Using Guide 3 Building Support

Introduction

These guides were developed by the Arkansas Department of Health to provide background material, tools, and resources to individuals involved in Hometown Health Improvement. They are intended to be used as a general guide. Each community should choose the tools and adjust the guides to fit their unique needs. Each guide contains explanatory text, specially designed tools, worksheets, and suggestions for other available resources. If you have any questions concerning this guide, please contact your Hometown Health Regional Leader.

Use this margin to note interesting tools or ideas.

How to use this guide

Each guide is designed to assist the reader in accessing, understanding and using the tools presented. This guide is divided into seven sections. The sections of the text are delivered in columns. The right side of the page features explanatory text for each topic. The left side of the page features comments or questions to spark thought or conversation about the text, along with providing open white space for written notes.

Section One offers information to gain support for your coalition through sponsorship. Section one can help you determine the sponsorship you need, contact a sponsor, and get formal commitment from the sponsor.

Section Two gives tips on starting your coalition. This section is provided to help you lay the basic foundation for your successful coalition.

Section Three is designed to help you develop an effective team. In this section, you will find what is needed for a team to be successful.

Section Four gives tips on dealing with conflict in the coalition or team. Section four offers communication skills and techniques to find resolutions to problems.

Section Five explains cultural diversity. You will learn how to work with different cultures within your coalition.

Section Six is the tools section. Any place you see the toolbox symbol, located below, you will know this particular tool is provided for
you not only in the section to practice with, but also in section six for you to copy and use in the future.

Section Seven provides additional sources for you to review concerning the topics covered in this guide. Literature, web pages, and contact information of recognized experts are featured, along with the sources that contributed to this guide.

Evaluation of this Guide

In the back pocket of this guide you will find an evaluation. When you complete your first review of this guide please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation and return it to the address listed on the bottom of the evaluation. It is our goal that this guide be a useful tool to you as you begin your work with Hometown Health Improvement. Your comments will help us evaluate our work and create quality materials in the future.

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Acknowledgements

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Gail Gannaway * Jackie Gorton *Jean Hagerman * Mary Cannell

Today's public health problems require cooperative action by many organizations, creative solutions and involvement from all levels of the community, and an understanding of their diverse cultural and social make-up.

Building Support Through Sponsorship

The health of the community is a shared responsibility of many entities. That is why the Hometown Health Improvement Project brings together a wide range of people and institutions, including consumers, business leaders, health care providers, elected officials, religious leaders, and educators. Everyone in the community has something to contribute to the project.

The success of creating a healthy community depends on the commitment of those who live there. It requires everyone sharing their resources to support common goals. Success will occur only when partners are truly committed to addressing a shared problem that cannot be solved working alone.

The role of the local health unit is to provide leadership and technical assistance to the community. To do this, they must first gain support for the project. There are a variety of ways this can be done. Based on the knowledge of their community, each local unit will have to determine the best way to proceed in gaining support and, ultimately, making their community a healthier place to live.

Sponsorship

A sponsor is needed to initiate and lead the Hometown Health Improvement project. The sponsor is responsible for building the necessary stakeholder team (coalition) and maintaining momentum throughout the project. The sponsor should be a strong leader and well respected by the community.

Projects can be sponsored by the health unit and another key member, or members, of the community, or by another agency or organization with the health unit as a major player. In most cases, the best option is joint sponsorship. However, in certain situations one of the other two types might be more productive.

A number of factors may determine the number of sponsors involved, including the size of the community, the interest level of community leaders, and the political dynamics existing in the community.

Carefully consider your community to determine the best way to proceed. The steps for securing co-sponsors or one sponsor are essentially the same.

Determining the Best Sponsorship Method for Your Community

Review the benefits a sponsor can provide, then consider the questions that follow to determine what would work best in your community. You should also become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the sponsor. The primary roles and responsibilities of the sponsor are to empower the coalition to help achieve project goals, and to sustain the overall process. The Tools Section of this guide contains the **Sponsor's Roles and Responsibilities, Tool 1.**

Benefits of a Sponsor

- A sponsor can enhance the visibility of the project and prepare the community for change.
- A well-respected and visible sponsor can aid in the recruitment of stakeholders.
- A sponsor's personal and business relationships can provide access to community stakeholders.
- A sponsor can provide access to financial and non-financial resources.
- A sponsor can provide the necessary leadership required throughout the project.

Questions to Consider

- Who could best provide the benefits of a sponsor in your community?
- Can someone in the local health unit best provide the benefits of a sponsor in your community?
- What combination of individuals or organizations could best provide these benefits?
- Is their an existing group or coalition that could and would undertake the project?

The role of the local health unit is to provide leadership and technical assistance to the community.

Finding a Sponsor

Potential sponsors may be identified from a number of different organizations. Depending on the community, a variety of organizations should be considered. The following is a list of organizations that have a vested interest in community health. Some could also access resources for the project.

- community hospitals
- professional associations
- health care professionals
- advocacy groups
- not-for-profit associations/organizations
- community businesses
- local government agencies
- schools/colleges/universities
- managed care organizations
- local community action groups
- politicians/legislators
- other government agencies

Contacting a Potential Sponsor

After identifying the target organization, a specific individual at the organization should be contacted. Typically, this individual should be the chief executive officer or another senior executive. The potential sponsor should initially be contacted by telephone. You should stress specific project benefits to stimulate the individual's interest. Also, roles and responsibilities should be reviewed. In preparation for the telephone conversation, consider the following questions:

- How will you describe the project?
- How will you tailor the "recruitment" approach for the specific background of the sponsor?
- What information will the potential sponsor need?
- What benefits should be communicated to the sponsor?
- How much time will the sponsor need to decide whether or not to support the project?
- What must be done to secure an initial meeting?

In the Tools Section of this guide, you will find **A List of Project Benefits and the Sponsor's Role and Responsibilities** to help you enlist a sponsor for your project, **Tool 2 and 1**.

After contacting the potential sponsor, a follow-up letter should be sent. This letter should thank the sponsor, review the conversation, provide additional information regarding the project and, ideally, confirm a one-on-one meeting. See the Tools Section for a sample **Follow-up Letter to a Telephone Conversation, Tool 3**.

If the potential sponsor is not available to participate in this project, review the potential sponsor list. Then, repeat this step until a potential sponsor is successfully contacted and a one-on-one meeting is scheduled.

Remember, you want a sponsor or sponsors for a specific reason -- to lead the project. If a person tells you they do not have the time, do not annoy or bother them until they say yes. If a person says yes, but is not willing to make the commitment necessary, the effort will fail. Instead, try to find other ways to involve them and get their support.

Sometimes a person may want to play a significant leadership role, but does not want sole responsibility. That is one reason joint sponsorship works better in some places, it allows sponsors to share responsibilities.

Meeting with the Sponsor or Sponsors

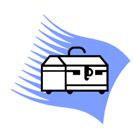
Ideally, a one-on-one meeting should be arranged during the initial telephone call. This meeting should include the sponsor(s) and a representative from the local health unit initiating the project. The meeting should be held within two weeks of the telephone call in order to secure momentum early. Topics to discuss include:

- Overview of the concept of community health improvement.
- Benefits to the sponsor and the community.

- Resources available to assist the sponsor.
- Roles and responsibilities of the sponsor.
- Formal request for sponsorship of the project.
- Role of the local Health Unit Staff.

To guide the meeting and make sure it is productive, prepare a checklist and agenda. Be sure to address the sponsor's roles and responsibilities. Examples of the **Sponsor's Roles and Responsibilities**, a **Checklist for Meeting with a Sponsor,** and **An Agenda Structure** can be found in the **Tools Section, Tools 4 and 5**. If you need information on communicating with a power person, see Guide Two: Building Capacity for Hometown Health.

After the initial one-on-one meeting, a follow-up letter should be sent. The letter should thank the potential sponsor for their time, highlight key points of the meeting, and identify next steps. The letter also should summarize any agreements made during the meeting. An example of a **Follow-up Letter** can be found in the **Tools Section, Tool 6**.



Confirming Formal Commitment

While the sponsor informally may have committed to the project at this point, a formal agreement is necessary to establish the relationship and ensure everyone understands their role. The project cannot move forward without a key community member to lead the project and recruit and motivate additional members. The sponsor should be a "champion" to help achieve and sustain change – an element critical to the project's overall success.

"Collaboration is a mindset that says, **of course** I'm going to need the help of others to do my job well."

As part of their formal commitment, the sponsor should agree to publicize their involvement and role in the project. A press release discussing the project and the sponsor's role may be prepared for the media and selected community groups. This will help generate interest when coalition members are solicited and gives the sponsor positive publicity. For more information on preparing a press release see Guide Two: Building Capacity for Hometown Health.

Hopefully, the sponsor will remain with the project for its duration. However, should the sponsor leave the project for some reason, another sponsor should be recruited.

If the local health unit chooses to be the sponsor, they must be able to provide the things an outside sponsor could, or be able to get a commitment from someone or several individuals and organizations that can.

Providing Support to Sponsors

Sponsors or co-sponsors will need the help and guidance of the local health unit and the other resources of Hometown Health Improvement. This is your commitment to them.

The word 'coalition' is derived from two Latin roots, coalescere, "to grow together' and coalitio, 'a union'. Coalitions unite individuals and groups in a shared purpose

Building Support Through Coalitions

Community-wide change requires community-wide mobilization of resources and will. After deciding to act, sponsors must identify and bring together all the potential players. These people are often called stakeholders because they have a vested interest in the community and its future.

Together these individuals will make a stakeholder team or coalition. This team is responsible for supporting the project and carrying out the work. Consequently, the team should have the respect and confidence of community members. The process of developing the stakeholder team requires recruitment, orientation, and strategic planning. Additionally, the stakeholder team should publicize the project and begin to build community-wide support.

When people and organizations work together on behalf of the community, not themselves, things happen

The real value of participation stems from the finding that mobilizing the entire community, rather than engaging people on an individualized basis or not engaging them at all, leads to more effective results. Change is more likely to be successful and permanent when the people it affects are involved in initiating and promoting it. Ultimately, the collaborative must form a web of alliances that represents the interests and resources of the entire community. Sponsors, and other partners as they come on board, should use personal relationships to reach out to potential partners.

Benefits of Coalitions

Coalitions allow a multitude of stakeholders in the community to work together toward a common purpose, building on the community's resources, talents, and assets. In coalitions, all parties have a contribution to and a stake in the outcomes.

A collaborative approach involves building relationships, establishing effective communication, and sharing resources with many diverse partners, including state and local public health jurisdictions, community service providers, business, labor, health care providers, insurance plans, and others. Though it often takes more time initially than independent action, collaboration results in support and buy-in from the community that is essential to the success of the project.

Planning well, having a clear shared vision, publicizing small successes, giving credit for ideas, sharing responsibilities, and letting the coalition grow over time have all been found to lead to success.

Coalitions are partnerships of the many sectors of a community, which gather together collaboratively to solve the community's problems and guide the community's future. When they are driven by citizen identified issues, citizens become involved in all steps of the problem solving process. If this happens, coalitions can become a powerful and enduring force for change.

A coalition of stakeholders:

- Helps increase the visibility and credibility of the project and stimulate community interest.
- Ensures community ownership and investment in issues and solutions.
- Increases communication and breaks stereotypes
- Decreases project workload as tasks are divided and team members share responsibilities.
- Revitalizes the sagging energies of members of diverse groups who are trying to do too much.
- Provides more energy to tackle projects.

- Can provide access to both financial and non-financial resources.

- Enhances the creativity and problem-solving abilities of the team.

- Can accomplish what single organizations cannot.

Coalitions can work. When people and organizations work together on behalf of the community, not themselves, things happen. However, they do require energy and time. If they are put together well and with positive intent, they become the part of a community, not merely an add-on. Clearly, however, collaborative ventures are not easy to create and even more difficult to sustain. There are many lessons that can be learned from previous attempts.

Avoiding Landmines When Forming a Coalition
The following are some common landmines that hamper many coalitions.

- Waiting to convene a group until everyone is at the table. The enthusiasm of a wisely selected and enthusiastic core group can cool while others are being brought in. Do not waste time.
- Not taking the time to involve key players who could easily block what the collaborative hopes to do. Whenever possible, try to make allies out of adversaries.
- Allowing one partner to assume control of the group, instead of establishing the expectation of shared leadership. Collaborative power grows when equals share authority and responsibility.
- Allowing the media or political pressure to direct the agenda.
- Neglecting to reflect periodically on milestones and potential problems.

