

PRIMER

SUSTAINABILITY



Fostering Long-Term Change to Create Drug-Free Communities



Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
National Coalition Institute

CADCA's National Coalition Institute, developed in 2002 by an Act of Congress, serves as a center for training, technical assistance, evaluation, research, and capacity building for community substance misuse coalitions throughout the United States. The Institute developed these primers to serve as a guideline for coalitions navigating the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Strategic Prevent Framework (SPF). These primers highlight the CADCA model of prevention and its applied uses to the SPF. Each primer is designed to stand alone and work with others in the series. Research suggests that prevention of substance use and misuse before it starts is the most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce substance use and its associated costs. Coalitions are critical to the success of prevention efforts in local communities. Through your work in engaging key sectors of the community, we can create population-level change and positive, sustainable outcomes that can truly change the world. To learn more about our work, visit the CADCA website, www.cadca.org.

—Arthur T. Dean
Major General, U.S. Army, Retired
Chairman and CEO
CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Drug-Free Communities Support Program.....	1
The Public Health Approach	1
Strategic Prevention Framework	3
Overview of Coalition Sustainability.....	5
A Word About Cultural Competence as it Relates to Sustainability.....	8
CHAPTER 1: ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS	9
Maintaining Involvement and Energy.....	9
Build a Strong Volunteer and Membership Base – The 6 R’s.....	10
CHAPTER 2: BUILD A CREDIBLE PROCESS.....	13
Building Coalition Member Skills to Implement the SPF	14
Planning for the SPF: Organization Chart and Timeline	15
CHAPTER 3: ENSURE RELEVANCE	19
Ensuring the Relevance of the Coalition	19
Maintaining External Ties	20
CHAPTER 4: CREATE A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN	23
Step 1: Inventory Current Resources.....	24
Step 2: Identify Future Resource Needs.....	26
Step 3: Select Funding Strategies	27
Step 4: Identify Potential Sources and Donors.....	32
Step 5: Create Case Statements	34
Step 6: Action Plan for Contacting Sources and Donors	36
CONCLUSION	38
A WORD ABOUT WORDS	42
GLOSSARY	43



INTRODUCTION

Drug-Free Communities Support Program

In 1997, Congress enacted the Drug-Free Communities Support Program (DFC) to provide grants to community-based coalitions to serve as catalysts for multi-sector participation to reduce local substance use problems. By 2018, nearly 2,000 local coalitions received funding to work on two main goals:

- Goal 1: Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private nonprofit agencies, and federal, state, local, and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.
- Goal 2: Reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.*

*For the purposes of the DFC grant, “youth” is defined as 18 years of age and younger.

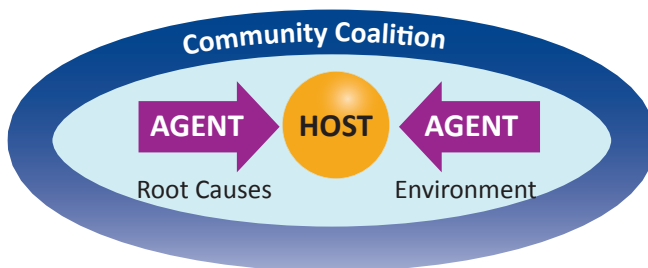
The Public Health Approach

Effective prevention efforts focus on impacting the individual, peers, families, and the overall community environment. It is the role of coalitions to reduce substance misuse in the larger community by implementing comprehensive, multi-strategy approaches using a public health approach to prevention.

Community coalitions use the **public health approach** to look at what substances (the **agent**) are being used by youth and adults (the **host**) in the community and to impact those conditions (root causes in the **environment**) that promote the use of substances and strengthen those conditions that promote and support healthy choices and behaviors.

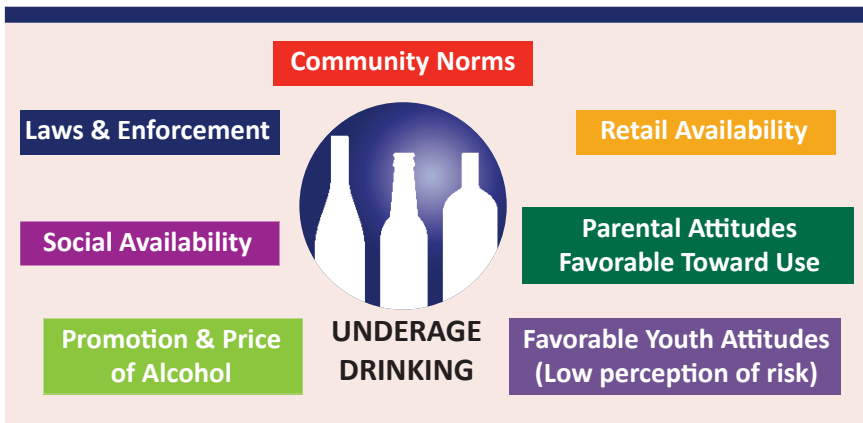
THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

