



# TIPS FOR RECRUITING COALITION MEMBERS



## INTRODUCTION

Community organizing to achieve tobacco-free communities is challenging, but meaningful, work. Having an effective coalition is critical to building the grassroots power you need to pass tobacco-free policies in your community. Using these tips will help you recruit the people, skills, and resources to build your community coalition and support your policy priorities.

Each Local Lead Agency (LLA) is required to have a coalition, but they are not each in the same position of development. Some have well-established functioning coalitions that they are seeking to grow, while some may be starting over due to staff changes, COVID-19 interruptions, or other factors, and some coalitions are in between these stages.

Regardless of where you find your coalition, you will need to do three things before you start your coalition member recruitment effort: 1) Focus on building a community-based coalition 2) Assess your coalition membership and 3) Develop a recruitment plan.

## MAIN MESSAGE:

- Building and developing a community-based coalition is the key to building power
- Assessing your coalition is key to understanding your needs
- Developing a plan to recruit coalition members will ensure you get the people and organizations that you need



## COMMUNITY-BASED COALITIONS

The vision and expectation of the California Tobacco Control Program is that local coalitions be “community-based coalitions” that foster independence and the ability to speak and act as needed to advance local tobacco free policies. Community-based coalitions have these key features:

- Diverse organizational membership from many sectors of the community
- Ideally a majority of members are not funded to participate in tobacco-free efforts
- Independent spokespeople can speak on the coalition’s behalf
- Funded partners can divest themselves from the message and the coalition is still community-strong!

Make sure to have these community coalition features in mind as you assess your coalition and determine the kinds of people and organizations you want and need to recruit.

## ASSESSING YOUR COALITION: Who Do You Need to Recruit and Where Do You Start?

These are at least seven types of people/organizations that you need to consider having in your coalition:

- 1 Like-minded people and organizations that have a mission supportive of your coalition
- 2 People who represent the community most impacted by tobacco
- 3 People and organizations with resources
- 4 People and organizations who have connections to policymakers
- 5 People with skills your coalition needs/lacks
- 6 People and organizations who can counter your opponents during a campaign
- 7 People with access to youth leaders

Once you have identified who those people and organizations are, you need to know where to find them.

- Make a calendar of community events. Think of resource fairs, “coffee with a cop” events, movies at the park or other community events. These are great ways to network and learn about other organizations, community leaders and opinion leaders that could be targets for recruitment.
- Challenge yourself and think beyond “traditional” nonprofit organizations that may help diversify the interest and capabilities of your coalition. Also think of “grasstops” or “movers and shakers,” nonprofit leaders, business owners, community leaders, etc. These are the people who are keeping their fingers on the pulse of the city.

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## DEVELOP A RECRUITMENT PLAN

Once you've identified the people/organizations you want to recruit, you will need to build a recruitment plan and implement it! The plan should include identifying the tasks that you will complete to recruit the people/organizations on your target list. You'll need to develop a timeline so that you can be sure that you're moving forward and completing your tasks.

Your plan and timeline can be as simple as an Excel document listing the tasks to be completed, the start and end date, and who is responsible for the task. The plan should be living documents, and visited often, updated as priorities shift and as tasks are completed.



## YOU'RE READY TO START REACHING OUT AND RECRUITING!

The most effective way to recruit new coalition members (or to ask an existing coalition member to continue their service) is to ask them! The best way to do that is by meeting them in person, if possible. Conducting a One-on-One meeting with the potential recruit will give you the best opportunity to provide background about the coalition, explain the role you hope they'll play and to make the "ask."

Before the One-on-One meeting, complete the following tasks:

- Do some research on the person you will be meeting with
- Write down your goals – the intention and purpose of the meeting
- Be ready with an "ask," something you want from the person you're meeting with

Here are the key elements of a successful One-on-One recruitment meeting:

### Start with self-reflection to get the conversation going:

- Convey your "why." Why you are involved in the coalition and what's your story that led you to work on tobacco issues.
- What role do you play and why do you care about your tobacco policy?
- What is the mission of the coalition and why is it important to you?

### Learn about your potential coalition member's self-interests:

- What are their interests, what's their "why" about tobacco or the issues that motivate them?

- What goals do they have in joining the coalition and the work on tobacco issues?
- How could the coalition help with their own goals?
- What resources could they contribute to the coalition?
- What skills might they be interested in learning through their coalition participation?

**Check for alignment between their interests and the coalition’s goals and activities:**

- Explain how the coalition’s tobacco policy work will help address the health inequities in the community and why it matters to everyone in the community.
- Point out the organizations or individuals who are involved in the coalition and ask how they see their organization benefitting from engaging with them.
- Ask how they see their goals aligning with the goals of the coalition.

**Make the “ask.”**

- At the end of the One-on-One, ask the prospect to consider joining the coalition. If they can’t commit to joining the coalition, explore other activities they might be interested in. This can be a task or service you can provide for them, or it could be asking them how you and your coalition can collectively help their agenda and the community.
- If they cannot commit to join as a coalition member, could they be an ally or a volunteer? Are there any activities their organization could engage on even if they’re not a coalition member? Could they provide coalition updates and information to their members?

Make sure to follow-up with next steps and send/ email/text a thank you note to the person(s) with whom you met.

Good luck on your coalition recruitment efforts!

For more information and to find other community organizing and engagement resources, visit the Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing & Engagement at [organizingtoendtobacco.org](https://organizingtoendtobacco.org)