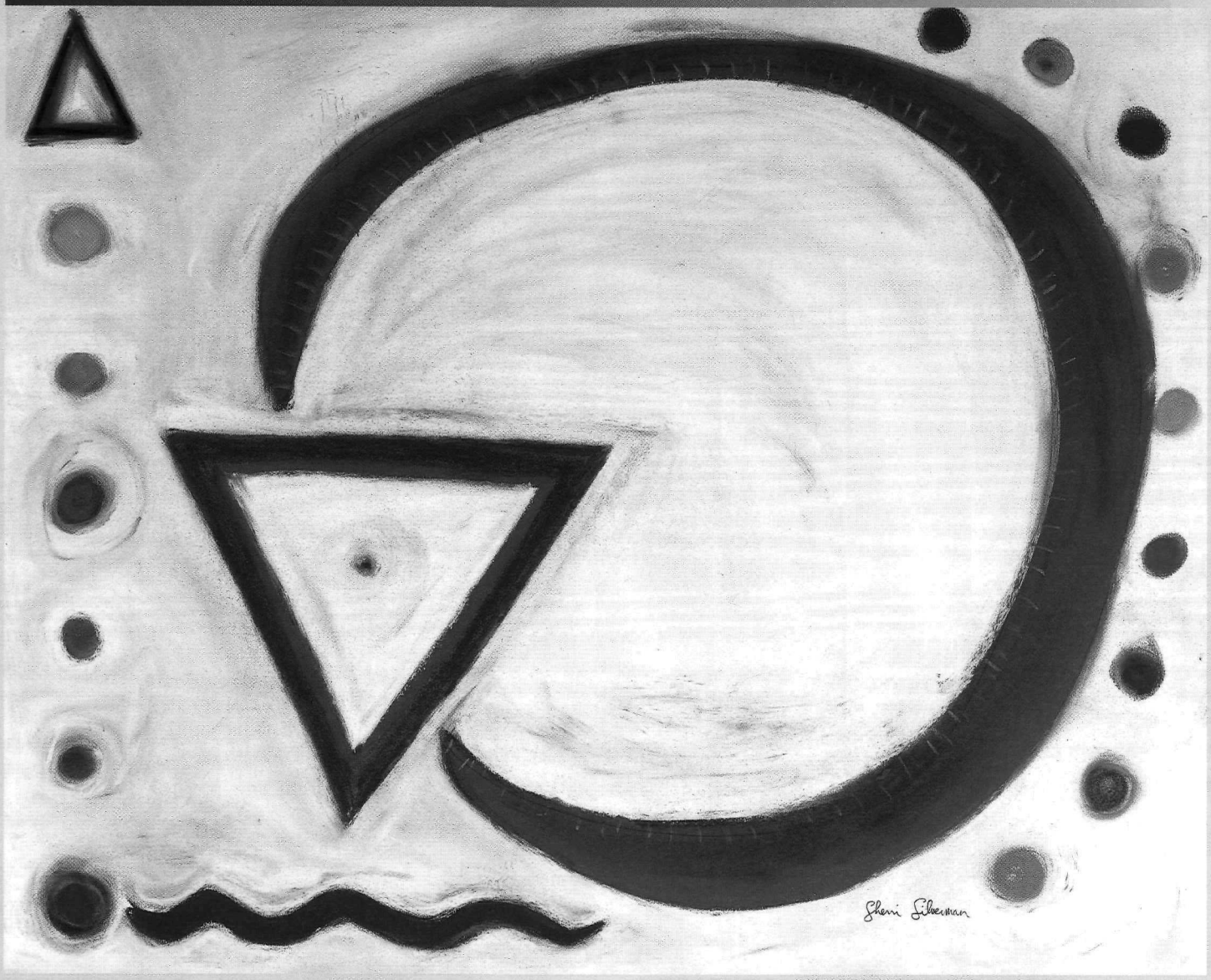
Working Together, *Moving Ahead*



A Manual to Support Effective Community Health Coalitions

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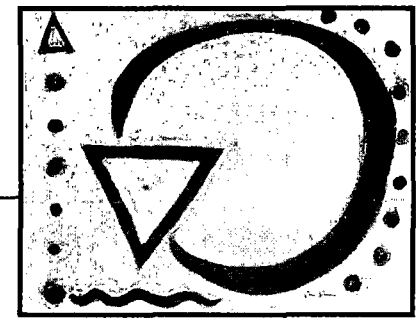
CHAPTER 1



INTRODUCTION

As we enter the 21st century, if we happen to work on improving health status or health care delivery systems, we are very likely to be involved in at least one coalition. The group may be called a partnership, a collaborative, a consortium, a planning council or an advisory group, but whatever it is called, it takes a lot of our time. It can be rewarding, or frustrating, or both. No one in college or graduate school taught us much, if anything, about how to be an effective member of such a group, let alone how to provide effective staff support or resources to such a group. Yet coalitions and other multiparty entities are a pervasive part of our lives. They are often a lifeline that helps us reach out to the people we want to serve. They often provide a vehicle for legitimating our work with "power brokers" in the business community or in the legislature. They may include, in addition to people who look and sound a lot like us, people whose culture, discipline, expertise, perspectives and opinions are very different. Indeed, diversity is the key to the underlying strategy of a coalition.

When we use the phrase "In union there is strength," we are usually talking about a group like a professional association or labor union, where all the members are presumed to be very much alike, and to have shared interests and perspectives. The term "coalition" comes from a different stream in political history, that is, the process of pulling together a group of distinct interest groups or political parties who have a shared interest in a particular issue or objective. The strength of the "union" in a coalition is the strength of its diversity, and of the extent to which it can find common ground in the context of diversity. Make no mistake — this is not easy work. That, indeed, is why this manual was developed. The purpose of this manual is to support those who:

- Participate in coalitions
- Provide staff support to coalitions
- Provide funding or in-kind resources to coalitions or
- Require their grantees to organize and utilize coalitions in their work

The manual is designed to provide practical advice on common concerns and problems facing coalitions. It is also designed to get people thinking about why they have chosen to use coalitions in their work, about their assumptions in building coalitions, and about the structures and processes they are using with coalitions. If you have reactions to what is said, please share them with us!

Where Does the Manual Come From?

This manual is one of several products of a multiyear assessment of statewide tobacco control coalitions funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWFJ) through its SmokeLess States Initiative (SSI). This assessment was carried out by a group of researchers based in several different organizations (you could almost say it grew out of the work of a coalition!); the principal author was also the Principal Investigator for the researcher. The work began shortly after the SSI was announced, and even before applications were submitted. RWJF funded us initially to examine how states mobilized coalitions in response to the announcement, and whether their interactions resulted in an application, and in efforts to work together whether or not the application was funded. We studied 12 states that were likely applicants; all but one did apply, and a subset was funded. Once funding decisions were made, RWJF asked us to conduct a more formal evaluation. Included in this longer study were all nine states that received four-year "implementation" grants as well as three of about a dozen states that received smaller, two-year "capacity building" grants.

Both studies used qualitative research methods extensively. We set a team of "action researchers" to carry out site visits that included semistructured key informant interviews and observations of coalition meetings and coalition sponsored events. We also collected and analyzed background materials and current documents describing the work of the groups studied. After a couple of years of field work, however, we found ourselves ready to move for-

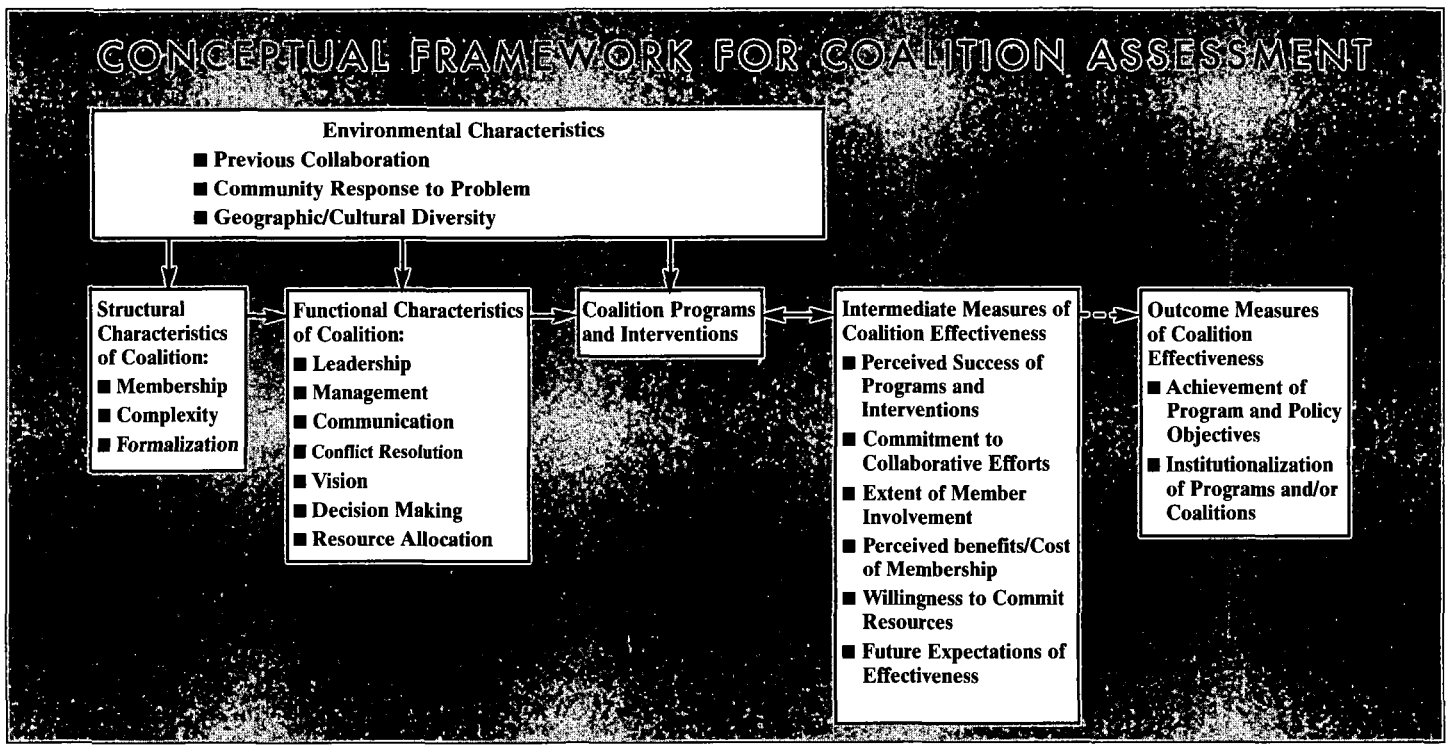
ward to the development of a more "closed-ended" survey instrument called the *Coalition Self Assessment Survey (CSAS)*.[1] This survey captured the characteristics, experiences and responses of coalition members from each site. Finally, we also collected secondary data to learn more about the environment of the states we studied and to track changes in tobacco policy in those states. These data, taken together and analyzed to identify themes across sites, form the primary "ground" for this manual.[2] However, we are also building on the understanding and evidence of other researchers and practitioners.

[1] Those interested in using this survey, which is designed not only for the purposes of evaluation but for providing feedback for improvement to coalitions themselves, can request the document *"The Coalition Self Assessment Survey: A Manual for Users"* from Shoshanna Sofaer, Dr.P.H., Robert P. Luciano, Professor of Health Care Policy, School of Public Affairs, Baruch College, 17 Lexington Avenue, Box C-401, New York, NY 10010.

[2] In addition to this manual, we have developed a set of case studies of tobacco control coalitions, *Lifting the Smokescreen: 7 Stories from the Front Lines of Tobacco Control,* which tell more particular stories in considerably greater detail and draw out lessons learned from a particular state's experiences. This document is also available from Dr. Sofaer.

Conceptual Frameworks Guiding our Work

Two conceptual frameworks have guided our work, and are also reflected in this manual. The first is a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Coalition Effectiveness; the second is a Conceptual Framework for Coalition Development. In 1993, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) supported the development of a Conceptual Framework for Coalition Assessment for possible use in evaluating coalitions associated with the NCI ASSIST tobacco control program. Like the SmokeLess States Initiative, the ASSIST project had as a central ingredient the mobilization of a multi-party coalition of public and private organizations, and individuals, who would help to plan and carry out specific activities to further a particular set of community health objectives. The primary author developed a preliminary version of this conceptual framework, which was then revised and refined at a meeting of other coalition



researchers and experienced coalition developers. Although NCI chose not to embark on a coalition evaluation, we decided to use an adapted version of this Conceptual Framework (see next page) to guide our study. Since it has proven both useful and robust, we have used elements of the framework as organizing principles for the manual. We were acutely aware, however, that coalitions do not just happen; they change and sometimes grow over time. We therefore synthesized a number of discussions in the literature into a Conceptual Framework of Coalition Development, which is described in detail in Chapter VIII. In the next section of the introduction, we describe how the manual is organized, relating it to the Conceptual Frameworks we used.

How is the Manual Organized?

An important message of this manual, one that is reiterated throughout but discussed in particular in Chapter II, Origins and Purposes of Coalitions, is that the environment of a coalition shapes the challenges it faces, the resources available to it, and its structures and strategies. Across issues, the following are particular characteristics of an environment that influences, coalition functioning and effectiveness:

- The extent of public support for the objectives of the coalition
- The extent to which there are organized and powerful interest groups opposed to the objectives of the coalition
- The history of prior collaboration both on the issue addressed by the coalition and on other health and social issues
- The extent of cultural, ethnic and economic diversity in the region and
- The extent to which geography or climate create barriers to in-person communication and interaction among coalition members

Some might also add that the "munificence" of the environment, that is, the extent to which there are resources available to support new initiatives of any kind, would also influence the focus and effectiveness of a coalition.

