

Appendix 1

Coalition Building:

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Coalition Building

By
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What is Coalition Building?

A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity.[1] Coalition building is the process by which parties (individuals, organizations, or nations) come together to form a coalition. Forming coalitions with other groups of similar [values](#), interests, and goals allows members to combine their resources and become more powerful than when they each acted alone.[2]

Why is Coalition Building Important?

The "ability to build coalitions is a basic skill for those who wish to attain and maintain power and influence." [3] Through coalitions, weaker parties to a conflict can increase their power. Coalition building is the "primary mechanism through which disempowered parties can develop their power base and thereby better defend their interests." [4] Coalitions may be built around any issue and at any scale of society, from neighborhood issues to international conflict.

The formation of a coalition can shift the balance of power in a conflict situation and alter the future course of the conflict. People who pool their resources and work together are generally more powerful and more able to advance their interests, than those who do not. Coalition members may be able to resist certain threats or even begin to make counter threats. Generally, low-power groups are much more successful in defending their interests against the dominant group if they work together as a coalition. This is certainly more effective than fighting among themselves and/or fighting the dominant group alone.[5]

Environmental groups in the United States have long understood the power of coalitions. Rather than taking on powerful industries on their own, leading environmental groups have often formed coalitions to challenge big business in the ballot box, at the legislature, and in the courts. They have succeeded in getting environmental candidates elected, and strong environmental protection laws passed. Without having many environmental groups working together, industry would have had a much stronger hand in the fight over environmental protection in the U.S.

How Do You Build a Successful Coalition?

Building a successful coalition involves a series of steps. The early steps center on the recognition of compatible interests. Sometimes this happens naturally. Other times potential coalition members must be persuaded that forming a coalition would be to their benefit. To do this one needs to demonstrate

1. that your goals are similar and compatible,
2. that working together will enhance both groups' abilities to reach their goals, and
3. that the benefits of coalescing will be greater than the costs.

This third point can be demonstrated in either of two ways: incentives can be offered to make the benefits of joining the coalition high, or sanctions can be threatened, making the costs of not joining even higher. For example, the United States offered a variety of financial aid and political benefits to countries that joined its coalition against Iraq in 2003; it also threatened negative repercussions

for those who failed to join, and much worse for those who sided with Saddam Hussein. Another method that can make joining the coalition appealing is to eliminate alternatives to the coalition. Once most of one's allies or associates have joined a coalition, it is awkward...perhaps dangerous not to join oneself. Although people and organizations often prefer non-action to making a risky decision, if they find themselves choosing between getting on board a growing coalition or being left behind, getting on board is often more attractive.[6]

Lastly, coalition builders may use precedence as a means of social influence. For example, in making decisions, people (or countries) generally want to remain consistent with prior commitments. That means that nations can pressure their allies to act with them in new endeavors. Failing to do so, it can be argued, would hurt their "long-standing alliance." This strategy is not always successful, especially if the self-interest of the other group seems to be harmed by the proposed action. (France, for instance, was not willing to join the U.S. coalition against Iraq in 2003, despite a long-term alliance between France and the U.S.)

What are the Benefits of Coalitions?

The benefits of coalition building go beyond increased power in relation to the opposition. Coalition building may also strengthen the members internally, enabling them to be more effective in other arenas. Some other key advantages to coalition building include[7]:

A coalition of organizations can win on more fronts than a single organization working alone and increase the potential for success.

A coalition can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or personnel resources of any one organization would not be sufficient.

A coalition can develop new leaders. As experienced group leaders step forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups. The new, emerging leadership strengthens the groups and the coalition.

A coalition will increase the impact of each organization's effort. Involvement in a coalition means there are more people who have a better understanding of your issues and more people advocating for your side.

A coalition will increase available resources. Not only will physical and financial resources be increased, but each group will gain access to the contacts, connections, and relationships established by other groups.

A coalition may raise its members' public profiles by broadening the range of groups involved in a conflict. The activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization.

A coalition can build a lasting base for change. Once groups unite, each group's vision of change broadens and it becomes more difficult for opposition groups to disregard the coalition's efforts as dismissible or as special interests.

A successful coalition is made up of people who have never worked together before. Coming from diverse backgrounds and different viewpoints, they have to figure out how to respect each other's differences and get something big accomplished.

They have to figure out how each group and its representatives can make their different but valuable contributions to the overall strategy for change (See [consensus building](#)). This helps avoid duplication of efforts and improve communication among key players.

Disadvantages of Working in Coalition[8]

Member groups can get distracted from other work. If that happens, non-coalition efforts may become less effective and the organization may be weakened overall.

A coalition may only be as strong as its weakest link. Each member organization will have different levels of resources and experience as well as different internal problems. Organizations that provide a lot of resources and leadership may get frustrated with other members' shortcomings.