- Failing to establish clear ground rules.
- Failing to have a clear purpose agreed on by the group.

Factors Influencing a Coalition's Success
The following have been identified as important criteria for success:

- Planning well
- Starting small, do not overestimate what you can do
- Publicizing small successes
- Giving credit for ideas
- Sharing responsibilities, and
- Letting the coalition grow over time

Coalitions do not just automatically work. They require a concentrated effort, organizational coordination, and effecting a balance between group cohesion and member autonomy.

Coalitions must:

- Define their purpose – what it will do and also what it will not do
- Decide on clear goals that relate to the purpose, and objectives that are measurable, time-specific and tied to the goals
- Decide on how administrative and financial arrangements will be handled during the formation period
- Decide on the best structure

- Decide on leadership
- Agree on roles and responsibilities of members
- Prepare a realistic work plan (list goals, objectives, tasks, timetables, and people or organizations responsible)
- Establish a procedure to address problems and conflicts openly to avoid factions.

Factors Hindering a Coalition's Effectiveness
Once operational, coalitions can be effective change agents. However, they require commitment, time, and energy. People have to be committed to the coalition's purpose, and the goals and objectives have to be realistic and achievable within a reasonable timeframe.

Coalitions can fail for various reasons:
- Unclear or too broad a purpose or losing focus on the purpose.
- Goals and objectives are not clear, measurable or time specific.
- Disparities on values, and purposes of the member organizations.
- Unclear or unrealistic expectation about the coalition's roles, responsibilities, or the time and resources required to establish and maintain a coalition.
- Lack of leadership, planning, and organization.
- Failure to acknowledge individual needs of members or member organizations.

- Conflicting loyalties, vested interests, and fear of domination by one organization or individual
- Lack of adequate funds and/or personnel to carry out goals
- Failure to produce results commensurate with the time and effort expended

- Focusing on obstacles and current realities rather than future possibilities

- Over reliance on a charismatic leader

What a Coalition Is Not

In order to have a successful coalition, it is important to understand what they are not. Coalitions are not externally run or externally driven organizations. They must have a strong base in the community. That base should have a strong citizen component, but even for a coalition of agencies, those agencies must have deep community roots.

Coalitions are not an automatic link to the grassroots and "real people." Too often people think creating a coalition will naturally create links to the grassroots. But this is unlikely, if coalitions are composed of institutional representatives rather than citizens. Coalitions must make special efforts if they are serious about reaching the grassroots. There will be a section on how to involve the community later.

Finally, coalitions are not a cure-all. Even the most successful coalitions cannot solve all of a community's problems.

Coalitions are not ends in themselves, but rather a means to an end. Certainly, we have all seen many examples of coalitions that have either outlived their usefulness or never actually found it, but have, instead, become forums for endless planning and contemplation rather than forums for action. Coalitions are a mechanism that allows communities to solve their own problems more effectively. Too many coalitions do not get to that problem-solving phase.

Collaboration is central to coalition building. Coalitions are not always efficient. Building a collaborative effort through a coalition is not necessarily efficient. It involves casting a larger and larger net to involve more and more people in both identifying and solving a community's problems. This requires building consensus and building trust, both of which take time. Coalition building is not a "quick fix," nor a one-year project.

Recognizing Other Community Coalitions

Building a coalition requires the involvement and expertise of a variety of individuals and groups. Coalitions, if formed in the right spirit, add value to existing community efforts. They do not duplicate or supersede existing organizational structures or job responsibilities. They are not intended to be ways to exclude or bypass; collaboration is intended to bring parts of a community puzzle together to make things happen in new and different ways.

A community coalition will build bridges to strengthen the capacity of your community. Establishing a community coalition naturally begins with linking to what already exists. As your coalition grows, it continues to link with other existing groups that share common goals and could help assume responsibility for collaborating on a broader agenda.

It is important to realize that other coalitions currently may exist in the community and may be potential resources. Specifically, existing coalitions can provide suggestions, support, and/or resources to the community health improvement project. Moreover, existing coalitions may be working on related projects.

Existing coalitions are likely to have several assets, including "lessons learned," useful to the sponsor. Other community coalitions may have collected relevant data, established a community-based organization, and created an infrastructure that could contribute to the project's success. These assets may help the project move ahead faster and more effectively.

By building on existing groups and creating formal linkages to other existing groups in your community, you focus the work of the various efforts toward achieving related goals.

A number of sources can be used to determine the existing coalitions in the community. These sources include:

- the sponsor's network of community contacts
- professional associations
- not-for-profit organizations and foundations
- state and county agencies
- local media, schools and universities

The process of contacting existing coalitions also should be used as a way to educate the community about the project. When calling, visiting, or writing other coalitions, be prepared to discuss the concept of the Hometown Health Improvement. Also, individuals involved in existing coalitions may want to become involved in the project. If this is the case, an invitation to participate should be extended.

You must also be prepared to meet some resistance or concern that you are interfering in their business. You need to be able to tell them how your project is different and will complement their Project. If you can not do this, it may be necessary to rethink the group you were considering for your project.

Coalition Membership

Coalition memberships vary widely. Initial coalition discussions about who should be invited, and who should not, are often among the coalition's first decisions. If one makes the assumption that the goal of the coalition is to mobilize as many resources from as many sectors of the community as possible to work on community issues, then one needs to make initial membership decisions that would create a sense of equal access to the coalition. If coalitions limit who can be members, who can be on steering committees, whose resources they are interested in tapping, then by definition they are excluding people from the community and the coalition will not be able to tap into their capacities and resources to solve the community's problems.

Often coalitions decide to start off small, and try to increase their inclusiveness as time proceeds. The difficulty with this approach is that when others come on board they can feel that critical decisions were made without them. An inclusive approach requires addressing the issue at the start. There may be valid reasons to exclude someone or to start small but make sure that when the decision is made the consequences are also considered.

There are a myriad of reasons why the participation of diverse community members is important. Among these are:

- Insights of more people in defining the issues and priorities.
- Community ownership and investment in issues and solutions.

- Broader networks of people to inform and involve.
- More energy with which to tackle projects.

Inclusive membership will occur only through active recruiting of the two power extremes in the community- the most powerful (business, clergy, politicians, etc.) and the least powerful (neighborhood groups, youth, people of color, the poor, etc.) The geographic boundaries of the coalition will also be decided by those directly involved.

While collaborations should be inclusive, they also must be careful not to become so large that partners no longer feel as though they have ownership. Creating special working groups or subcommittees can provide additional people with roles to play.

Identifying Potential Stakeholders
The people who will lead, participate in, and eventually implement the activities of the coalition will affect its growth and development. Their vision, commitment, and competence are central to the success of any collaborative effort, especially as they work toward achieving better health outcomes in the community.

Begin with people who are interested: a shared and clear commitment to the purpose is the single most important factor contributing to success. Do not waste time trying to include people who should be involved but who simply are not interested; conversely, do not exclude groups that logically might have something to contribute.

In the Tools Section of this guide, you will find Tools to help you **Identify Stakeholders in the Community, Tools 7, 8, and 9**.

Potential members should represent the diversity of the community and should include a variety of community leaders. They should be people who have the ability and resources to bring about change. They should have a good understanding of the community in which they live and be supportive of the assessment and planning process.

These people are critical to the project. Some potential stakeholders include:

- Hospital chief executive officers and other executives
- Physicians, nurses, and other health professionals
- Local business professionals
- Elected officials and civic leaders
- Local department of health officials
- Teachers, professors, and academic researchers
- Religious leaders
- Individuals admired by the community

Stakeholders typically have several key characteristics in common. These characteristics include:

- leaders in the community
- vested interest in the community's health
- influence in the community
- interest in representing diversity of the community
- active in community affairs
- belief in the project concept

Keep in mind that in some organizations the top person is not the best person to participate or the person who will work the hardest. You may want their support but a middle manager or someone else to actually participate and be a part of your coalition.

Preparing to Contact Potential Stakeholders

Before contacting potential stakeholders, be prepared to discuss the benefits to them or their organization and possible roles and responsibilities. Also, gather background information about the potential stakeholder and their organization. The background information can provide insight into the key values important to the stakeholder. Be prepared to answer any questions the potential stakeholder may have, including why a coalition is the best method for addressing these issues or completing this project.

The most effective way to recruit potential members is to meet them face to face, though there are situations where phone calls or writing letters are better or at least reasonable options. You know the people in your community and may find it best to use a combination of approaches, contacting different people in different ways.

Regardless of the form of contact the purpose is to:

- Initiate the relationship-building process.
- Provide information about the project.
- Request formal commitment and support.
- Identify an optimal date for a coalition meeting.

It is important at this stage to remember that people are being invited to the table to explore a problem of mutual interest. No one is in charge, and no agenda has been set. That will be asked of the coalition.

In the Tools Section of this guide are an **Outline of a Conversation** and a **Sample Letter to Recruit Stakeholders,** to help you contact potential members, **Tools 10 and 11**.

Conversations on collaboration should emphasize what people and agencies are "getting," not what they may be "giving up," what they will gain, not what they will lose. Refer to the **Project Benefits List** in **Tools Section, Tool 2**.

Members may decline if participation is perceived as costly. Costs that are often cited include:

- Devoting time to the coalition that is taken from other obligations.
- Losing autonomy in shared decision making.
- Lacking direction from the leadership or staff of the coalition; perceiving a lack of appreciation or recognition.
- Becoming burned out; lacking necessary skills and feeling pressured for additional commitment.

Look for the worksheet on **Excuses You May Hear** in the **Tools Section, Tool 12**.

Participants will invest their energy in a group only if the expected benefits outweigh the costs that are entailed.

At the conclusion of the telephone conversation or face-to-face meeting tell the potential stakeholder that a follow-up letter will be sent to him or her prior to the meeting date. Ideally, this should occur no later than two or three weeks after the first contact. To help the stakeholder understand the project, be prepared to respond accurately and completely to any questions prior to the meeting. Send or drop off a brochure on the Hometown Health Improvement Project. If the stakeholder agrees to join the coalition, notify them of the first meeting and include an agenda. Make sure you follow through on anything else you agree to do such as send more information or contact someone. Recruiting key partners and incorporating them into the collaborative will take time. While working to develop a broad-based membership, partners also should work to make allies out of potential enemies. Successful collaborators continually ask themselves, " Who is in a position to obstruct our efforts? How can we help them see the advantages of working together and involve them?"

In the Tools Section of this guide you will find a **Follow-up Letter to Send a Stakeholder After Your Initial Conversation** with him/her, **Tools Section, Tool 13**.

Elements of a Successful Stakeholder Team

To develop a stakeholder team successfully, the following key elements for success should be satisfied.

- Broad-based participation should be developed early and continue throughout the project. The stakeholder team should reflect the composition of the community (e.g., various positions, backgrounds, interests, racial, ethnic, and income groups.) Representing the diversity of the community should result in new perspectives and more creative solutions to problems.

- Focus on the project is maintained while the stakeholders' needs are also met.

- The community's readiness to change should be assessed. Whether this is determined by a formal survey, or by informal discussion, this assessment should identify specific challenges facing the stakeholder team. Identifying these challenges up-front should reduce stakeholder frustration and improve satisfaction.

- The project should be publicized to the community. Publicizing the project serves to inform the community and possibly obtain additional community resources. The team might want to appoint a person or subcommittee to be responsible for this.

Additional information can be found in **Building a Stakeholder Team**, **Tools Section, Tool 14**.

Building Support Through an Effective Team

We have all been part of a team where people started out enthusiastic but then nothing was accomplished and it gradually fell apart. There are a number of things you can do to help prevent this from happening but it is important to start early in the life of your team. How you begin is critical. This section offers tips and advice on how to ensure that your team is effective.

Preparing for the First Coalition Meeting
Once stakeholders are identified and contacted, it is time to hold your first meeting. The coalition meeting should occur shortly after the team members have been contacted. At this meeting, stakeholders should be assembled to discuss the project concept, as well as basic steps the project will include. Remind them that these steps are just a guide, they will determine the specific activities for their community.

A coalition's membership is its primary asset. Each member brings a different set of resources and skills to the coalition.

The first meeting is very important. It provides an opportunity to create lasting impressions on the stakeholders. Before potential members begin to collaborate, they must believe that collaboration will produce positive outcomes.

Positive expectations may create a climate of optimism that sustains member commitment. For these reasons, it is important that the sponsor be well organized and helps establish effective working relationships.