In addition to discussing the environment, however, Chapter II also includes the following:

- An analysis of why coalitions have become so common
- A discussion of the wide range of purposes and roles that coalitions can play
- An analysis of the differences between "mandated" and "voluntary" coalitions, including their advantages and disadvantages, and a discussion of how the disadvantages can be mitigated
- A discussion of the geographic level at which coalitions can be formed, and an analysis of how to think about which level or levels are most appropriate given the work being done
- A discussion of competing coalitions and how to deal with them; and
- A discussion of how to develop initial roles for a coalition as well as how to revisit roles and mission over time

The second part of the Conceptual Framework is the structure of the coalition. Several aspects of structure are important, including:

- The extent to which the coalition's membership includes those with the range of skills, resources, credibility and perspectives needed to achieve its community health objectives
- The complexity of coalition structure; and
- The extent of formalization of the coalition

Chapter III discusses Membership: Bringing People to the Table. This chapter

- Addresses the size of coalitions and the implications of size for coalition structure and functioning
- Discusses coalition growth over time

- Describes different types of coalition membership, including informal v. formal; symbolic v. active; and individual v. organizational
- Identifies the issues to be addressed in choosing individuals to represent organizations on a coalition, including continuity, commitment, level of authority, ability to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the group, and communication
- Discusses the all-important issue of the breadth of coalition membership, including both why some coalitions simply seem to "round up the usual suspects," and why and how to move beyond that approach. This section includes a discussion of what kinds of contributions you should be looking for from members
- Discusses recruitment, including an analysis of why people join coalitions and why they don't (benefits and problems) and resources, timing and strategies for identifying and involving new players in a group; and
- Discusses retention of members, including an analysis of why people stay in, or leave, coalitions, and the advantages of early engagement through orientation, mentoring, and strategies to avoid burnout and permit different levels of involvement over time

Chapter IV addresses the Organizational Structure of coalitions, including the formality of the structure and its complexity. With respect to formality, this includes issues such as:

- Whether the coalition needs a "lead agency" as a fiscal conduit or more active manager and if so, how to choose a lead agency
- Whether the coalition should have formal linkages to other organizations
- Whether it needs formal eligibility criteria for membership, different levels of membership, and a dues-paying structure
- Whether it needs officers, how many and how they can be chosen
- Whether it should have formal by-laws
- Whether it should keep a formal record of meetings, plans and actions
- Whether it needs formal ground rules for meetings and a formal agenda; and
- Whether it should incorporate

With respect to complexity, it includes issues such as whether the coalition structure should include:

- An Executive or Steering Committee
- Other permanent committees
- Time-limited task forces; or
- Regional groupings

The third part of the Conceptual Framework addresses a coalition's functional characteristics. Important functional characteristics specified in the framework include:

- The extent and allocation of resources available to the coalition.
- Leadership (especially among coalition members);
- Decision-making in the coalition, including the extent to which members have decision-making influence;
- The extent of conflict and conflict resolution;
- Management expertise (especially among staff of the coalition);
- The extent of shared vision among members;
- Communication patterns; and

Chapter V, Resources: The Benefits and Risks, addresses one of the thornier issues in the life of coalitions. The chapter addresses primarily financial resources, acknowledging that other resources (discussed in Chapter III on Membership) are also critical. It discusses:

- What it takes to get supported for actually running the coalition itself
- The benefits and challenges of getting staff to support the coalition

- Generating funding for programs and activities
- What happens when a coalition becomes a source of funds, or funding recommendations, for others in the community, including considerations of conflict of interest; and
- The often ignored "indirect costs" of coalitions

Chapter VI, Leadership, addresses a factor that is important, because coalitions seem to require a different kind of leadership from other, more "hierarchical" groups. The chapter discusses:

- Leadership from coalition members, both formal and informal, with special emphasis on leadership style, important characteristics of leadership in coalitions, and the often-ignored topic of leadership succession
- Leadership from coalition staff, including the inevitable influence of staff and the pitfalls of overdependence on staff; and
- What happens when there is no leadership

Chapter VII addresses Making Decisions and Resolving Conflicts: The Heart of the Coalition Process. It begins with a discussion of how to decide how, what and when to make decisions, since we often simply make assumptions about our decision-making processes instead of consciously, and strategically, defining them as part of the process of building the group. The importance of having a "regular" and "emergency" decision-making process is stressed. The discussion of decision-making rules addresses such questions as:

- How issues are discussed, with a presentation of the "nominal group process" approach as another resource for coalitions and
- How decisions are made

However, decision-making styles as well as rules are analyzed, with special attention to how styles may need to accommodate the perspectives of a diverse group, some of whom may have previously felt disenfranchised.

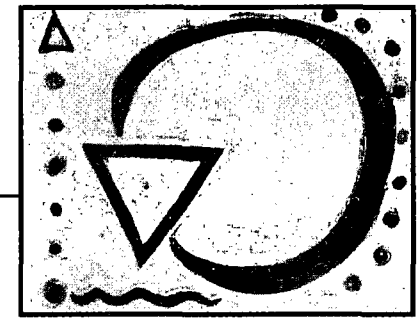
Conflicts are viewed as a special case of decision making, and as something that is not necessarily "bad news" for a coalition. The chapter addresses sources of conflict and alternative ways of handling conflicts and their advantages and disadvantages.

Finally, Chapter VIII addresses Coalition Development, using our second Conceptual Framework, which specifies four phases of development:

- Stage One: Getting to Know You
- Stage Two: Getting Ready for Action
- Stage Three: Taking Action
- Stage Four: Death or Transfiguration

Many previous frameworks for coalition development assumed, as we did initially, that coalitions experience a linear progression from stage to stage. Through our work on the ground, however, we learned that coalitions do not always exhibit this kind of development. In addition to discussing each stage in detail, this chapter describes ways in which coalitions can get stuck at a particular stage of development; how they can "leap forward" over a stage or even two when challenged or required to do so; and how and why they often "cycle back" to an earlier stage, in order to regroup and move forward again. We also discuss the challenge, for funding sources, of making sure they recognize the actual stage of development of the coalitions they support, and not force them to undertake tasks that are beyond their capacities at that stage. While some groups rise to the challenge, as noted above, others become discouraged or downright dysfunctional. Finally, we note that while recognizing that coalitions can outlive their usefulness or split apart due to unresolved conflict and "die," the next frontier for discovery is how to sustain coalitions over time, so they continue to play a vibrant part in improving health and health care for all Americans.

CHAPTER 2



ORIGINS AND PURPOSES OF COMMUNITY HEALTH COALITIONS

A. Definition of a Coalition

A coalition is a vehicle for structured and purposeful interaction among a set of organizations, groups and individuals. Many other terms are used instead of the term "coalition," including partnership, collaborative and consortium. In addition, many entities called planning councils or advisory boards have many of the same purposes and characteristics as do coalitions as defined here. We intend this manual to be of use to those who are involved in any of the many entities that fit this fairly broad definition.

There are three key parts of this definition. First, coalitions have a purpose. They are not ends in themselves, but means to some other end. This implies that the value of coalitions should be judged in terms of how well they help achieve their purposes. Second, coalitions have structure, although it may be very limited. The most critical aspect of a coalition's structure is its membership. This brings us to the third key element of our definition: A coalition pulls together multiple organizations, groups and individuals.

B. Purposes of Coalitions

The use of coalitions has become a dominant strategy in community health improvement. They are being used to address numerous public health problems, including tobacco use; HIV/AIDS; breast and cervical cancers; injury control; physical inactivity; substance abuse; and teen pregnancy. Coalitions are also being used to achieve improvements in medical care, particularly so that medical services better address priority community health problems, and to improve medical care access, affordability and quality in a particular community.

Coalitions perform a range of important functions for such efforts, including:

- Information exchange and networking
- Planning, coordination and resource allocation
- Implementation of joint programs
- Making visible the commitments of participating organizations and people
- Mobilizing community support
- Promoting policy changes
- Supporting professional people who are addressing difficult problems

Coalitions are broadly accepted as vehicles for organizing communities around health issues because they help participants:

- Mobilize and maximize power and influence
- Share responsibility and accountability
- Coordinate planning, strategy and action
- Pool resources and expertise; and
- Minimize duplication of effort

C. Why Are So Many Coalitions Being Formed?

We think the major reason so many coalitions are forming is that health problems have become more complex, and that more people are recognizing this complexity and its implications for effective action. For many, this is not good news. A simple problem, with clear boundaries, seems a lot easier to solve. But if we treat a complex problem as if it were simple, we will not only fail to solve it, we will get very frustrated in the effort!

What do we mean when we say problems are getting more complex? First, most contemporary health problems have multiple causes, and often multiple consequences. If we are going to really deal with the problem, we need to address these multiple causes and consequences. Teen pregnancy is a good example. If we analyze this complex (read difficult) problem, we easily see that some of the causes include lack of education about sexuality; earlier onset of sexual activity and lower levels of abstinence; and irregular (or no) use of contraceptives. Digging deeper,

some think teen pregnancy also results from low self-esteem among young women; lack of responsibility for their actions among both young women and young men; adolescent experimentation with or addiction to psychotropic substances like drugs and alcohol; and other thorny social problems. What about the consequences of teen pregnancy? They include higher high school drop-out rates, and thus diminished job prospects and income, and, of course, a higher rate of very low birth-weight babies and thus infant mortality. It's easy to get depressed even thinking about this panoply of problems! Can any single agency handle them all? Unlikely. Can a coalition handle them better? Maybe, but only if it is well designed and well run.

A second aspect of complexity is that clusters of problems co-exist, so that to address one problem we really have to address more than one. For example, controlling tuberculosis in large urban areas requires public health professionals to deal with the problem among homeless people who may have severe emotional problems or be problem drinkers. Thus, to be effective at one of the most basic aspects of infectious disease control, public health workers must work with mental health and/or alcohol abuse experts. Furthermore, this group of people need not only medical care, but shelter and transportation; many have families. This means reaching out beyond the traditional boundaries of medicine and health to work with people in housing, transportation, child care and perhaps education. Again, no single organization is unlikely to be successful in addressing such complex problems. Instead, multiple participants, from multiple disciplines and organizations, are needed.

Last but certainly not least, more and more professionals have learned that they cannot be effective at addressing a health problem unless they work collaboratively with the individuals, families and communities who are affected by it. From the perspective of the affected parties, they are entitled to participate since it is their lives and quality of life that are at stake. From the professional's perspective, hard experience has often taught that if you don't involve those affected in designing responses to a problem, your "professionally defined" solutions are likely to fail. At least some of what has to be accomplished can only be done by or with the cooperation of the people or the community affected. Indeed, many communities with serious problems mistrust professionals and other representatives of society's "mainstream," who usually control resources, rules and regulations. This means we find ways not only to involve multiple professionals and agencies, but to involve, effectively, affected populations. Given the above, it is not surprising, then, that serious attempts to address significant community health problems often use coalitions as a vehicle or strategy. Indeed, as we see below, coalitions are often required or mandated.

D. Mandated v. Voluntary Coalitions

1. Mandated coalitions

Mandated coalitions either are typically created through laws or regulations, by groups with money such as state health departments, legislatures or foundations. Typically, to participate in (and get funding from) such programs, you have to have, or form, a coalition or similar body. Mandates ensure that something called a coalition will get off the ground; they are often accompanied by resources to support the coalition's operations, in addition to the money they may provide for actual operating programs or providing services. However, since participants in mandated coalitions may not have initiated the process themselves, they may not be committed to coalition development and maintenance in the long term. There is no guarantee that they will develop a sense of ownership in the mandated coalition. Often there is a persistent sense that the coalition is owned more by the agency or organization that mandated it than by participants themselves, or by the community involved. Sometimes, however, the shell of a coalition already exists and the mandate serves to get it funded and on its way to productive action.

The extent and nature of mandates vary. Sometimes the mandate is simply for a coalition to be designated and the details are left open. At other times the agency that is to lead, sponsor or convene the coalition is specified, and either specific members or categories of members are defined. Sometimes, the mandate also influences how decisions are made, what kinds of decisions have to be made, and the timetable for decision making. The more specific and comprehensive the mandate, the greater the likelihood both that communities will feel they have lost freedom and initiative, and that the particular mandate will fail to fit local circumstances.

The benefits of mandating a coalition, and getting the funding that goes along with it, are the ability to hire staff, who often are the glue that holds the coalition together; to purchase or rent equipment; to pay for postage and phone calls; to serve refreshments at meetings; and to hire consultants and speakers to help the group educate themselves and plan.

2. Voluntary coalitions

On the other hand, people do find ways to get coalitions off the ground without mandates. In voluntary coalitions, getting off the ground depends on whether the participants are willing and able to bring existing resources to the table to support these very practical needs. Some voluntary coalitions are initiated by service providers; other are started by grassroots community activists; still others are convened by more mainstream community leaders.

Providers of service, public and private, often initiate coalitions to address the need for joint planning, development or coordination of services. Only providers are represented in some of these coalitions; others include representatives of either consumers or community leaders. Some coalitions are initiated by government agencies, while others are developed by voluntary agencies or community-based organizations. To the extent that the initiator wants to involve others, that organization will have to deal with this important question: "Who started this and why?" If a local public health agency initiates a coalition and invites several community-based service providers to participate, the latter may or may not be receptive and willing, depending on the extent and history of previous interactions with the health department. Alternatively, if a small group of service delivery agencies with differing sizes, sponsorship and scope of services jointly initiates a coalition, a very different message may be projected to those they invite to join them: that a wide range of contributions and contributors are needed and appreciated. Still another image comes across when a cross section of not only health care providers, but community members and those who pay for health services, are all able to achieve consensus that something needs to be done and collectively issue the call for a coalition.

Many coalitions that address community health goals are initiated by grassroots activists. Activists often make public officials nervous and uncertain as to whether, when and how to relate to them. Sometimes local or state health departments are the targets of grassroots coalitions, which are trying to get these public agencies to change their policies, procedures or resource allocation decisions. Indeed, in those cases, the activists may not invite their participation at all. In other cases, a grassroots group will pursue a more collaborative strategy rather than a confrontation. In such circumstances, it is often in the interest of more "mainstream" public and private health agencies to pursue opportunities for cooperation and mutual support with grassroots activist groups. For example, people with disabilities have sometimes used dramatic confrontational strategies to get the attention of public officials, sometimes with great success. When they do succeed in getting policies enacted, however, getting them implemented in the most appropriate manner will likely be supported if officials and grassroots

activists work together on specifics such as what equipment and services will make the most difference in increasing the autonomy and job-readiness of people previously unable to work.