The Public Health Approach demonstrates that problems can arise when a **host** (the individual or person using substances) interacts with an **agent** (e.g., the substance, like alcohol or drugs) in an **environment** (the social and physical context in which substance use does or does not occur).



Root causes, also known as risk and protective factors or intervening variables, are those conditions in the community, family, peer group, and school that make it more or less likely a person will misuse substances. In another area, consider the risk factors for heart disease. A poor diet is not the only cause of heart attacks, but we know that a poor diet can significantly increase the likelihood you might have a heart attack. Eating healthy foods and exercising are examples of protective factors that can decrease the likelihood of future heart disease. Figure 1 identifies key risk factors/root causes for underage drinking. (Note: these risk factors are discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Collect Needs and Resource Data.)

Figure 1



Community coalitions are oftentimes one of the only groups in a community that are organized to address the entire community environment in which young people may use substances. Many organizations and individuals can impact the individual and address specific aspects of the environment, but the coalition is the only group that is looking **COMPREHENSIVELY** at the environment seeking to achieve population-level changes to the entire community.

Approaches that target individual users can reach limited numbers of people. Community-based programs that provide direct services to individuals are important partners in a comprehensive community-level response to substance use. Strategies that focus on the availability of the substance and the entire community environment—although more difficult to implement—are likely to impact many more people. For example, information learned by teenagers who attend alcohol prevention classes at school is important, however, these **individual-focused strategies** are limited to those students enrolled in the classes.

Chances of keeping youth from using alcohol are greater if those classes are part of a comprehensive strategy that also includes local ordinances that limit billboards and other advertising near local schools, and community-wide policies that mandate responsible beverage service training as part of the alcohol licensing process. These strategies, coupled with increased funding for compliance checks and increased fines for violations, will work to ensure that alcohol retailers do not sell to minors. Such **environmental-focused strategies** target the substance (e.g., the availability of alcohol) and the environment (e.g., implementing policies to reduce youth access). The **role of the coalition** is to identify or coordinate the implementation of these comprehensive strategies.

SAMHSA’s Strategic Prevention Framework

The DFC initiative utilizes the **Strategic Prevention Framework** (SPF) developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The SPF’s seven elements guide coalitions in developing the infrastructure needed for community-based, public health approaches leading to effective and sustainable reductions in substance misuse.

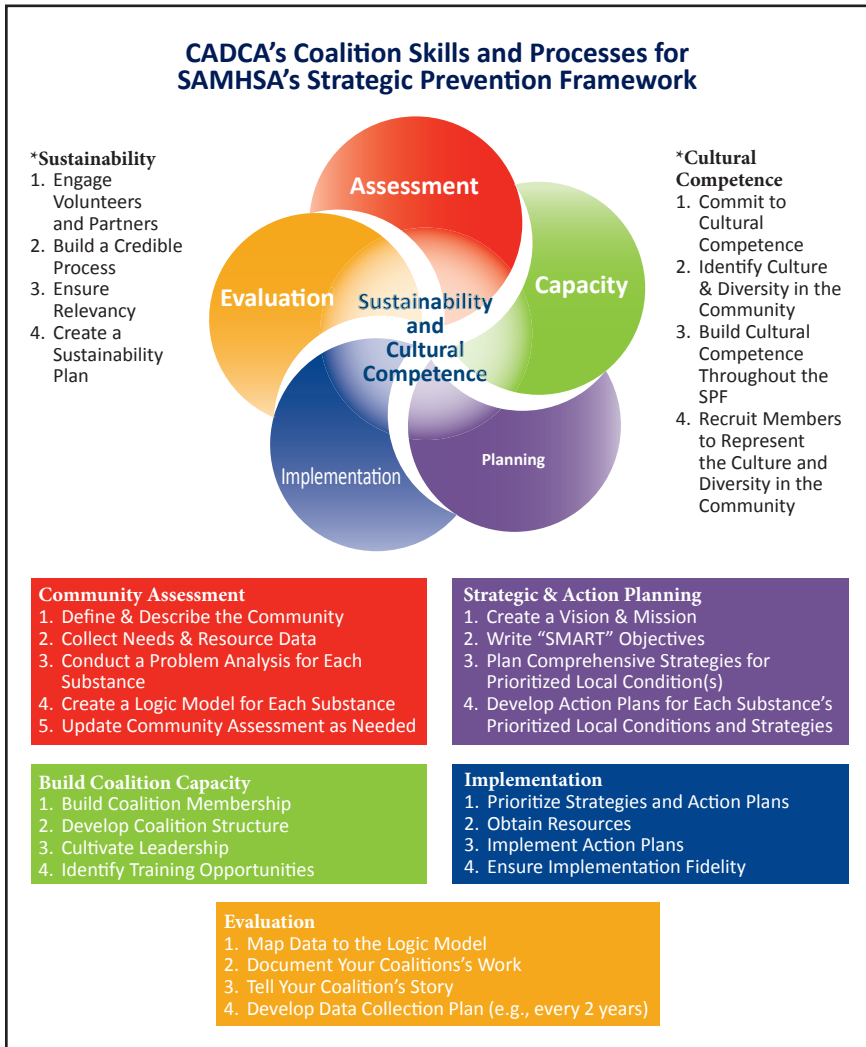
The elements shown in Figure 2 include:

