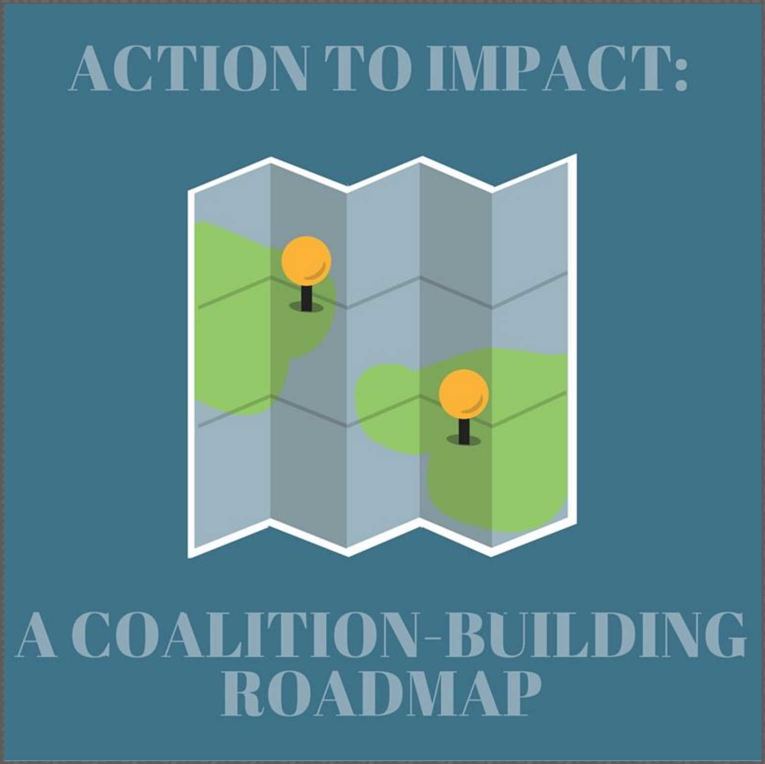


# Action to Impact:

## A Coalition-Building Roadmap

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## Go

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Partnerships for Strategic Impact
*Leveraging collective expertise for impact.*

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# Action to Impact:
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## GO

Maintaining the health of a coalition is an essential factor in its ability to be effective and efficient. This includes assessing coalition health, active committee engagement and ongoing partner communication. In addition, staying on top of data to measure productivity and impact, and using it for strategic planning, are critical aspects of successful coalition management. Finally, although it may seem obvious when to declare that a coalition's mission has been accomplished, it is actually a complex question that depends on a variety of factors. Several questions addressed in this section include:

- Is our coalition healthy?
- Do our committee and meeting structures facilitate impact?
- Do we communicate effectively to build coalition support?
- Do our activities, programs and strategies support reaching our goals?
- How do we actually use all the data we collect?
- Are we on course to having the impact that we desire? Should we change our activities or resources to better meet those goals?

- How does a coalition ensure sustainability?
- Are we going in the right direction? Does the coalition need to change its focus, hand over work to another entity or disband?

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**Effectively Manage A Coalition Day-To-Day:** The information in this section describes how to effectively cultivate and sustain collaboration and coalition health by continuous improvement of day-to-day processes, including managing for success, tracking productivity and impact and using data to drive decision-making and action. It also provides insight into how to know when it is time for your coalition to evolve into a new form, declare success and/or disband.

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## Managing for Success

Once a coalition starts to operate, it is essential to actively manage it to ensure the ongoing strategic use of resources to achieve the identified goals. To do this, coalition leadership should regularly survey the coalition to ensure that it is healthy and that coalition partners are focused, engaged and that you are all effectively meeting coalition goals. A robust committee structure should be cultivated and regularly reviewed to ensure it adequately reflects coalition strategy. Meetings should be strategic and productive. Further, it will be important for the coalition to develop new leadership and actively plan how to effectively communication to increase impact.

## Surveying Coalition Health

Regular review of coalition health is essential to maintaining the infrastructure, cohesion and purpose needed to drive results. Coalition health can be reviewed several different ways: a focus group of coalition partners; informal partner interviews; and online group surveys.

**Figure 1:** Tips and Tricks for a Successful Survey Process

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Timeline*** | To motivate responses and effectively manage the process, we recommend that the survey be launched and completed within a two-week period. |
| ***Tool*** | Consider putting the survey into an on-line survey tool (such as *Survey Monkey*, *QuestionPro* or *GoogleForms*) for ease in data collection. When using on-line survey tools, make sure you include the "progress bar" option so that people can track progress towards completion of the survey. Links to the recommended survey tools can be found in the Essential Resources section below. |
| ***Response Rate*** | To get the best response rate to your survey, we recommend sending it out to participants at approximately 10:30 AM on a Monday that is not following a holiday. Let the respondents know the due date of the survey, what will be done with the results and how long you expect it to take. Then, send reminders every other day at different times (e.g., just before lunch at 11:45 AM, just after lunch at 1:00 PM, towards mid-afternoon when people are in a slump and looking for distraction at 3:30 PM and at the end of the day 4:30 PM). |
| ***Closing the Survey*** | In each survey reminder, let people know how many people (or what percentage) have already taken the survey and the average amount of time it has taken them to complete it. Remind them the survey closes at 5:00 PM on the given day/date. After the survey officially closes, re-open it the following Monday for one business day to catch any late responders. |
| ***Compiling and Analyzing Results*** | Once the survey closes, the data should be downloaded into *Microsoft Excel* for analysis, preferably by the data committee. The steps of data analysis are described in greater detail in *Data Analysis Meetings* in the *Data-Driven Decision Making* section below. The goals for analyzing the Coalition Health Survey Data are to:<br>1. Understand where there is general consensus that the coalition is functioning well.<br>2. Understand where there is general consensus that the coalition is facing challenges.<br>3. Understand where there are meaningful differences in opinion or perception about where the coalition is, how it functions and/or where it is going. |
| ***Action Planning*** | A data committee can generate and/or lead the steering/full committee in reviewing the survey summary and outlining recommendations and specific action plans. The recommendations then can be shared with the full committee and/or divided among the coalition committees and coordinator for review and action. |

For example, if the survey results indicated lack of partner engagement, the steering committee might be charged with reinvigorating the partnership depending on the reasons cited for the disengagement. Or, if the results indicated leadership gaps, the steering committee could consider creating a leadership succession plan to stabilize the coalition for future work. If the survey results indicated concern about how the coalition does (or does not) measure impact, a data committee could be developed or, if it already exists, the committee might ask to propose performance metrics better aligned with the mission and goals of the coalition.

Once a coalition starts to operate, there are several different survey tools the coalition leadership can use to check the overall health of the coalition:

- **An Annual Partner Survey** that assesses perceptions of coalition health, gathers candid feedback for the leadership to ensure that the coalition is unified and still pointed towards the mission. It also ensures that resources are distributed in the most effective manner. To sustain effective collaboration, an annual partner survey can ensure coalition partner strengths are being maximized and that each partner is benefiting from their participation.

**Figure 2:** Domains of Coalition Health That can be Tested via Survey


Partnerships for Strategic Impact and Center for Nonprofit Excellence have created a set of *Coalition Health Survey* templates, from which you can choose topics and questions that best fit the needs of your coalition. The survey was designed to be taken by all coalition partners and, if taken in full, takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. We also offer two abbreviated versions of the survey, one that take 15 minutes to complete and another that takes 5 minutes to complete. Coalition leaders, and/or the coalition data committee should review all 3 versions and decide which survey is the best fit for balancing the group's needs (i.e., time it takes to complete vs. amount of useful information desired). All surveys are available in the Essential Resources section below.

- **Meeting Exit Surveys** can provide candid feedback to leadership regarding whether or not participants feel that the meetings are a good use of their time and their perspective is represented and heard, regardless of the outcome of any votes.

- **Partner Satisfaction Survey**: It is also valuable to assess partner satisfaction at least annually via a *partner satisfaction survey.* Most central to coalition health is that partners feel that the benefits of being part of the coalition (e.g., what they get out of being in the coalition) is greater than the costs (e.g., the time, resources and energy each partner contributes to the coalition). This survey can be included as part of an overall coalition health survey or be a stand-alone instrument.


**Essential Resources** for evaluating the health of your coalition:
- ✓ Maintaining a Coalition, Community Toolbox
- ✓ Are You Ready to Evaluate Your Coalition?, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Diagnosing the Health of Your Coalition, Community Toolbox
- ✓ What to Do When Things Go Wrong, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Original Coalition Health Survey, Partnerships for Strategic Impact and Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- ✓ Abbreviated Coalition Health Survey, Partnerships for Strategic Impact and Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- ✓ Very Abbreviated Coalition Health Survey, Partnerships for Strategic Impact and Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- ✓ Coalition Member Survey, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Survey Monkey, Creating Online Surveys
- ✓ QuestionPro, Online Survey Software
- ✓ GoogleForms, Online Survey Software



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**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ In the fall of 2013, the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) sought to develop its capacity to evaluate its community impact. It started by asking partners to complete a comprehensive coalition health survey. The survey showed an unexpected opportunity to unify coalition partners around a clear strategy to better prepare the coalition for evaluation. As a result, the CMHWC delayed working out an evaluation framework until it had the opportunity to engage the full coalition in approximately three months of facilitated strategic planning.
- ✓ When the City of Promise was just starting off, they wanted the Steering Committee to include many different voices, including those of neighbors who had historically not had a voice at meetings with service providers, civic leaders and other decision makers. Additionally, the Steering Committee meetings were open to the public, who were able to make comments. In order to ensure that everyone felt that they had space to talk and received recognition and incorporation of their ideas, anonymous meeting exit surveys were given to all Steering Committee members and people from the public attending the meetings. The project evaluator compiled and graphed the survey data and presented it at the next meeting. One of the first orders of business at each Steering Committee meeting was to review the exit survey data from the past meeting and suggest actions needed to address any concerns. This was one way that the City of Promise worked to equalize power and change the tone of conversation from "for" the neighborhood to "with" the neighborhood.