In both mandated and voluntary coalitions, ultimately, the key factor is whether people are committed to the general purpose of the coalition and are convinced that some structured joint action is needed to achieve that purpose. And in nearly all cases, initial commitment and conviction is not enough to keep a coalition going, and make it effective, over the long haul. Both commitment and conviction need to be deepened over time, in both mandated and voluntary coalitions.

E. Local, State and National Coalitions

Coalitions can be formed at the national, state, regional or community levels. Some coalitions bridge multiple jurisdictional levels. For example, a state coalition may be linked to a number of regional or community-level coalitions. The appropriate jurisdictional level for a coalition effort depends on the level at which intervention is required to achieve specific objectives. Multilevel coalitions are appropriate when interventions are required at more than one level. Sometimes a coalition starts out at one level and then realizes that it needs another level to become effective.

Policy-oriented coalitions can be relevant on several jurisdictional levels, depending on which level of government or private policy-making group is responsible for the target policies. For example, an attempt to eliminate discrimination in access to health insurance for AIDS patients might require action at the state government level, while advocacy for more rapid evaluation of new medications to improve AIDS treatment is more likely to require coalition activism at the national level. A local coalition may be more appropriate in advocating for the distribution of condoms or clean needles to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in substance users. But if policies at the state or even federal level constrain the local action, then there may be a need for a broader coalition, or even a coalition of coalitions, to take on the policy barrier in question.

Coalitions that work on services integration often are found at the point of service, typically the community or regional level. Here again, however, federal or state policies that affect either eligibility for services or how resources flow can interfere with local coordination, requiring a multilevel strategy.

WHERE'S THE ACTION?

Tobacco control coalitions illustrate well how different local circumstances can effect whether work is needed at the local or state level, or both. The brave and canny people who work in "the belly of the beast" in North Carolina's tobacco control world know that while action at the state level is limited indeed, many localities are willing and able to pass ordinances to limit where people can smoke that are stronger than state politics would permit. So they have supported local coalitions as well as their state coalition. On the other hand, passing an initiative to increase the tax on a pack of cigarettes takes work at the state level, although lots of local support is critical too. Statewide coalitions in places as diverse as Alaska, Arizona and Massachusetts have all worked successfully on such important policy actions.

F. Competing Coalitions

Before starting a new coalition, make sure you find out if a group already exists that is dealing with the same or a closely related problem. Serious negative consequences can result if a new coalition is viewed as attempting to preempt, replace or duplicate an existing one. Given the energy and time it takes to create and maintain a coalition, new efforts need to take preexisting interactions into consideration. This makes it more difficult to mandate the development of coalitions across a wide range of jurisdictions, as related groups may already exist in some areas but not in others. It is important that policies take such variations into account. There are several options with regard to preexisting coalitions:

- They can be supported (that is, you can join the existing coalition instead of starting another one)
- The existing coalition can be used as a foundation for building a stronger, more comprehensive or, in some cases, a more focused effort
- A "specialist" coalition can be created under the umbrella of a larger preexisting one
- If the existing coalition has become ineffective or destructive, it may be necessary to start a new one

G. Defining Mission and Initial Roles for a Coalition

People assume that the coalition has to have a clear and specific mission at the outset. As the song says, "It ain't necessarily so!" A general mission is needed to get people motivated and moving. However, participants need to have the freedom and take the time to refine, revise, focus and reshape the mission as they go on. This concept may conflict with the idea that the coalition has an external mandate. Funders must give people leeway if they expect real commitment rather than participation just because it is required. The coalition also must recognize that the mission may have to be refined from time to time. Occasionally the mandate is broad enough to permit a group to articulate its own focus.

In defining initial roles for a coalition, remember that it takes time for coalitions to develop, and that the pace of development will vary. It is important to avoid specifying initial roles that are difficult or impossible for the coalition to carry out effectively given its stage of development. At the outset, coalition conveners and members need to identify roles that:

- Will allow people to get to know each other, what each can contribute and what each is looking to get out of its participation
- Are not likely to threaten some of the members
- Are not likely to invest certain groups with dominance prematurely

Examples of such activities include putting together a directory of resources that already exist for a specific problem; sponsoring a community meeting to hear what people have to say; gathering basic data about the problem; discussing processes, membership issues, etc.

H. Revisiting Purpose and Roles Over Time

Whatever the initial purpose, mission and roles of a coalition, they need to be revisited and renewed over time. First of all, the coalition has to stay in touch with changes in the problem it is addressing, particularly new opportunities, new challenges and new players. Equally important is staying in touch with the dynamics of the group: What is happening to the members' commitment? to leaders? to participants' interests, agendas, and in their agencies? Just as you don't want to start out overambitious, you don't want to stay less than bold. Over time, a coalition needs to challenge itself to take on more difficult roles and more specific and comprehensive agendas. At the outset, you need to build the trust, and the competence, to act effectively. Once you have it, use it or you will lose it!

I. The Coalition's Fit with Its Environment

As with any organization, it is very important that a coalition fit its particular environment. There is no single model of a coalition that is right for all circumstances and situations. The right model for one place may be the wrong one somewhere else. Each coalition needs to learn about and adapt to its environment. There are a number of critical features to keep in mind as this occurs:

- People's previous history with collaborative groups will influence whether the structure of a coalition or its approach to making decisions, is a good fit with its environment. Those who are accustomed to being directed by a single strong leader probably will not do well in a coalition with lots of shared leadership roles and intentional "fuzziness" about who's in charge. More generally, people's good and bad experiences in previous coalitions will influence whether they come to a new one with optimism or serious skepticism, or just stay away all together!
- The "culture" of the area with respect to formality versus informality. In some places, people expect that a serious organization will be fairly formal, with explicit rules about how things are done, and by whom. In other places, an organization like that will be barely tolerated; people prefer working very informally with a minimum of what they consider bureaucratic "fuss and bother." There are ways to make either type of coalition work, but only if there is a "fit" with the culture.
- The degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity in the local ethnic mix. As we discuss at length, coalitions are formed to get different kinds of people and agencies involved. Some communities and some coalitions, however, are far more diverse than others. Greater diversity is, both a challenge and an opportunity, but whatever it is, it has to be taken into account. When people have different assumptions and standard operating procedures, you have to spend time getting those out on the table so the group can build consensus about how this particular group of people will work together, recognizing that the ground rules may be pretty different from what each individual member is used to.
- Public attitudes about the problem you are addressing are an important part of the "climate" of the coalition's work. Take, for example, expanding a needle exchange program to further prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis

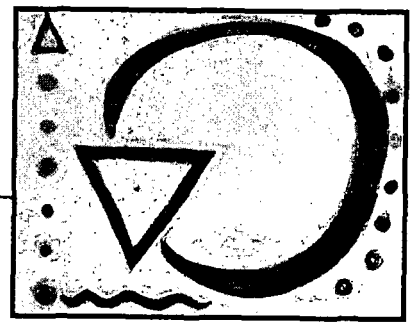
CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY IN TANDEM

The statewide tobacco control coalition in Alaska, the Alaska Tobacco Control Alliance, includes just about everyone who has any interest in reducing tobacco use. Convened by the Alaska Native Health Board, they are especially vigilant in involving the many Alaska Natives who live in small villages. These folks, as exemplified by their glorious art, are intensely visual, making it hard for them to relate to disembodied and often anonymous voices on the telephone. In these circumstances, it is always good practice to ask people to indicate their name before they start talking. But that may not be enough to solve the whole problem. A visitor learning about the coalition suggested a creative solution: Create a visual "map" with photos of everyone, giving their names and agency affiliations, showing where they are based in the state and, where appropriate, how they relate to each other.

and other infectious diseases among intravenous substance abusers. If the community favors needle exchange, the coalition can move toward negotiating with higher levels of government. If the community doesn't know much about this approach, or distrusts it, work will have to be done to change community attitudes, and the coalition may need to find other strategies it can implement in the shorter term.

- Geography and climate have a practical, direct effect on how people in a coalition communicate. In a big state like Alaska, which also has a challenging climate, coalitions have to do a lot of work through conference calls and electronic communications. In a small state like Rhode Island, frequent face-to-face meetings are more feasible. Care is especially essential when parts of a coalition's "territory" face more challenges from geography and climate than others. In these circumstances, it is tempting for those who can easily meet face-to-face to do that, without taking steps to ensure that those who cannot attend in person are not, or do not feel, left out.

CHAPTER 3



MEMBERSHIP: BRINGING PEOPLE TO THE TABLE

Members are the life blood and the identity of any coalition. Recruitment and retention of members is one of the biggest challenges coalitions face. Membership criteria, whether explicit or implicit, communicate a great deal about coalitions to communities. When coalitions are viewed as a means to reaching health objectives rather than as an end in themselves, the key factor in deciding on membership is whether a particular individual or organization can bring specific, relevant perspectives and resources to the table. In order to attract the members you need, however, you also have to consider whether and how the coalition can serve its members. In this chapter, we will discuss size and growth in coalition membership; different categories and types of members and their implications; choosing individuals to represent organizations on coalitions; how and why to make your coalition as broad and inclusive as possible; and member recruitment and retention.

A. Size and Growth

Coalitions can vary in size from very small, with memberships of only two or three organizations or half a dozen individuals to very large, with 2004–300 organizations and individuals. The organization and management of a coalition are influenced by the size of the membership. In general, more structure, such as a more active and empowered executive or steering committee, more formal committees, more task forces, etc., is needed for a larger group. Larger groups typically hold fewer full member meetings. However, having a full membership meeting at least once a year can provide significant reinforcement of the identity and continuity of the coalition and serve as a "celebration" of its work.

It might seem that it would be easier to manage a smaller coalition, but this is not always the case. There are some very effective smaller, medium-sized and even very large coalitions. It is more important for the structure and decision-making processes of the coalition to be appropriate for its size. The actual number of members should, again, reflect the breadth of perspectives needed to address the community health issue in question.

HOW MANY "REAL" MEMBERS DO YOU HAVE?

There is a real difference between a "mailing list" of coalition "members" and the number of people or organizations that are actively engaged in the coalition. When we surveyed the members of the 12 Smokeless States Initiative (SSI) coalitions, we used the membership mailing lists provided to us by each coalition. On some lists there were lots of people who were not active but received informational mailings, or who were added to the list for all time because they had once requested information. Needless to say, these people were NOT interested in completing a survey! And it is hard to believe they would necessarily "be there" for the coalition in times of need. Keeping track of the number of "real members" you have is important for setting realistic goals. However, a coalition can also keep track of people who are not actively involved but who want to stay informed. Some have a larger "mailing" list used for information sharing and for periodic quick response needs such as "action alerts."

Most coalitions, especially the ones that are perceived as successful, grow in size over time. Although growth needs to be planned, it does not have to be continuous. Often coalitions need periods of consolidation when the membership remains quite stable. Once stability has been achieved the coalition can entertain growth, development and change. Sometimes coalitions decide they are complete; sometimes they are not yet ready to recruit more members since the current members are still figuring out who and what they are. Keep in mind, however, that there is almost always a tension between the comfort of working with people and organizations with whom you have worked things out, and the need for new ideas, new blood and strategically defined additions of members. These new members must be integrated into the coalition, and the longer-standing members must adjust to them if they really are to become a part of the group. In particular, recruitment of nontraditional partners, i.e., those who represent unfamiliar sectors of the community or very different kinds of organizations, can be a challenge. However, these groups can often increase the coalition's access to key community constituencies and decisionmakers, link them more effectively to related initiatives, provide new sources of expertise and—over time—leadership, and concrete resources.

Some coalitions become smaller over time, especially if many people join at the outset and then find they really do not want to commit themselves to the coalition's cause or strategy. Attrition can also occur if the coalition is relatively inactive, or if it is taking action that leaves significant subgroups uncomfortable. For example, some coalitions take positions on policy issues and certain organizations are prohibited by law or their own internal policies from participating in such activity.

B. Types of Members

1. Informal v. formal membership

Some coalitions have formal by-laws or other rules that either state who the members are or specify criteria for membership. Sometimes by-laws establish a dues structure for members. Different levels of membership can have different levels of dues. Sometimes the differential dues are associated with different levels of decision-making influence within the organization. This approach can lead to a potentially problematic perception that "not all members are created equal," with resultant resentment and diminished commitment by those who perceive that they are viewed as "less equal." However, dues can be an important source of discretionary funds for any organization. The dues themselves are not the problem; it is their association

EXPLICIT LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP WITH "NO BLAME" ATTACHED

Since it is often the case that different members of a coalition make different kinds of commitments to it, it may actually make everyone feel more comfortable to have that "said out loud" but without blame. One group of partnerships, those associated with the community care network (CCN) vision of the American Hospital Association, has explicitly distinguished three kinds of partners: Full Working Partners, Participating Partners and Informing Partners. Full Working Partners are active across the board in the work of the CCN and contribute some kind of resource to the group; Participating Partners are actively engaged in one or more aspects of the work; Informing Partners are explicitly involved only in giving and getting information about the partnership, but they may become more active over time.

with power and influence within the coalition that can cause problems.

Many organizations create "sliding scales" for dues that are related to the resource base of the member. In some cases members, such as people facing the problem and small community-based organizations, are not expected to pay dues although their influence is not affected. In such cases there has to be a shared sense that those not paying dues in dollars bring something else of great value to the group.

2. Symbolic v. active members:

Coalitions often have two types of members, symbolic and active, although this differentiation is seldom made explicit. Symbolic members are those who can and do lend their names to letterhead, help to promote the coalition and its cause, and provide access to influential people. Unlike the "active" members, they participate only minimally in the day-to-day life of the coalition and typically attend few if any coalition meetings. Their prime value is that they may give legitimacy to the group, either throughout the community or with a particular constituency that is important to the group's functioning. Having both symbolic and active members is not a problem as long as everyone understands the purpose and rationale for doing it, and the expectations of all parties are clear. Over time, "symbolic" members can become more active, while "actives" who are close to burnout can find a place and a way to embody their continuing commitment to a cause.