There are several tools provided in the Guide Two to help prepare for the meeting. Ideally the meeting agenda and list of individuals invited should be sent prior to the meeting.

In addition to preparing the agenda you need to consider the physical setting for the meeting. This can be very important to the success of the meeting. For assistance on this, see the Guide Two.

Change Readiness Survey

Some communities will find it helpful to conduct a survey to assess stakeholders' perception of the community's readiness to change. If you choose to do this, the survey should be sent with the follow-up letter to the stakeholders, prior to the meeting. Prior to the next meeting, send out a reminder with an agenda, a list of agreed actions, minutes, and attendance list. Each coalition is different and what they want to send will vary. At an early meeting the group should agree on how much follow-up they want. A coalition must be willing to formulate strategies that gradually draw people more closely into its web, rather than expecting a full "connection" from the beginning. You will find a copy of the **Change Readiness Survey** in the **Tools Section, Tool 15**.

Coalitions must seek to break the "top-down/bottom-up" mold. Collaboratives are intended to be non-hierarchical structures through which people come together to solve problems. They are mechanisms for sharing power and are intended to enable institutions and communities to find new ways of organizing and operating.

Once operational, coalitions can be effective change agents. However, they require commitment, time, and energy to succeed. People have to be committed to the coalition's purpose, and the goals and objectives have to be realistic and achievable within a reasonable time.

Characteristics of Teams That Work and Those That Do Not

Far more groups fail than succeed, so what can be done to make sure your coalition develops into a productive group? Here are some characteristics of productive and less productive groups.

In productive groups:

- ✓ People listen and pay attention to one another.
- ✓ People discuss the subject at hand.
- ✓ Everyone's ideas and suggestions are welcomed.
- ✓ Everyone has a chance to state his or her views.
- ✓ The group uses its agenda as a guide for discussion.
- ✓ Members know and use problem-solving steps.
- ✓ Members are clear about group decisions and are committed to them.

In less productive groups:

- ✓ People do not listen and all tend to talk at the same time.
- ✓ The discussion jumps from one idea to another, often diverging to irrelevant topics.
- ✓ Some members' ideas do not seem "to count", so these people do not act as if they really belong to the group.
- ✓ No one summarizes or checks to see if everyone who wants to speak has actually spoken. One or two people do all the talking.
- ✓ The agenda is not clear and there is no written guide for discussion.
- ✓ Meetings start late and discussions go on and on until people get tired.
- ✓ No order is followed for identifying and solving problems.
- ✓ Decision-making is "muddy" and people are not committed to the group's plan.

Ensuring Your Team is Productive

Anyone who has been in a coalition will tell you that the path to success is a rocky one, often marked by two steps forward and one step back. This should not surprise us when we consider the many forces in communities. We must think about the path of coalition progress as a dynamic one, one that is constantly changing with time. New obstacles and opportunities always keep arising. So let's look at some strategies to help ensure your coalition's success. In addition to these ideas working through the sections on defining the community and creating a common vision can also help to develop a productive team.

Developing a Base of Common Knowledge

Getting to know each other is important for the success of the coalition. One of the hardest parts of collaboration is having people from diverse backgrounds learn to trust each other. In the most effective coalitions, partners take time to understand each other's systems and explore their differences. Partners with limited knowledge of each other's organizations often rely on stereotypes and misconceptions to fill in the blanks. To avoid misunderstanding, partners must develop a base of common knowledge. This requires learning about each other's services and resources, goals, objectives, organization cultures, and working constraints. Developing common knowledge also means understanding personal differences and working together to achieve small victories.

If coalition members are to work together effectively, they must know what services and resources they bring to the table. Partners must understand the policies and regulations that constrain each organization and the language each uses to discuss its work.

Partners need to share information that will help others understand:

- ✓ The organization's mission.
- ✓ The policies, rules, and procedures they must follow to deliver services.
- ✓ Where the money comes form and how they can use it.
- ✓ How they measure and define success.
- ✓ The terms, phrases, and acronyms they use routinely.
- ✓ How their organizations are staffed and the extent of partner's authority, including formal and informal decision making power and ability.
- ✓ Internal communication patterns (who communicates with whom and how).
- ✓ Their allies, supporters, and competitors.
- ✓ Previous experience with collaboratives and their feeling about them.
- ✓ What they have to offer a collaborative.
- ✓ How collaboration might affect them, positively or negatively.

Talking candidly about these issues builds trust and allows partners to plan realistically.

Defining Committee Structure

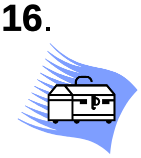
Don't confuse structure with bureaucracy.

One of the primary reasons a team fails is lack of structure. Structure is the framework around, which the group is organized. Structure gives members clear guidelines for how to proceed. Uncertainty and disagreements will inevitability arise. If there is too much uncertainty or disagreement, people will begin to imagine how nice it would be to be someplace else. They will lose interest and enthusiasm. A clearly established structure gives the group a means to cut through the uncertainty, resolve the disagreements, and maintain the investment.

It is important to deal with structure early in the organization's history. While the need for structure is clear, the best structure for a particular coalition is harder to determine. This is because organizational structure is not one-size fits all. Some structures are tight; others are loose. Some are simple; others quite complicated.

The best structure depends upon who you are, where you have been, and where you see yourself going. And structure will change according to different stages in an organization's life. The task for any organization is to find that structure best suited to its own character, members, time, and place. Do not confuse structure with bureaucracy.

Though structure of a coalition is essential, it must also be flexible so that new players can be added, sub-groups established to serve special purposes, and the capacity to respond to changing circumstances maintained. There is no one "model" for a coalition that all communities should follow. To help you decide what structure is best for your group, see the **Tools Section, Tool 16**.



Coalitions are intended to be non-hierarchical structures through which people come together to solve problems. They are mechanisms for sharing power and are intended to enable institutions and communities to find new ways of organizing and operating.

Regardless of what type of structure your organization decides upon, three elements will always be there. They are:

- Some kind of governance
- Rules by which the organization operates
- A distribution of work

Structure is best decided upon internally, through a process of critical thinking and discussion by members of the group. When choosing a structure, consider the needs of the coalition. It is likely that roles and responsibilities will be delegated among coalition members. Some coalitions have found that they can spread the workload out among both the coalition and the community by delegating tasks and requirements to a group in the community that a team member leads.

One way to determine the structure is to identify the specific skills and interest of each stakeholder. The team should recognize the diversity of individual members composing the team and use this strength to the team's advantage. It should be understood that each member's input is valuable and everyone can contribute in a meaningful way. Use the **Exploratory Meeting Sign-In Sheet** provided in the Tools Section to find more information about each stakeholder, **Tool 17.** For additional information see, *Tools 7,8, and 9*.

Based on the skills identified, specific roles and responsibilities may be defined. These roles and responsibilities should be matched with the member's background, experience, and interest.

Still, "gaps" may be identified by comparing the skills identified on the team, with the skills needed for the project. The team should fill any "gaps" by recruiting additional stakeholders.

Finally, as a result of identifying stakeholder skills, the team can clearly allocate specific project resources. This should avoid any duplicative efforts, use resources more efficiently, and build on skills and strengths.

Obviously, a group can accomplish more than an individual could alone, and that is why this coalition was formed. However, this does not mean that it will automatically happen. It is important that the structure of the group facilitate this process. Make sure your structure stresses open communication, teamwork and leadership. In some cases it may be necessary to use exercises or other methods to develop and enhance these skills. Provided in the Tools Section is a sample of **Roles and Responsibilities of Members**, **Tool 18**.

Defining Rules for Facilitators and Staff

Sorting out the roles of facilitators and staff is an important element in building a working collaborative. First of all it is important to understand the difference between the two.

- Facilitators—assist with collaboration, coach and manage the process of collaboration, and are able to “step back” and allow the group to do the work. They focus primarily on helping to design and conduct the meetings of the coalition, but generally do not carry out the substantive agenda. In certain circumstances, facilitators are able to “ask the tough questions” and “push the group” to grapple with these issues.

- Staff—of the collaboration have much more direct ownership of the coalition. They are responsible for making the work of the coalition happen. They nurture the process and participants along, and serve the collaboration as both a professional leader, who performs vital staff work, and a logistics person who coordinates and guides meetings.

The staff helps by:

- ✓ Keeping the vision
- ✓ Identifying and developing leadership
- ✓ Building and maintaining a collaborative measure
- ✓ Serving as a communication center
- ✓ Functioning as policy analyst
- ✓ Facilitating interagency relations
- ✓ Involving the community

Some coalitions operate with people in both facilitator and staff roles. This approach enables the staff members to participate more readily in the dialogue of the collaborative rather than having to help facilitate meetings. In these cases, the agenda for the coalition's meetings and the desired outcomes are defined by the leadership of the coalition and staff. The facilitator's role is to help the group work through the agenda and reach the desired outcomes. Both of these roles are ones the Department is prepared to help provide as apart of the technical assistance for the project. In most cases, the staff's role will be filled in part at least by someone in the local unit.

The role of coordinating a coalition is a complex one, involving numerous functions and a capacity to work with a wide variety of groups and individuals. Coordinators and leaders must be perceived as fair and able to deal with conflict; they must be able to help a diverse group create a vision and action plan, and then move forward.

Over time, coalitions should work to build a collaborative decision-making culture with facilitation skills among all members of the coalition. This may eliminate the need for the facilitator role on a regular basis. There will be occasions, however, when difficult choices must be made or conflicts arise where the involvement of a third party facilitator can help the group to move forward.

Defining the Community

One of the first things the team must do is define their community for the Hometown Health Improvement Project. Community can mean many different things. Therefore, accurately defining the community is critical to successfully improving community health. This is important as we tend to take the dimensions of our communities for granted. This could lead to an unintentional oversight and exclude an important segment that should be included.

Broadly, communities can be defined in three different ways:

- ✓ Community as a Place
- ✓ Community as a People
- ✓ Community as a System

More specifically, a community may be defined by geographic, demographic, social, cultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical dimensions. While the final definition may be based on one or more of these characteristics, it is important that a single, unified definition is developed that accurately reflects the community's unique attributes.

Identifying Geographic Boundaries

Initially, the community's geographic boundaries should be examined. A number of these boundaries are already established and recognized by community members. The geographic of a community can be determined by looking at a variety of things including:

- Counties
- Townships
- Cities and Municipalities
- Zip Codes
- School Districts
- Health Statistical Area
- Geographic Service Area

Information sources that may be used to identify the geographic community include street, political ward, real estate, and postal maps. Additional considerations include landmarks, roads, natural borders (mountains, rivers, etc.), and distance between population areas. Community stakeholders also may define geographic boundaries based on perceptions that more accurately may reflect the "true" boundaries of the community.

Stakeholders may have differing viewpoints regarding the community's geographic boundaries. These differences are valuable to obtaining an accurate and flexible definition that can be used throughout the community health improvement project.

The geographic boundaries of the community will drive the remaining data collection process. Here are some things to consider when determining whether your definition should include a single town, a county, or a cluster of towns.

- ✓ Do the leaders have a shared vision?
- ✓ Are there horizontal linkages that can be strengthened?
- ✓ Is there evidence of past cooperation among towns?

- ✓ Is there a shared problem or common set of needs?
- ✓ Will the process increase the community capacity to meet the health care needs of citizens?
- ✓ Will the functional community survive?
- ✓ Will the benefits of shared planning outweigh the risks?

Defining the boundaries is essential to the project. The team should not proceed until they reach consensus on the primary geographic boundaries defining the community. There are several tools in the Tools Section to help you **Define Your Community**, **Tools 19, 20, 21**.

We traditionally think of a community as meaning the people in a given geographical location however, it can mean any group sharing something in common, for example the medical community, the business community, etc. Actually there is not one community but many overlapping communities. The following are several categories of information to help you look at other aspects of your community. It may help uncover something in the community's history that explains the strong emotions on a particular subject. Regardless of what is found you will have a clearer picture and understanding of your community.

Identifying Demographic Characteristics

Once the geographic boundaries are agreed on, the demographic characteristics of the community should be used to develop the definition of the community. The advantage of including demographic information is that these characteristics often affect health status. By examining and defining a community's demographic makeup, stakeholders can better understand and predict health issues. Some key demographic characteristics to consider include:

- ✓ Race/ethnicity
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age

Additional variables and combinations of demographic data defining the community also can be examined. Stakeholders are encouraged to compile and analyze the data to best meet the needs of the community. A great example of how to do this is found in the Tools Section, **Demographic Profile Worksheet**, **Tool 22**.