**Lesson Learned**:

- ✓ Be certain before you administer a coalition health survey that there is support among the survey participants for the scope of the survey. The full coalition health survey takes 20-30 minutes to complete which can prove to be a challenge if coalition partners do not buy into the survey scope or do not understand the value of the resulting data. This buy-in can be enhanced if coalition leadership takes time to advocate for the tool and to frame the value of the survey results in the context of the overall strategy. Specific sections or questions of the full coalition health survey can be picked to reduce the length of the survey and/or to focus on particular aspects of coalition health.

## The Art and Science of Effective Committees

Committees—the rights ones with the right partners with the right charge and good agendas—can significantly enhance coalition work by delving into a particular topic of import and moving the coalition's goals forward in between full coalition meetings. The types of committees a coalition creates depends largely on the support it needs to operate effectively (e.g. its form, such as steering or fundraising or coalition health committees) and the work it wishes to accomplish (e.g. its function, as detailed in coalition strategy and goals), which will differ coalition to coalition. Here are several local examples of "function" committees:

The Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition has as a key strategic goal to sustain outreach and public awareness about mental health and substance abuse needs and services. Through its Communications/Public Relations Committee, it manages the coalition's Help Happens Here stigma reduction and public awareness campaign.

Likewise, the Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH) has as its mission to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in our community. TJACH has a Service Provider Council which meets monthly to identify ways to improve the system of care for the homeless of our community by avoiding duplication of services, filling in gaps in the safety net and sharing information. Several Service Provider Council representatives are members of the TJACH governance board.

There are two "form" committees, in particular, that are central to maintaining momentum throughout the life of the coalition:

- **Steering Committee**: A steering (executive) committee often acts similarly to a board of directors, focusing on big picture strategy and developing a governance structure that fits coalition needs. From meeting agendas, to partnership recruitment, to financial management, the steering committee represents the active leadership arm of the coalition. Key responsibilities of any steering committee include: strategic guidance and oversight (holding or changing vision, mission and goals), tracking progress to impact and building relationships within (across committees) and outside the coalition (with other community initiatives).

  Once you determine the form and function of your steering committee, it can take the lead on developing, distributing and/or collecting key coalition documents, such as memorandums of understanding between the partners and a coalition charter. While written agreements do not need to be established immediately, policies should be developed in tandem with the formation of the coalition to help guide its progress. The



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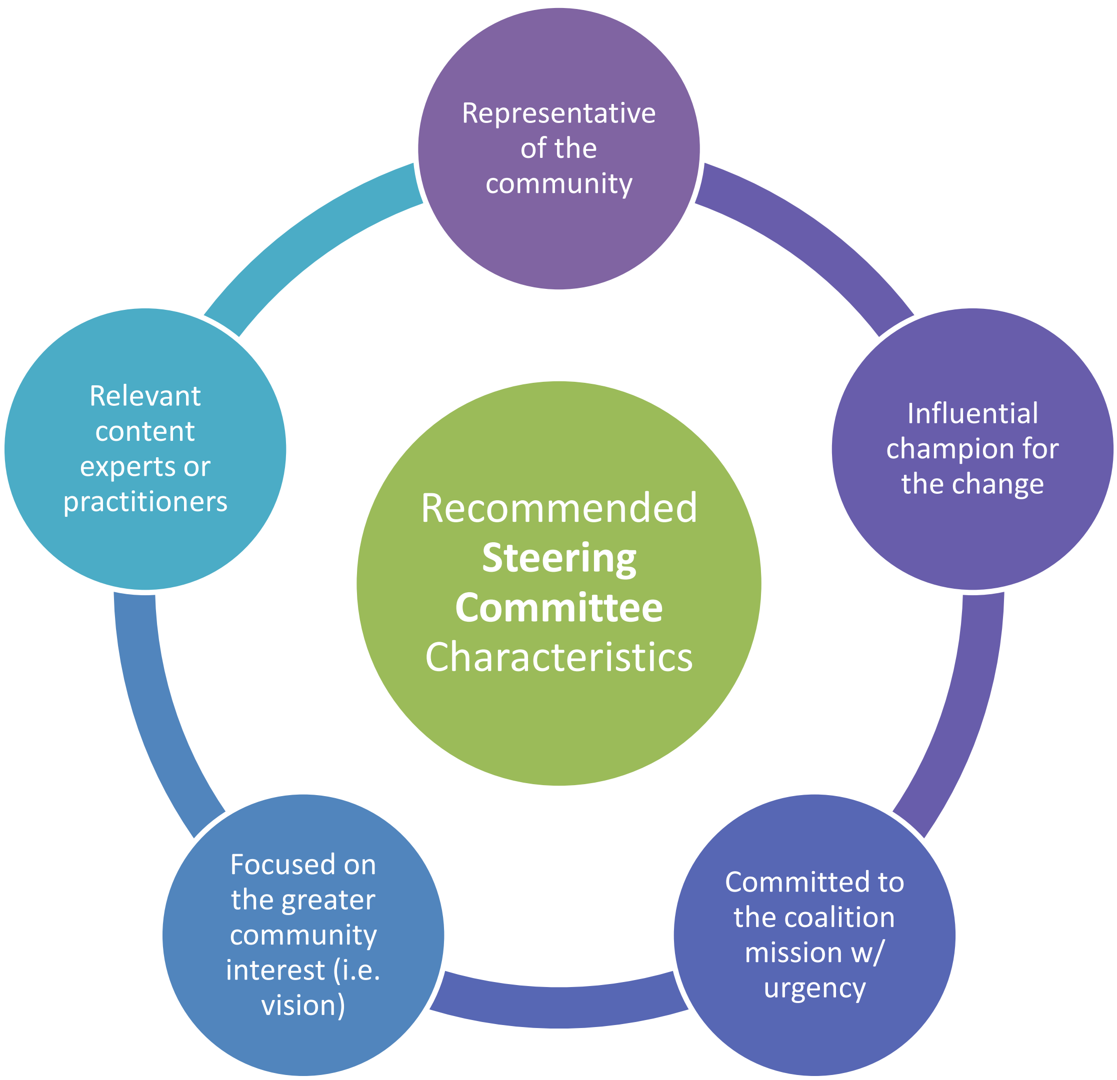
steering committee also can hire and supervise a coalition coordinator and be key champions for the coalition in the community. More information on coalition charters can be found in Focus on Governance section of Set in the Roadmap. More information on memorandums of understanding can be found in the *Why Data Feels Hard* section of Set.

Typically, those serving on a steering committee should be decision makers for their respective organizations so that the committee is empowered to make decisions for the coalition. Other strong characteristics for steering committee members include:

**Figure 3**: Characteristics of Strong Steering Committee Members



A steering committee might include, for example, *a chair or co-chairs* of the coalition, as well as the chairs of each committee, a *funder representative* and at least one *representative of the community or communities* the coalition seeks to serve. The steering committee should be diverse and include representatives across sectors, reflecting the makeup of the coalition. The committee is generally staffed by a coalition coordinator, if one exists. To determine who to invite to join a coalition steering committee consider:

1. **Demographics**: What does the community look like and who does the coalition impact?

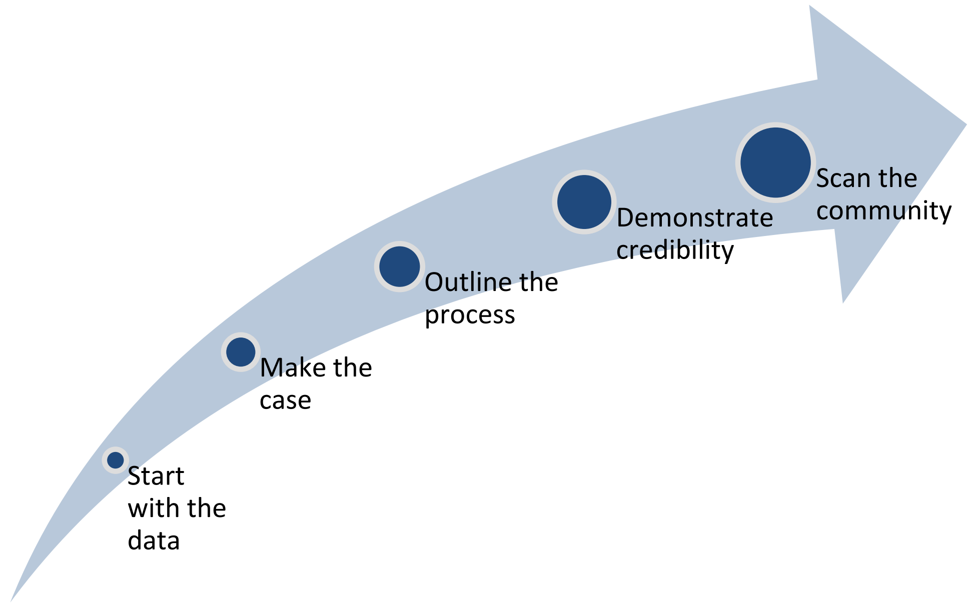
2. **Cultivation**: What organizations or individuals must be in the mix for the coalition to have traction, especially those who provide support for the challenge or participate in the service system the coalition targets?

3. **Information**: Who understands the environment in which the community-level problem has developed, as well as the major drivers of the problem and barriers to impact?

4. **Resources**: Who in the community has financial, human or infrastructure resources that could be valuable to achieve the coalition's goals?

How do you first assemble a steering committee, or a coalition as a whole for that matter? Take the following steps to generate interest and engagement in addressing the problem you see in the community (to assess community readiness, see the Set section of this Roadmap):

**Figure 4:** Steps to Assembly




1. **Start with the data**: Provide the most compelling data you have, both quantitative (which enumerates the scope of the problem), and qualitative (which tells the story behind the numbers).

2. **Make the case**: Identify the unique perspective the individual or agency can bring to the effort that otherwise would not be represented.

3. **Outline the process**: Explain how this collaborative approach can be successful and perhaps how it will be different from other community attempts to solve the problem.

4. **Demonstrate credibility**: Show what individuals and agencies have agreed to join the collaborative effort and what motivated them to do so.