FRIENDS OF TUCSON FULL COURT PRESS

In Tucson, a major tobacco control effort is organized with one set of active partners, each of which have funding to implement pieces of a complex program, and an "auxiliary" group called the Friends of Full Court Press, which includes dozens of well-known community leaders, who considerably extend both the "reach" and legitimacy of the project's work. Each year the "Friends" throws a Fiesta to celebrate the project and its cause. Friends also pledge to do what they can in their own personal lives to support reductions in tobacco use, especially by kids. Having a group like this "watching your back" helps the Tucson project take a stand on controversial issues such as the value of licensing stores that sell tobacco products.

3. Organizations v. individuals

Most members of community health coalitions are organizations which designate one or more individuals such as staff, board members or volunteers as official representatives. Some coalitions, however, also include individuals as members. Such people are asked to join because of their personal characteristics, such as technical expertise, extensive experience, leadership skills or ability to communicate. They may or may not have an organizational affiliation, but their organizational affiliation, if any, is viewed as largely irrelevant to individual members' participation in the coalition. Individual members are sometimes active professionals, but they can just as well be retired, self-employed or not working by choice (e.g., homemakers).

Many coalitions are comprised entirely of organizations, and some coalitions are convinced that individuals are inappropriate as members because they cannot really be held accountable by anyone. A few coalitions are made up entirely of individuals, because the founders believe that organizational agendas only get in the way of working toward a common goal. In their view, it is personal expertise and legitimacy, rather than the organizational affiliation, that

counts. Most coalitions, however, are neutral on this issue; typically the vast majority of members are organizations, but there are a few individual members.

C. Issues in Choosing Organizational Representatives for a Coalition

A number of issues need to be taken into account by organizations when they are choosing representatives for a coalition. They include continuity, commitment, level of authority, and communication. The most critical one, however, is the need to make sure that the representative(s) chosen can make a meaningful contribution to the coalition while simultaneously representing their organization's interests.

1. Continuity

It is NOT a good idea to have different people attend coalition meetings every time. One or more continuous representatives is a far better approach. Of course, given staff turnover and the natural evolution of a coalition, the representatives may well change over the years, but continuity in membership is a critical ingredient to making progress and to efficient decision making. Often, an organization designates different people to attend various committees and task force meetings, while others only attend full coalition sessions. Even in these circumstances, however, continuity in attendance is critical. "Tag teaming," in which a pair of people share responsibility and keep each other informed, is another approach that can work. Sometimes both individuals will attend meetings; at other times one or the other will assume the responsibility.

2. Commitment

Continuity of membership is one indication of the commitment of an organization, or an individual, to a coalition. And in most coalitions, members often "check out" each other's level of commitment. Other characteristics that reflect commitment in the people organizations assign to coalitions include active participation in meetings and willingness to take on work assignments and complete them in a timely and creative way.

BUT WE ALREADY MADE THAT DECISION...

Coalitions have to make decisions and then move on to take action, if they are going to make a difference. But when different people from an organization attend each meeting, there is a "pull" toward revisiting decisions again and again, if only to explain the specifics and the rationale to the newcomers. When a coalition of health care purchasers and health plans in Portland, Oregon embarked jointly on administration of a survey of health plan members, the rotating membership didn't stop the action, but it slowed it down. It was also frustrating for those people who were more regular in their attendance. The problem was exacerbated because the group did not keep minutes and the rotating representatives didn't debrief their colleagues.

Sometimes, however, the individual who participates is more committed than the organization with whom s/he is affiliated. A common scenario is that an individual staff or board member of an organization joins a coalition because s/he finds their goals important and their approach exciting. Such people might find more "like minded" people on the coalition than they do in their home organization. Even if the organization agrees to "join" the coalition, as long as

the individual is willing to be their representative, the organization itself may give only lip service or rhetorical support to the coalition, or may not care about it at all. In such cases, the person really is there more as an individual than as an organizational representative; for this participant, the coalition becomes an important source of moral as well as practical support. It may not always be appropriate to make that explicit, since s/he may need the "umbrella" of the organization in order to attend and participate in coalition meetings and activities. Furthermore, one can always hope that the organization's commitment will grow over time, and sometimes it does. On the other hand, it is probably unwise to assume that the organization the person represents will be either willing or able to contribute resources, or vocal support on controversial issues, even if their "representative" is personally a deeply committed member.

3. Level of authority

Higher-level representation from an organization is a symbolic indication that the coalition is a high priority for that organization. Senior executives can also make more independent decisions or resource commitments. However, there are times when a "frontline" person is needed, because s/he has the critical information, relevant skills, or the time needed to undertake specific task assignments. It is important to ensure that at least one of an organization's representatives can make commitments on behalf of their agency. Continuous trips back home for permission or instructions can be counter-productive to group dynamics and slow the ability to get things done. Of course, there are (or can be) limits to the organizational representative's autonomy, particularly when there is a major commitment of resources or to a policy position that will be publicly announced with the name of the organization attached. Even an Executive Director may have to go to his or her board on these issues. You have to be willing to let people go through formal internal processes for this level of commitment. Ideally, the representative is empowered by his or her organization to participate at a level that is appropriate to the group involved. For example, a higher and broader level of empowerment can be vested in people serving on executive committees, while a lower or more specific level of empowerment is granted to those who serve on topic-specific committees.

4. Communication

If the organization is really the coalition member, it is important that the representative who is active serve as an ongoing channel of communication between the organization and the coalition. This means keeping the coalition abreast of what is happening in their organization and vice versa. The staff person who attends coalition meetings needs to provide regular feedback to the organization about the coalition's activities, programs, and work in the policy arena. This might be in the form of reports at staff meetings, dissemination of minutes or other coalition materials to other members of the organization (especially executive or administrative staff), and/or informal discussions with other individuals in the organization. It is especially important that the representative keep the lines of communication open in the sensitive areas of policy positions and policy advocacy.

It is also important for the representative to keep the coalition as a whole up-to-date on changes and new initiatives in their home-base agency. This is a key part of the ongoing information-sharing purpose of any coalition. It also helps the members of a group keep the circumstances of all their member organizations in mind as they consider issues and make decisions.

In addition to depending on communication through representatives, however, the coalition itself can be proactive in communicating beyond those who come to

meetings. For example, they can use their larger mailing list of interested individuals to share newsletters or specific action alerts. In the new electronic age, they can also broaden their communication net by using fax and/or phone trees and e-mail.

D. Breadth of Membership

Organizations and individuals should be in a coalition because of what they can contribute to the achievement of the coalition's mission, goals and objectives. Decisions about membership have to be strategic, but it is important to take a comprehensive look at the potential contributions of different members. These include:

- Legitimizing the coalition to the community or constituency of interest
- Expertise
- Information
- Skills, both technical and interpersonal
- Financial or material resources
- Willingness to work to help get the job done; and
- Facilitating access to key constituencies, including, for example:
  - —the people to be served;
  - —policymakers, both public and private;
  - —the community at large;
  - —business and labor leaders;
  - —professional groups; and
  - —influential organizations such as the media or faith-based groups.

Breadth of membership is key to capturing all the energy, talent and resources that your community has to offer in addressing a complex community health problem. Many coalitions, however, do little more than what we call "rounding up the usual suspects." Why? It's actually quite simple. The instinct of people setting up a coalition usually is to include those who already are familiar to them, and who already are working on the problem in some way. To some extent this reflects a bias that the major if not the only contributions to be made by members are expertise and skills. However, it also may reflect a fear of giving decision-making influence to others, especially those who are different, or less well-known or understood.

But as we have already noted, most community health problems are complex and downright tough to ameliorate, let alone eliminate. Typically, the "usual suspects" have been working on the problem, giving it their best shot, for years and years. At a certain point you have to ask yourself, "If we still have a serious problem, might it not be because we need to involve some new kinds of groups and people?" To achieve the coalition's objectives, you almost always have to open up the problem analysis and problem solving process to a wider range of people and organizations than you are immediately comfortable (or effective) involving. That means you will all have quite a bit of learning to do before you work together fruitfully.

In addition to broadening the "technical" range of a coalition—by including people from other helping professions besides medicine and health, for example—you need to open the "sociocultural" range of the coalition as well. One dimension of this is to add individuals and organizations who are linked to different ethnic groups, different age groups, and even to different gender groups in your community. This is "received wisdom" when we are trying to reach a particular group in the community, but it needs to be considered even when this is not the case. For example, while it is important to include kids, and not just youth-serving organizations, if you are trying to reach kids, what about trying to harness the energy of young people in addressing an issue such as the health problems of older people? Similarly, women have a role to play at all times, not just when "women's health" is at issue. As one minister said, he often finds that in local coalitions older women, who have been both mothers (and grandmothers) as well

as teachers, nurses or secretaries, often emerge as leaders. He notes that these women are especially effective in helping a group become cooperative and make tough decisions in a humane way, since, as he said, "They really know how to deal with three kids and only two cookies."

Breadth of membership is also critical to helping a coalition broaden its "influence range." Historically, health care and social service agencies have not had the same level of political influence as other groups, such as "big business" or, in some parts of the country, "big labor."

If people concerned about health are going to effect change in policies or in systems (even health systems), they need to have influence, and they need to involve those with influence such as the business community, media, political leaders or their staffs, labor and religious leaders. One consequence of bringing in people who are not "technical experts" is that you have to learn how to talk about the problems that concern you in a way that is accessible not just to other experts but to intelligent lay people. Meeting this particular challenge, however, often forces us to reexamine both our assumptions and our evidence. This can lead to new perspectives on persistent stumbling blocks, insights that can move us forward more rapidly than we thought possible.

People often use the need to get things done quickly as a reason for not broadening group membership. This is at best a poor excuse. Although it takes more time, energy and thought to integrate individuals with a variety of backgrounds and value orientations, the investment is essential if you want to obtain the contributions and perspectives that they bring.

Clearly it is harder to recruit and retain members who are less familiar to you, and who may be either superior or subordinate socially as well as different culturally. Some recruitment strategies are provided below. Membership should reflect the goals and strategies of the group. Service delivery will require one set of members; policy advocacy another; systems change yet a third; etc. But not everyone needs to be on every coalition. Growth has to be planned and staged. It probably is dangerous to triple your membership overnight.

E. Recruitment Strategies

1. Why do people join coalitions?

In order to recruit effectively, you need to think about why people join coalitions, and why they don't. There is a wide range of reasons people and organizations choose to join or not to join coalitions. At the core, however, is a calculation of whether the benefits that will accrue from joining and participating exceed the costs and the problems. This does not mean that people are cynical, just that their time and attention are limited and they need to set priorities. You also should keep in mind that the benefits include things that have to do with values, mission and desire for positive social interactions, as well as more material things like information, power or resources. Here are some perceived benefits that people in coalitions report are important to them when they join a coalition:

Benefits of coalition membership

- Developing collaborative relationships
- Helping my organization with goals
- Increasing professional skills
- Staying well informed in a changing environment
- Getting access to key policymakers
- Increasing my sense that others share my goals
- Getting support for policy issues
- Getting access to the target population
- Getting services for clients
- Getting client referrals from others
- Getting funding for my organization

People also have reasons for not joining coalitions. Here are some of the problems that keep people from joining a coalition, or that can lead them to reduce or end their involvement:

Problems of coalitions

- Activities do not reach my constituency
- My skills and time are not well used
- My opinion is not valued
- The coalition is not taking any meaningful action
- The cost of travelling (e.g. to meetings) is too high
- Other costs of participating (including time, dues) are too high
- Being involved in policy advocacy is a problem
- My organization does not get enough public recognition through the coalition
- The coalition competes with my organization
- I am the only voice on the coalition representing my view

2. Timing your invitation

Most coalitions begin, as noted above, by engaging the groups with whom they already have active working relationships. Only later will they go "beyond the usual suspects." However, keep in mind that people do not like to be asked to join groups at a later stage if they think that all the important decisions have already been made. They are highly likely to feel exploited or like token members when that happens. This is especially important when you are attempting to engage groups who perceive that they have been ignored or neglected in the past.

On the other hand, some people, including many who have substantial power in the community, are uncomfortable joining (not starting) groups initiated by others that are just getting started or in an early stage of development. They don't want to waste their time in the early stages of a group's formation unless they are leading the group themselves. When recruiting people like this, you should be prepared to indicate how, when and where you expect them to participate and contribute, and why their participation is important.

3. Reaching groups with whom you have not worked

In attempting to reach groups with whom you have not worked in the past, it is especially important that you get to know their values, cultural and social norms. You can do this by asking questions about their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about the mission of the group and their previous participation in similar kinds of groups. It is important to ask specific questions about issues that may come into conflict with the group's values, mission and objectives. You should not assume that everyone in an unfamiliar group is alike; such behavior is a form of stereotyping. Instead, find the gatekeepers and influentials and use them to get your foot in the door, to find out whom you need to know and where and how to find the information you need. Admit what you don't know, and commit to being a quick learner. Acknowledge that you are more likely to make errors of judgment in picking the right person or organization with the less well-known groups, but you've got to take the first steps. It also can be quite useful to seek out the advice of others in the community who may have had prior experience with the group.

4. Investing in recruitment

Recruitment takes time and resources. It must be planned, and it won't be successful unless there is a concerted effort. It will be easier if you acknowledge that you will not succeed every time. If someone tells you that he or she is unable to join, ask him or her to suggest others who might be able to, and ask if you can keep the individual on your mailing list. If they are forthcoming and you feel comfortable enough, you might want to ask why they can't join. You will have to be prepared to go back to some groups more than once over time. Although staff are an extraordinarily useful asset to recruitment, members are essential to recruiting other members.

5. Providing intermediate steps to full involvement

People are often unwilling to make a commitment to full involvement at the outset. An incremental strategy can be used to involve people initially in concrete and specific ways that are well suited to their perceived interests and contributions. This may include participating in a coalition activity or event, or in a subgroup such as a committee or task force. This approach often paves the way for gradually increasing involvement over time as the person gets to know the coalition and its principal players.