Identifying Social and Cultural Characteristics

Social and cultural practices influence a community's perception of what "health" means and may influence how and what kind of health care people seek out, as well as individual health behaviors. Various social groups may consider a certain behavior a health risk, while others may not. Having a clear understanding of the social and cultural perceptions of the community will assist the team in defining the community and developing the most effective intervention strategies. Social and cultural characteristics include religious perceptions about health care, ethnic beliefs about the family's role in health care, and a multitude of other characteristics.

Identifying Socioeconomic and Sociopolitical Characteristics

Socioeconomic factors include income levels, educational levels, unemployment, inflation, and the strength of the local and state economies. Identifying the economic forces affecting the community will assist in identifying key underlying causes of health issues and their potential solutions. Identification of these characteristics can provide insight into community health status since there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and health. Sociopolitical considerations involve understanding the political dimensions of the community. Determining the community's political landscape can help identify implementation roadblocks and opportunities. Sociopolitical information includes community voting patterns, which political issues are of primary concern, and which political parties and platforms the community identifies with and supports.

Sources of information regarding community sociopolitical dynamics include:

- ✓ Stakeholder perceptions
- ✓ Newspaper publishers
- ✓ Media
- ✓ Radio and television broadcasters
- ✓ Politicians/political parties

Successfully defining the community should incorporate the following key elements for success:

- Team must agree on geographic boundaries of the community.
- The team must identify as thoroughly as possible the characteristics that define the community.
- Consensus by the team must be reached on a definition of the community if the team is to collect valid community-specific health information.

Due to the diverse interest in the community, reaching consensus on the definition of "community" is not always easy. Use the **Exploring Your Community Worksheet** in the Tools Section to help you reach a definition, **Tool 23**.

If a common definition of community cannot be agreed upon, the team must work together until it is able to develop a consensus on the meaning of "community" for the project. The team should refer back to standard geographic definitions established by the state for guidance. Existing data may dictate the meaning of "community" for the team. If the team cannot reach agreement, consider using an outside facilitator to help the team reach consensus. There may be others in the community such as public officials, community developers, local historians, and specific community group leaders that may be able to provide assistance. Defining the community is a major accomplishment. The stakeholder team should celebrate this achievement.

Identifying Community Dynamics

Some groups find identifying community dynamics early in the process helps them know who to involve and how to ensure results. Others choose to wait until they are ready to implement a strategy to do this and some do both. Community dynamics are the various formal and informal relationships that exist in the community and that have a potential impact on the community health improvement project. The relationships between insurers, providers, businesses, and individuals in the community have a significant effect on how health care is delivered and used. Understanding these relationships and how they develop within the community is important for determining an effective community health improvement strategy.

The benefits to formally identifying community dynamics are:

- Key community change agents and supporters are identified and can be recruited

- Identification of community strengths and weaknesses can assist in focusing health improvement efforts
- Formal and informal community leaders are identified and considered when developing a strategy to address the key health issues facing the community

See the **Community Dynamics Worksheet** in the Tools Section for more information, **Tool 24**.

There are a variety of measures to help you determine the dynamics of your community. These are summarized below with suggested tools to assist your team in this process.

- **Ownership and Involvement Potential**
  Measuring ownership and involvement potential means looking at the extent to which the community, as a group, has participated in key decision making in the past. Identifying and measuring the level of ownership and involvement in the community helps the team maximize community involvement.

- **Current Level of Community Collaboration**
  Community collaboration is the ability of various community members and organizations to work together effectively. It is the process by which agencies, individuals, stakeholders and other organizations within your defined community formally commit to a sustained effort to work together for a common good.

  A community must collaborate if it is to use available resources efficiently to address key health issues. Existing community-based collaborative projects should be identified and examined. Collaborative projects may be formal, well-organized projects, or informal arrangements.

- **Community Business, Health Care, Social and Government Relations**
  Identifying the forces compelling change in the community will assist in developing an effective intervention strategy. Two key questions to address in this step include:
  - ✓ What are the forces impacting community relationships?
  - ✓ Are there any significant relationship "gaps" in the community or areas for relationship improvement?

A **Collaboration Inventory Questionnaire** has been provided for you in the Tools Section of this guide, **Tool 25**.

The success of the intervention strategy depends on the community's ability to work together to achieve a common goal—improved overall community health. The more knowledgeable the coalition is regarding business, health care, social, and governmental relationships, the more likely a successful intervention strategy will be implemented. The community must perceive a satisfactory level of ownership of the health issues of their community. After looking at your community dynamics, you may find that you will encounter one or more of the following. If so, here are some suggested ways to overcome these barriers.

Lack of perceived ownership by community of health issues

Effective communication is a useful method for helping community members perceive health issues on their own. Inform the community about the effects of poor health on the community. Also, communicate the benefits the community may realize may improve its collective health.

Little or no collaboration between community coalitions

Collaboration building activities including sharing of resources, and joint sponsorship of programs can help improve community cooperation. Because improving community health requires the combined effort of the entire community, increasing the number of collaboration activities is essential. Additional collaboration building activities include sharing of volunteer resources, joint fund raising, sharing of funds, and joint events.

Relationships between business, health care, social and governmental entities are non-existent or negative

The stakeholder team must help forge positive links between business, health care, social and governmental entities. This requires extending communications in new and different ways (e.g.., joint planning sessions, regular and frequent exchange of relevant information). Negative relationships between community segments must be countered by the vision of a better future for all. Again, persuasive and persistent communication detailing the benefits of working together can overcome this barrier.

The involvement potential and collaboration levels within the community should be measured. The coalition will be the primary resource for this information as it represents the diversity of the community. Communicate with key contacts that previously have had successful collaborations to see what insight or advice they can give the team.

Understanding community characteristics is important. It helps the team be aware of the degree of community collaboration, so it can foster positive relationships. This increases the chance of a successful project and will help determine the best approach.

Potential Problems and Ways to Address Them

Coalitions, like most organizations and groups, can work well or be plagued with problems. Here are some of the most common problems and how to avoid them or address them if they occur.

Turf and Competition

A clear and explicit goal of coalitions is often to promote coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Therefore, it may surprise some that turf, territoriality, and competition among coalition members is a major barrier to coalition success. The capacity of one organization to feel competitive with another often amazes outsiders. This competition can be between two public sector agencies, between the private sector and the public sector, between state and local governments or between local government and the community. Although one would hope that having declared themselves as wanting to be part of a coalition, these turf battles would decline – but they often escalate instead.

Strategies for Dealing with Turfism

Too often we expect self-sacrifice from individuals and organizations as they move toward coalition solutions. If we understand that personal and organizational self-interest is part of the reality and part of what motivates people, then we can look for strategies that take self-interest into account. It is also possible to minimize the impact of turf, territoriality, and self-interest by appealing to a larger good. It has been found that the common good that has the most appeal is that of the community and neighborhood. This is why coalition building often focuses on geographic areas.

Bad History

A frequent comment when you begin working with communities about building a new community coalition is, “Oh, we tried that once before here. It doesn’t work.” Many communities have had unsuccessful attempts at building cooperation and forming coalitions in their past. Too often, these attempts were ill fated because they did not involve a carefully thought out process, did not have enough resources to succeed, or were imposed from above as a mandate: “You WILL cooperate.”

Also, there is often a history between agencies and different components in communities, and one should never forget their impact.

Too often someone tries to start working in a community without knowledge of context. Never forget the power of history. All you have to do is talk to an agency director and hear, “We don’t work with that other agency because 15 years ago they had a director who insulted our director at a public meeting” or “We tried that about 7 years ago but we ended up doing all the work and they did nothing” to realize how important it is.

Strategies to Deal With Bad History

The first strategy is to learn the community’s history. Even if you have lived there forever, talk to people and make sure you have not forgotten or did not know something. Determine what efforts occurred in the past to build cooperation and coalitions, and how they succeeded or failed. Newspaper archives or local historical society can often provide valuable insight into a community. One can also collect a detailed history of conflict and cooperation among agencies in the community. Following that, the second key way to undo bad history is to create an open and fair process that allows everyone to participate, everyone to set the ground rules, and everyone to shape the coalition's agenda. In this way, some of the factors that led to conflict in the past can be avoided in this new round of coalition building.

Failure to Act

One of the most lethal behaviors of coalitions is endless, long planning meetings that bog down a coalition before it ever acts. Many of us have sat on coalitions that aim to solve problems by involving a large number of important people with busy schedules, who sit around a room for over a year thinking, planning, and doing needs assessments before anything happens. In most cases, this long planning process without action is not only unnecessary, but can also destroy a coalition before it starts. Citizens, citizen groups, and those in the community committed to change are often quickly turned off by this atmosphere. Coalitions at their heart are based on creating change and demonstrating the capacity to act. It is this capacity that attracts the kinds of members who make coalitions succeed. When coalitions fail to display a commitment to action, or display a fear of advocacy, then they discourage the involvement of exactly the people who will make the coalition a success.

Strategies to Avoid Failure to Act

Although a coalition must be able to operate in a planning manner, it must also be able to produce some actions and results in its first weeks and months of existence. These are not opposing goals. One can be involved in a careful, long-term planning process, while at the same time acting on issues like creating a newsletter, circulating a petition at a coalition meeting, or holding a public session on a controversial topic.

All of these can happen within the first months of a coalition's existence. Such actions show the members and the community that the coalition is committed to making something happen, as opposed to writing reports that sit on someone's shelf.

In order to keep players in the coalition, from the start, the coalition must be able to demonstrate a commitment to action, and then it must indeed act. Both the commitment to action, and the action itself must be sustained throughout the history of the coalition.

A coalition must be careful not to become so involved in these efforts that progress is delayed on more difficult and, perhaps, more controversial goals.

Dominance by Professionals

Although key professionals in communities are often important members of coalitions and can be especially helpful assets, they can also become barriers. This happens when professionals dominate the process.

This barrier is seen frequently, for example, when a group of adult service providers decides to deal with teen issues in the community by developing a teen center. In one actual situation, providers went about designing and opening a teen center without any input from the teens themselves. When no teens showed up in the first months, the professionals perceived the teens as being apathetic and blamed the teens for the problem. The providers did not recognize that only by consulting with teens, and letting them decide how best to set up the teen center, did they have any chance of success.

Strategies to Deal with Dominance by Professionals
Active attempts to recruit citizens are critical to coalition success. One should also respect the important role of "citizen helpers." These are people who have professional roles in communities, but who are also active citizens of the community and, therefore, can wear both hats. But having citizen helpers does not eliminate the need to have citizen members who are not in a professional, formal helping role. Often, to get citizen input requires the coalition to actively go out in the community, talk to citizens, and test out new ideas before they are implemented. Unless the coalition is constantly asking the community what it wants and then responding to it, it will be hard to overcome the dominance of both professionals.

Lack of a Common Vision
Building collective ownership and responsibility for the work of a collaborative is critical to its success. Without this, the coalition may find itself breaking apart when it confronts issues that challenge old paradigms, formal agency missions and established policies and procedures. There is often disharmony and disagreement about the coalition's purpose or goals.

Strategies to Ensure There Is a Common Vision
Clearly, the most helpful strategy is to develop a common vision before the onset of the coalition. Grassroots community coalitions typically have that; for example, the neighbors in the community get together to make sure the community playgrounds are safe. If a joint vision is not clear to everyone at the start, it will be necessary to undertake a planning process that involves visioning, revisiting the mission, clarifying the goals and articulating objectives and action plans. This will help the coalition determine whether or not there are indeed shared tasks that members wish to work on together. If there are not, the coalition needs to be brave enough to dissolve. If there are, the coalition can

rewrite its mission statement and move forward. Coalitions are such vibrant and responsive institutions that this process of revisiting vision, mission, goals, and objectives needs to occur on a very regular and, at a minimum, annual basis.

Failure to Provide and Create Leadership

Coalitions have two leadership missions. One is to provide competent leadership for the coalition itself and for its tasks. The other is to create new leadership in all sectors of the community. Many coalitions struggle with one or both of these missions. There are coalitions where there is a lack of leadership – many lieutenants but no generals. The coalition then seems to flounder, not heading in any one direction nor accomplishing any one task. Often, coalitions that manage to exchange information but never move forward to action suffer from the above difficulty.