To keep a coalition together, it is often necessary to cater to one side more than another, especially when negotiating tactics. If a member prefers high-profile confrontational tactics, they might dislike subdued tactics, thinking they are not exciting enough to mobilize support. At the same time, the low profile, conciliatory members might be alarmed by the confrontation advocates, fearing they will escalate the conflict and make eventual victory more difficult to obtain.

The democratic principle of one group-one vote may not always be acceptable to members with a lot of power and resources. The coalition must carefully define the relationships between powerful and less-powerful groups.

Individual organizations may not get credit for their contributions to a coalition. Members that contribute a lot may think they did not receive enough credit.

The Bottom Line

Deciding whether to join a coalition is both a rational and an emotional decision. Rationally, one must consider whether one's effectiveness and one's ability to attain one's own goals would be enhanced or harmed by participation in a coalition. Emotionally, one must consider whether one likes the other people or groups, and whether cooperating with them would be easy, or more trouble than it is worth. Usually when two people, groups, or organizations' goals are compatible, forming a coalition is to both groups' benefit. But

organizational styles, cultures, and relationships must be considered as well before any choices are made.

[1] Douglas H. Yarn, *The Dictionary of Conflict Resolution*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 81.

[2] "Coalition Building" (Boulder, CO: Conflict Research Consortium, 1998, accessed on January 30, 2003); available from <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/coalition.htm>; Internet.

[3] Michael Watkins and Susan Rosegrant. "Building Coalitions." In *Breakthrough International Negotiation: How Great Negotiators Transformed the World's Toughest Post-Cold War Conflicts*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001), 211.

[4] "Coalition Building," op.cit

[5] Michael Watkins and Susan Rosegrant, op. cit

[6] Ibid, 218-219.

[7] Florida Office of Collegiate Volunteerism, Coalition Building Guide. (1991, accessed 1 July 2003) available from <http://www.tzd.state.mn.us/gettingstarted.html>; Internet.

[8] Ibid.

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10 STEPS TO STARTING A COMMUNITY GARDEN*

American Community Gardening Association

The following steps are adapted from the American Community Garden Association's guidelines for launching a successful community garden in your neighborhood.

1. ORGANIZE A MEETING OF INTERESTED PEOPLE

Determine whether a garden is really needed and wanted, what kind it should be (vegetable, flower, both, organic?), whom it will involve and who benefits. Invite neighbors, tenants, community organizations, gardening and horticultural societies, building superintendents (if it is at an apartment building)—in other words, anyone who is likely to be interested.

2. FORM A PLANNING COMMITTEE

This group can be comprised of people who feel committed to the creation of the garden and have the time to devote to it, at least at this initial stage. Choose well-organized persons as garden coordinators. Form committees to tackle specific tasks: funding and partnerships, youth activities, construction and communication.

3. IDENTIFY ALL YOUR RESOURCES

Do a community asset assessment. What skills and resources already exist in the community that can aid in the garden's creation? Contact local municipal planners about possible sites, as well as horticultural societies and other local sources of information and assistance. Look within your community for people with experience in landscaping and gardening. In Toronto contact the Toronto Community Garden Network.

4. APPROACH A SPONSOR

Some gardens "self-support" through membership dues, but for many, a sponsor is essential for donations of tools, seeds or money. Churches, schools, private businesses or parks and recreation departments are all possible supporters. One garden raised money by selling "square inches" at \$5 each to hundreds of sponsors.

5. CHOOSE A SITE

Consider the amount of daily sunshine (vegetables need at least six hours a day), availability of water, and soil testing for possible pollutants. Find out who owns the land. Can the gardeners get a lease agreement for at least three years? Will public liability insurance be necessary?

6. PREPARE AND DEVELOP THE SITE

In most cases, the land will need considerable preparation for planting. Organize volunteer work crews to clean it, gather materials and decide on the design and plot arrangement.

7. ORGANIZE THE GARDEN

Members must decide how many plots are available and how they will be assigned. Allow space for storing tools, making compost and don't forget the pathways between plots! Plant flowers or shrubs around the garden's edges to promote good will with non-gardening neighbors, passersby and municipal authorities.

8. PLAN FOR CHILDREN

Consider creating a special garden just for kids—including them is essential. Children are not as interested in the size of the harvest but rather in the process of gardening. A separate area set aside for them allows them to explore the garden at their own speed.

9. DETERMINE RULES AND PUT THEM IN WRITING

The gardeners themselves devise the best ground rules. We are more willing to comply with rules that we have had a hand in creating. Ground rules help gardeners to know what is expected of them. Think of it as a code of behavior. Some examples of issues that are best dealt with by agreed upon rules are: dues, how will the money be used? . How are plots assigned? Will gardeners share tools, meet regularly, handle basic maintenance?