F. Retention Strategies

1. Why do people stay in coalitions? Why do they leave?

Over time, coalition members continue to keep an informal running calculation about whether or not the benefits of participation outweigh the costs. They are likely to do so when:

- The mission and values of the coalition are consistent with those of the member
- The desire for positive social interactions is met; and
- The member has what s/he perceives as access to a sufficient amount of information, visibility, credit, decision-making influence and resources

However, the effectiveness of the coalition, both internally and externally, is also important. If the coalition is not moving, people often will walk away. They may also leave if conflicts are handled poorly. (See the section on conflict resolution in Chapter 7).

2. Member orientation

Member orientation is essential both to retention and to meaningful participation. It is very important to be welcoming to new members! To engage new members, we recommend putting together a packet of materials that is not too overwhelming but gets at the basics of what the coalition is and does, and who the key players are. This packet should include material about the history of the coalition, the "culture" and norms of the group, how decisions are made, previous and planned activities, a list of the members and a list of the coalition's accomplishments. It is essential that people be given the tools they need to have influence over decisions. In fact, this is key. If a group of people join the coalition together, consider having an orientation session or a retreat for them. Also consider having some kind of event that celebrates the new members. Make sure they are properly introduced to the group, and especially to the leadership.

3. Linking new members to the right kinds of activities

As new members join the coalition it is important to determine their interests, expertise, and the amount of time they have available for coalition-related activities. The next step is to give them opportunities to participate that fit their interests and needs. These should start slowly and build up over time.

4. Linking new members to experienced members

One way to expedite the engagement of new members is through informal "buddying" of new members with experienced ones, including those who are quite different. This will help to expose the new member to the coalition's diversity. Do not depend solely on staff or officers to carry out this important function. Being a "buddy" also can revitalize the interest of a less active member.

5. Preventing burnout

Coalition members can and do burnout. Causes of burnout are multiple. They include too much responsibility; doing something for so long one loses interest in it; lack of a sense of progress; too much unresolved conflict, especially conflict that gets personalized; and group dynamics that are exhausting (not just because of conflict but because it takes too long to make decisions or take actions). Sometimes we can start to see coalition burnout when people are on too many coalitions. This is

especially problematic in smaller communities where there are the same number of problems and fewer people. In those cases, some restructuring of the coalitions may be required. Rotating jobs is a good idea.

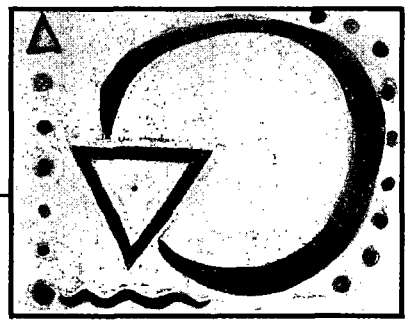
6. Helping people to manage different levels of involvement over time

It is a good idea to let people back off periodically from high-level, high-pressure involvement (such as being an officer of the coalition or a committee chair) to a position with fewer demands. You need to plan for this ahead of time, and to be grooming some people to get more involved so others, including leaders, can become less involved. Sometimes, for personal or professional reasons, people may need to back off entirely for a time. When this happens it is important to try to keep the door open for the future. By letting people back off they won't have to fall apart, and they probably will be more receptive to future reengagement. It is important to remember that, with few exceptions, your members are volunteers—at least to the coalition. If you push them too hard they are bound to rebound.

Reminder: You—the coalition—are your members.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



The organizational structures and operating principles of coalitions can be as varied as the purposes they serve. Coalitions can be ad hoc, time-limited groups; formal structures with complex long-term objectives; and an infinite variety of things in between. They can be national, regional or local in scope, and they can operate at all of these levels simultaneously. They can include numerous groups and individuals who meet regularly as a whole and in several committees, or they can be limited to a few small groups that meet occasionally in a church basement. Coalitions can and do develop and change over time, becoming larger and smaller, more and less formal and structured, more narrowly focused or more ambitious in scope.

No single structure is right for all coalitions. The size of the group, the complexity of its goals and tasks and, more than anything, the "norms" of the people and the community in which the coalition is located will all influence how it needs to be structured to work effectively. However, by definition, coalitions are more horizontal than vertical in structure. Hierarchy is incompatible with the concept of equal opportunity for participation and contribution, which is the hallmark of a community health coalition.

A number of key decisions must be made regarding the initial structure of the coalition. As the coalition develops over time, structural adaptations are likely to occur. Most of them fall into two categories: How formal should your structure be? and How complicated should your structure be?

A. How Formal Should Your Structure Be?

In a formal structure, lots of things are decided upon ahead of time, and written down. For some, formality provides a level playing field, consistency and predictability; all these factors help build trust. Formality can also help get the work done efficiently and on time. Unless people are very comfortable and experienced in working together, the absence of rules can result in constant squabbles about how to do things and who is in charge. In extreme cases, this can lead to paralysis and inaction. For others, however, formal structures impede creativity, flexibility, and "give and take." Think about your particular community and your particular group and its "norms." In some communities, and for some people, formal structures are just a bureaucratic nuisance. They assume coalition members can and will just figure out what has to be done and do it. Almost all coalitions have at least some degree of formal structure, in part because the organizations they come from have a formal structure. But it is important to retain flexibility, and it is therefore wise to introduce greater formality into the coalition structure gradually. Remember that it is easier to become more formal than it is to become less formal! Here are specific issues coalitions must address regarding how formal they need to be:

1. Does the coalition need a "lead agency"?

If the answer is yes, who should fulfill that role—the state or local health department? a voluntary agency? or a local hospital or university?

Most of the coalitions we have studied have a lead agency, for the practical reason that there had to be someone to receive and manage funds on behalf of the group. What does vary, however, is how the lead agency is identified. In some cases, as noted in our discussion of mandated coalitions (see Chapter II), a funding source specifies who the lead agency must be. In other cases, the lead agency is actually the group that convened the coalition to begin with. In still other cases, the group as a whole makes a decision about the most appropriate agency to be the "lead." There are two critical issues to keep in mind with respect to lead agencies:

- Who is in the best position to carry out the administrative and financial functions of a lead agency?
- Who is most likely to be respected and trusted by other coalition members, and by the community and constituencies the coalition needs to reach?

Quite often, the answer to these questions is pretty self-evident. At other times, there may actually be competition to be the lead agency, especially if prestige or money goes with the designation. Some coalitions have found that if one of the competitors wins out, the other may back off. Others find it wiser to try to pick as "neutral" a group as possible to be the lead. In some communities, there is a fear that the lead agency will try to control the agenda, structure and strategy of the group as a whole; picking the largest and most resource-rich or visible agency in the coalition is not a good idea under these circumstances. In other communities, agencies are more willing to join if they see that a large and well-regarded entity is serving as a lead agency, because that gives them confidence that there will be action, and also resources.

2. Should the coalition have formal linkages with other organizations through such mechanisms as shared memberships or memoranda of understanding?

It is rare that coalitions set up such formal linkages at the outset. The exception is when a coalition actually becomes a subgroup of an existing "umbrella" group. In those cases, specifying the relationship of the two groups in writing is important to ensuring that the new coalition has sufficient autonomy to operate and make decisions. Over time, however, such linkages may become appropriate, for example, if the coalition is getting or providing resources to another group, or if two or more groups are working together on a common agenda.

Sometimes there are two coalitions created by different funding sources to deal with the same or at least highly overlapping issues. For example, in the world of tobacco control, the National Cancer Institute funded statewide coalitions in which the lead agency had to be the state health department, while the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation supported coalitions where the lead agency was up to the local entities to determine. Some states have received funding from both sources. For the "enemies" of the tobacco control movement, any opportunity to "divide and conquer" is attractive, so people were often concerned about how the two projects and their coalitions would interact. In some cases, a single coalition served both projects. In other cases, over time the roles of the two groups, and the boundaries and overlaps between them, were slowly worked out. While formal statements can help in specifying relationships, their development is often so gradual and "organic" that such statements can only be drawn up fairly late.

3. Does the coalition need formal eligibility criteria for membership? Different levels for members?

See Chapter III on membership for a discussion of membership issues for coalitions, with special attention to the types of members.

4. Should the coalition have officers and, if so, should they be elected or appointed? How long should they be in office?

Most groups have a limited number of officers—President, perhaps a Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer (sometimes the latter two are combined). It is a good idea to make sure that officers are affiliated with different members, and perhaps even with different sectors of the community, to reflect the diversity of the coalition and guard against concentration of power.

A more significant issue is how the officers are chosen. In an organization like a coalition, where it is important for everyone to feel as though they have influence on decisions, election of officers is usually more appropriate. However, if no one is willing to volunteer (not a good omen for commitment to the group!) then appointment may be a fallback option.

In order to avoid burnout and to promote the emergence of new leaders, it is also important to consider terms

of office. Terms from one to three years are common; some groups permit reelection, but it is a good idea for there to be some kind of "term limit" for coalition officers. When you are first getting started, it is not uncommon to stagger the terms of the first group of officers so they are replaced gradually rather than all at once. This permits a balance between new participants and continuity.

5. Should the coalition have formal by-laws?

Most coalitions develop by-laws, but many do not do so until they have been in operation for a year or more. There is a very real tension between the work that it takes to put together the right set of by-laws and the pressure people feel to actually get to work on the community health problem at issue. To save time, many groups begin by looking at by-laws for other groups. If you take this approach, make sure you look at by-laws for a group that is as similar to a coalition as possible. The by-laws for a large voluntary agency may not work as well as the by-laws for a membership organization, for example. And rather than simply adopt someone else's by-laws wholesale, look them over carefully to make sure there are not important changes needed. Be particularly careful, when you are getting off the ground, to make sure that it is not extremely difficult to alter the by-laws. The coalition needs to feel free to learn and use its learning over time.

6. Should formal minutes be taken at meetings? Should other records of the coalition's plans and actions be kept?

Meeting minutes can be a useful tool. They can record decisions the group has made; they can list the follow-up action steps that have to be taken, by whom and by when; and they can give at least some of the flavor of the deliberations of the group. They need not summarize everything that happened at a meeting, however. Since it is always the case that someone is not able to attend a meeting, the minutes are useful in keeping them up-to-date. In some groups, the Secretary takes the minutes; in others it is a support staff members; still other groups rotate the job of taking and distributing minutes. In all these cases, it is a good idea to develop a "template" for the minutes and have everyone stick to it; this typically reduces the time it takes both to prepare and to review the minutes.

Other formal records of a coalition can be useful; this is particularly true of the following:

- Mission or vision statements
- Strategic or action plans
- Resource allocation decisions related to such plans
- Positions on particular policy issues
- Summaries of programmatic initiatives

The primary audience for some of these documents is internal; the primary audience for others may be external. Keep in mind, however, that under certain circumstances you may have to keep written records to a minimum. This is particularly true when a group is taking on controversial issues and there may be other groups or individuals who would want to discredit them. In some cases, depending on the sources of funding for a given coalition, there may be laws that require their documents to be made public. And in some cases, the group's strategy may require that they keep their plans quiet until the right point in time.

7. Does the coalition need a formal set of ground rules (e.g., *Robert's Rules of Order*) to govern its meeting process? At meetings, should there be a formal agenda that is agreed to by all participants?

Clear, shared and explicit rules to govern how issues are raised, how they are discussed and how they are decided are often critical both to building trust and to getting closure. This is another area, however, in which the "culture" of the community and participants in question need to be taken into account. Some people find rules and

agendas barriers to participation rather than things that help to structure effective participation. Be especially careful about formal ground rules and agendas if there are some people in the coalition who are very experienced at working with them while others are not. The latter are likely to feel (and perhaps really be) disenfranchised if they are less experienced than others.

Having an agenda is a good idea, but a more important issue is who sets the agenda and how and whether the agenda is actually followed. These issues are discussed further in Chapter VII, which covers decision making.

8. Should the coalition incorporate?

When you incorporate an organization, you have to become quite formal. Incorporation rarely happens at the outset of a coalition's life. It is a major turning point in the coalition's development, and is a sign that people expect and want to work together not just for a few years but for the long haul. It also implies that people have come to a comfort and trust level with their structure and their decision-making processes. Coalitions typically incorporate, however, for very practical reasons: There are opportunities they cannot take advantage of, or resources they cannot acquire, unless they incorporate. In a few cases, groups incorporate because they are dissatisfied with the lead agency they have chosen as a fiscal intermediary for the group; unless they are really ready to put in the time, effort and money it takes to incorporate, an alternative lead agency may be a wiser step.

B. How Complicated Should the Structure Be?

Another dimension of coalition structure is complexity. An organization becomes more complex as it add subunits and layers. The units and the layers are typically defined by functions (a Nominating Committee), by issues (an Adolescent Health Task Force), or by region (the Bronx HIV/AIDS Network). In most of the organizations in which we work, there is also some kind of "vertical" structure, or hierarchy. While coalitions are intentionally less hierarchical, the introduction of features such as officers and in particular an Executive Committee does introduce some degree of hierarchy. Without any subunits or layers to an organization, everyone works on everything. In a very small coalition, or one that is just starting out, that can be very appropriate. As coalitions grow and begin to work on multiple fronts, it typically becomes more efficient to "divide and conquer."

Like formality, the need for complexity, and the appropriateness of complexity, will depend on the community and the members of the coalition; on the size of the coalition; and especially on how many tasks and activities the coalition is undertaking, and how different these tasks are. As with formality, it is a good idea to start out with a fairly simple and flexible structure, adding complexity over time. Here are some particular issues to address with respect to how complicated the coalition's structure should be:

1. Should the coalition have an Executive or Steering Committee?

The need for an Executive or Steering Committee depends on the size of the coalition (see Chapter III). When there are more than about 25 people it usually is wise to have a small group that can meet more frequently between full coalition meetings to help structure the decisions that the whole group needs to make and perhaps make urgent decisions, at least on an interim basis. This smaller group is usually called either an Executive Committee or a Steering Committee. It typically includes the officers of the coalition and the chairs of key committees where they exist; in some cases there are "members-at-large" chosen from the broader membership of the coalition. When there are different regional groupings within a coalition, it is not uncommon, and often wise, to include representatives of more "local" groups on the Executive Committee.

Whatever it is called, the Executive Committee needs to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Communication flow and ground rules for agenda setting and interim decision making are critical, as serious problems can arise if the whole group begins to feel disenfranchised by what the Executive Committee is doing.