5. **Scan the community**: To leverage the work, are there community-level plans that your coalition can take part in or support? For example, the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition played an active role in the 2015-17 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) assessment process, a collaboration between the Thomas Jefferson Health District and the two local health systems, Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital and the University of Virginia Health System. The coalition's participation informed its strategic plan update and helped it to develop relationships that led to new steering committee participation

- **<u>Data Committee</u>**: If data is important to your coalition, and it usually is, a data committee of coalition member representatives is highly recommended to oversee and provide direct leadership of the data collection and analysis process. The data committee is a working committee which will coordinate data collection and reporting, as well as lead the process for understanding the extent to which the coalition is meeting its goals. Ultimately, the data committee can inform annual reflection and strategic planning. Especially at first, it can be daunting to start thinking about collecting and looking at data. With patience, support and time, however, every group should be able to effectively analyze and utilize their data.

  The committee must have sufficient time to plan, gather, graph and understand the data. ***Rule of thumb***: allow at least three times the amount of time you expect to need to analyze and review data! The ideal data committee includes four to six people with a mix of the following expertise:

**Figure 5**: Data Committee Roles

**Coalition Coordinator**

- The coalition coordinator analyzes and graphs the data, and generates the agenda. If he/she is knowledgeable, he/she may bring data analysis issues and/or preliminary conclusions to the committee.

**Data Committee Chair**

- The data committee chair should be a representative of coalition leadership (e.g., someone from the executive or steering committee).

**Representative from Each Core Agency**

- No matter what kind of data the coalition collects, there should be a core agency representative who possess at least most of the characteristics listed below (or who are open to learning). This is especially important if the coalition believes program-level data is necessary to track progress.

It is important that each core agency representative:

- Is acquainted with their agency-level data.
- Has experience with and comfort around data and numbers. Ideally, it will be someone familiar with *Microsoft Excel.*
- Knows how agency-level programs are implemented (i.e. someone with "boots on the ground").
- Is able to make meaningful recommendations to agency leadership about how to collect or report data. Knows what funders are looking for (this may include a development director, a grants writer or a board member of one of the partner agencies).

Some people are naturally inclined to embrace data (think CFO or evaluator or card shark), others are excited to look at data with support, still others are disinclined to look at data or think it is not necessary (or perhaps threatening) and a small group of people refuse to look at data. Consider this when establishing your data committee!

In *Why Data Feels Hard* in the Set section of this Roadmap, we described how to cultivate an *inquiry-based culture* within your coalition. A data committee can help to create and sustain an inquiry-based culture by practicing the following:

1. **Adapting new information, conditions, ideas or policies** coming from the coalition as a whole, or the coalition leadership, into the data-driven decision-making processes by noting how these things might impact current or future data gathering or interpretation. This includes paying attention to the context in which the coalition functions (e.g., the environment, partnership, relationships, power/influence, energy, etc.) and making recommendations for how the coalition work can be responsive to changes as they occur.

2. **Providing data to the coalition** so it can be used as a springboard for discussions about values, mission and hidden assumptions in coalition work.

3. **Using strengths identified in the data** to build energy for addressing challenges as the next priority—committing to never using data to criticize, blame, or shame.

4. **Examining the data** for indications that activities, programs or strategies were effective and communicate that efficacy to stakeholders.

5. **Highlighting the complex, bi-directional relationships and patterns** between the works the coalition and its partners are doing and the intended and unintended outcomes resulting from that work.

To support this effort, the data committee should create working relationships among committee members that cultivate trust and a safe place that encourages taking risks, floating “wild” ideas and challenging the status quo. To achieve this culture, two things of particular importance should be tolerated (1) *speaking freely and asking questions*, as well as for (2) the inevitability of *discovering errors in the data*. These inquiry-based cultural norms can be modeled by the chair(s) of the data committee, written into the committee charge and affirmatively adopted as operating principles within the committee.

*Speak Freely and Ask Questions*: It cannot be overstated how important it is for the coalition coordinator and data committee chair to explicitly invite and encourage, any and all questions or suppositions about the data. This supports building trust and respect between committee members. Committee leaders should check in regularly with people who are not vocally participating, emphasizing that everyone can speak freely and that all perspectives are encouraged and valued. This is an important first step in creating an inquiry-based culture.

*The Inevitable Errors:* No one likes to find out that there is an error with their data (or have questions asked about what they are doing). Therefore, it is imperative that the tone and perspective of the meetings promote a strengths-based and inquiry-based culture. The goal should be “let’s work together to support each other in having the best data possible,” and “let’s use our collective strengths to support the challenges each and every one of us has.” Rather than having a cultural frame that seeks to find deficits, the culture should be “figuring out where to focus the coalition’s problem-solving energy next.

RESOURCES

**Essential Resources** for evaluation:

- ✓ Steering Committee Toolkit, Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Working Groups Toolkit, Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Setting the Scene for Collective Impact, Webinar, Collective Impact Forum and FSG
- ✓ Setting the Scene for Collective Impact, Webinar Handout, Collective Impact Forum and FSG
- ✓ Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for Improving Practice, FSG
- ✓ Evaluating Collective Impact: Five Simple Rules, Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Needle Moving Collective Impact Guide: Capacity and Structure, Bridgespan Group



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**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ The Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) steering committee started out meeting quarterly, but now meets every other month in order to keep coalition business moving, and to effectively engage steering committee members in recruiting new members and advocating for increased access to mental health services in the community. In addition, the membership of the steering committee has evolved over time as the coalition has refined its strategic objectives, to include representatives from the two hospital systems that serve the region: University of Virginia Health System an Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital, as well as from the Thomas Jefferson Health District.

**Lesson Learned**:

- ✓ Every time your coalition updates or revises its strategy or the work plan it creates to implement the strategy, be sure to assess whether you have the committee structure that best supports your revised focus and work plan objectives. Make sure, too, that your leadership committee (executive or steering) is populated by those individuals and agencies most invested in the work and success of the coalition. If you choose to have leadership committee slots reserved for certain organizations, it's important for those organizations to identify employees that can contribute at a leadership level to the coalition. Consider inviting potential leadership committee prospects to be part of the coalition in another capacity first so they develop an understanding of the work before they get engaged in coalition governance.

## Making the Most of Meetings

Coalition meetings – whether full, steering, data or other committee meetings – are critical to facilitating action and accountability in multi-sector collaboration. Meetings are a time to connect, share information, hear diverse viewpoints, deliberate and create action plans – all important activities to maintain a productive coalition.

- **Committee Structure**: Once your coalition has identified the committees that will best serve the strategy, and outlined the ideal membership for each committee, there are several characteristics that must be present for a committee to be most effective: engaged committee leadership, regular, productive meetings; and report-outs to the full coalition to facilitate committee accountability and coalition communication. For more information on systems leadership see *Committing to Systems Leadership* in the Set section of the Roadmap. To facilitate productive meetings, create meeting agendas, give committee members adequate advance notice of meeting dates (including meeting reminders!) and follow up with notes and action items from each meeting. If you start each meeting with checking in on the action items from the prior meeting, you will create an expectation of accountability since no one likes to report that they did not accomplish what they promised to do.

- **Meeting Agendas**: To further enhance productivity, create a consistent, structured meeting agenda so that both committee and full coalition members know in advance what their roles and responsibilities are and what to expect from the meeting (see the Essential Resources below for meeting agenda template). This creates a culture of accountability that will help your coalition be more efficient and effective. The agendas don't have to be fancy – sending them by email is fine - but just make sure it's clear who is on the agenda, the timeframes for each topic and what actions need to be taken.

  Committee meeting agendas tend to be focused on policy or program implementation while full coalition meetings are the time for strategic discussions among participating members. For example, your data committee might focus on analyzing new data while your full coalition would review the data report and decide how that informs strategy.

  Effective coalition meetings, in general, prioritize strategic, goal-directed discussion, data review, education on emerging issues and trends, seizing new opportunities and problem-solving current challenges. Whatever you do, avoid spending the bulk of your time at coalition meetings on committee reports. This takes up valuable meeting time that could be used for strategic discussion by coalition members. Instead, create an accountability culture that expects meeting materials, including written committee reports, to be read in advance so that meetings can focus on strategic issues and what is next; ask specific questions of the committee and facilitate discussion in order to fully engage coalition partners. Meeting agendas should also be circulated in advance, after having been prepped and vetted by the coalition chair(s) and/or the steering/executive committee, so that coalition partners know what to expect and can be prepared to actively participate.

- **Focus on Engagement**: In any coalition, it is an ongoing challenge to keep members productive and engaged, especially in meetings. After the energy of coalition start-up and strategic development has transitioned into a call for coalition members to take on specific tasks and responsibilities to move the coalition agenda forward, the work can become more real and, at certain times, feel dull and at other times, overwhelming. If you find that your meetings have become less dynamic than they could be, following are tips to keep energy and productivity high:

**Figure 6:** Tips for Keeping Energy and Productivity High

| If… | Then |
|---|---|
| ➢ Fewer people are attending meetings consistently… | ➢ Call people before meetings to remind them to come.<br>➢ Consider shorter meeting times.<br>➢ Conduct a confidential interim evaluation of the process to figure out what's working and what's not. |
| ➢ Partners are using electronic devices in meetings… | ➢ Give lots of breaks during a meeting.<br>➢ Let participants know in advance when they will have free time.<br>➢ Request that participants put away their devices in the interim.<br>➢ Create an agenda in which everyone is responsible for reporting or leading some aspect.<br>➢ Talk to people individually to see if the meetings feel unproductive or are not holding people's attention, and adjust as needed. |
| ➢ There is frustration at the pace of change… | ➢ Build in early wins.<br>➢ Organize the work so that the group can plan, test, refine and implement some of its ideas midway through the process. |
| ➢ Partners are rehashing old ground… | ➢ Document decisions.<br>➢ Remind participants of decisions made. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ➢ Address lingering conflicts or concerns that have not been resolved. |
| ➢ There is less energy around the table… | ➢ Reconnect with the purpose.<br>➢ Bring participants directly to the communities they are working in.<br>➢ Engage more residents in the work.<br>➢ Select a compelling article for discussion, or ask individual participants to lead a session about a central concern. |
| *Source:* Facilitation for Community Change[1], Bridging RVA | |

➢ **Deciding to Decide**: You can have the most efficient, effective structure in your coalition but still struggle to make progress if you do not agree on how group decisions will be made. Some coalitions choose to have a decision rule that is agreed upon in advance and used whenever a decision needs to be made. For example:

**Figure 7:** Decision Rules in Coalitions

| ***Coalition*** | ***Quorum*** | ***Decision Rule*** |
|---|---|---|
| Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) | The CMHWC has a quorum when a majority of its members are present. | Once quorum is established, decisions are made by a majority of the quorum. |

Often, coalitions default to consensus in decision-making because it empowers all voices, but beware of confusion about how consensus works: consensus may not always be the best approach.