10. HELP MEMBERS KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER

Good communication ensures a strong community garden with active participation by all. Some ways to do this are: form a telephone tree, create an email list; install a rainproof bulletin board in the garden; have regular celebrations. Community gardens are all about creating and strengthening communities.

Appendix 3

Coordinator Responsibilities

I. The People Part

Recruitment

- a. Identify and recruit participants based on criteria set by coalition or grant
 Inform participants of project outline and goals
- b. Identify and recruit mentors
 Inform mentors of project outline and goals
 - participants served
 - mentor responsibilities
 - timelines and commitments/expectations
 - obtain signed mentor agreements
- c. Identify and recruit volunteers
 Inform of project outline and volunteer needs

Education/Information

- a. Plan information meeting
 - Secure convenient, adequate meeting site and reserve it
 - Invite all potential participants, mentors, and volunteers if appropriate
 - Invite previous participants to present if possible
 - Secure posters, journals, PowerPoint of similar projects
 - Plan menu/secure donations or funding for food
 - Plan for miscellaneous needs: camera, tablecloths, plates, cutlery, etc.
- b. Conduct information meeting
 - Fully explain project to all
 - Provide and explain participant packets which include:
 - Letter of invitation to apply
 - Participant covenant/landlord agreement
 - Pre-survey
 - Plant request
 - Photo release
 - Introduce mentors
 - Obtain and maintain contact list for all participants, mentors & volunteers
 - Set and/or review timelines
- c. Collect and review packets from participants
- d. Follow up on missing information
- e. Select participants
- f. Match mentors with participants if not done previously

II. Locations (the Places Part)

- a. Determine and secure permission for locations
- b. Check with officials for zoning, water needs and billing, etc.
- c. Obtain landlord permission prior to installations

III. Materials (the Products part)

- a. Order enough copies of "All New Square Foot Gardening" for each participant/family and each mentor
- b. Order plant starts based on participant requests (order some extras)
- c. Purchase or obtain via donations (or combination of both) materials for beds:
 - i. Cedar boards
 - ii. Hardware for construction
 - iii. Lath or other material for grids
 - iv. Miscellaneous supplies such as tomato stakes, wood and netting for trellises, etc.
- d. Determine soil mixture to be used and purchase or obtain via donations (or combination of both) ingredients for the soil mix
 - i. Vermiculite
 - ii. Peat moss
 - iii. 5 different kinds of compost
 - iv. Other if you decide to use a different soil
- e. Purchase or obtain via donations (or combination of both) supplies for participant gardening kits:
 - i. Kneeling pads
 - ii. Gloves for each family member
 - iii. Garden trowel
 - iv. Seeds per participant request forms

IV. Installing, Monitoring, and Evaluating (the Process Part)

- a. Coordinate installation schedules with participants, installers, and mentors
- b. Assure soil mix will be available and ready to add with installations
- c. Retrieve and distribute plants to participants ideally on or prior to installation day (unless beds are installed prior to planting time)
- d. Meet at participant's home with installers and assure needs are met for installers and participants regarding installations
 - i. *At least one adult participant must be present for installation—goal is to engage participants fully in process and provide education about sunny site, proximity to water and house, etc.*
- e. Stencil number sequence on boxes for tracking
- f. Take plenty of pictures throughout installations at multiple sites

- g. Monitor through season to assure participants and mentors are well connected and have what they need; provide on-going encouragement, support, and appreciation for all involved
- h. Deliver post tests and evaluations with stamped return envelopes to participants
- i. Deliver evaluations with stamped return envelopes or via e-mail to mentors
- j. Begin data evaluation as evaluations are returned
- k. Follow up with participants and mentors to assure good return rate of post tests and evaluations
- l. Begin data evaluation

V. Celebration (the Party Part)

- a. Enlist help of volunteers and delegate tasks
- b. Locate and reserve a convenient, adequate location with a kitchen
- c. Plan most convenient date and time and design an invitation
- d. Send invitation about 3 weeks prior to event; invite everyone involved
- e. Assure all gardeners—but especially participants—know to contribute a dish made with produce from their gardens
- f. Plan for extras: bread, drinks, dessert, pitchers, tablecloths, etc.
- g. Develop displays of project using lots of pictures and quotes
- h. Create Certificates of Participation for participants
- i. Create Certificates of Appreciation for mentors
- j. Create any other acknowledgements as deemed appropriate
- k. Hold potluck celebration and take lots of pictures
- l. Eat, drink, and enjoy!

VI. Project Evaluation

- a. Gather all straggler surveys, evaluations, and comments; follow up to collect missing data
- b. Compile data into reports, articles, and/or presentations
- c. Present on project and outcomes to any and all interested parties
- d. Save everything for future project opportunities