On the flip side, a coalition may have a single dominant person who does not delegate, who does everything him/herself. As with any other organization, the members or followers then feel powerless, excluded, and increasingly less involved. That is one of the problems that occurs when paid coalition staff are used. These individuals take on leadership roles. The members can then easily say, "Well, I don't need to do that, we'll let our staff person do it." The creation of that kind of staff role implicitly undermines the creation of new leadership roles among the members.

Strategies to Ensure Strong Leaders

Coalitions need to have clearly identified leadership structures, but also need to share leadership as broadly as possible. Coalitions must consciously foster the development of leadership among all their members for coalition tasks, and also seek out new individuals to take leadership roles in the community. Sharing leadership is essential. When people talk about other people's group, it is a sign that they do not really share ownership.

Leadership must be seen as multi-faceted and occurring in many ways – not just who runs the meeting, or who chairs a task force, but also who volunteers to get people to come to a meeting, who sets up refreshments, and who is the lead person behind the scenes making things work. Each of these are leadership roles. It helps when leaders delegate "pieces of responsibility" to different parts of a collaboration. Leadership involves giving the work back to the group. Coalitions must regularly evaluate how their organizations themselves are being led and how good a job they are doing at creating leaders.

Poor Links to the Community

The majority of coalitions seem to have little success in establishing solid links to the community as a whole. When coalitions begin with gatherings of human service providers or educators, the meetings that are scheduled are often inaccessible to working citizens in terms of time, space, and the language and culture of the meetings.

Suppose a group of providers talks about funding sources coming from the state, using a variety of acronyms and initials; ordinary citizens quickly understand this is a world that they are not a part of; they may not return.

Strategies to Create Strong Links to the Community

Some strategies include making meetings more accessible in terms of language, time, space, and childcare; others include having agendas and processes that are citizen-driven.

Working With Volunteers

While some people on the coalition will be involved as part of their jobs others will volunteer their time, talents and resources. This is an important fact to keep in mind because there are recurring problems that typically characterize volunteer groups. The five problems discussed here are common to volunteer groups. Knowing how to confront difficulties with goals, group-membership contracts, leadership responsibility, rewards, and group process can make the work of these groups effective and satisfying. Attention to these problems can reduce the frustration and increase the effectiveness and enjoyment of working in volunteer roles.

Five Recurring Problems Common to Volunteer Groups:

1. *Too Many Goals*
   Most volunteer groups attempt more than they can accomplish. Their goals are usually so broad and vague that they create frustration in volunteers, leading to rapid turnover and often the effort fails. It is very important to push toward specific, achievable goals. Achievement leads to a feeling of success -- the only thing that can sustain volunteer effort.

2. *Lack of an Adequate Contract*
   One of the most basic problems facing volunteer groups is the lack of an adequate contract between the group and its membership. Most groups and organizations are not explicit about expectations for members. Most groups also do not allow the members to indicate their resources, experience, and backgrounds.
   Hence, a specific agreement between members and the organization regarding what each person can and will do is rare. Discovering members' resources and establishing members' time

commitments usually occurs informally and haphazardly, costing the group much maintenance time. Under utilization of members skills and experiences is often the result.

A method to deal with this problem is to have specific, written statements of expectations for each volunteer to help clarify individual responsibilities.

Another method that works well in some groups is to make asking specific questions a permanent agenda item. These questions will legitimize explicit discussion about members' mutual expectations. A permanent agenda item could be "Are we fulfilling our individual job descriptions?" or "How should they be changed or updated?"

3. *Lack of Leadership and Accountability*

Reluctance to confront the problems of leadership and accountability is common in volunteer groups. Since volunteers are not paid, this issue is especially uncomfortable. Failure to establish adequate leadership structures and to make members accountable for their responsibilities can be extremely serious. There are several ways to avert this.

✓ Project Leader

An effort should be made to select project leaders for each major program attempted. If possible, this task should be assumed by an active volunteer. This person is responsible for seeing that the project is successfully completed. This is also a good way to share leadership and get more people involved.

✓ Volunteer Coordinator

Many organizations do not provide adequately for volunteers in their structure. A volunteer

coordinator is useful to maximize the contribution of volunteers.
This person links the volunteer to others and keeps them moving. Often volunteers just need recognition. Letting them know how much they are appreciated can go a long way. This can be done in a variety of ways such as: hosting a luncheon or dinner for them, recognizing them in front of a group, mentioning their help in a press release, etc.

✓ Regular Meetings
Regular meetings intended to examine progress toward objectives, to exchange volunteers' information about their work, and to air problems can be very helpful. These meetings may result in a sense of group cohesiveness and a climate of support. Sometimes a regular meeting is not necessary but taking a few minutes before or after the coalition meeting to do this is well worth it.

✓ Orientation
Another function that a volunteer coordinator or someone else should do is to orient new members to the group. The more time spent on orientation, the quicker the volunteer becomes a working member of the organization. One orientation method uses the "buddy system": assigning one volunteer to work closely with each new member, to answer questions, and generally to familiarize him with the work. The veteran member can also assist the new member in developing a job description.

4. Lack of Rewards or Recognition
A major failure is neglecting to recognize volunteer efforts and contributions. Do not forget that it is not always people outside the organization who volunteer. Sometimes an

employee volunteers for additional responsibilities or to do something on their own time. This also needs to be recognized. One way to recognize volunteers is to invite them to participate in training or to provide lunch. A special dinner or other ceremony once a year where they are recognized or given a certificate is also helpful.

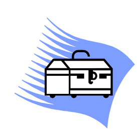
5. *Lack of Attention to Group Process*

Most volunteer groups do not give adequate thought to how they work together. Decision-making methods and other group norms are not determined explicitly. Group-process activities can aid the group in becoming more effective.

Some groups use structured experiences, role-plays, and discussion to help the group generate process objectives for improved functioning. For example, an objective might be “Our group will solicit views of quiet members” or “We will attempt to make our decisions by consensus as often as possible.”

A process observer is a group member assigned to observe the process. The existence of this role makes group dynamics a legitimate discussion item. The observer points out those items that are hindering group effectiveness and suggests preventive actions. Examples would be persuading the group to pursue the subject of preventing certain members from dominating.

The role of the process observer could revolve so that all members become accustomed to observing the process. **A Checklist of Process Objectives** developed by the group could be an important aid for the observer. An example is provided in the Tools Section, **Tool 26**.



Regular agenda items for meetings can sustain the group's thinking about its process. The questions might be as simple as "How are we performing as a group?" It is important to continuously monitor the process.

Building Support Through Conflict Management

Conflict is a daily reality for everyone. Whether at home or at work, an individual's needs and values constantly come into opposition with those of other people. Conflicts are also a part of every agency, organization and group. Community coalitions are no exception.

Some conflicts are relatively minor, easy to handle, or capable of being overlooked. Others of greater magnitude, however, require a strategy for successful resolution or they will create constant tension and problems. The ability to resolve conflicts successfully and find peaceful solutions to disagreements through conflict resolution is an important skill that we all have to develop and continually work on.

"Conflict resolution is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them."

Conflict resolution is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. The disagreement may be personal, financial, political, or emotional – or all of these. A conflict usually involves a dispute between two or more individuals or organizations.

Though there seem to be endless reasons for conflicts when you evaluate them you will usually find the same underlying causes for most. Those include unclear expectations, poor communication, lack of clear jurisdiction, insufficient resources and incompatible values.

In some cases these are intertwined and there are several involved. Some are easier to deal with than others. If it is obvious that poor communication is the real problem you may be able to clear up the conflict by simply clarifying the issue. However, when resources or values are involved, it may be more difficult to find a resolution.

"Often, there are many different ways to address the same interest."

As you might expect conflicts often arise when two or more parties are at odds over limited resources. Because there is not enough to satisfy their desires at the same time, conflict begins. Resources can include money, people or even time. Another basic source of conflict lies in value differences. In value conflicts, two or more parties desire different goals. Value conflicts are not easily resolved because the conflict may not be over a tangible, concrete item that can be negotiated.

It is also not unusual for value conflicts and scarce resource conflicts to become entangled. This happens because our values so powerfully influence our decisions to allocate or invest our resources.

The following steps will help you successfully negotiate the resolution of a conflict.

Understanding the Conflict

Whether the conflict is between you and another individual or between different members of the coalition, there are some basic steps to help you resolve it. First, you need to understand it.

As stated, conflicts arise for a variety of different reasons. It is important for you to define clearly your own position and interests in the conflict, and to understand those of your opponent. In a group this might involve understanding the two different sides.

Some questions to help you do this include:

- What are my interests?
- What do I really care about in this conflict?
- What do I want?
- What do I need?
- What are my concerns, hopes, and fears?

And the same time you must consider the other side.

- What are the interests of the other side?
- If I were in their shoes, what would I really care about in this conflict?
- What do they want?
- What do they need?
- What are their concerns, hopes, and fears?

"Recognizing does not mean agreeing."

Interests play an important role in better understanding conflict. Often, groups waste time "bargaining over positions." Instead of explaining what the interests of their position are, they argue about their "bottom line." This is not a useful way to negotiate, because it forces groups to stick to one, narrow position. Once they have dug into a particular position, it will be embarrassing for them to abandon it. They may spend more effort on "saving face" than on actually finding a suitable resolution. It is usually more helpful to explore the group's interests, and then see what positions suit such interests.

By communicating your interests rather than one position you are leaving some room to negotiate. Often, there are many different ways to address the same interest.

For example: one side has proposed building a recreational complex. The other side is opposed due to the cost. They waste a lot of time arguing the merits of a complex. When they stop and look at the reason they want the complex it is to start a basketball league to give the youth of the community something to do. Both sides are committed to the goal of finding activities for youth. Once they realize they really want the same thing, the disagreement is about the cost of the complex they can look at other ways to accomplish the goal. Someone might suggest working out a deal with the schools and local churches to use their gyms when they are not using them.

Communicating with the Opposition
After you have thought through your own interests and those of the other party, you can begin to communicate directly with them. Here are some tips to help make those talks more productive.

- Slow down the action. Many fights and arguments get out of control very fast. Before reacting, take a deep breath, count to 10 to buy time to think. If possible find a way to excuse yourself from the situation for a moment so that you can collect yourself.

"When people believe they have been listened to, they generally become less angry and more open to listen to what the other person has to say."

- Put yourself in their shoes. Listen. Their opinions are important to you, because their opinions are the source of your conflict. If something is important to them, you need to recognize this. Recognizing does not mean agreeing.

"Understanding is not the same as agreeing."

- Let everyone participate who wants to. People who participate will have a stake in a resolution. They will want to find a good compromise.

- Talk about your strong emotions. Let the other side let off steam. Acknowledge the other person's feelings. When people believe they have been listened to, they generally become less angry and more open to listen to what the other person has to say. Statements like "You really feel strongly about this" tend to diffuse the anger and open up communication. Do not, however, react to emotional outbursts. Try an apology instead of yelling back. Apologizing is not costly, and is often a rewarding technique.

- Be an active listener. Do not interrupt. Hear the other person out. Making eye contact, nodding, and saying "uh-huh" are ways to show you are listening. Rephrase what you're hearing as a question: "Let me see if I am following you. You are saying that …..Have I got that right?" You can still be firm when you are listening. Understanding is not the same as agreeing.

- Speak about yourself, not the other party. In the recreation complex example, you might say, "I am concerned that our youth do not have anything to do with their spare time." rather than "If you cared about the kids of this town at all there is no way you could be against this project."

- Be concrete, but flexible. Speak about your interests, not about your position.

- Set your sights on a "win-win" solution. In a win-win solution, both parties get what they want and come away happy. This requires good listening on both sides and creative thinking. If a win-win solution is not possible, you may have to settle for a compromise, where each person gets something and gives up something. A compromise is a lot better than violence.

- Remember that conflict handled well, can lead to personal growth and better relationships. Try to see the conflict as an opportunity. Working through the conflict with a friend can lead to greater closeness. Hearing other points of view can introduce us to new ideas and increase our understanding of other people and ourselves.

- Avoid early judgments. Keep asking questions and gathering information.

- Do not tell the opposition, "It's up to you to solve your problems." Work to find a solution for everyone.

- Find a way to make their decision easy. Do not call it a way for them to "save face." Try to find a way for them to take your position without looking weak. Egos are important in negotiations.