1. *What is Consensus?* Consensus does not mean that the decision has to be unanimous, nor does it mean compromise; rather, it is a decision that is arrived at via robust group discussion and the "constructive resolution of critique and dissent." (Facilitation for Community Change[3], Bridging RVA) Once reached, it is a decision that all can accept even if they disagree. There are three categories of viewpoint in the consensus model: support, stand aside and block. In most cases, there is no need for voting in consensus if decisions are fully vetted and discussed, but voting can be a valuable tool when a coalition gets seriously stuck.

[1] Bridging RVA, Facilitation for Community Change, Saphira M. Baker, Author; Jason W. Smith, Contributing Editor, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014.)
[3] Bridging RVA, Facilitation for Community Change, Saphira M. Baker, Author; Jason W. Smith, Contributing Editor, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014.)

Because the categories help to understand what consensus means, they are listed here:

*a.* *<u>Support</u> – I believe this is the best decision and am committed to following through with it*

*b.* *<u>Stand Aside</u> – I lack information, cannot follow through for personal reasons, am undecided or disagree but can accept the decision*

*c.* *<u>Block</u> – I cannot, in good conscience, accept the decision*

2. *<u>What are the Alternatives</u>? If* consensus cannot be reached, and a decision must be made, other options include majority or supermajority vote (above 50%, such as 2/3's or 3/4's vote of the coalition or committee membership).

> For a more detailed discussion of coalition decision-making, including additional resources on consensus decision-making, see <u>Facilitation for Community Change,</u> Bridging RVA, pgs. 17-19. This book on participatory decision-making also comes highly recommended: *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, by Sam Kaner.

**Essential Resources** for meeting tools:

- ✓ Facilitation for Community Change, Bridging RVA
- ✓ Steering Committee Meeting Agendas, Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Meeting Minutes Template, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Coalition Meeting Check-Up, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Chair or Facilitator's Meeting Guidelines, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Guidelines for Coalition Meeting Etiquette, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Tips for Retaining Coalition Members, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Collective Impact Warm-Up Exercises for Meetings, PowerPoint, FSG Advisors

**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ The Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) structure its meeting agendas into sections related to its strategic framework. That way, the coalition goals remain front and center and it helps ensure movement forward on each goal. The coalition also has conducted short, written exit surveys to assess meeting productivity and member engagement. When exit survey are given, results are reviewed and summarized by the Data Committee which reports them back to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee then shares relevant data at full coalition meetings, asking for action items to improve meetings in response to the data.
- ✓ City of Promise also uses meeting exit surveys after steering committee meetings to make sure that steering committee members, as well as visitors to the meetings, not only felt the meetings were productive and focused on advancing the mission, but also that they had enough information to understand the meeting, as well as a voice that was heard in the meetings. Surveys are sent out electronically after each meeting, then collected and summarized. In the next meeting, the first order of business on the agenda reviews the survey responses from the last meeting and makes any necessary changes to the meeting processes. City of Promise also changed the format of the meetings, including a time for public comment and ensuring that discussion items had enough time dedicated to hear from everyone.

**Lesson Learned**:

✓ It can take several tries to get a meeting agenda format that works best for your coalition or coalition committee. The keys are to stay focused on the mission and goals of the coalition, to ask specific questions or for specific input, and to ensure enough time for everyone to contribute to a meaningful discussion. Short, written meeting exit surveys, while sometimes experienced as perfunctory, can really help ensure that meetings are focused and have added value to the participants. Other facilitation tools you can use to test meeting satisfaction include: "plus/delta" and "popcorn." In both cases, the meeting facilitator surveys the group on the spot. With plus/delta, the meeting facilitator asks participants to share what went well (plus) and what could be improved (delta) and can write this feedback onto a whiteboard or flipchart. With popcorn, the facilitator can ask any coalition member for verbal feedback on the meeting, and can take the feedback as it "pops" up from the participants.

## LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING

In many cases, founding coalition leaders are the individuals who initially identified the need to join forces and called the coalition together. The work does not stop there, though. For a coalition to thrive until it achieves the change it seeks, new leaders must come into the pipeline and have the chance to grow and develop. To source new leaders, coalition leadership should seek to:

1. *Understand the systems* that the coalition's work will impact in order *to identify leaders*, both known and emerging, *who are already motivated* by the identified problem, but may not yet be involved in the coalition. Prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in your ongoing efforts to strengthen coalition leadership.

See Focus on Governance, Engaged Partners, in the SET section of the Roadmap for a case for diversity, equity and inclusion, and more information on how to choose the right partners.

2. *Scan for leadership changes* occurring within stakeholder organizations. Specifically, look for the opportunity to include new coalition members and/or new representatives from current members who might help energize the group and maintain its momentum. Set aside time regularly at your steering committee meetings to evaluate coalition

membership to make succession planning intentional, proactive and strengths-based. Consider appointing a steering committee member or members to focus on the issue long-term, and bring new ideas to the table for discussion.

3. *Cultivate leadership at many levels*, such as in committee or on special, ad hoc coalition projects, to give coalition members the opportunity to grow into leadership and to ensure that programs and processes run smoothly and efficiently. Unlike individual organizations, coalitions often work best with horizontal structures, as opposed to vertical or hierarchical leadership, which means that anyone in the coalition can be tapped or grow into leadership. By growing leaders from within, you are more likely to maintain consistent leadership throughout the life of the coalition.

4. *Seek leadership suggestions* from funders and coalition partners, both initially and through the development of the coalition.

5. *Plan for coalition activities* to involve group engagement in order to incorporate and cultivate many voices and foster investment and leadership. Factor in time needed to prepare meeting agendas that focus on engagement, to prepare emerging leaders for participation and to build consensus and ownership of the work across the coalition.

6. *Consider training* to help build targeted knowledge, skills and abilities of coalition members who have the potential to take on leadership roles within the coalition. A coalition health assessment can help you identify leadership needs and knowledge and skill-building opportunities within your coalition that you can address via training.

The coalition coordinator, however that position is structured, should conduct a formal orientation for any new coalition members, particularly for members who join mid-coalition or replace coalition representatives from their own organizations. Orientation should prioritize bringing new members up to speed on coalition history, successes and current challenges with a focus on integrating new members into the coalition with respect and understanding of what has already been accomplished so that each new member can add value from the start.

Strategies for onboarding new partners include:

1. *Adopt a membership list and terms*. As part of your charge, confirm the list of members and the specific term they will serve.

2. *Orient all new members.* Before a new participant attends a meeting, ask a current member to provide a one-on-one orientation on the work accomplished to date.

3. *Debrief*. After his or her first meeting, respond to any questions or requests for additional information. Establish a "buddy" system for the first few months between the new member and one of the more experienced members.

*Excerpted from Facilitation for Community Change[6], Bridging RVA*

**Essential Resources** for member orientation:

- ✓ Facilitation for Community Change[1], Bridging RVA
- ✓ Member Orientation Packet, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Buddy Program for Member Recruitment, CoalitionsWork

**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ When it was time for a founding co-chair transition, the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) steering committee recruited two long-time, active members of the coalition to stand for election as co-chairs. Once new co-chairs were elected by the full committee, the founding co-chairs then agreed to remain on the coalition, and on the steering committee, to support the leadership transition.
- ✓ The City of Promise initiative, which started programming in 2012, has had backbone support built into the model since 2012 in the form of a staffed, fiscally-sponsored program led by an Executive Director. The initial seed funding for this backbone capacity came from a federal grant awarded in 2011, and that funding has been sustained since via a combination of private foundations and individual donors. City of Promise is led by a steering committee, and leadership has rotated among steering committee members most of whom have been on the steering committee since launch.

[6] Bridging RVA, Facilitation for Community Change, Saphira M. Baker, Author; Jason W. Smith, Contributing Editor, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014.)

**Lesson Learned**:

- ✓ Within coalition partner organizations, those participating in the coalition should plan ahead for others to take on their roles in the collaboration in order to keep momentum going in the event of a transition. This may mean that the coalition coordinator reminds partner representatives six months before their term is up (or when the coordinator hears that the representative will be leaving) to identify and start bringing a new partner representative to meetings.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Two types of communication are important to sustain a healthy coalition: internal and external. Internal communication—continuous, consistent and open communication within the coalition—is needed to build trust, assure mutually-reinforcing activities and create a common motivation. External communication—strategic and aimed at generating interest and support from donors and external stakeholders—ensures buy-in to the coalition's mission.

- **Internal Communication**: The coalition coordinator can and should prioritize communication within the coalition. There are three levels of effective communication: inform, consult and involve. When all three types of communication occur, it leads to deeper trust and engagement among coalition partners. Coalition members can be *informed* via regular meetings, one-on-one conversations, email updates and a coalition website. They can be individually *consulted* on issues that fit within their unique expertise, encouraged to play a leadership role in discussions on the topic, and they can be *involved* in any action that fits their organizational profile and/or strategy, interest, or expertise. Involvement often happens best at the committee level where the coalition action plan is organized and implemented.

> Don't forget to create a written history of decisions made – via meeting minutes and/or a coalition action timeline – and to make this history easily available - in a shared online folder, on the coalition website and/or for reference at meetings - to limit rehashing of past decisions and to help keep the coalition on track. This will not only help preserve important institutional history it will also increase coalition efficiency.

  Consistent, quality communication can not only fill critical knowledge gaps for coalition members, but it can also help the coalition commit to a joint strategy, shared measurement, and an ongoing dialogue or forum for new ideas and concerns that need to be addressed along the way. It is important that internal communication is inclusive, that the coalition decision-making structure is transparent to ensure collaborative decision-making, and that all members are heard.

