

Building a Strong Foundation for Sustainability

Handout 2 - Partnership or Coalition Involvement

The following recommendations can help you organize your coalition and/or partners to achieve short-term sustainability and, in turn, prepare your coalition and/or partners for long-term sustainability planning.

Communicate a shared vision and key objectives. True collaboration requires a commitment to shared goals and responsibilities, a jointly developed structure, mutual authority, accountability for success, community assessment, and the sharing of resources, risks, and rewards.

Recruit a diverse set of partners from a variety of sectors and disciplines but keep recruitment strategic. Keep in mind that coalitions should strategically recruit people based on matching the community health initiative's goals and objectives with members, resources, interests, and skills.

Establish strong partnerships with Federal, state, and local public health agencies. Ensuring that key community stakeholders are involved in your effort can help increase visibility and support within the community. Government agencies may be able to help you coordinate resources, become aware of funding opportunities, and create connections with other groups in the area that are doing similar work. In addition, government agencies may be able to provide technical assistance and training for your coalition members.

Ensure that roles and assigned tasks are clearly defined with members and external stakeholders. This can be done through conference calls, e-mails, meeting notes, or program/project plans that specifically mention the activities that will be carried out by coalition members or partners. Monitoring deliverable timelines is particularly important.

Secure member commitments in writing, particularly when investments are high. A commitment letter or memorandum of understanding (MOU) lays out the rules that govern your collaboration. It includes information about the coalition or partner's vision, mission, and purpose; values and assumptions; timelines and milestones; leadership and membership expectations; roles and contributions; financial relationships; and rules on participation, decision making, communication, and conflict.

Use strong leaders who possess consensus-building and problem-solving skills. Coalitions and/or partnerships demand transformational leaders—change agents who are good role models and who can articulate a clear vision, empower followers to achieve at higher standards, lead as peer problem-solvers, build broad-based involvement and participation, help members reach a consensus on diverse issues, and work to build trust.

Implement succession planning measures. Implement measures to identify people that will be in training roles for key leadership positions. It may also be a good idea to have rotation schedule in place so that leaders who have been in their role for one or two years can rotate the role to another person. This will ensure that leadership is shared and that new leaders will constantly be mentored.

Check back with coalition members regularly to ensure their needs are being met and that they are being recognized for their efforts in a way that is meaningful to them. Regularly communicating organizational successes and highlighting the contributions members have made to that success is one effective way to ensure continued member engagement.