If you have an Executive Committee, you also have to decide how it will be chosen. Options include election by the whole coalition, appointment by key officers, and volunteers. In some cases, the "mandate" for a coalition will specify how the Executive Committee should be constructed. This is one of the thorniest problems for mandated coalitions, since the Executive Committee is rightly seen as a group with more than the usual amount of influence on the life of a coalition.

You also need to decide how much power the Executive Committee will have in making decisions, allocating resources, etc., especially when they are acting without the consent of the full group. These powers should be delineated in the by-laws of the coalition. The more power vested in the Executive Committee, the more important it is that they are chosen through an open process that is viewed as democratic and that there is ongoing communication between the Executive Committee and the coalition as a whole.

THE INFLUENCE OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

In our survey of Smokeless States coalitions, the groups identified as having "a lot of influence" on coalition decisions were the Executive or Steering Committee (81%); coalition officers (72%); representatives of lead agencies (66%) and coalition staff (38%). Both coalition staff and other coalition members were viewed as having "some influence" (48% and 78%, respectively.) In comparison, 60% percent of respondents rated themselves as having "some influence." Thus, the Executive or Steering Committee is clearly viewed as the group with the greatest influence on decisions.

One of the most important roles of an Executive Committee is to take action in a hurry when opportunities or challenges arise. This might include taking advantage of a funding opportunity, responding quickly to a piece of unexpected legislation, or in some cases handling a conflict in the ranks that is getting in the way of important deadlines. Given the ubiquity of e-mail, fax and other rapid communication technologies, it has actually become easier for the entire membership of a coalition to have an opportunity to at least comment on an urgent circumstance, even if they do not participate in deliberations or make final decisions. Taking advantage of these technologies can help ensure that the Executive Committee maintains the trust of the group as it gets on with the work.

2. Should there be other permanent committees?

Delegating responsibilities to committees can help increase efficiency for the coalition as a whole. Functional committees, such as Policy Setting, Member Recruitment, and Legislative Programs/Education can help to facilitate the work of the coalition. The advantages of having committees are that you get more work done when a small group of people are working on particular issues. Another advantage of all kinds of subgroups is that they can attract and engage people with specific interests or skills who like to have the opportunity to focus on things they do well and/or enjoy doing. As we discussed in Chapter III, Membership, it

is often possible to recruit someone initially to serve on a coalition subunit where it may not be possible to recruit them to join the coalition as a whole.

Topic-specific committees that are related to the programmatic focus of the group can also be useful for getting the job done and affording individuals an opportunity to share their unique expertise. For example, a broad community health improvement coalition such as a CCN partnership can have committees to tackle each of the priority health issues they have chosen to focus on, e.g., mental health; elder health; school health; or reproductive health. When you have topic-specific committees, however, it is also important to coordinate and communicate across the different committees, both so that people do not "bump into each other" and so they can learn from each other's experiences. This often becomes a key role for staff and for the Executive Committee.

3. Regional groupings

Coalitions can have national, state, local and neighborhood levels that are related to each other. Regional groupings can give the coalition greater reach, and they often lead to greater membership diversity and effectiveness. However, considerable thought must be given to how the levels will relate to each other, in particular with regard to governance. For example, are there representatives from the more local groups on the state and national groups, and in particular on the Executive Committee? It is a good idea to have this cross-membership and representation to keep things coordinated.

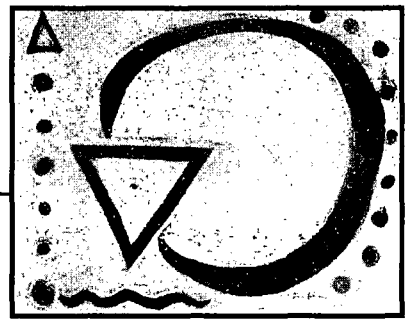
Local people often have a very different perspective on the world. Sometimes they are much more activist and want change now; at other times they are much more conservative about what it will take to achieve a change in their particular context. These issues must have a forum where they can be addressed.

4. Should there be more temporary groupings such as Task Forces?

Temporary groupings such as task forces give a coalition flexibility to deal with issues that are important without creating a standing "bureaucracy" that takes on a long-term life of its own. They may be set up to deal with challenges or opportunities in the environment that are not ongoing. They have the advantage of giving members a chance to work on an issue on a shorter-term basis. If you set up one or more task forces, it is important to specify the purpose and objectives for the group and perhaps how long it is expected to operate. This makes it clear that the group has a clear focus of attention and a time-limited mandate.

Reminder: Your structure sends a message to the community about how you make decisions and take actions. It will be noticed and read that way. Match your structure to your purpose, role and context: There is no single right structure.

CHAPTER 5



RESOURCES: THE BENEFITS AND RISKS

As with any organization, coalitions need resources in order to operate. It is useful to define resources broadly, to include not only funding, but also contributions of time, space, materials and equipment; information; access to important groups and individuals; legitimacy; and prestige. In this chapter, we will focus primarily on financial resources, examining not only how coalitions acquire and use such resources, but the impact of having either resources themselves or control over resources that would be distributed to others. The latter topic is important because coalitions often make either recommendations or decisions about who will get funding for various activities.

A. Support for Running the Coalition

The basic operations of coalition requires some level of financial resources. It costs money to:

- Arrange and conduct meetings
- Gather and distribute information
- Publicize the coalition; and
- Recruit members

Having a budget or earmarked and dedicated in-kind contributions is often a key to both the initial mobilization of a coalition and to its ability to make progress as a group. Without some level of financial resources that the coalition can call its own, it is hard to overcome the tendency for people to work on their own instead of jointly, and against the pressure of other priorities. Without funding, coalitions have to get by using volunteers and in-kind contributions from members. And many coalitions have survived and even thrived for years in just this way. For example, many grass-roots activist groups have a history of providing endless hours of volunteer support to keep coalitions going during hard times. If a coalition has this experience, especially at the outset, it is important, once funding and staffing do become available, to recognize these volunteer efforts and to find ways to continue to harness the energy and motivation they reflect. Unfortunately, however, running a coalition on volunteer energy and in-kind contributions over the long term is difficult, especially if most of the members have significant full-time employment, not to mention families and other obligations. Further, the level of resources available this way is often insufficient or barely adequate and, perhaps more problematic, their continuity cannot be assured.

Basic operating expenses can be met in several ways:

- Especially if a coalition is mandated, support for its basic operations often comes from the external agency who is doing the mandating.
- In voluntary coalitions, member organizations typically contribute resources, including both in-kind support such as space, secretarial support or access to staff for particular tasks, and actual dollar funding.
- One type of member funding can come from dues. (See Chapter III for a discussion of the issues that arise when members pay dues to a coalition.)
- Coalitions can independently seek funding, both from private foundations and from public agencies.

Most people believe that resources always come with strings attached. And they are usually right! Whatever the source of funding for the basic operations of a coalition, the question arises: To what extent is the source of funding, rather than the coalition as a whole, making the important decisions? We have already noted that mandated coalitions always have to overcome the notion that someone else "owns" the group. If one or a small number of coalition members are providing the bulk of the resources for the group's operations, people will also worry that they will expect to have more influence. A dues structure that is a result of consensus and that seems equitable to all can be useful because it generates resources just for the coalition that they control themselves. Similarly, if the group decides to pursue external funding, they are more likely to feel they

are in charge of their own destiny. Nevertheless, they need to make sure that there is considerable overlap between their agenda and the agenda of the external funders.

When you get external funds and you are not incorporated, however, you need to identify an agency as a fiscal conduit, sometimes called a "lead agency." (See Chapter IV for a discussion of the use and selection of lead agencies.) Some funding agencies mandate the lead agency. The membership may not have a choice. In other instances, the lead agency is selected by the membership. The lead agency may be agreed upon by a small number of agencies who come to the table to write a grant proposal. The bottom line here is that while it would be ideal if the membership agreed about who the lead agency is, that doesn't always happen. The lead agency usually is perceived as having significant, sometimes undue influence about the direction of programs, policy and resource allocation. Sometimes this is a problem, sometimes it isn't. Usually the lead agency also has more responsibility with respect to programs, policy, and resource allocation, and along with this goes more influence. The danger seems to be when the lead agency exerts undue influence against the will of the members. A good lead agency can be a real asset. It is ideal to select a lead agency that is highly legitimate in the community, well managed, has an interest in the work of the coalition but has other work to do as well.

B. Staffing the Coalition

You don't need much in the way of resources until you decide that the coalition needs its own staff. This is an important decision in the life of any coalition. Related decisions are what kind of staff and with what level of responsibility. Some groups get by with part-time administrative support staff only. Under those circumstances, any technical work is going to have to be done by members themselves. A good administrative assistant can schedule meetings and arrange for meeting space, follow up to make sure people will be attending, and arrange for refreshments or any equipment that will be needed. S/he can copy and distribute materials before, during and after meetings. But developing an agenda, identifying and gathering relevant data about the problem at hand, identifying additional groups and individuals who should be asked to join and similar tasks will require either some level of professional staffing or a genuine time commitment on the part of one, or preferably several, members. One approach is for member organizations to assign staff to these functions. This inevitably raises the issue of whether this assigned staff person is responsible to the coalition as a whole or just to

HOW CAN I GET PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE MORE ACTIVELY AT THE MEETINGS?

This question was raised by a coalition staff member who was both dedicated and frustrated. A little probing unearthed a very basic, and all too common, problem. When asked who ran the meetings, the staff member replied: I do. When asked who developed the agenda, the staff member replied: I do. When asked who prepared the minutes, the staff member replied: I do. Unintentionally, indeed unconsciously, this coalition staffer was giving the signal to members that this was "his" coalition, not theirs. Even though the group had officers, they were not really running the coalition; he was. It is not surprising, in these circumstances, that few if any people were participating.

the agency that employs them. Assigned staff typically have to "bend over backwards" to demonstrate that they are not dancing strictly to the tune of their employer.

Even when the coalition has funds to hire their own staff, however, they must deal with a number of issues. Professional staff will inevitably have an influence over policies and program decisions. The extent of influence, and how it is exercised, varies depending upon both the seniority and the style of the individual in question.

Staffing a coalition is a tough job, one that requires a mix of skills that we seldom teach in our professional schools. Coalition staff members are hired both to do work themselves, and to create conditions that make it easier for coalition members to make concrete contributions of time, energy and expertise. Ideally, staff should not be making policy and program decisions, but rather laying out issues as neutrally as possible, providing the pros and the cons, and facilitating decision-making by the group as a whole. Nevertheless, how a decision is framed always has a big impact on the outcome. So coalition staff need both to support the coalition members and officers, and to take their cues from them.

Having staff can really solidify the coalition's links with its community and relevant constituencies. They are invaluable in tasks such as planning recruitment campaigns, generating publicity, developing the technical backup for strategic planning and policy analysis, and staying in close touch with organizations both in and out of the coalition who are critical to coalition success. On the other hand, coalition members themselves need to get out and meet with potential members and with key policymakers and agency heads. When there is a press conference, it should be a coalition member who is most often the spokesperson in front of the mike and the cameras. Priorities for the group need to be determined by the group, not by staff.

All this means that while having staff is wonderful, it brings challenges. The roles and accountability of staff members need to be carefully articulated and clearly understood by all members. The balance of task assignments and the balance of influence over coalition decisions also are key issues. Coalition members need to be realistic—staff are NOT going to do all the work; members still have to do their share. Officers in particular will need to function to some extent as the day-to-day supervisors of the coalition staff (or at least for the most senior staff member, if the coalition has multiple staff). Coalition staff will need both direction and a resource for brainstorming and problem solving from coalition officers.

Ultimately, coalitions acquire staff because they enable them not only to survive, but to develop and get things done. Members of a staffed coalition may do at least as much work on behalf of the coalition as members of an unstaffed coalition, perhaps even more. If the coalition is on the move, getting things done, growing in size, in impact and in prestige, this is not a sign that the staff is not doing its job; rather it is a sign that the staff is doing its job quite well!

1. Consultants as staff for coalitions

Occasionally, a coalition or partnership decides that rather than hire staff, who are viewed as somewhat permanent, they will hire a consultant or even a consulting firm to provide administrative and technical support. This approach to staffing has the advantage of flexibility: You don't have to commit yourself for too long to a particular person and they will not have the expectation of long-term employment. However, there are disadvantages as well. Consultants are rarely engaged on a full-time basis, and they typically will have other clients in addition to the coalition. The issue here is not just one of "juggling time," but rather of making sure that there are no conflicts of interest or cross currents between the coalition and the other activities and clients of

the consultant. For example, if the consultant is also employed by one or more of the members, the group may worry that s/he is giving more weight to their perspective. And as with any staff member, consultants can begin to take more "ownership" of the coalition than is at all appropriate. Finally, consultants are usually expensive! In one partnership we studied, a group of consultants offered to serve at a reduced rate. Unfortunately, that gave them the impression that they could call more of the shots themselves. When their agenda and approach began to dominate the group, other members backed off and the group came very close to falling apart.

There are other uses for consultants that are entirely appropriate, however. Coalitions and partnerships we have studied have often hired consultants for time-limited and skill-specific tasks, such as facilitating a strategic planning retreat; writing a proposal; designing a media campaign; or providing advice on how to interact with state and local politicians.

C. Generating Funding for Programs and Activities

Generating funding for programs and activities is the key job that coalitions must do if they want to achieve their goals and make their dreams come true. The critical issue is not whether you do this, but when: at the outset or after the group has had some time to coalesce. Sometimes the nucleus of the coalition has worked together in the past, is made up of experts, and can go after funding at the outset. All too often, however, groups pursue funding very early and find that they get into difficult conflicts as a result of not having clearly determined their mission, objectives and how the money will be spent. Either their strategy and program ideas were not sufficiently consolidated, or they were not ready in terms of their relationship with each other.

Problems can also arise when a coalition starts "following the money," i.e., shifting their mission, priorities and strategy to more closely match available funds. This is a risky approach in all situations, but it is especially tricky for coalitions where trust internally and legitimacy externally are both so critical. People have to know what you stand for. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that any rush for funds be predicated on a conscious decision to go after them with buy-in that will make it work if the funds are received.