Proactive internal communication can not only engage, but can also help effectively manage coalition partner expectations. For example, it is a good idea to revisit commitments among coalition partners regularly, whether those commitments are in the form of charters, partner agreements, strategic action plans or committee job descriptions. Often, as coalitions evolve, new organizational partners join and founding partners leave. This is particularly the case for coalitions that work on long-term efforts. In addition, new organizational staff may be assigned to the coalition committees over the time of an organization's membership. Therefore, you cannot assume strong buy-in or transparency about work expectations unless you review them regularly with the current coalition membership – perhaps at your first meeting of each year. It may also be necessary to update and modify these governance tools to best reflect evolving coalition goals and coalition partner commitments. Your steering or executive committee can take the lead on altering charters and action plans, at least every few years, while your committees can initiate review of their own job descriptions in concert with an annual strategy review. When solid governance is in place coalitions can organize, act, monitor, react and reorganize to achieve their designated outcomes.

- **External communication**: To develop broad-based support and keep track of changes in the issue it targets, a coalition must *listen* to the community and *share* coalition goals and impact with the public; yet, a coordinated communications strategy that prioritizes active stakeholder engagement – from prospective funders to key community leaders to potential coalition partners - can be challenging to develop, often due to limited capacity. It is important, therefore, to be realistic in developing a plan for external communications, relying heavily on the people, relationships and assets already within your coalition.

  1. *Community Relations*: To build community relations, a coalition can identify both formal and informal ways to engage in dialogue with the community it seeks to change. Sometimes, the best ways to promote external communication are to cultivate a select few influential champions of the coalition's work.

*As one leader of a community collaborative put it, "Even more than resources, I need some outside group with credibility to point to this model and say, 'This is a great thing to do.' That would help me get the local partners and resources to the table." Government, philanthropy and other regional and national institutions can be vital sources of such external credibility—through awards, reports and other formal or informal forms of support and encouragement.*

Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives: A Promising Approach to Addressing America's Biggest Challenge (pg. 12), The Bridgespan Group

In addition, coalition members themselves can be encouraged and supported to share information about the coalition's work within their own networks and spheres of influence. For example, the coalition can provide regular updates to its members, give them talking points to share and even include communication practice sessions within coalition meetings. This word-of-mouth approach relies on the relationships of coalition members to spread the word and generate new resources for the work.

Other times, a more traditional communications strategy can be employed in which the coalition communicates its progress and impact with the public through the media (including social media, either via coalition accounts or accounts of individual coalition members where appropriate), a website, a progress report or by taking its work directly to the community through special events and community outreach supplemented by print materials that explain the who, what, when, where, why and how of the coalition. Before allocating funds to a communications strategy, make sure to consider whether any coalition members can provide in-kind support as part of their coalition commitment. If needed to increase the coalition's impact, also consider seeking special funding to implement a communications strategy.

**Figure 8**: Types of Communication


2. *Communication Work Group*: One way to spur external communication, even with limited capacity, is to create a communication committee within the coalition. The workgroup charge would be to create a *communications plan* for the coalition. This committee may also be tasked with promoting public awareness of the issue the coalition seeks to address as well as organizing special events on behalf of the coalition. To recruit committee members, consider those both inside and outside the coalition with experience or a genuine interest in communications and, depending on the committee's scope, organizing outreach events. Since communications is about building external relationships, make sure that whomever you invite to join the committee has a clear commitment to and enthusiasm around the coalition's mission, and is willing to share it. Especially with this committee, members of it do not have to be part of the coalition. Inviting community stakeholders to join the communications effort can help to recruit outside ambassadors and bring them closer to the work of the coalition.

3. *Communications Plan*: A communications plan helps you make the best use of your limited resources by identifying the most efficient and effective strategies for getting your message out to key stakeholders and the community at large. Like a strategic plan, a communication plan adds value no matter what stage of development your coalition is in: it can help you introduce a coalition, generate energy and excitement for ongoing work, and encourage new funders or partner organizations to come to the table. There are a series of steps you can take to create a communication plan, always with the knowledge that the best communications plans weave the work of communications into the existing activities of the coalition so as to make the best use of coalition capacity. A couple of key questions to consider in building a communications plan for your coalition:

    a. *What's your purpose*? There are different reasons you may want to communicate about the coalition. Do you simply want to build awareness of your issue? Do you want to educate the public and perhaps even those most affected by the issue? Do you want those with whom you communicate to invest in the coalition – either by providing dollars, volunteer time or in-kind resources? Or do you want more direct participation, either in the coalition itself or as clients of the services offered through the coalition or by member agencies? The key framing question is what do you want those with whom you communicate to do to help you achieve collective impact?

    b. *Who are you trying to engage?* Target audiences are the categories of people that you need to reach with your communications. It is important to clarify who these categories are so you can best design a message that resonates. Examples of likely audiences include: funder prospects who could be key financial supporters of your work; community leaders who could help you create system-wide change; key constituent groups for whom you provide services or advocate; and even community members who can help you spread the word and source new resources. With limited capacity, it is also critical to prioritize your target audiences in order of importance so you allocate your resources to achieve the highest impact.

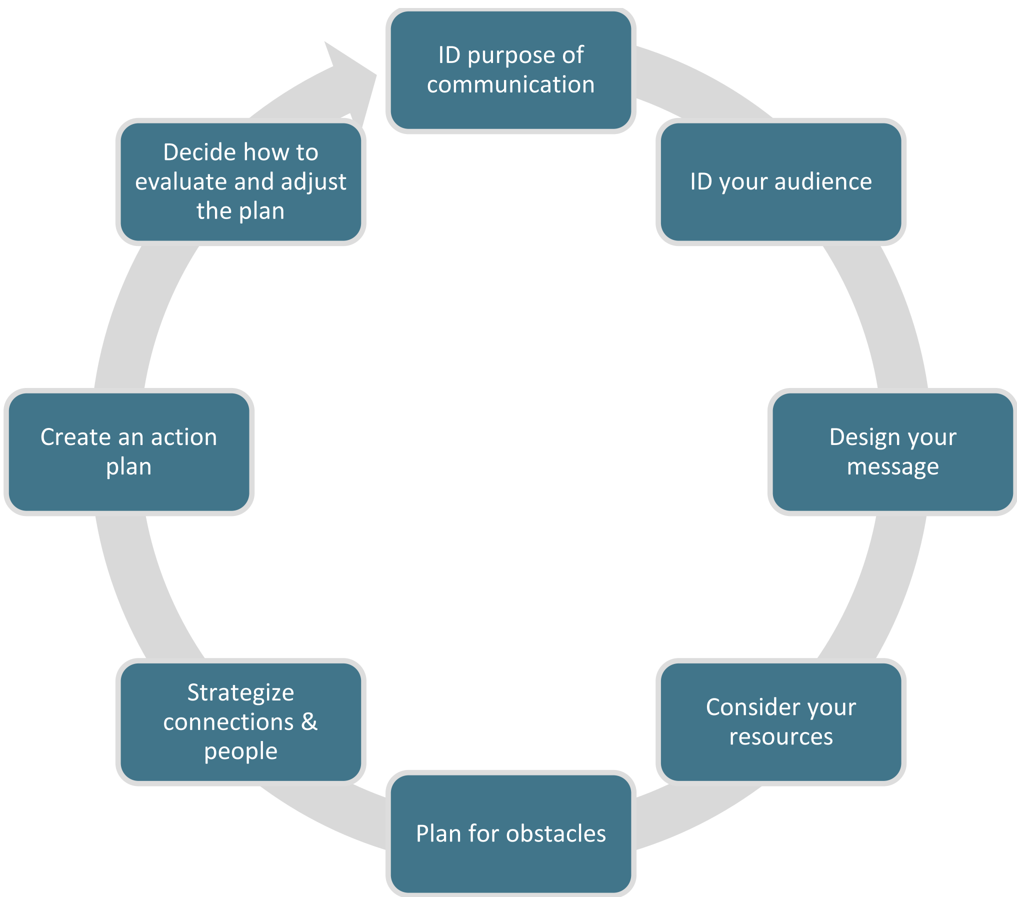
    c. *What's your budget?* You may or may not have funds available to implement a communications plan. If you can budget for communications, make sure to include both the hard cost of the communications tools you plan to use – whether websites or brochures or event materials or services – as well as the resources and staff time needed to implement the plan. Also consider whether it makes sense to handle communications in-house or to outsource the work to an outside consultant who can focus solely on the plan? If you do not have any funds allocated to communications, you may be able to piggy-back on the communications plans of your member agencies who consider the coalition work a core part of their strategy, partnering to jointly communicate about the work of the coalition to media and the public. You might even work with coalition members to incorporate key coalition messages into their own forms of communication. In addition, coalition members – both on and off the committee – may be able to give their time in-kind to the community event/outreach effort as part of their overall coalition commitment.

d. *How will you evaluate impact?* As with any part of your coalition strategy, evaluation is key to understanding the impact of your communications and fine tuning the plan based on what you've learned. To make evaluation work for you, plan for it. As the communications committee to consider what success would look like, and to develop key measures to recommend to the full coalition for approval. Success could take any form, depending on your plan goals.

   For example, if your goal is to cultivate more media coverage of your efforts, success could look like having a robust list of media contacts with whom you've managed to develop ongoing relationships. You could accomplish this by having as part of the committee work plan, a goal to meet media representatives personally and to share information regularly with them about the issue you seek to address so you can become an ongoing resource to your media partners.

   To track impact, and to ensure your communications plan is a vibrant part of your strategy, consider both the numbers of (quantitative) and the stories from (qualitative) those you reach. Demonstrating that you had strong attendance at your open house event is one key factor to show impact. But if you can show how the open house impacted those who attended or that they took action as a result, it can tell a more complete story of how or whether your communications plan is contributing to your collective impact.

**Figure 9**:  Steps to Developing a Communications Plan




RESOURCES

**Essential Resources** for effective communication:

- ✓ Communicating Across Collaboration, BUILD Initiative
- ✓ Organizational Message for Coalitions, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Continuous Communication, Collaboration for Impact
- ✓ Developing a Plan for Communication, Community Tool Box
- ✓ Sample Coalition Newsletter, Build Initiative
- ✓ Coalition Newsletter Template, Build Initiative
- ✓ Sample Communications Committee Job Description, Build Initiative
- ✓ Strive Partnership Report 2012-2013, Collaboration for Impact
- ✓ Boston Opportunity Agenda 2012 Annual Report, Collaboration for Impact



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**Local Spotlight**:

✓ The coordinator of the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition (CMHWC) sends out a regular e-newsletter to coalition members to keep them updated on coalition progress, highlight member agency events, share emerging research and trends in the field and coordinate coalition and committee meetings.

