is happening in the community

Effectiveness of the coalition structure:

____ The coalition meets regularly

____ All coalition members have a copy of the bylaws

____ The coalition has a chair that runs the meetings

____ The coalition has a mechanism for making decisions

Membership Engagement:

____ The coalition has active members

____ Members clearly understand their roles

____ Members have a process for providing input into the coalition's priorities

____ Members regularly participate in the coalition's meetings

____ The coalition has a process for orienting new members

____ Members feel free to speak at a meeting without fear of being criticized

Evaluation:

____ At the beginning of every year the coalition develops new goals and activities to accomplish over the next year

____ At the end of every year the coalition takes time to review their goals and accomplishments from the past year, as well as re-evaluate the mission

____ The coalition conducts an annual action planning session

Options for Change

Once the review is completed there are a many options for how the coalition can implement changes. Below are a few options.

- **Growing:** If the evaluation indicates that the coalition is doing well and therefore is ready to take on a new challenge the coalition should identify new tasks or activities to undertake.
  To identify if it is time to expand its scope, the coalition will want to consider: track record of success; the stability of the coalition; member capacity; and if the need is there.
  If you do decide to grow into new challenges, it is important to recognize that there may be additional capacity challenges, such as a need for more funding, or additional coalition members who can help take on an increased workload. Ultimately, you want to be sure that when growing you continue to make the core mission of the coalition the priority.
- **Staying the course:** If the evaluation indicates that the coalition is running well as is, then the coalition can determine to stay the same. However, staying the course does not mean that the coalition does not have to make any changes. There will always be opportunities to improve.
- **Ending:** It is O.K. for a coalition to end, especially if it has completed its mission. If the evaluation determines that the coalition has completed its mission, that the membership is no longer engaged, or if it cannot operate without funding and has none, then it might be time to consider disbanding. Operations for disbanding and what happens with any leftover resources should be determined in the bylaws of the organization (referenced in part 2). Another option is to combine with another coalition.
- **Changing focus:** If the original mission of the coalition has been met, but there is still a need in the community, then the coalition may decide to change focus. This can be a longer process because it will require creating a new mission and vision, and revising the bylaws. If this is decided on then all members of the coalition will have to go through the mission identification process in part 1.