Looking for Resolutions
Once you know what the interests of both parities are and how to better communicate with the opposition, you can start thinking about solutions. Consider all of the interests. You may want to list them. Look at what you have listed. Are there common interests? Often both parties share many interests. For example, both groups may want something for youth to do after school but one wants to build a gym and another wants a tutoring program.

Voting
One of the most common ways groups try to resolve conflicts is by voting. This can be a good and effective under certain conditions. It works well for less important things when the group agrees to abide by the wishes of the majority. However, when big issues are involved you need to consider how it will impact the group and the side that loses. It may resolve the issue,

but cause long lasting damage to the group. It is better if everyone feels good about the decisions made.

Holding a Special Meeting to Resolve the Conflict

It may be helpful to hold a meeting specifically to resolve the conflict, or to brainstorm ways to resolve it. If you decide to have a meeting or to devote part of your regular agenda to this task, be sure you have a clear written purpose statement about what you are trying to accomplish. If you decide to hold a separate meeting it might be a good idea to try a different environment from your usual location or setting. Make sure the setting is informal where people will feel safe. Find an unbiased facilitator, someone who can structure the meeting without sharing his or her own feelings about the conflict.

You can brainstorm with both groups, or just one side at a time. A group with 5 to 8 people works well though in some cases it may be necessary to have more people involved. Either way you will probably want to establish some ground rules.

When considering solutions:

- Work on coming up with as many ideas as possible. Do not judge or criticize the ideas yet – this will keep people from thinking creatively.

- Try to maximize (not minimize) your options.

- Look for win-win solutions, in which both parties get something they want.

- Find a way to make their decision easy and strong looking.

- During the meeting, seat people side-by-side, facing the "problem" -- with a flipchart or wipe board for writing down ideas. The facilitator will remind people of the purpose of the meeting, review the ground rules, and ask participants to agree to those rules. During the brainstorming session, the facilitator will write down all ideas so everyone can see them.

Once you have all of the ideas you can choose the best one. The idea is to use both sides' skills and resources to get the best result for everyone. Think about which resolution gives both groups the MOST. That is probably the best one. In some cases it is a good idea to make the selection at a time other than the brainstorming session. This gives people a chance to think about the different options and possibly gather additional information about them if needed.

"In conflict resolution, the best solution is the solution that is best for both sides"

Using a third party mediator

You may want to use a third party mediator. This is a person who is not from your group or your opponent's group, but whom you both trust to be fair. Your mediator can help both sides agree upon a standard by which you will judge your resolution. Standards are a way to measure your agreement. They include expert opinions, law, precedent, and accepted principles.

For example, let us say you are building a new playground for your town's elementary school. You disagree with the superintendent about what kinds of materials you will use to build the playground. The superintendent wants to use chemical treated wood, but you feel it is unsafe. A mediator might read the current guidelines of the lumber industry and tell you which kinds of wood are considered safe for children. Maybe you and the superintendent will agree to follow the lumber industry's advice – in other words, to use that as the standard.

Of course, there are often many kinds of standards. There may also be a national parent group that suggests certain safety guidelines for playgrounds. A mediator might help you and the superintendent negotiate about whose standard you will use.

Mediators can also:

- Run the brainstorming session
- Set ground rules for you and your opponent to agree upon
- Create an appropriate setting for meetings
- Suggest possible ways to compromise
- Be an "ear" for both side's anger and fear
- Listen to both sides and explaining their positions to one another
- Find the interests behind each side's positions
- Look out for win-win alternatives
- Keep both parties focused, reasonable, and respectful
- Prevent any party from feeling that it is "losing face"
- Write the draft of your agreement with the opposition

Exploring Alternatives

There may be times when, despite your hard work and good will, you cannot find an acceptable resolution to your conflict. You need to think about this possibility before you begin negotiations. At what point will you decide to walk away form negotiations? What are your alternatives if you cannot reach agreement with your opponent?

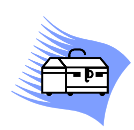
It is important that you brainstorm your alternatives to resolution early on in the negotiation process, and that you always have your best alternative somewhere in the back of your mind. As you consider possible agreements with your opponent, compare them to this "best" alternative. If you do not know what the alternative is, you will be negotiating without all the necessary information.

In order to come up with an alternative, start by brainstorming. Then, consider the pros and cons of each alternative. Think about which alternative is realistic and practical. Also think about how you can make it even better.

At the same time, do not forget to put yourself in the shoes of your opposition. What alternatives might they have? Why might they choose them? What can you do to make your choice better than their alternative?

Working with groups preventing conflicts or at least keeping them from escalating into big ones is the best way to get the results you want. That is why it is important to develop a good working relationship in the group. One way to do this is to view you as partners, not adversaries. This is where having a common purpose or mission can really come in handy. Remind the group why you are there and that you are all working towards the same thing. Think about conflict prevention in the beginning of your coalition building. One idea is to have a policy on how conflicts will be solved.

Included in the Tools Section you will find a **Team Building Worksheet** to use when a conflict arises, **Tool 27**.



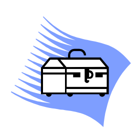
Cultural Diversity

"Every person is, in many respects like all other people, like some other people, like no other person."

In many communities in Arkansas, if we are to succeed, cultural diversity issues must be considered. Culture is a word that covers a lot of ground. Culture refers to a set of behaviors, habits, roles, and norms that apply to a particular group. Racial groups come easily to mind as examples but cultural traditions and differences, can extend well beyond race and ethnicity. They can be based on age, gender, social class, religion, region, disability, sexual orientation, employment, family background, or even on neighborhood – or any combination of these factors. There are number of different terms used when discussing culture and culture diversity. See the **Definitions** page in the **Tools Section, Tool 28**.

"Culture is learned and shared behaviors and perceptions of a group which have been transmitted from generation to generation through a shared symbol system."

In this section we discuss some general cultural differences as well as specific examples of how when working to improve the health of the community these must be considered. Tips for various situations are also included. The different cultures in the community need to be a part of your coalition. There are three primary times in community health improvement when you must consider the different cultures of your community. First, when you are forming your community coalition. Secondly, cultural differences will play a role in the interaction and work of the coalition. Finally, when determining how to address the problems you choose to focus on, culture must be considered. Included in the Tools Section of this guide is a worksheet to **Help Members Understand Diversity**, **Tool 29**.



"Revealing some awareness of cultural issues conveys interest, concern and respect."

Integrating diversity and the different cultures of the community from the very beginning is often an overlooked aspect of community health improvement. Too often the challenges of developing programs and strategies that are sensitive to different cultural perspectives and priorities are ignored. Disparities in program impact among different populations may be a result of approaches that are sensitive to some groups, but "gloss over" the concerns of others. These issues are particularly important in communities that have undergone considerable change in their ethnic and cultural makeup in recent years. In Arkansas some areas of the state have experienced this to a greater degree than others. Programs may be strengthened by setting aside time early in the planning process to share cultural ideologies, examine origins of ideas, and seek ways of establishing common perspectives on issues of concern. The goal should be to facilitate buy-in and support of the initiatives' goals and objectives by the partners.

The Importance of Culture

Let us begin by considering why culture is important. Culture provides people with a design for living and for interpreting their environment. Culture has been defined as "the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people." Culture shapes how people see their world and structure their community and family life. A person's cultural affiliation often determines the person's values and attitudes about health issues; responses to messages; and even the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

A cultural group consciously or unconsciously shares identifiable values, norms, symbols, and ways of living that are repeated and transmitted from one generation to another.

Race and ethnicity are often thought to be dominant elements of culture. But the definition of culture is actually broader than this. People often belong to one or more subgroups that affect the way they think and how they behave. Factors such as geographic location, lifestyle, and age, among others, are also important in shaping what people value and hold dear.

"Too often people interpret the behaviors of others as being negative or inferior because they do not understand the underlying value system of another culture."

There are risks in summarizing particular cultural issues. There is enormous diversity in populations of all cultures. In all societies, there are sub-cultures, and important differences between rural and urban groups, among different classes and genders. The individual is the "foreground," while the culture is the "background".

Individuals are not cultural cardboard cutouts, yet they are influenced by their socio-cultural context and by their changing circumstances. Different generations and individuals within the same family may have different sets of beliefs; some people assimilate and assume the cultural values of the host society while others maintain or blend different perspectives. Not all people identify with their ethnic cultural background. Being aware that people share common problems or situations can help in understanding their health needs.

Respect the integrity of cultural beliefs. You do not have to agree with every aspect of another's culture just as the other person does not have to accept everything about yours – effective and culturally sensitive health care can still occur. All of us are capable of identifying with our own culture, and forming prejudiced views about other cultures and other belief systems – the skill is in being aware of the possibility and recognizing when it is occurring.

Organizations that provide information or services to diverse groups must understand the culture of the group they are serving, and must design and manage culturally competent programs to address those groups.

Health Beliefs

You may be thinking that health is health and that what ever you decide is needed to make your community healthier is true for everyone. And in some ways that is true. We would all be healthier if we ate five fruits and vegetables a day. But in reality it is not that simple. Cultures vary in their beliefs of the cause, prevention, and treatment of illness. Therefore, these beliefs dictate the practices used to maintain health. Health practices can be classified as folk practices, spiritual or psychic healing practices and conventional medical practices. Some cultures closely tie religious beliefs to state of health. When illness is viewed as a curse for sins, people may seek a cure through good deeds and forgiveness from a spiritual source rather than through medical care.

The value placed on “good health” is also variable. The Anglo-American culture emphasizes duration in life, whereas some other cultures place greater emphasis on the quality of life. From culture to culture, the perception of health will differ. Anglo-Americans believe thinness to be a desirable health goal, whereas other groups, such as Haitians, may consider thin people to be in poor health and fat people to be healthy and happy. Similarly, cleanliness is not closely associated with good health in some cultures. Natural body odors are acceptable and desirable, rather than offensive, in many cultures. Adoption of hygienic practices that have a positive effect on health, such as brushing the teeth, may need to be explained and promoted with clients.

Cultures do not uniformly recognize conditions as diseases or illnesses. A condition considered normal in one culture might be defined as a disease in another.

For example, tuberculosis may be so common in a given culture that its symptoms are viewed as normal. Also, when acute symptoms are present clients may be unwilling to seek health care. Children may not be brought in for care when they have skin eruptions or ear infections because the parents do not consider them ill. Preventive health checkups, such as dental or eye exams, may be avoided or considered unnecessary because no symptoms are present. Prenatal care may be delayed or avoided because child bearing is seen as a natural and personal process. For employed clients, seeking health care may mean time away from their jobs and lost income. For some cultures, such as Hispanic, it may also signify a lack of strength and control over their lives.

Clients may follow a specific process in seeking health care. They seek advice from family in choosing a healer or a course of treatment. Culture healers often may be used instead of conventional medical care. The family supports and also frequently is involved in the treatment and cure. Western medicine too often makes the mistake of cutting off that support system by dealing with the client alone. Clients may need to consult with the support system before making a medical decision. Unconventional beliefs and practices must be respected. Many have survived for generations and are in fact effective.

Ensuring the Different Cultures in Your Community Are Represented on Your Coalition

Initial and ongoing involvement of representatives from different cultures in the community is critical to the success of your coalition. Some cultures are very obvious others are not as readily apparent. The following tips will help you identify some of the different cultures that need to be involved.

Gaining Awareness of Culture Issues in Your Community

Here are a few ways to help make you more aware of cultural issues in your community.

Individually

- Read about the different cultural groups. Consider reading novels as well as nonfiction books about different groups, or books written by ethnic authors.

- Keep informed about current political and economic issues (e.g., civil rights, affirmative action and immigration policies, budget cuts, and other changes in social and health programs). Note their impact on different ethnic or cultural groups.

- Pay attention to the media. Watch for incidents of racial or cultural stereotyping. Be aware of the stereotypes you have.

- Read cultural magazines and newspapers; listen to and watch cultural programming to learn more about different groups' customs, languages, or dialects; forms of entertainment, and so on.

- Attend cultural events.

- Take classes or workshops to learn another language

- Learn the history of cultural/race relations or different religions to increase your understanding of different groups.

- Talk to experts or do research on persons with disabilities and children with special health care needs.

As a Group

- Conduct in-service workshops for staff; incorporate exercises in cultural sensitivity and awareness.

- Meet periodically with staff to discuss cultural issues. Invite an expert consultant to facilitate this.

- Participate in cultural exchanges with community contacts and/or advisory group members (e.g., potlucks, socials, festivals, exhibits, etc.).

