Guidance for Building and Maintaining a
Community Coalition

"Collaborative problem-solving involves proactive, strategic, and visionary community-based processes that bring together multiple parties from various stakeholder groups (e.g., community groups, all levels of government, industry, and academia) to develop solutions to address local environmental and/or public health issues. Partnerships and negotiations are required to achieve such a goal. When multiple stakeholders work together, they create a collective vision that reflects mutually beneficial goals for all parties. Such collaboration fosters the conditions that enable the parties to mobilize the resources necessary to realize stronger, more lasting solutions."

--EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model

What is a "coalition"?

A coalition is a group of two or more entities that agree to work together temporarily in a partnership to achieve a common goal. The word coalition connotes a coming together to achieve a goal. The COVID Community Coalition initiative is focused on encouraging the creation of local coalitions to empower communities so they can implement local solutions to this global pandemic.

What are the goals of a COVID Community Coalition?

- Develop local awareness and recognition of behavior changes that can slow down the spread of coronavirus in local communities;
- Share data and resources for informed decision-making; and
- Encourage and empower coalition members to put ideas in action

Who should be included in a COVID Community Coalition?

Recommended stakeholders for a community coalition include representatives from:

- County and Local Government Organizations
- Local business leaders
- Public safety organizations
- Local public health organizations
- Wellness and mental health organizations
- Behavioral specialists
- Volunteer and non-profit organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Social services organizations
- Federal- and State-recognized Tribes

Who should be the organizer of a COVID Community Coalition?
Because the purpose of a local coalition is to make decisions that are tailored to the community it represents, each coalition may be managed and organized uniquely. Successful coalitions have been managed and facilitated by a local entity. They may independent or may be able to connect or build from existing collaborative working groups in a community.

How and how often should a COVID Community Coalition meet?
The frequency and method for convening should be determined by each Coalition and should consider the current guidelines for social distancing and the needs of the coalition members. Many collaborative initiatives have been successful through the use of conference calls and online meetings, using tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, etc.

What are some best practices that can make a COVID Community Coalition successful?
Successful collaborative organizations begin with a roadmap of how to get to an endpoint. The roadmap includes (1) defining the issue, (2) identifying the cause, (3) evaluating solutions and identifying resources, and (5) implementing strategies. At each step, the group should consider all perspectives equally.

1. Define the issue
   o The group discusses and develops a common understanding of diverse perspectives on the issue. This is oftentimes determined by asking the group to agree on ***what*** the issue is to be considered and addressed. This step should be defined early and quickly and should be viewed as the central focus of the group's mission throughout the process.
2. Identify the cause
   o Once the group determines the greatest concern, it then drills down to the root cause of ***why*** the issue exists. Understanding the root cause can lead to better outcomes.
3. Evaluate solutions and identify resources
   o As the group identifies and discusses potential solutions, it analyzes each one for possible intended and unintended effects, feasibility and impacts. This maps out the process of ***how*** to reach a solution for the defined issue, including which resources may be necessary for implementation and sustainability.
4. Implement strategies
   o Finally the group develops a plan for implementation of a solution. The plan should include methods to monitor progress and measure the success of the

solution. Successful collaborative groups stay connected by discussing lessons learned and ongoing continuous improvements.

What are the benefits of a Community Coalition?

During this continued time of COVID-19 response, there is a need for connection and creativity to address the public health and community needs.

No single organization, institution, or sector of society, no matter how large or well established, can adequately address the public health and related challenges experienced by communities today. A Community Coalition establishes and builds relationships within a community where better ideas and outcomes can be achieved together. Working collaboratively, a Community Coalition can leverage the necessary human, social, intellectual, technical, legal, and financial resources to make long-term progress in a community. The process of collaborative problem-solving builds a unified community which in turn is a better place to live, work, and play.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model](#)
- [EPA's Community Involvement Tools and Resources](#)