



TIPS FOR ENGAGING AND RETAINING COALITION MEMBERS

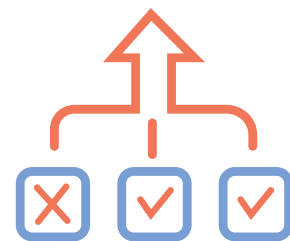
Bringing the right organizations and individuals together in a coalition is the first step toward achieving your shared policy goals. Engaging coalition members in meaningful activities will not only contribute to the coalition's success but will help ensure that they will stay for the long haul. Keeping the coalition membership engaged takes work, and that work is not just about engaging the individual coalition member, but also involves creating a healthy environment, culture and operating structure that values the member's time, experience, and contributions. Doing these things will not only build a healthy coalition, but it will also help retain good coalition members.

Below are 10 ideas to consider for engaging the individual members and the coalition itself.



- 1 Have a written statement of goals.** Everyone should understand the coalition's goals, which are agreed upon by all organizations in the coalition. Clearly stated goals keep the coalition focused and lets the members know what to expect. Goals should always be SMARTIE: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
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- 2 Agreed Upon Decision Making Process.** Ensure a straightforward, understandable decision-making process for deciding goals, strategy, tactics, and engagement. A set of rules or guidelines will help coalition members understand exactly how decisions are made and will reduce confusion and the chances of coalition splintering at the first sign of internal friction.



- 3 Hold Engaging Meetings.** Many coalitions fail to engage their members in ways that value them and their time. Holding meetings at times and locations accessible by all enhances the likelihood of participation and sends a message of inclusion. Soliciting input from coalition members about availability and preferences increases commitment. Not everyone has a 9-5 schedule, so be open to meetings outside that "normal" meeting system.

4 Determine the priorities and self-interests of each member. Have a one-on-one conversation with each coalition member to determine what their interests are and that of the organization they represent, if they do. For example, why are they concerned about tobacco products being sold within 1000 feet of schools? Once the coalition member's interests and "why" are known, make sure to direct their energy toward activities and issues that align with their interests.



5 Assign Responsibilities and Activities. Review the skills and resources each member can bring to the coalition table, then decide what activities they would be best suited for. Is there a Coalition committee, subcommittee, or workgroup that would benefit from their skills and experience? Could they serve as a spokesperson and member of the speaker's bureau? Find the right place for each coalition member.

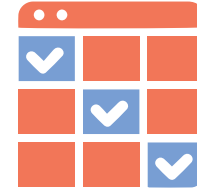
6 Utilize the Ladder of Engagement. A community organizing concept called the ladder of engagement is a tool for growing and deepening the commitment and engagement of a coalition member, organization, or community member in the coalition. See examples below:





- 7 Create Opportunities to Venture Outside the Coalition's Comfort Zone.** Host a park clean up or meet at an outdoor park. Keeping members engaged in alternative activities can help coalitions stay relevant and exciting. Maybe host a coalition meeting at a park and offer a yoga/meditation class.

- 8 Track Coalition Member Engagement.** Once a coalition member has been slotted for a particular task, project, or committee, create a method for tracking their activities and ensuring coalition members deliver on their tasks and in a timely fashion. A simple chart could be used to collect the information and that could be shared with the coalition member and the coalition itself.



- 9 Ensure Ongoing Communication.** Set up regular meetings with coalition members to check in with them, their engagement, activities, and satisfaction with their participation. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone. A personal call to a coalition member can make all the difference.

- 10 Recognize Work.** Make sure to recognize the contributions of each coalition member and the specific ways they are contributing to the coalition's goals and activities. One of the best ways to ensure coalition members stay committed is to acknowledge their contributions and their value to the coalition.



Best practices for coalition management always include reviewing and re-evaluating the Coalition on a regular basis. Review the goals, activities, and functioning of the coalition to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and beneficial engagement by coalition members. Look honestly at the coalition's successes and failures and determine any changes that need to be made. Ask coalition members to provide their feedback and suggestions.