Funding confers a number of benefits on an organization, among them the ability to acquire additional staff and equipment, improve communication, have more programs, etc. However, it also may result in an influx of new players — new staff, new funding sources, and sometimes new members who are attracted by the fact that the group now has money to spend. This, in turn, may lead to competition and conflict.

The receipt of funds implies the ability to plan, design and implement, to make much more concrete decisions, to manage money and people, to take credit and blame, and to become much more visible. It implies, in fact, a certain level of coalition development. Problems can arise when a coalition takes on funding before its own level of consensus and trust is sufficiently high. These problems are not insoluble; some coalitions are quite successful in "leapfrogging" to a higher stage of development. Typically, however, they have to backtrack at a certain point and reconsolidate their foundations in order to actually make good use of the resources they acquire. (See Chapter VIII for an in-depth discussion of the stages of coalition development.)

D. Being a Source of Funding or Funding Recommendations

Some coalitions have resources available to them which they can distribute to other groups or organizations. Others have a mandate to make recommendations to funding agencies about priority needs and who is best able to meet those needs. The amounts in question can be fairly small or very

large. For example, many coalitions we have studied use "mini-grants" of a few thousand dollars to fund very specific activities that support the goals of the coalition. In contrast, many of the coalitions and coalition-like groups supported by federal and state agencies are tasked to make recommendations that can influence the allocation of millions of dollars in grants and contracts. Whatever the amount in question, being in a position to influence resource allocation fundamentally changes the dynamics of a coalition. Having money to distribute increases the motivation to join coalitions in order to gain access either to the funds themselves, or to exert influence over who gets them and for what. Even if there are no new members, the level of potential conflict among members can increase, since something material and valued is more clearly at stake.

Coalitions that play these roles have to set very specific priorities, develop a fiscal and programmatic management structure, and sometimes enter into formal legal relationships with other groups through grants, contracts or other mechanisms. Just as important, such coalitions have to deal effectively with the issue of conflict of interest (both the reality and the appearance), especially if coalition members are candidates for the receipt of funds.

Resource allocation decisions are among the toughest ones that any individual or organization makes. By definition, this task will be a challenge for all, including the most mature, coalitions. Sometimes, this kind of responsibility is handed to newly developing groups that lack the capacity to make informed decisions. The result can be that resources are not used wisely and that the reputation of the group suffers. On the other hand, having resources to allocate immeasurably increases the potential impact that a coalition can have.

Each coalition needs to define how resource allocation decisions will be made, and by whom. Sometimes, a mandating agency spells out the process and criteria for setting priorities and making decisions. As with all mandates, this can be problematic, because people will feel they are not really making the decisions. In fact, there is almost always room for interpretation of criteria. Often the challenge for coalition leaders and staff is to ensure that the process is not being manipulated by a few canny people!

Whether mandated or not, a clearly articulated process and criteria can both facilitate the work of the coalition and make it more "transparent" to the public. Just as critical is having the time to go through the process in a meaningful way. Agencies sometimes mandate quite a complex process of information gathering and analysis but give a coalition only a couple of months to complete it! This typically leads not only to questionable decisions but intense frustration among all parties.

In our research we have identified several models with respect to who makes the decisions. They include:

- Having the Executive Committee make decisions and then present them to the full coalition
- Having the coalition's Board of Directors make the decisions; and
- Appointing a special committee that has broad representation and very strict rules for making the decisions

None of these approaches is inherently superior. What is most critical is that both the coalition, and those who either do or do not get the resources allocated, know about the process ahead of time and find it acceptable. Keep in mind that it will never be possible to design a process for allocating resources that is everyone's favorite!

E. Indirect Costs of Coalitions

Decision makers should be aware of the indirect costs of coalitions, including their major resource: the time and attention of members. Individuals who choose to participate in coalitions tend to have multiple roles and responsibilities.

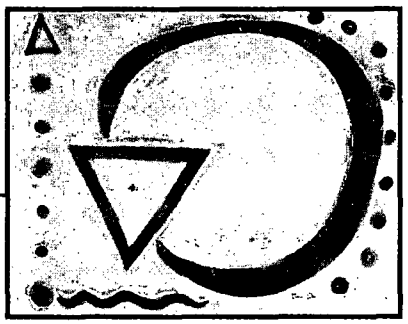
The time they spend on coalition activities could be used for something else that might be quite productive. Coalitions that demand too much from their members without providing tangible benefits to them may find that the members may be unlikely to continue to participate, at least constructively.

Ultimately, the most intangible but perhaps most essential resource required by coalitions is faith that joint action will produce results. If problems with participating in a coalition become greater than the benefits, and especially if it is perceived that the coalition gets nothing done, some or all of that faith can be lost and become unavailable for similar future initiatives.

Reminder: Resources are essential; resources can be dangerous.

CHAPTER 6

LEADERSHIP



Coalitions require leadership in order to operate, accomplish their missions and develop productively over time. Whether or not there are formal officers, one or more individuals or organizations must exercise leadership to build and maintain coalitions. In some cases, formal officers also are significant coalition leaders; in others, staff members are the key activators of a coalition. Perhaps in keeping with the image of joint action, coalitions often try explicitly to develop shared or collective leadership. Rotating officers among different people and having co-chairs for committees or task forces are not uncommon.

The function of a coalition leader is not to make independent decisions but rather to facilitate group decision-making. Leadership roles include:

- Motivating members to participate and contribute
- Structuring group interactions so they are both fair and productive
- Negotiating among people and organizations with diverse agendas; and
- Maintaining and communicating enthusiasm through good times and bad

These roles all require a difficult balance between taking initiatives and remaining responsive to others.

One pitfall of coalition leadership is visibility. If one member is an especially effective spokesperson, he or she may begin to be perceived as getting the limelight or credit for collective efforts. Since coalitions are supposed to be effective because many contribute, the perceived celebrity of one or even a few members may be resented by other members. Nevertheless, like all organizations, it is useful for the coalition to be embodied in the minds of people in the community in one or a small number of people.

A. Leadership from Members

There are two types of leadership in coalitions: formal and informal. All coalitions have both kinds of leadership. The formal leaders are the officers, while the informal ones are the people who are influential and trusted whether or not they are officers. Incumbency—having a formal position—is neither necessary nor sufficient to leadership, especially in coalitions.

Where do leaders come from? Are they chosen by the members? Are they appointed or mandated by external groups? Are they self-appointed? Have they become leaders by default because no one else volunteers even though they may not want to be in the role? The ideal is to have a leader who wants to be a leader and who the group recognizes and respects as a leader. This is far more critical than exactly how the leader is chosen.

In the context of a coalition, multiple leaders, both formal and informal, can be a very good idea. First, multiple leaders reflect the concept of both the horizontal (not hierarchical) structure of the organization and the diversity that

SOMETIMES EVEN LEADERS NEED TO BE LED

In one Smokeless States coalition, two leaders dominated the group as a whole. None of the other members of the coalition had either the charisma or the commitment of these two leaders. The staff director was inexperienced and unsure of himself. When a serious conflict arose between the two leaders, therefore, it festered and poisoned the atmosphere of the group. No one else could take on the conflict as a whole in one camp or the other. In fact, the conflict caused members to withdraw even further. This further emphasizes the need for a "pool" of potential leaders within a coalition.

are the trademarks of any good and effective coalition. Further, multiple leaders, including informal ones, help to create a pool of future formal leaders as well as roles for past leaders. Multiple leaders can share responsibilities. They can act as mentors to nurture the future leaders. They can take a break from being formal leaders or even retire, allowing new leadership to grow into their roles. Consequently, having multiple leaders may help to prevent burnout. On the other hand, if multiple leaders go off in different directions, rather than coordinate and cooperate with each other, the coalition's energies will be unfocused and it may have to deal with conflicts that are hard to resolve or manage.

With respect to the external image of the coalition, it often is important to have a clear and consistent spokesperson for the group. However, it also can be effective to have a small group of spokespeople who speak with one voice but perhaps to different audiences. It is essential that the spokesperson be an effective communicator. Therefore, if the formal leader of the group is not the best communicator, someone else should serve as spokesperson.

1. Leadership style

Leadership style is one of the most critical determinants of the effectiveness of coalitions, both in terms of how they function internally and their ability to get things done in the broader community and society. There is no single leadership style that works either for all coalitions or for all situations of a given coalition. Nevertheless, we can identify certain important attributes of leadership for developing and maintaining a coalition. The ideal coalition leader:

- Has a clear vision of the coalition
- Is inclusive
- Appreciates diverse perspectives and contributions
- Respects each individual in the group
- Is respected by coalition members
- Is open to input and feedback
- Is willing to give feedback and able to provide it in a constructive manner
- Is fair, equitable and ethical both within the coalition and in working with others outside the coalition
- Is goal and task oriented (you've got to get work done!)
- Is effective at keeping the coalition focused
- Is effective at achieving closure on decisions without cutting off input and participation prematurely
- Is accessible to members
- Can create a balance of responsibility among members and between members and staff
- Is skilled at eliciting input from people, especially those who are more quiet and newer members who may feel like outsiders at first
- Works collaboratively
- Is skilled at framing issues, including conflicts
- Is skilled at conflict resolution/management

The reality of operating under time pressure or in situations where there are windows of opportunity that require intense focus on a specific task can cause leaders to temporarily become more directive, more controlling and less inclusive in order to get things done. Sometimes it is necessary to make an executive decision and then explain what has occurred and why to the members.

Leadership style makes a difference in what a coalition gets done and also how coalition members feel about the group. But sometimes what it takes to get things done is different from what it takes to make people comfortable with the group process. In our study of SmokeLess States coalitions, we found that coalitions whose members reported that their leaders had a controlling style were more likely to pass a cigarette excise tax increase. On the other hand, in coalitions whose members reported a more inclusive and less directive leadership style, members were more likely to be committed to and satisfied with the coalition, report that the benefits outweigh the costs of partici-

pating, and report that the coalition is essential, and will have a significant impact in the future. A critical issue for leaders is the ability to deal with and balance both process and outcome. One way to think about this is that over time, coalition leaders need to build a reservoir of trust among members. They can call upon that reservoir when, at least for a time, they have to shift to a more directive and controlling leadership style in order to take advantage of a time-limited opportunity to get something important done.

2. Leadership succession

Just as people don't like to think about the "end of life," groups don't like to think about the "end of term" of their leaders. However, this is not something that can be denied. It is dangerous both for the leaders and the group for the same people to be in leadership roles too long. Effective leadership requires continuity but not permanence.

The group needs to plan for succession. This is easier to do with respect to "formal" leaders, where you can limit the terms of office (see Chapter IV for a discussion of this issue). But succession also needs to be thought through with regard to important informal leaders who hold no office. For example, the best spokesperson for the group may be someone who is a great communicator, but doesn't like holding office.

Planning for succession means grooming the next generation of leaders all the time so you have a pool of emerging leaders to draw upon. One advantage of committees and task forces is that they provide mid-level leadership opportunities for many people, some of whom can grow into and may assume broader leadership responsibilities.

Coalitions also need mechanisms for orderly transitions, and recognition of both old and new leaders. Many coalitions have one-year terms for formal leaders, which allows for orderly nomination and selection of new executive committee members as well as standing committee chairs. Some will have rules about whether a formal leader may serve more than one term, which may be necessary depending on the availability of new leaders and the desire for continuity in pursuing an important initiative that has just gotten off the ground.

LEADERSHIP STRENGTH

Respondents to the SSI evaluation identified the following strengths of their coalition's leadership: It was ethical; respected in the coalition and in the community; got things done; had a clear vision for the coalition; and kept the coalition focused. Fewer respondents strongly agreed that their leaders sought others' views; utilized the skills and talents of many; and created a balance of responsibility, while about 60% strongly agreed or agreed that their leaders strongly advocated for their own agenda or controlled discussions.

When new leaders are elected or selected, an opportunity to recognize both old and new leaders is provided. Like all coalition members, leaders are typically contributing their time over and above their "day job." And they typically put in a lot more time than the average group member. Formal events at which people are recognized in public are useful. Just as important for many leaders, however, are the quiet comments and thanks of their fellow coalition members.

B. Staff Members as Leaders

In Chapter V, we discussed the roles of coalition staff, emphasizing that they should be facilitating the work of the group as a whole. However, it is not uncommon for staff members of coalitions to become the de facto leaders of the group. In some cases, this happens because the formal leaders, such as the officers, are either unwilling or unable

to be real leaders. In other cases, it is because staff are perceived as more neutral and better able to balance among the various agendas present in the group. In still other cases, it is because the coalition, at a given point in time, is very dependent on the technical skills and knowledge of the staff member because those attributes are not available in the group itself. Sometimes the leadership role of staff members is openly acknowledged by the group. For example, we often hear a key staff member described as the "glue" that holds the coalition together, both in very practical ways and because of their style in interacting with members. At other times, the staff member is quite adept at making sure their leadership is pretty invisible, exercised primarily behind the scenes. The advantage of this situation is that the authority of the formal leaders is not being undermined. The disadvantage is that some staff members use this strategy to escape scrutiny and accountability for their actions.

It is important for coalition members and leaders to recognize that staff members can always have a great deal of influence informally, even if they don't have formal power or position. This is primarily because they are in a position to shape the flow of information. They often write up the meeting minutes and summarize other information which is distributed to the group. They can provide too much information and overload people, or they can provide too little and leave people hanging and unable to take meaningful action. This an area in which coalition leaders drawn from the membership have to take some initiative. They need to work with staff, and the group as a whole, to determine just how much information is enough, what form of information is most user-friendly, and what timing is most appropriate for distributing information. Coalitions need to address this explicitly, and they can and should experiment with various modalities for delivering the information, such as briefing and/or background documents, newsletters, action alerts, fax/phone trees, news from the field and, of course, e-mail.

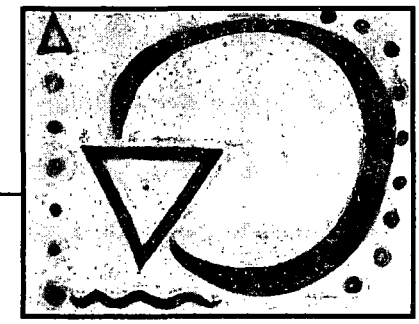
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE IS NO STAFF?

