

# Coalition Goal Setting

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## Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the systematic process of identifying issues to focus on and activities to implement with the assets, challenges and opportunities of the coalition in mind. Strategic planning involves the development of a vision and mission, formation of goals, and establishment of objectives to accomplish the goals.

A **vision statement** provides a brief description of where the coalition would like to be in the future while a **mission statement** describes the general focus or purpose of the coalition. The vision and mission provide direction to a coalition.

**Goals** describe the specific actions that a coalition will take to work toward its vision and mission, and **objectives** are specific steps that will be taken to accomplish the goals.

A well-written strategic plan that is clearly communicated to coalition members is a defining characteristic of an effective coalition (Butterfoss, 2007). Providing members with the opportunity to participate in goal development can improve engagement and commitment. Additionally, having a clearly defined vision and mission can reduce conflict within a coalition, as it minimizes confusion and competing interests regarding the purpose of the group.

## Establishing Coalition Goals and Objectives

The first step in goal setting is making use of the community assessment to develop a list of coalition priorities. Once priorities are identified, coalition members can share the problems or needs that are being addressed by their individual agencies and organizations. The coalition can then discuss potential group goals that either address additional problems or enhance present work on existing problems. During the goal-setting process it is important that all coalition members do the following:

- Allow each group member to share his/her interests and abilities
- Draw on each other's strengths

- Be honest, up front and willing to modify ideas for the goals of the coalition
- Recognize that hidden agendas can jeopardize the work of the coalition

SMART criteria can be used in the development of goals and objectives (Butterfoss, 2007). Using SMART criteria, goals and objectives should be as follows:

- **Specific:** What will be achieved? In what quantity? By whom?
- **Measurable:** Can information on the objective's outcome be collected and detected?
- **Achievable:** Is the coalition capable of achieving the goal?
- **Relevant:** Does the objective fit with the coalition's mission and vision?
- **Time Sensitive:** Is there a timeline by which the objective will be achieved?

**Logic model development** can also help a coalition identify and clarify objectives. Logic models illustrate how the activities that a coalition plans to do are associated with the outcomes that it hopes to achieve. A logic model contains three basic components: inputs, outputs and outcomes.

- **Inputs** are the resources (staff, money, educational materials, etc.) that are necessary to carry out a coalition's activities.
- **Outputs** are the activities that a coalition carries out to meet its objectives. These may include services provided, events conducted and products delivered as a result of a coalition's work. The number of people reached by any given activity is considered an output.
- **Outcomes** are the desired changes that occur as a result of a coalition's activities. Outcomes can be subdivided into immediate, mediating and ultimate outcomes.
  - » *Immediate outcomes* include changes in awareness, knowledge attitudes and skills (McKenzie et al., 2013).



- » *Mediating outcomes* include changes in behavior or in the environment.
- » *Ultimate outcomes* include changes in individual health status, quality of life or in the health of the community. Ultimate outcomes should be written to reflect a coalition's mission and vision.

The best way to write a logic model is to consider what the group ultimately wants to accomplish and then work backwards, thinking about the smaller changes, activities and resources that will lead to the realization of that goal. Logic model templates are provided for reference at [uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodelworksheets.html](http://uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodelworksheets.html). When a logic model is developed in one of these ways, it can help a coalition do the following:

- Clearly communicate a purpose
- Write goals and objectives
- Recognize the resources required to achieve goals
- Obtain additional funding
- Evaluate progress

Evaluation of coalition efforts will be discussed in more detail in the 14th fact sheet in this series titled *Evaluating Coalition Processes and Impacts*; however, it is important to note that evaluation cannot take place unless goals and objectives are established. Goal setting and evaluation go hand in hand. Evaluation holds a coalition accountable to its efforts and goals, and evaluation findings can be shared with stakeholders and community members to gain support for future efforts and goals (Roussos and Fawcett, 2000).

## References

- Butterfoss, F.D. (2007). *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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- McKenzie, J.F., Neiger, B.L. and Thackeray, R. (2013). *Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Health Promotion Programs: A Primer*, 6th Edition. Pearson.
- Ohio Center for Action on Coalition Development (1992). *Building Coalitions: Coalition Formation and Maintenance*. Darby, PA: DIANE Publishing Company.
- Roussos, S.T. and Fawcett, S.B. (2000). "A Review of Collaborative Partnerships as a Strategy for Improving Community Health." *Annual Review of Public Health*, 21, 369-402.

## Additional Resources

- The Asset-Based Community Development Institute. "Downloadable Resources." Publications on community assessment and community mobilization. [abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable](http://abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable)
- Coalitions Work. "Tools and Resources." Resources for a variety of coalition processes and coalition evaluation. [coalitionswork.com/resources/tools](http://coalitionswork.com/resources/tools)
- University of Kansas. "Community Tool Box." Toolkits on a variety of topics related to partnership building and community change. [ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents)
- University of Wisconsin-Extension. "Program Development and Evaluation." Logic Model templates and examples. [uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html](http://uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html)
- Iowa State University, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. *Vision to Action: Take Charge Too*. Publication about community assessment, vision development, action planning and evaluation. [soc.iastate.edu/extension/ncrcrd/ncrcrd-rrd182-print.pdf](http://soc.iastate.edu/extension/ncrcrd/ncrcrd-rrd182-print.pdf)

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