- Invite prominent community leaders or academics from different cultural groups to discuss relevant issues with staff, or encourage staff to attend lectures, workshops, or conferences in the community.

- Pair staff members with community people to work together on different program tasks and learn from each other about differences or similarities in their cultural traditions, values, and experiences.

Create Partnerships

It is very important for you and your coalition to not only include individuals from the various cultures in your group, but to build partnerships with them.

- Use business/community resources. Local businesses are an important link with minority communities and may act as a tremendous resource for interaction and information dissemination.

- Build broad-based coalitions involving representatives from education, the religious community, law enforcement, housing, etc.

"Lack of acknowledgement is devastating to most human beings."

- Today the public health needs of diverse populations extend beyond the traditional medical model. Increasing numbers of participants in the public arena are being identified. To best meet the needs of increasingly diverse populations, coalitions need to be built that include those addressing the welfare of linguistic and cultural minorities. Community-based organizations are critical partners in these efforts. Local health departments can create or participate in existing coalitions.

- Maintain linkages with health professional schools. To meet the growing needs of multicultural communities, local health departments must develop working relationships with health professional schools. Local health departments that serve linguistic and cultural minorities could provide internships for students, thereby increasing the number of professionals who choose to serve these populations. Health departments can have an impact on professional schools by communicating their needs and by supporting the special needs of bilingual students who may need special services.

- Include minority health issues in health systems reforms. A health system in which health services are a right, not a privilege, for all residents would ensure health services for all populations.

- Develop partnerships between local health departments and minority groups. Local health departments should include representatives of minority groups in programmatic and policy decisions affecting services. Such participation increases the likelihood that services are appropriate.

Build Bridges

- Acknowledge the differences without judging the differences.

- Search, listen, and look for common bonds.

- Use the positive energy in the common bond to build a relationship that benefits both you and the other person.

- Do not play – “I will respect you, if you respect me first” game.

- Do not respond to other people’s ignorance.

Some **Common Cultural Barriers and Tips to Overcome Them** are found in the **Tools Section, Tool 30**.

Culturally Sensitive Communication
We often forget that there are many types of communication. When considering different cultures it is important to take all of these into account. Below are some of the most common you will want to keep in mind.

Nonverbal Communication
Messages are communicated by facial expressions and body movement that are specific to each culture. You should be aware of variations in nonverbal communication to avoid misunderstandings or inappropriate movements that may unintentionally offend people. Also, you should use caution in interpreting someone’s facial expressions or body movements. Your interpretation might be quite different from the client’s intent.

- Silence
  You may view silence as awkward or a waste of time. However, some cultures are quite comfortable with periods of silence. People who view silence as a normal part of conversation may not appreciate your efforts to fill the void with small talk. Some Native Americans, for example, consider a minute and a half to be a normal amount of time to wait to respond, while Arab friends may spend 30 minutes or more sitting together in silence. Conversely, some cultures consider it entirely appropriate to speak before the other person has finished talking; therefore, you should avoid mistaking this overlap as rude behavior on the part of the client. Being tolerant of natural pauses or interruptions in the communication process will help foster respect.

- Distance
  The most comfortable physical distance between two people varies from culture to culture. The Anglo-American generally prefers to be about an arm's length away from another person. Hispanics usually prefer closer proximity than Anglo-Americans, in contrast to Asians, who tend to prefer greater distance. Giving someone options for space preference, such as saying, "Please have a seat wherever you like," can help you establish the proper distance for that person.

- Eye Contact
  The amount of eye contact that is comfortable also varies with each culture. Many Anglo-Americans are brought up to look people straight in the eye. However, older African Americans may have been taught not to make eye contact with whites.

Some groups, including Native Americans and Asians, consider staring impolite. However, if you avoid eye contact or break eye contact too frequently, as you might to complete paperwork, it may be misinterpreted as disinterest. Observing a person both when listening and speaking can offer clues to appropriate eye contact. Also, you can arrange seating to meet the situation such as by sitting next to someone, rather than across from him or her, to reduce direct eye contact.

- Emotional Expression
  Expression of emotion among people of different cultures varies from very expressive, as with Hispanics, to total non-expressiveness, with Asians. People have a tendency to regard those who are more expressive as immature and those who are less express as unfeeling. Happiness and sorrow are emotions common to all people, but they may not openly express them, particularly to outsiders. Varying beliefs about the origin and treatment of pain will dictate different emotional behaviors in different cultures. Also, people of some cultures, such as Asian, may smile or laugh to mask other emotions.

- Formality
  Anglo-Americans tend to be informal in their oral communication, but some other cultures prefer to keep a relationship more formal. You should not assume that a first name basis is appropriate. Some African Americans view being addressed by a first name as too familiar and may infer disrespect. In Vietnamese and Chinese cultures people have three or four word names. The first word is the family name, the second word the middle name, and the last one or two words the given name. The given name is usually preferred along with the title of Mr. or Mrs. Terms of endearment such as “honey,” or

potentially derogatory terms such as “boy” or “girl” when referring to adults, should be avoided. Asking how he or she prefers to be addressed is the easiest solution, or address them formally until they ask you to call them something else. Never introduce yourself to an adult as Mr. Mrs., or Ms. and then call them by their first name.

How you address someone is particularly important to the elderly. Many of them were raised in a more formal time. Be sure you address the elderly as Mr. or Ms. unless they ask you to address them otherwise.

People with disabilities sometimes are talked “over” as if their disability automatically determines their ability to respond to questions or be involved in a conversation. Never refer to them in the third person, as they are invisible.

To help you **Avoid Objectionable Language**, you will find a worksheet in the **Tools Section, Tool 31**.

- Rapport

  Establishing rapport is important. You should use ”small talk” to reflect genuine concern for the person. But do not overdo it. Too much chatting, too many questions, or being “too nice” may cause uneasiness or raise suspicion. An opening question such as “How may I help you?” can provide an opportunity for people to express their problems. If a person is not responsive to an open-ended question, you might suggest several options for them to choose from. Silence on the part of the individual does not necessarily reflect disinterest, but rather may be a thoughtful reaction to a question. Demonstrating patience, respect, and awareness of the person's culture can greatly help to establish rapport.

- Subject
  The subject matter may influence the success of your health promotion program. Certain subjects may not be acceptable for discussion. For example, a client may be unwilling to discuss personal or family matters with an unfamiliar counselor, because those matters are considered to be private. Also, asking about family or spouses is not considered appropriate in every culture. Religious beliefs may be a taboo subject; therefore, actions based on them may be sensitive or difficult to discuss. You may be able to phrase questions in ways that are culturally more appropriate and explain why it is necessary to ask certain questions. You can also say, "Please tell me if you do not want to answer."

"Simply exposing clients to a new idea or practice will not automatically result in adoption if that idea or practice conflicts with their values."

Verbal Communication
In addition to nonverbal communication, differences in spoken languages are also barriers.

- English as a Second Language
  If you have ever tried to master a foreign language, you can appreciate the problems facing the client for whom English is a second language. He or she may have difficulty expressing thoughts and concerns in English and will require more of your time and patience.

  You will want to allow sufficient time for the client to formulate answers to questions. Use simple vocabulary, and speak slowly and clearly; try to find words the client understands. Repeating the same words in a louder voice will not increase comprehension unless the person is hard of hearing; becoming frustrated with yourself or the other person will only aggravate the situation. Further, a loud voice may be interpreted as hostility or disrespect. Ignoring someone, or halting the conversation and turning to another activity, such as paperwork, are unproductive and will only serve to increase someone's feeling of isolation.

Generally someone will understand English better than he or she speaks it because of the difficulty in finding the right words. Remember that fluency in spoken or written English does not correlate with intelligence. Also, some people may not be able to read their native language. They will be able to speak, but not read, English well – or vice versa. Do not automatically assume that the level of fluency in speaking reflects the appropriate reading level when you are choosing materials, whether in English or translated. It is wise to check for comprehension before distributing written materials to clients with questionable reading skills. For people who do not read in any language, try using materials such as pictures, models, and actual objects.

- The Non-English-Speaking Client
  In recent years, many health units in Arkansas have experienced an increasing number of clients who do not speak English. Here are some tips that may help. Remember if you have a number of clients who do not speak English coming to your clinics they represent a part of the community your coalition cannot ignore.

  If you and the client do not speak the same language, direct communication may be difficult or impossible. In that case, an interpreter must be included in the health promotion process. The interpreter can explain concepts that are foreign to either you or the client. Also, an interpreter may be able to establish rapport with the client, thus eliciting more information.

There are, however, limitations and drawbacks in using interpreters. It adds another step and, therefore, additional time in the process. In general, translations tend to be simplistic, not reflecting the nonverbal and emotional expression. Some words or concepts may be difficult to translate due to a lack of vocabulary or to the personal nature of the subject matter. For example, in Cambodia there is no direct translation for the word anemia, so the word must be explained to clients. You should be aware that interpreters may censor or translate information from the client into what they think you want to hear.

When interpreters are necessary, they should be carefully selected. Bilingual staff and community volunteers can be used when hiring qualified interpreters is not feasible. Check with the office of minority health for guidelines when hiring an interpreter. Adult family members or friends of the client are also possible choices. Children, however, should not be asked to translate because of the value many cultures place on adults as authority figures and the possible inappropriateness of some subject matter for children. Enlisting interpreters from the waiting room is not recommended because some ethnic groups, such as Puerto Ricans, consider it a breach of confidentiality to have a stranger interpret for them. Also, you should not assume that any Latin or Asian can interpret for all others of the same cultural root. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans do not speak identical languages nor do Cambodians and Vietnamese. Mistaking one group for another may offend clients because they take pride in their ethnic origins.

You can do several things to improve the interpretation process. To begin, you should instruct the interpreter on the goals and the purpose of your health promotion program. Also, don't forget to instruct them on the importance of confidentiality. Then, to enhance nonverbal communication, seat the interpreter so as not to obstruct your visual contact with the client. Also, try addressing your client directly instead of directing your statements to the interpreter. You will want to avoid slang words, complex ideas, difficult abstractions, or lengthy speeches without pauses. Instead, use language and examples your interpreter can understand and translate. Instruct interpreters to use the client's own words instead of paraphrasing, and encourage them to ask for further explanation whenever a word or phrase is unclear.

Adapting Interventions to Fit Context and Cultural Traditions

When you start collecting information and assessing the health status of your community, individuals from all cultures in the community must be included.

Once your coalition has identified their priorities determining what interventions to implement becomes an issue. Whether you are deciding on an intervention or considering whether or not to implement a successful intervention somewhere else you must consider the cultural context. Interventions are not always one-size-fits-all. When the setting is different, they may need to be adapted. The following considerations and guidelines can help you adapt interventions to fit the culture.

Health initiatives must be culturally appropriate and recognize the way in which culture affects perceptions of health problems because this will impact the potential for success of broad-based generic initiatives.

Why should you adapt interventions to fit different cultural traditions?
You want your intervention to work.

Consider the following:

- Show respect for another culture's values and identify.

- Improve your ability to connect with your target population.

- Increase the relevance of your actions.

- Decrease the possibility of unwanted surprises.

- Increase the involvement and participation of members of other cultural groups.

Does An Intervention Always Need to be Adapted?
No, there are certainly cases where little or no adaptation is necessary. For example:

- A grant-writing specialist was asked to give a grant-writing workshop to a Hispanic group who spoke English. Almost no adaptation was needed in this case. The basics of grant writing vary little across cultures. Cultural differences were not a factor here.

- Another specialist gave a demonstration on the Internet to a group of newly arrived immigrants from different countries. Their goal was to learn how to use the Internet. They wanted to learn very specific skills. For this purpose, their culture did not matter.

At other times, cultural differences do indeed matter:

- An AIDS prevention organization wanted to do prevention education in its local Spanish-speaking community. Community members were not inclined to or not able to come to public meetings. But they would and did go to meet their neighbors at another neighbor's house. The education here took place through charlas, or "house chats," a medium well suited to that particular culture.

- An African-American minister discussed how black groups and white groups operated differently in meetings, at least as far as he was concerned: "See, white folk come to a meeting, they want to take care of business, they want the small talk very limited. They've got an agenda, boom, boom, boom, boom, off to their next meeting. Some black meetings take more stroking. You do more social backslapping, talk, talk, talk, and talk. And then you eventually get down to business." You can see why cultural adaptation would be very important.