In May 2017, CMHWC initiated the Help Happens Here campaign aimed at connecting community members in need with mental health resources and reducing the stigma of mental health and substance abuse disorders. The campaign consists of the release of a new website with information and resources, advertisements on local, public transportation and a mental health and substance abuse services referral hotline.

## USING DATA TO DRIVE ACTION

It is important to gather, analyze and compile the *right* metrics for illustrating impact and this happens simultaneously through planning *and* trial and error. A data committee with guidelines and a work plan can analyze coalition data at different intervals and create an annual report. The data committee should be charged with using the data to review the impact of the work done, as well as adjust the coalition's strategic plan for the next year based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified in the analysis.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING
USING DATA TO PLAN

### DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

Data-driven decision making is often thought of as being much more complicated than it is. However, in reality, you perform data-driven decision-making every time you go to the grocery store. When you shop you have a lot of both quantitative (number) and qualitative (story) data, such as:

1. The amount of money you can spend overall. (number)
2. An amount of money you can spend on certain items/categories. (number)
3. Family and personal preferences. (story)
4. Cost comparisons between preferred items and sale/generic items. (number)
5. Nutritional information of preferred and sale/generic items. (number)
6. Amount of food needed to be purchased. (number)

When shopping, you implicitly balance all this information and make choices about what you can afford, what you and your family will happily eat, what you and your family will eat to stretch your money and which food is the most nutritious, etc. These are very complex things to balance and there is no formula that can do it for you, nor could you program a computer to make perfect decisions for you each week.

Using community-level, agency-level or coalition health data is a very similar and complex balancing act. As a collective, the coalition partners can wrestle with the data to decide (1) what it means to them and (2) what they want to do about it. The following section outlines a recommended structure for effectively utilizing coalition data to inform ongoing strategic planning for the coalition; this is also an ideal structure, but one that agencies and coalitions rarely have the resources and capacity to fully implement. Additionally, political will, coalition dynamics and the existing expertise will necessitate adjustments, enhancements and deviations from this ideal structure. We recommend that you use this structure as a template for what you are trying to achieve, and then modify it to meet the needs of the specific coalition. This structure assumes the use of a LOGIC MODEL or STRATEGIC IMPACT MAP®, described in more detail in the SET section of this Roadmap.

- **Backbone Support for Data Analysis**: Someone has to be responsible for collecting, compiling, analyzing and graphing the data. Ideally, this would be the coalition coordinator. This person should invest in learning how to use *Excel* or another graphing (or statistical) program. There are plenty of low-cost, simple graphing training opportunities such as those available on YouTube.

- **Analysis Process in Excel:** In *Excel*, create a worksheet tab for each *productivity* and *impact* indicator. Bring in the specific raw data into each worksheet and then sort, count, average and group data as needed. Next, create graphs in each worksheet. Be sure to use similar formats for all graphs. Ensure that all vertical axes for data on the same scale have the same range, and cross the horizontal axis at zero. If the vertical ranges are different, you cannot accurately compare data across graphs.

RESOURCES

**Essential Resources** for Excel Graphing Tutorials:

- ✓ Scatterplots, YouTube
- ✓ Line Graphs, YouTube
- ✓ Simple Bar or Column Graphs, YouTube
- ✓ Stacked Bar or Column Graphs, YouTube
- ✓ Pie Charts, YouTube
- ✓ Bubble Graphs, YouTube
- ✓ Misleading Axes on Graphs, Calling Out B.S. in the Age of Big Data
- ✓ The Principle of Proportional Ink, Calling Out B.S. in the Age of Big Data

- **Data Committee Meeting Suggested Guidelines**

  The following is a detailed set of suggestions for how to run the most effective data meetings. We have provided detail because many people have asked us for specifics – however, just as there are many ways to run any meeting, data meetings can be effective in many forms.

Well-resourced coalitions may primarily to rely on staff to manage and interpret the data; however, having the collective expertise of the coalition stakeholders involved not only ensures all the things potentially affecting the data are considered, but also ensures they are all knowledgeable and conversant in the data and its implications.

*<u>Before the meeting</u>*

a. The coalition coordinator prepares an agenda at least one week ahead of the meeting, as well as distributes any graphed data the committee will review (many people like to print out the graphs and make notes in the margins).
    i. These data graphs may be of immediate, agency-level productivity and impacts or of community-level, collective impacts.

b. When presenting graphed data to review, the committee members are asked specifically to answer the following questions about the group of graphs:
    i. What is good news?
    ii. What concerns you?
    iii. Where do you want more information?

*<u>Data analysis meeting structure</u>*

a. Data analysis meetings often last 90 minutes (especially when the committee members are new and have not engaged in this process before).

b. Start with the first graph. Have people say what they think it means and offer any responses to the three questions above.

   Ask *"The Three Why's"* to try to understand the graph fully, including understanding the root (or most elemental aspect) of the finding (look at the data and hypothesize *why* the data appear the way they do; then, ask why *that* is; then, ask why *<u>that</u>* is?)

c. Write down everyone's thoughts and ideas. Treat this like a brainstorming session—no ideas are wrong or too unlikely to include in the list of possibilities (see the section on building a strengths-based inquiry-based culture).

d. Use the collective knowledge of the committee membership to generate the most likely hypotheses for the stories behind the data (this is why representatives from each of the core agencies should be on the data committee).

**Essential Resources**:

✓ [Tips for Structuring Better Brainstorming Sessions](), inspireUX

*Developing conclusions*

Armed with all the data and how everyone has interpreted it, the data committee can come to consensus about the following:

a. Where are there successes?
b. Where are there challenges and priority areas for improvement or growth?
c. Where are there deeper questions about the data or what is going on behind the data?

*Developing action steps*

Now the data committee has the opportunity to make recommendations for action steps for change going forward.

a. Note the specific data points that were used to demonstrate the need for the change.
b. Prioritize where there is likely collective motivation and resources to make changes.
c. Note the timeframe needed for each specific action (even if that is 'To Be Determined').
d. Note the resources needed to make the change.
e. Identify who might lead and be involved in the change.
f. Make specific "To Do" assignments for each committee member at the end of each meeting.

**Sample Data Analysis Meeting Agenda**

**90 minutes**

| | |
|---|---|
| Welcome and introductions<br>(keep doing introductions until everyone on the committee knows each other well and trust has developed) | 5 min. |
| Review graphs<br>Which graphs did people find most interesting?<br>-What did those graphs say?<br>-Ask **The Three Why's** to understand what is behind the data.<br>-What additional data/information is needed? | 55 min. |
| What are the most important conclusions from the data? | 15 min. |
| What recommendations for action from the data? | 15 min. |

**Figure 10:** Annual Data Committee Work Plan

**Step 1:** Develop a Logic Model or Strategic Impact Map® with at least one indicator of productivity and impact for each goal. More information on Logic Models and Strategic Impact Maps® can be found in the Set section of the Roadmap.

**Step 2:** Present the *Logic Model* or *Strategic Impact Map®* to both coalition leadership and the whole coalition for feedback and buy-in.

**Step 3:** Meet individually with each partner agency to figure out if, and how, they are measuring each productivity and impact indicator for each goal.



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**Step 4:** Collect productivity/output and impact/outcome data in one place.

**Step 5:** Graph and correct the data.

**Step 6:** Review data in a data committee meeting(s), drawing conclusions and developing ideas for action.

**Step 7:** Summarize key points (summaries, conclusions and action steps) into a bulleted document, ideally grouped by your goals as outlined in your *Strategic Impact Map®.*

**Step 8: Optional**: Present the right amount of data productivity/output and impact/outcome data, as determined by the coalition leadership informed by the data committee, to various stakeholders (e.g., coalition partners, the public at large, city counselors, service recipients, etc.) so that additional conclusions can be drawn and people can engage with the data.*

**Step 9: Optional**: Ask the stakeholders to talk about what they think the data means and what actions the data suggests they take.*

How you specifically go about data presentation with stakeholders should be guided by three things: (1) building the experience of the stakeholders for looking at data, (2) what you want people to get out of the experience and (3) what you want out of the experience. There is no one answer for how data should be presented to various stakeholders, or how much data should be presented. Generally, however, less is more, especially if the stakeholders are new to looking at data.

> Sometimes you might choose to break the stakeholders up into groups and have them look at just a couple of data points each. For example: maybe each group looks at different data, maybe everyone looks at the same data, maybe you facilitate small groups or community meetings to look at and comment on the data, maybe you present all the data to a larger group with conclusions and interpretations.

- **<u>Frequency of Data Analysis:</u>** Immediate-impact data should be analyzed with scheduled regularity: e.g., monthly, every six months and/or annually. The exact timetable depends on what data is available when, data committee capacity and the difficulty of accessing data.  Community-level, collective impact is usually analyzed each time it becomes newly available, which is most often annually.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

**Local Spotlight** on using data to measure impact:

- ✓ Every 6 months, City of Promise pulls together a subset of the overall data collected, graphs it, draws conclusions and presents it to the Steering Committee. Read more about City of Promise's data use in the LOCAL SPOTLIGHT section below.

**Figure 11:** Data Analysis Timeline

**Every month:**

- *Every month, the data committee can take a quick look at the data* collected in that last month and alert coalition leadership, partner agencies, or other apropriate coalition committees about data that might inform their work. If there is not data that is readily available to look at on a monthly basis, then:
  - The data committee can review any changes in programming or policies that might be affecting the coalition and its partners, and/or
  - Actual data can be looked at every six or 12 months instead.
- *Examples of conclusions* that might come from monthly looks at the data might be:
  - The number of people served by agency X, Y and Z are going down, while the number of people served at agency A is increasing. Wonder what's behind this?
  - Agency B finally got a psychiatrist hired and now has capacity to see X people a week. In the first month, the psychiatrist saw Y people. Referrals accepted!