If there is no staff, it takes very dedicated volunteer leadership both from organizations that are willing to provide in-kind resources such as staff time, office space and supplies, and from individuals who are willing to donate significant amounts of time and effort to the coalition. Otherwise the coalition will have a difficult time surviving in the long term. In the short term this kind of volunteer leadership and support can keep the coalition going until funding and thus staff, become available. During times of little or no funding, larger organizations such as voluntary agencies may provide such in-kind resources to keep the coalition going.

C. And When There Is No Leadership?

Leadership is an essential ingredient of all coalitions. Without at least informal leadership, coalitions rarely survive. Staff members can sometimes hold a group together in the short term without leadership from the members, but coalitions in these circumstances are unlikely to make progress and are very likely to wither and die.

CHAPTER 7



MAKING DECISIONS AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS: THE HEART OF THE COALITION PROCESS

A. Who Decides Who Decides and How?

Decision making is critical to the functioning and effectiveness of any coalition. It is especially important in building and maintaining trust among coalition members and the coalition's legitimacy and respect in the larger community. Nonetheless, the decision making process often just happens rather than being consciously deliberated and discussed. Coalitions can benefit from deciding how they will make decisions, and from documenting the process.

Many decision-making strategies will work, and different kinds may be needed for different situations or kinds of decisions. You can build up your repertoire as a group over time, but you have to have some understanding of the ground rules fairly early. At the beginning you need:

- **A basic method that specifies:**
  - How issues needing a decision will be identified
  - How they will be discussed and
  - How decisions will be made
- **An emergency method that specifies:**
  - What constitutes an emergency
  - Who can invoke the emergency method
  - What small group or individual can make emergency decisions
  - The use of phone calls and e-mail to obtain input on emergency decisions and
  - How these decisions get communicated to the group as a whole

If you are really active in your work, you will need an emergency method. You can revisit these decision-making rules periodically, after you get some experience in how well they work for your group.

B. Who Decides What Needs to Be Decided?

There is a great deal of power inherent even in announcing that a decision has to be made, especially by the group as a whole. There is even more power in "framing" the decision. Because it shapes the question and introduces a certain degree of bias, the frame can determine the response. For example, you can frame a decision by saying: What shall we do about the attack on our position that was published on the op ed page of the local paper last Sunday? This assumes everyone agrees that the coalition had taken the position in question, viewed the op ed piece as an attack on that position, and agree that some response is needed! How questions are framed is related to the issue of who puts together the agenda for the meeting and the supporting materials for the agenda, which is where decisions that have to be made are identified and framed. Again, you can't leave it to chance, especially since this is frequently a staff function. The rules about who can raise a matter for decision making have to be clear, and it is best to be inclusive about this.

It also is important to document decisions that have been made so people don't keep reintroducing them and revisiting them because they did not like the outcome. This is why meeting minutes are important, and why people need to get them, read them, approve them and keep them. It is best if a designated person (e.g., coalition staff or Secretary) takes minutes at each meeting and uses a consistent format for preparing and distributing them.

C. Decision-Making Rules

Decision-making rules are needed, but they don't have to be carved in stone. Basically, people have to have a shared understanding of the process. Often, but not always, it is best to write the rules down. As we discussed in

Chapter III, in some communities unwritten norms are more meaningful and powerful, and make people feel more comfortable than written rules. Two issues are related to this point: how things will be discussed, and how decisions will be made.

1. How things are discussed

Robert's Rules of Order, or "parliamentary process," is often used as a well-known and fair way to ensure that people have a chance to participate in the decision-making process. For example, in *Robert's Rules of Order* there is a specific way to bring a discussion to closure, but unless the majority of the group agrees that it is time to move to a vote, the discussion continues.

Even if you have a set of discussion rules of this kind, however, you cannot ensure that everyone will participate, or even that they will feel that if they want to participate, they can. One alternative to the typically free-flowing discussion of issues is to use a technique called "nominal group process" to maximize thoughtful consideration of the issues and participation by all. This method can work well in groups as large as 15 or 20; it becomes more tedious in larger groups. In this method, a question or issue is posed to the group. Then something unusual happens: no one says anything for a few minutes (typically 2-3). There are two advantages to this brief period of silence. First, everyone actually gets the opportunity to think about the question, rather than feeling they have to respond "off the top of their heads." Second, the discussion does not immediately get shaped by a few highly verbal people who always have something to say about anything, leaving out those who really don't like to talk unless they have thought something through. People are asked to write down as many answers to the question as they have, on a piece of paper or on 5" x 8" cards (finally, a use for all those index cards!). When the silent period is over, the facilitator goes around the table systematically, giving each individual an opportunity to respond to the question with the first of their comments. Cards can be posted, or the responses are summarized on a flip chart or blackboard for all to see. Often, people come up with the same or very similar responses; the facilitator can keep track of the number of "agreements" with a given comment. The process continues until everyone has shared all of their replies. The group then goes into a more open-ended discussion mode to categorize and discuss the responses.

Another way of sharing diverse points of view is brainstorming. In true brainstorming, disparaging comments or rebuttals to other people's comments are off limits. Both these methods have in common the notion that everyone's ideas have value and deserve to be considered. Of course, no method will work unless everyone knows how it works, and unless the facilitator is consistent in sustaining the "rules," whatever they are.

2. How decisions are made

Decisions can be made by the following methods:

- General consensus
- Total consensus
- Super-majority
- Normal majority; or
- Sheer exhaustion

Especially at the outset, some coalitions feel they must have a fairly high level of agreement on decisions. This may be especially true for decisions about the group's membership and structure, about leadership, about staffing, and also about how decisions will be made! They may opt for general consensus as a way to come to closure. In general consensus, as compared to total consensus, almost everyone has to agree, but there may be one or a very small

number of people who are not completely comfortable with the decision. In total consensus, absolutely everyone has to agree; a single person can be a "holdout" and the group as a whole has to keep working until either that person is convinced or a change is made in the decision that makes it acceptable to the "holdout." Ironically, while general consensus is useful when a group is trying to build trust, total consensus is very hard to achieve and is not feasible unless there is ALREADY a very high degree of mutual trust and respect in a group. This is because the group has to be willing to let anyone hold up a decision until s/he is satisfied. Needless to say, this generates both enormous amounts of pressure and potentially a lot of resentment.

Using even general consensus, however, requires that whoever is leading the discussion be skilled at determining that people have in fact come to a general agreement, summarizing the essence of that agreement, and checking it out to make sure they have gotten it right. This is a fairly informal process, in contrast to the more formal approach of having someone articulate a motion in a particular set of words, having someone "second" the motion, and eventually taking a vote on the motion (which of course may have been altered or amended). Normally, groups operate by the rule that a simple majority (more than 50 % of those present) rules. However, for some groups, or for some decisions that are viewed as being more significant or harder to reverse, a "super-majority," i.e., 60% or two thirds of those present) will be required for a motion to pass. Groups like coalitions, when they are using voting to make decisions, almost always have to check out, after the fact, how the "losers" are taking it. On the one hand, the group needs to move on and act on the decision, but on the other hand, it is wise to make sure there is not going to be "fallout" that could be prevented. Coalition leaders need to be especially vigilant if it appears that the same group of people are "losing" votes frequently. They may begin to believe that their point of view is either not understood or not welcome within the coalition.

Finally, in some groups, a few vociferous people, even if they are in the minority, can persevere in taking a particular position for so long that the rest of the group gives in to them out of sheer exhaustion. This is not an appropriate decision-making style for any group; it is particularly destructive for a coalition.

WONDERING IF IT'S POSSIBLE?

In case you wonder if it is possible for people to be satisfied with the decision making process in their coalition, the results of our research with tobacco control coalitions are reassuring. In our surveys of coalition members, nearly all (from 75% to over 90%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their groups had clear and explicit procedures, that decisions were timely, that the process was fair, and most important of all, that the coalitions made good decisions.

WONDERING IF IT MATTERS?

In addition, we found that high levels of comfort with the decision making were associated with member reports that the coalition was essential to success in meeting community health objectives and to greater certainty that the coalition would have an impact in the future.

independent coalition were operating at Stage 1 while others were operating at Stage 3. But because there was already a base of trust and commitment, the entire group quickly began to operate, as a whole, at Stage 3. It is interesting to note that this happened in a state where the external environment could be described as hostile, rather than supportive, of the coalition's objectives. It demonstrates once again that courage and in this case humor and warmth can help a lot when people are trying to work together under difficult circumstances.

C. Matching Coalition Roles and Expectations to Stage of Development

Often funding sources or internal pressures lead people to have unrealistic expectations about how long it will take before the coalition becomes genuinely capable of making a difference in the world. People think it can happen in a matter of weeks or months. The reality is that it takes years.

The very nature of being funded may force some coalitions to operate or pretend to operate in Stage 3 even if they are not ready to do so. With external funding, some coalitions will find that they have to recruit and integrate new members as well as further specify their structure. These tasks are appropriate to Stage 2 and even Stage 1. One would assume that a Stage 3 coalition would be able to carry out Stages 1 and 2 tasks effectively. In reality, however, participants in many coalitions can be resistant to what seems to be a process of "revisiting" prior decisions with which they were entirely comfortable.

We found that the consequences of the tensions inherent in operating in this kind of developmental limbo included the following:

- Conflicts left unresolved (or even unacknowledged) because participants did not perceive there was time to focus on them due to deadline pressures
- New members not feeling invested in the coalition
- Key community constituencies not being involved

Sometimes coalitions misjudge their readiness for implementation when they really are at an earlier stage of development. Technical assistance may be necessary to fast track coalition development so that they can carry out the programs for which they were funded. One reality that may contribute to a situation in which a coalition, or a funder, misreads its stage of development is that, within a given coalition, there may be groups that are at different stages of development. For example, it is not uncommon for a coalition to have a core group of more sophisticated members with significant experience working together who could be said to be at Stage 3, in addition to another group of people who are newer to the issue or newer to participating in coalitions, who are really operating at Stage 1 or Stage 2. Leaders of coalitions like this have a difficult balancing act. They need to provide opportunities for the more sophisticated members of the group to take meaningful action while making sure that others do not feel ignored or left behind. Furthermore, the leader also has to make sure the less sophisticated or experienced people actually are not left behind, that they grow and develop.

Another way to view this circumstance is that one group of people are on the coalition as "instrumental" members (those who are ready for action) while another are there primarily as "symbolic" members (providing legitimacy with specific constituencies). As in our discussion of different kinds of members in Chapter III noted, however, this kind of differentiation only works if everyone agrees to these roles. The other interpretation that can be made by those considered "symbolic" is that they are really there only as "tokens" with no intention to take them or their perspective seriously.

D. Staying Alive: Sustaining Coalitions in the Long Term

One of the unanswered questions about coalitions is what it takes to sustain them in the long term. Many coalitions have begun in the last 10 or 20 years. We don't have

much information about how many have survived, how many have not, and what distinguishes the two groups. Right now, the collective wisdom of those we have talked to, who have operated coalitions for several years, is that the essential ingredients include:

- A core group of dedicated people/organizations (or even one visionary instrumental person)
- A bigger group that can be mobilized when challenges or opportunities arise
- Some level of dedicated staff
- A clear but malleable vision of a desired future and the coalition's role in that future
- Ability to regroup and change if necessary
- Ability to move through stages, recycling back and moving forward as necessary; and
- Last but probably most important, a reservoir of trust among members and between members, staff and leaders

We hope this manual has provided food for thought for those who join, finance, lead or staff coalitions. We certainly do not have all the answers. Indeed, one of our main messages has been that there is no one right answer for how a coalition should work in order to make a difference in the health of communities. We are sure, however, that across this nation, thousands of health professionals, community leaders and garden-variety community folk are doing their best to work jointly in order to move forward to healthier communities in a healthier nation. They have and will make mistakes. They have and will achieve remarkable things. Most important, they will learn, and use what they learn, to keep going, one way or another.

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Our deepest debt, however, is owed to the hundreds of individuals who participate in state and local tobacco control coalitions, who were so patient with us as we interviewed them, observed them, bothered them with our survey and listened attentively to our presentations of findings. The 12 sites in our SSI study are pioneers and stalwart warriors in the fight against the leading cause of preventable mortality in the United States. The sites in our study were Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont and West Virginia. In addition, we were fortunate to be supported by the SSI National Program Office at the American Medical Association, and in particular by Kathy Harty and by the Foundation's staff on the program side of the house, in particular the inimitable Michael Beachler. Both have now gone on to other work (Kathy back home to Minnesota and Michael to work on his great love — the often forgotten rural communities of our nation).

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As evaluators, it is always inspiring, and challenging, to work with dedicated and determined people who bring a sharp strategic intelligence to their efforts. I am convinced that our work would not have resulted in this manual had we not been working in an environment of people who valued both action and science.

[1] Additional insights for the manual are drawn from our participation in the evaluation of the Community Care Network (CCN) Demonstration Project, which is being carried out under the aegis of the Health Research and Education Trust, in collaboration with the American Hospital Association, the Catholic Hospital Association and the Voluntary Hospitals of America. CCN itself has been supported by The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which also contributed to its evaluation. Major funding for the evaluation came from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, from The California Wellness Foundation, and from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. My colleagues on this evaluation (for which I serve as a Co-Principal Investigator, are an impressive bunch indeed, including Gloria Bazzoli, Ph.D., now at Northwestern University, Principal Investigator for the CCN Evaluation; Romana Hasnein-Wynia, Ph.D. and Frances Margolin, M.P.P., who have coordinated the CCN Evaluation for the Health Research and Education Trust; and Co-Principal Investigators Jeff Alexander, Ph.D., from the University of Michigan; Doug Conrad, Ph.D. from the University of Washington and Steve Shortell, Ph.D., who recently, showing his usual good judgment, made the move to my wonderful alma mater, the University of California at Berkeley. Some of the examples in the manual come from the experiences of the CCN Evaluation as well as the SSI Evaluation.

Working Together, *Moving Ahead*

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