

TOP 10 (& OTHERS) LIST

MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF A COLLABORATION/PARTNERSHIP

1. **Resources.** The clear #1 advice from IL Community Coalitions is that a coalition/collaboration requires resources – the ability to commit staff time, financial, & in-kind resources to the efforts of the Coalition.
2. **Clear, Common Vision, Purpose & Goals.** Must have common goals/vision based on commitment to children & families that goes beyond loyalty to a program & is shared by at least 2 or more key people in the Coalition. Must identify where every member fits into the vision/goal/purpose and have professional agreement to work toward the goals. Commit to high standards.
3. **Openness & Commitment to Change.** Must be open to the possibility of doing things differently & open to learning & relearning what you thought you knew before in ways needed to meet the mission & purpose of the coalition. Must be flexible, creative & adaptable.
4. **Communication & Cooperation.** Must be open and ongoing.
5. **Structure of Coalition.** Need: regularly scheduled (quarterly, monthly), concise meetings; flexibility in maintaining group meetings & schedules; operating procedures, committees, roles & responsibilities; and, good checks & balances, especially with financial resources. Suggested to hold meetings at a different program/organization each time.
6. **Shared, Community-Rooted Leadership; Shared Decision-Making.** Need people willing to do their part & not drop the ball; committed participation. Need to listen to the community & be driven by its needs. Leaders must have vitality & persistence. Members bring enough knowledge of community strengths & weaknesses to the table.
7. **Identify & Work Out Barriers.** Must be willing to work out issues, challenges, & disagreements. Must brainstorm solutions & strategies to common Coalition, community & program challenges.
8. **Relationships.** It is important to have friends in a wide variety of places in the community & relationships that have spanned years. Helps to have all partners at the table from the beginning. Draw from individuals' strengths. Recognize champions & strive for non-competitiveness. Members concerns are unified.
9. **Respect Each Other.** Know your partners & the services they offer. Make sure every member has a chance to be heard. Need implicit trust among key partners. Broaden your frame of reference so you can “walk in my shoes.”
10. **Evaluate & Re-Evaluate the Coalition.** Ensure it is able to meet the group's needs related to purpose & structure. Make certain that it can maintain longevity & meet & establish goals. Evaluate performance & accomplishments.

OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FOR COALITIONS ...

- ✗ Advocate for unmet needs & continuation of services. Members are savvy on the state & federal political fronts.
- ✗ Be willing to identify & invite new key stakeholders to meetings, broadening the interest & needs of the partnership.
- ✗ Support families & their needs. Have a holistic focus toward families. Minimize the numbers of transitions for children & families. Must have a genuine interest in making communities better places for children & families.
- ✗ The community is geographically manageable.
- ✗ Formalize a working agreement.
- ✗ Take your time. Don't make decisions that may come back to haunt you; be patient. Take planning time & seek other funding.
- ✗ Market!

COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS USED BY REPORTING COALITIONS

- ✗ Email list server. Maintained by a facilitator in one coalition.
- ✗ Monthly meetings. A binder with meeting information is passed on to the next host in one coalition.
- ✗ Committee meetings
- ✗ Mailings
- ✗ Minutes, agendas, coalition member contact lists, financial reports
- ✗ Sharing information about programs during meetings – reports & written materials
- ✗ Sharing training opportunities for both staff & families
- ✗ Phone calls

RESPONSES TO: WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR COALITION MORE SUCCESSFUL?

Top Answer: Funding

- ✗ Needs assessment information/data – collection, analysis & report preparation/presentation.
- ✗ Bring in trainers to deal with specific issues.
- ✗ Funding for postage, mileage, & mailings.
- ✗ Funding for substitutes' stipends.
- ✗ Facilitator to do strategic planning.
- ✗ A dedicated part time coordinator and/or office assistant to keep the momentum going.
- ✗ Marketing; public awareness.
- ✗ Computerized tracking system.
- ✗ More paying members & supplemental grants.
- ✗ Obtaining 501(c)(3) status so we could look for funding.
- ✗ Broader scope of partners; reorganization.
- ✗ Coalition training for members.

RESPONSES TO: IF YOU WERE STARTING YOUR COALITION NOW, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

- ✗ Don't leave anyone out.
- ✗ Be prepared for resistance.
- ✗ Take the time to build trust. The level of participation is influenced by the potential threat that someone sitting next to me may also be competing against me for the same families, finances and/or services.
- ✗ Participation is more likely to occur & develop when reps are not working in a classroom and/or bombarded with daily crises.
- ✗ Put more work in up front with the "founding" members in finding operating resources & defining the focus before bringing others to the table.
- ✗ Must develop absolute respect. No hidden agendas. Get those on the table & deal with them.
- ✗ Formalize the agreement early in the process.
- ✗ Make sure the right people are at the table.
- ✗ Email is a must.
- ✗ Be consistent, patient & do your "homework."
- ✗ Share the member contact list early & update it.
- ✗ Get over differences more quickly & move to common ground.
- ✗ If an outside body (agency, state) imposes the purpose & structure, work harder to develop own mission within that & create buy-in.