**Once every six months:**

- *Once every six months*, the data committee should dive a little deeper into the data. Data should be collected from key partners, graphed and reviewed using the data analysis meeting format. Prior to the meeting, the data needs to be prepared, graphed and sent out for review, as described earlier in this section of the RoadMap. At this six-month interval, the data committee would provide the leadership with a simple document of graphs, bulleted conclusions, and bulleted recommendations for new action plans. Those recommendtions would go to the coalition leadership for consideration, development and implementation.

**Once a year:**

- *Once a year*, the data committee really should attempt to take a deep dive into the data identified in the Strategic Impact Map® or Logic Model. Requests should go out to partners for the agreed-upon productivity and impact data weeks before it is needed. The compiled data then needs to be prepared, graphed and analyzed as described above. The data committee then draws conclusions and sends recommendations for action plans up to the coalition leadership.

- **Annual Report**: A coalition annual report, informed by coalition data, can be very helpful in building an ongoing case for support, as well as to showcase and celebrate accomplishments. The data analysis for the annual report would be similar to the six-month process, but more comprehensive and inclusive of all the work that has been done by the coalition over the course of the year. To be most useful, an annual report can, and should, take many forms:

*First*, an Annual Report is a document of the work done over the year and a compendium of the data gathered for that year. The full report typically includes an Executive Summary (Executive Summaries between two and five pages are most effective). This Executive Summary will distill the most essential information, numbers, graphs and conclusions into a readable format. The full report could be extensive and often will be too long and arduous for most stakeholders to read. The Executive Summary brings all the information down to its most salient and critical points.

*Second*, a version of the Annual Report can be developed in a brochure format that can be handed out to stakeholders, investors and the public: a sleek, colorful, easy-to-read document with helpful infographics highlighting key data.

*Third,* a version of the Annual Report can be put into an infographic dashboard for the Coalition website. There are an infinite number of ways of doing this, from a running ticker-tape of facts, to side bars with graphs, to side bars with bold statements of impact.

- **Dashboards**: Dashboards are data visualizations that quickly help people take in information. Most often, they reflect community conditions, and thus community-level impact. However, you can have budget dashboards, productivity dashboards and immediate impact dashboards.

  The purpose and audience needs to be defined. Internal dashboards might be more detailed, and dashboards on your website might be more general. Some dashboards are static, some update automatically, some are customizable (so you can see only certain data).

  Tableau has become a popular tool for creating and publishing dashboards on-line. However, you also can easily create graphs and tables in Microsoft Word or Excel.

**Essential Resources** *for building a dashboard*:

- ✓ National Council of Nonprofits
  *Information Dashboard Design: Displaying Data for At-a-Glance Monitoring, 2nd Edition*, 2013, by Stephen Few, ISBN-13: 978-1938377006
- ✓ Ann K Emery has built a whole business on making data accessible and building dashboards
- ✓ 5 Must-Have Infographic Templates to Supercharge your Nonprofit, Vennage
- ✓ Nonprofit Annual Reports, National Council of Nonprofits

*Examples of digital Nonprofit/Coalition Annual Reports*:

- ✓ Point in Time Homeless Census, Open Knowledge Collaborative and Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless
- ✓ Strive Partnership Report 2012-13, Strive Partnership
- ✓ Boston Opportunity Agenda Annual Report 2012, Boston Opportunity
- ✓ Kiva Annual Report 2014, Kiva
- ✓ Charity Water Annual Report 2012, Charity Water
- ✓ Annual Report, City of Progress
- ✓ Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH): Data Dashboard

*National Dashboards*

- ✓ KidsCount Data Center
- ✓ ReadyKidsA: Children's Issue Council Dashboard

*Dashboards from other localities*

- ✓ Arlington Public Schools
- ✓ Miami-Dade County Early Learning Coalition
- ✓ Houston Coalition for the Homeless: Permanent Supportive Housing Dashboards
- ✓ Healthy Klamath
- ✓ Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ There are not a lot of collaborations in Charlottesville and Albemarle that have been collecting data consistently long enough to experience the full benefits of using data to drive decision-making. An initiative with significant data experience is the City of Promise. Every 6 months, City of Promise pulls together a subset of the overall data collected, graphs it, draws conclusions and presents it to the Steering Committee. A brief discussion after the data presentation supports incorporating the data into strategic action, refocusing for the following six months. Five years in, City of Promise conducted a second comprehensive needs assessment, including a survey of the neighbors. This was a huge effort and it had big payoffs in being able to see the successes and growth of the effort, as well as in being able to identify the next priorities for expanded efforts. For an example of the way data can be used to drive the decision-making progress, see City of Promise's Data Progress Report and their Year-End Data Report.
- ✓ The United Way's Outcome Collaborative plans to collect and review data annually to assess programming strengths and priority areas for growth. Critical to the ability to use data is the Collaborative's commitment to use the data it collects to lift up the community and support the children, families, programs and schools – never to punish, blame or shame.
- ✓ Even though it is not a coalition, the Thomas Jefferson Health District periodically conducts a comprehensive community health assessment which is used to guide local and regional strategic planning. This process, called Mobilizing Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), collects existing community-level data, conducts focus groups and some of its own surveys and brings together a diverse group of stakeholders and experts to interpret the data and create action plans for moving forward. The reports can be found here.
- ✓ In May of 2016, Governor McAuliffe issued Executive Directive 7: *Leveraging the Use of Shared Data and Analytics*, as a means of encouraging the coordination of data usage across the state. This directive came in response to the lack of shared data and information across agencies and corporations throughout Virginia. The goal of the

directive was manifold; the governor wished not only to increase efficiency at the state level, but to improve the provision of services and to maximize the use of state and citizen resources. Of course, the directive also emphasized the importance of privacy, as well, and directed the state to continue following all guidelines and laws providing for the protection of individual privacy. The document directed several agencies within the state to review the current data sharing policies and procedures in place and to recommend and put in place a new set of best practices regarding future use of data sharing and analysis. The report on Executive Directive 7 and its findings may be found here.

LESSONS LEARNED

**Lesson Learned**:

Collecting and using data to drive decision making is an iterative process. The first year there are *always* errors and data collection processes that did not go well. This is an opportunity to review and improve the data that is collected. In the second and third years many fewer improvements will be needed. In the fourth and fifth years, the real fruits of the data collection labor are born: (1) after four and five years of data are collected and examined, a collaboration is really able to start seeing meaningful trends, as well as maybe even being able to start seeing the impact of the work they did in the first and second years; (2) having practiced for several years, the data team finds it much easier to look at and interpret the data; (3) since the collaborative has been actively tracking and seeking to understand the data for so long, they are much more confident in drawing conclusions and using those conclusions to drive action (in the beginning people find themselves guessing a lot more and feel a lot less confident).

## USING DATA TO PLAN

Strategic planning is a process by which a coalition can develop and then reaffirm its shared agenda, outline the goals and activities that, individually and collectively, it believes will yield the community impact it seeks and identify how best to strengthen its infrastructure to support the work of the coalition.

- **Annual Strategy Review**: At least annually, it is ideal for any coalition to conduct a quick review and re-affirmation of the mission, vision and goals of the coalition using the data it collects to inform the process.

    1. The coalition leadership, including co-chairs, a steering/executive committee and committee chairs, should articulate the rationale for the review and develop the agenda and structure for full coalition discussion. Often a strategic plan review is conducted in a coalition retreat or a series of meetings dedicated to strategy review, and incorporates a Coalition Health Survey and/or Partner Satisfaction Survey.

    2. The data committee can support the strategic plan process by summarizing key annual coalition health survey and data collection results, including readily available community and/or agency-level data.

    3. With the data, coalition partners can contribute their collective knowledge to note critical changes in community conditions that necessitate shifts in vision, mission, or goals or refocusing activities, programs, strategies and/or resources.

    4. Adjustments deemed necessary can then be written into revised action plans to be implemented across the next year. More information on developing action plans can be found in *FOCUS ON GOVERNANCE* in the SET section of the Roadmap.

    5. Often, only the activities of the coalition will be updated for the next year; sometimes, the Strategic Impact Map® or Logic Model will need to be updated to reflect a shift in mission or strategic goals, depending on new research or data analysis.

- **Strategic Planning**: Formal strategic planning is a more intensive endeavor, typically encompassing research on environmental trends, interviews with external stakeholders, as well as a comprehensive internal review of strengths, opportunities, assets and results. *If data-driven, this more comprehensive, collective planning process integrates data into all levels of the discussion*.

**Figure 12:** Strategy Questions that a Coalition should ask:

| ***Internal*** | ***External*** |
|---|---|
| 1. In the context of our resource use (e.g., time, money, social capital, etc.), were we productive enough and did we meet our goals by achieving impact? | 1. In the context of changes in our community, are we aiming to impact the most important community-level need(s)? |
| 2. Should we be streamlining or changing activities, programs and strategies? | 2. Do we need to redirect our vision or re-imagine our mission and/or goals to better serve the community? |
| 3. Should we be refocusing or generating new resources to sustain or expand activities, programs and strategies? | |

1. Strategic planning allows a coalition to **establish clear priorities and strategic goals** for a longer time period—often three to five years, depending on how dynamic or static the environment is in which the coalition works.

2. This type of planning often encompasses at least a one-day, facilitated retreat or several strategic planning meetings and usually involves a **deep dive into both environmental changes and coalition activities**, successes and challenges since the last strategic planning process.

3. A difficult yet essential part of strategic planning is **determining the future trajectory of the coalition**. It may be prudent to change directions or leadership as necessary or seek outside support for work that the coalition lacks the capacity to address, or discontinue the coalition entirely. Finally, it is important to evaluate when the work of the coalition is done.

This Roadmap will not take on a comprehensive review of how to set and steward a common agenda via strategic planning. There are numerous on-line resources, as well as expert consultants available to our community to support strategic planning. The Roadmap will, however, provide some tips on how to sharpen your strategic planning through the use of data and offer an alternate approach to strategic planning. For assistance in sourcing strategic planning consultants with expertise in working with coalitions, contact the Center for Nonprofit Excellence.