These examples involve racial or ethnic differences, but could be extended to other cultural differences as well. Our general point is that it is difficult to know in advance how much cultural adaptation will be necessary. So it is best to assume that at least some adaptation might be necessary, and to proceed cautiously.

How should you adapt interventions to fit different cultural traditions?

Here is one step-by-step approach you can use as a guide.

1. Ask yourself, honestly: "Is the intervention worth adapting?" It may be good; but is it good enough? Is its potential value high enough to justify the effort you will be putting in? A sincere and thoughtful answer to this question, well before you start, can save you a lot of time and trouble later on.

2. Suppose you decide the intervention is worth adapting. Do you want to do the adaptation? Much of the success of your adaptation – or of any intervention – will depend upon your personal desire. There might be other things you would rather do. So unless you can answer this question with a definite "yes," think very carefully before moving ahead.

3. You may decide that you want to do it. But here is another question: Is it really your role to direct the adaptation? Maybe it is; maybe no one else is ready to come forward at all. (If so, ask why.) But maybe the intervention would work better if you didn't direct. Maybe others should take on the lead responsibility – which could both make the intervention more successful and empower those others as well. Maybe your best place is on the edges, or in the background.

4. Check your readiness. Even if you do have a role, are you culturally ready to take it on? You might want to ask yourself these questions:
   - What are your own cultural values and beliefs? How might they be different from those of the target community?

- Do you have experience working with the cultural group in question, or with similar groups?
- If so, what lessons can you draw from those experiences that might be useful here?
- Are you personally ready to take on the potential work of doing the adaptation?

"The bottom line: When careful thought and preparation are done a lot of effort and possible aggravation will be saved in the long run."

5. Check the readiness of your target group – "readiness" works both ways:
   - Is the cultural group in question ready to work with you?
   - Is it also able to work with you? Does it have the skills and resources that might be necessary?
   - How is it likely to react to your own cultural tradition? (For you will be bringing that tradition to the intervention whether you want to or not.)

6. Depending on your answers to these questions, you may be ready to go ahead. If so, make the commitment to do the adaptation. Your internal commitment, as well as your desire, will be an important ingredient in your success.

7. Set specific objectives for the adapted intervention. What, specifically, do you want it to accomplish?

These may seem like a lot of steps to take and questions to ask before you get started. Perhaps they are. They need not take a very long time to accomplish. And there is a very good reason why these steps need to be taken and the questions answered, right at the beginning. A lot of the work of any successful intervention should take place inside the person who is planning that intervention before any intervention actually takes place. Intervention is largely an inside job.

All of these points are especially true when it comes to adapting interventions to different cultural traditions. If you decide that not much adaptation is needed, great. If you decide that the adaptation should not be done as originally planned, that's okay too. The bottom line: When careful thought and preparation are done a lot of effort and possible aggravation will be saved in the long run.

And now you are ready to go to work. First of all, do some research, especially if you do not know much about the cultural group in question. Learn as much as you can about their beliefs and practices, about their social and political concerns and about their history particularly in your community before you plunge in.

Questions to Consider in your Search for Information about the Community

- Historical Issues
  - ✓ What is the history of the community?
  - ✓ What name or names do the cultural groups use to refer to themselves?
  - ✓ What is the significance of the different names?
  - ✓ What are the major differences between cultural groups in your target community, particularly across generational, educational, socio-economic and geographic lines?
  - ✓ What have been the major historical events that describe the target group's experiences in the United States?

- ✓ What were and are the major conflicts between or among the cultural groups in the target community? What were the outcomes?

- ✓ What were and are the major conflicts within each group? What were the outcomes?

- Economic and Political Issues
  - ✓ What are the different socio-economic levels of groups within the community?

  - ✓ What is the political status of each group in the community (e.g. undocumented, refugee, legal immigrant, citizen)?

  - ✓ What are the different literacy levels within groups? Are they literate/illiterate in English and/or their own language?

  - ✓ What are the different educational levels within groups?

  - ✓ How is their health status affected by their economic and political status? What are the predominant health problems?

  - ✓ How often do these different groups use medical care? What types of care?

  - ✓ What are the organizations that successfully serve the different groups within the target community? Are they governmental, religious, community, social service, political or ethnic in nature?

- Culture and Tradition-Specific Issues
  - ✓ What are the values of the different groups in the community?
  - ✓ How do various members of each cultural group define health and illness?
  - ✓ What are some of the more common health beliefs and practices of community groups?
  - ✓ What are the predominant family structures within the community's cultural groups?
  - ✓ What are some of the traditional roles of different family members in these cultural groups, particularly where health care is concerned?
  - ✓ Who are the formal and informal leaders in the community, and what role do they have in the area of health promotion?
  - ✓ How many languages and dialects are spoken?
  - ✓ What are the formal and informal channels of communication within and between different groups?

- Medical Orientation
  - ✓ What are the group's general beliefs about the cause, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease?
  - ✓ What are the group's attitudes towards "Western" medicine?
  - ✓ In general, what has been the experience of different groups when trying to access the health care system?

- ✓ To what extent is their use of traditional medicine or healers?

- ✓ Where do people go for health information?

- Diet
  - ✓ What are traditional foods, and what role do they play in health, religion, and social activities?

  - ✓ How has their diet here in the U.S. changed over time as compared to their country of origin?

  - ✓ Is there access to foods that constitute traditional diet? Are there acceptable substitutes?

- Religion
  - ✓ What are the different religions practiced within the cultural groups in the community?

  - ✓ How is practice of their religion influenced by their culture?

  - ✓ What is the size of membership, and who are the members?

  - ✓ Who are the religious leaders, and what is their role in the larger community?

  - ✓ Are there conflicts among or within the various religious groups?

  - ✓ What involvement do various religious groups have in the area of health education and promotion?

  - ✓ Do religious beliefs conflict with the philosophy of health promotion? Can the beliefs be incorporated into your program?

Where can you get these questions answered? You might start with your local library, which can supply you with:

- Census Data
- Maps
- Government Documents
- Local Reports and Statistics
- Hometown Newspapers, including back issues
- Articles and books on the cultural group you will be working with (Have others tried the same intervention with this cultural group? Through careful research, you may be able to find out what they did, and what happened as a result.)

Talk to people in that cultural setting. Talk to a variety of people if you can. These people can include:

- Known experts on that culture, usually through professional reputation

- Key members of that particular culture who are especially knowledgeable – either because they have lived for a long time in that cultural setting, or are well-connected to others in that setting, or both. These key members (sometimes called "informants' or "gatekeepers") can help you a lot when it comes time to begin the intervention itself.

Who are these people, specifically?
They could be:

- Local government officials
- Business professionals
- Teachers or college professors
- Professional researchers
- People who have worked in similar communities, on similar problems
- Well-informed people, without any particular title
- Community service workers
- Ministers

- Newspaper editors
- Advocacy groups

Each of these people can be asked for other leads.

Talking with others usually means one-on-one. Alternatively, you can also talk with others in a group. This can be more efficient and effective, even if some individual responses might be lost.

Spend some time in the cultural setting.
Have a cup of coffee; take a walk in the neighborhood; sit in a park; go to a public event (or get yourself invited to a private one.) The simple act of being in the setting can be an excellent teacher, and can give you insights otherwise hard to come by. Of course, while you are there, you can also talk to people; note that both "talking" and "spending time" are also forms of research.

When you have done your cultural homework, and learned as much as you feel you can, propose your intervention idea to some people in that setting. This can also be done one-on-one or in a group. The people you approach should be those you have developed a comfortable and trusting relationship with. If they are also influential people in that setting, that's an added advantage.

When you do propose, do so gently and gradually. Rather than saying, "I'm planning to do X," try something like, "I have an idea that's been on my mind. Can I tell you about it, and then I'd be interested in what you think." Be tactful. Key your words to the experiences of your listener. Take advantage of the cultural lessons you have learned.

After you propose, ask for feedback. Does your listener think the intervention is a good idea? Will it work? What changes should be made? What should happen next? When you ask for feedback, don't ask just as a formality. Take that feedback carefully into account. Make the changes that are suggested (or have a good reason not to).

If many different informants tell you that your idea has little value for people in that setting, or does not have a prayer of working, pay attention to those red flags. This may not be the right time or the right place to adapt this particular intervention. If so, it is much better to realize this now than later. But do not be too discouraged; some other intervention idea, perhaps not very different from what you had in mind, may emerge from your discussions. It might turn out to be a better idea for all concerned.

If your feedback is sufficiently positive, then you may be ready to move ahead. The next step is to find some people in that cultural community who will work together with you to make the intervention happen. Some of these people could be the same community members you have spoken to before (and it is certainly okay to have this in the back of your mind when you set out.) And some of them should definitely be people who will be affected by the intervention – if it is a teen pregnancy prevention program, for example, you want to include teens, and quite possibly teen mothers and fathers.

In other words, at this stage you want collaborators. In addition, you want to bring these collaborators together into an informal group -- a working group, an advisory group, what ever you want to call it. This group will normally take the lead responsibility for adapting and carrying out the intervention.

At this point, you should begin planning and execution, just as you would with any other intervention; those same basic procedures apply now as well. Here you can draw upon your past successful experiences. Your collaborators – your working group – will decide what might need to be changed from the original intervention, and what does not. It will agree upon a course of action, establish a timeline, conduct any pilot tests, and divide up responsibilities as it sees fit. These steps are common to all interventions, whether or not they are adapted.

Some Special Situations: What should I do if?

- Conflicts Arise
  If they do, do not be surprised. Conflicts are natural, especially if two groups do not have a history of working together successfully. Relationships need to be formed. Trust needs to be developed, and trust takes time.
  A useful guideline here is not to suppress conflict, but to see that it gets expressed when it occurs, openly and respectfully. Setting this tone at the beginning may help. Some regular check-in meetings to monitor both progress and feelings may help as well. So may some ground rules for dealing with conflict, so that it doesn't get blown out of proportion. See **Section Four** of this guide for more information on **Conflict Management**.

- Cultural groups really do not understand each other
  Cultural training may be needed when two cultural groups are newly dealing with each other. This may be true when neither has much experience working with the other and/or when the intervention is larger or might last for a long time. Trainers from one cultural group can work to train the other, and vice versa. Sometimes, trainers from both groups can conduct the training together.

The specifics of such training will vary with the situation; but you might want to work out some training details before the intervention is well under way.

- Materials need translation

You have materials in one language that you want translated into another. A good idea? Maybe so, but first consider whether relevant materials already do exist (and have been tested) in that second language. It could be a big time-saver if you can find them. Consider also whether it is better to translate than to create new materials from scratch. Creating new material takes time, but there's a possible gain in freshness and relevance.

If you do decide to translate, find an experienced translator in that cultural community. And if you can, try to have the translated material reviewed by others, and back translated into the first language by another person; these techniques will give you a check on translation accuracy.

- The adaptation involves several different cultural groups

Suppose you are adapting an intervention not just to one cultural group, but to several different groups at the same time. It can happen; you could be working in a multi-ethnic setting, or across multi-generational or multi-denominational lines. Here you have an extra challenge on your hands, one of many that makes community work so interesting.

Your best response is to look for elements all the cultural groups have in common. They could involve needs for better housing, street safety, or better education for one's children. Are there such elements in your case? Then adapt your intervention keeping them in the foreground; or adjust your intervention to address those common goals. Once again, make sure all groups involved have a seat at the table; ask for feedback; listen to it.

Many multi-cultural organizations have done just that. With successful multi-cultural work, which builds connectedness, trust, and achievement across several different cultures at the same time, is among the most exciting community work we can do.

Summary

Always work within the experience of your target group. See things through their eyes. Act accordingly. To do so, you must have a good idea about how those people understand and relate to the world. This takes understanding on your part, not to mention sensitivity, flexibility, and patience. It is not always easy. Working with different cultural groups or in culturally diverse communities presents a challenge even to experienced professionals.

"Where we all think alike, no one thinks very much."

Second, even with the right attitude and the right approach, success is not guaranteed. For a variety of reasons, you may not get the local collaboration you want or need. Other obstacles may get in the way. When success does happen, the rewards can be great. You will have developed a program that is culturally relevant to the community's needs. You may have set an excellent precedent for future work with that cultural community, a precedent that can long outlast your own departure from the scene.

If you would like additional assistance contact the Arkansas Department of Health Office of Minority Health.

It is also important to be aware of intra-cultural conflicts and develop strategies for bringing diverse groups to the table, addressing new and/or lingering tensions, facilitating sustained input, and sensitively responding to concerns.