- **Using Data to Inform the Plan:** A strategic planning session often starts with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) that seeks to answer these questions for the coalition:

**Figure 13:** SWOT Analysis

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Strengths*** | ➢ What is the coalition doing well/what is going well? |
| ***Weaknesses*** | ➢ What is the coalition not doing well/what is not going well? |
| ***Opportunities*** | ➢ What things in the external environment can the coalition take advantage of? |
| ***Threats*** | ➢ What things in the external environment does the coalition need to watch out for, prepare for or avoid? |

In order to create the SWOT analysis, the meeting facilitator—whether internal or external—will often compile data from the coalition, most often about resource use and productivity, as well as interview key partners about their perspectives. The facilitator may in addition gather community-level data—also called environmental research or trends—that directly or indirectly speak to the mission of the coalition. During the strategic planning session, these compiled data can be used as a tool for discussion, breaking coalition partners into smaller groups to generate lists of coalition strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats on the horizon. These lists are then condensed into summary statements of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. With these in mind, coalition partners can then generate strategic goals and priorities for the next two to five years.

If using the Strategic Impact Map® or Logic model, updating or identifying new priorities and strategic goals allow a coalition to adjust, add or subtract *Activities*, *Programs or Strategies/Activities* or *Resources/Inputs* so that more efficient *Productivity/Outputs* and better *Impact/Outcomes* can be realized. Through this process, the coalition is checking in to make sure that it is fulfilling its mission and working towards moving the "dial" or demonstrating *community-level impact.* Community-level impact is tracked to ensure that the mission of the coalition is still relevant, as well as to see if the work of the coalition is making a difference for the community.

**Figure 14:** Examples of SWOT Indicators

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strengths** | ➢ Sufficient *resource* generation, stability in resources (e.g., staff retention, successful leadership transitions, etc.).<br>➢ High quality *activities, programs and strategies* (e.g., client satisfaction with agency services, partner satisfaction with benefits of being in the coalition).<br>➢ Evidence-based activities, programs and strategies delivered with fidelity to the model.<br>➢ Sufficient *productivity*, adequate numbers of clients referred for services.<br>➢ Meaningful *impact* for clients and coalition partners. |
| **Weaknesses** | ➢ Insufficient *resource* generation, loss of resources, instability in resources (e.g., high staff turnover, lack of leadership, etc.).<br>➢ Low quality *activities, programs and strategies* (e.g., client dissatisfaction with agency services, partner dissatisfaction with benefits of being in the coalition).<br>➢ Evidence-based activities, programs and strategies, delivered without adequate fidelity to the model (or a lack of measuring fidelity).<br>➢ Insufficient *productivity*, insufficient numbers of clients referred for services.<br>➢ Poor or spotty impact for clients and coalition partners. |
| **Opportunities** and **Threats** | ➢ *Changes in need:*<br>*i.* changes in population<br>*ii.* changes in community-level needs<br>*iii.* changes in collaborators<br>*iv.* changes in competitors<br>➢ *Changes in what is known to work:*<br>*i.* new evidence-based practices<br>*ii.* new best practices reported by other communities<br>➢ *Changes in what is considered important:*<br>*i.* changes in leadership (agency, coalition, community, state, federal, etc.)<br>*ii.* changes in values<br>*iii.* effects of activism, media, etc. |

To take a comprehensive look at the data for strategic planning, follow the same basic steps outlined in the DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING section of this Roadmap.

- **An Alternate Approach to Strategic Planning:** Another approach to strategic planning is to start with a SOAR (as opposed to SWOT) analysis. The SOAR strategic framework, which focuses on Strengths, Opportunities, Assets and Results, is based in Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a strengths-based approach to asking questions and envisioning the future. The goal of AI is to build organizations and strategy around what works rather than focusing on fixing what does not work, and to create an inclusive, participatory process that engages key stakeholders with an underlying belief that: 1) what you seek you find more of; and 2) people commit to what they help create. While the SWOT and SOAR processes are similar, the questions posed are different. SOAR asks participants to identify organizational or coalition:

**Figure 15:** SOAR Analysis Questions

| | |
|---|---|
| **S**trengths | Key assets? |
| **O**pportunities | Market options? |
| **A**ssets | Goals for the future? |
| **R**esults | What can we measure to evaluate success? |

The SOAR framework can be beneficial to coalitions because it spotlights the positive, which can help to build trust among partners and key stakeholders, invites broad participation and can help facilitate transition from planning (strengths/opportunities) to implementation (aspirations/results). More information on Appreciate Inquiry, the basis for the SOAR planning framework, can be found in *Commit To Systems Leadership* in the Set section of the Roadmap.

**Essential Resources** for *creating agendas, plans and goals*:

- ✓ Setting a Common Agenda, FSG Social Impact Consultants
- ✓ Collaborating to Create a Common Agenda, Webinar, Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Collaborating to Create a Common Agenda, (Handout to compliment above webinar), Collective Impact Forum
- ✓ Prioritizing Your Strategies, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Factors that Promote Sustainability, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Facilitation for Community Change[1], Bridging RVA
- ✓ Living into Your Strategic Plan: A Guide to Implementation That Gets Results, The Bridgespan Group
- ✓ Coalition Vision, Mission & Goals, The Immunization Partnership
- ✓ 2017-2019 Action Plan Framework, Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition

**Essential Resources** for *information on strategic planning*:

- ✓ SOARing to High and Engaged Performance: An Appreciative Approach to Strategy, AI Practitioner, Jackie Stavros and Gina Hinrichs
- ✓ A Different Approach to Strategic Planning: SOAR-Building Strengths Based Strategy, Stan Capela & Ariana Brooks-Saunders
- ✓ Appreciative Inquiry: Business Planning Using SOAR, Design Research Techniques
- ✓ SWOT Analysis Template, Carolina Mountain
- ✓ The Strategic Planning Process, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Strategic Planning for Nonprofits, The National Council of Nonprofits
- ✓ Developing a Strategic Plan, Community Tool Box

**Local Spotlight**:

- ✓ As the community, coalition and funder context for the Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH) evolved, the board understood the need for a significantly revised workplan. In 2014, the board adopted a new plan to end homelessness and governance charter that reflected these changes. The revised plan to end homelessness established both process and outcome goals for the community, methods for ensuring accountability to these goals and specific processes for providing technical assistance, feedback and oversight. The new governance charter renovated the TJACH board by creating new membership, term limits, and agenda guidelines. The charter further established specific expectations of committees and subcommittees regarding communication, goal-setting, membership and meeting structure. These changes reflected TJACH's commitment to transparency in decision-making and focus on community-level data for governance. TJACH's renovated board structure and revised plan to end homelessness re-established the coalition's role in the service provider community. It helped enhance the coalition's credibility with stakeholders, decision-makers and funders and allowed staff and service providers to focus on the work that matters.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOUR COALITION

One of the most important jobs of any coalition is to decide when the work is done. Making this decision takes the collective will of coalition partners to even raise the question. It also requires the commitment along the way to identify clear goals, create a strong structure to achieve them and gather the right coalition partners that can do the work needed to be successful.

How do you know when you are done?

- **When Your Work is Done**: The easy answer to the question is when the problem that you gathered together to address is solved. When that is the case, you can declare victory, thank the people involved and return to the work of your individual organizations. However, it is often not that simple. Sometimes, the coalition evolves in a new direction, making it difficult to discern a clear ending. Sometimes, members have gotten so involved and invested in the work that it is hard to say it is done and move on. Other times, there may be disagreement about the ongoing necessity of the coalition, either due to changes in the sense of urgency or the emergence of new organizations or avenues to address the community-level need.

- **When the Coalition Moves in a New Direction**: As your coalition evolves, you can, and should, go back to the original questions about whether the collaboration is right for your organization. If you find that at this stage collaboration is not right for you, then it is important to the health of the coalition for you to proactively step back from the effort, reducing your involvement in and commitment to the work. This does not mean you should not stay informed. It does, however, mean that the coalition will have to find new leadership and new partners to remain viable. This is okay and one should not feel guilty about leaving the collaboration. A coalition has to be dynamic to be worthwhile to all coalition partners and the community.

- **When there is a Lack of Impact:** A coalition may also need to disband if it fails to thrive, whether through lack of leadership, inadequate resources, or insufficient urgency among key stakeholders, be it donors, elected officials, clients or nonprofit stakeholders. How do you know this is happening? When the benefits of working in coalition no longer outweigh the costs. That is a question you have to ask your own organization, but also one that coalition leadership must ask its partners.

- **When there is a Lack of Urgency:** Sometimes the environment changes in such a way that community priorities change (e.g., a natural disaster would be an extreme example, the Great Recession is a more recent example). In these cases, resources are funneled to address the most pressing community needs. Alternatively, a flood of resources may become available that allows for less pressing needs to be addressed – or for a previously dormant coalition goal to come to the fore. Other times, despite the best efforts of the coalition, the main champion and leader of the work moves on, or the backbone support shifts, and the sustained effort dwindles. In these cases, the most important work is often picked up by another entity.

In addition to checking-in with your coalition partners to assess whether your coalition fits into one of the categories above, you also can seek advice and guidance from other coalitions and/or funding partners within your region. Ask if/when they got stuck or faced obstacles, how they were able to move forward? Consider too pausing and reassessing your purpose with your key constituents in the community to confirm the need for the coalition still exists. You might also think about engaging an independent facilitator to help you assess the current coalition and environmental circumstances. An outside expert can bring new energy, perspective and focus to your coalition to help you ask the right questions that can lead you to a decision whether to refocus and move forward or disband. For more information on working with consultants, check out the SIDE TRIPS section of this Roadmap.

RESOURCES

**Essential Resources** for information on *assessing the end of a collaboration*:

- ✓ The Coalition Effectiveness Inventory, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Should You Disband Your Coalition?, CoalitionsWork
- ✓ Leaving a Collaboration: Steps, Capacity Builders' Collaboration Coach
- ✓ Leave or End a Collaboration, Capacity Builders' Collaboration Coach
- ✓ Am I a High Functioning Coalition Member?, CoalitionsWork

For information on *sustaining a collaboration*:

- ✓ Six Strategies for Sustaining a Collaboration, LaPiana Consulting

For information on *working with community members*:

- ✓ The Why and How of Working with Communities Through Collective Impact: An E-Course, Living Cities