- **Assessment.** Collect data to define problems, resources, and readiness within a geographic area to address needs and gaps.
- **Capacity.** Mobilize and/or build capacity within a geographic area to address needs.
- **Planning.** Develop a comprehensive strategic plan that includes policies, programs, and practices, creating a logical, data-driven plan to address problems identified in assessment.
- **Implementation.** Implement evidence-based prevention programs, policies, and practices.
- **Evaluation.** Measure the impact of the SPF and its implemented programs, policies, and practices.
- **Cultural competence.** Interact effectively with members of diverse populations.
- **Sustainability.** Achieve and maintain long-term results.

To be successful, coalitions leaders and members need to implement each of these elements in their community. Fortunately, all the skills and knowledge do not need to reside in any one individual, but in the coalition members' collective repertoire of skills and knowledge.

Figure 2 displays the key skills and processes that CADCA has identified as essential for a coalition to be successful. The *CADCA Primer Series* describes each of the SPF elements in detail.

Figure 2



Overview of Coalition Sustainability.

“Sustainability” is a term that we hear more and more often in relation to coalition work. Whether in discussions about our natural environment or a new community program, the questions on the minds of many funders, leaders and community stakeholders are...

*“Does what we are doing make sense as a long-term strategy?
and...can we keep this up?”*

A Definition of Coalition Sustainability

A sustainable coalition has enough resources to intervene at the community-level and can maintain these resources long enough to see community-level outcomes.

In the context of conducting a specific strategy (e.g., prescription medication take backs or conducting regular alcohol compliance checks), we define sustainability as the likelihood of that approach continuing—especially after initial funding ends. Sustainability in the context of coalition work is even more complex. Broadly stated, it is the ability of your coalition to maintain the **human, social and material resources** needed to **achieve long-term goals** for community change. This guarantees that your coalition can have ongoing vitality in its internal structure and process and ensures viability of its strategies in the community over the long-term. The components of this definition include:

Long-term goals for community change. First, achieving significant change in your community takes time. The conditions that foster substance misuse did not develop overnight, and your coalition will not change them quickly. If you are serious about affecting the problem in a meaningful way, acknowledge that you are in it for the long haul. It may take several years to enact the changes you identify and realize the long-term effects. Much can—and likely will—happen over the course of those years. Smart coalitions not only get things done now, they also prepare for changes that can affect coalition work in the foreseeable future.

Sustainability Planning for DFC Grantees

Coalitions receiving DFC funding are required in years three and seven of their grant period to submit a sustainability plan. Do not wait that long to develop a plan. You should be thinking of sustainability as you begin to work through the elements of the SPF. Incorporate the tips presented throughout this primer and take note of the ideas your coalition generates, and you will find that the formal plan practically writes itself.

This primer builds on others in the series by laying out a framework and describing key considerations and action steps for coalitions to include in their

journey to sustainability. The remainder of this publication is organized into four chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Engage Volunteers and Partners** provides information on how coalitions can build and sustain volunteer and partner involvement in the coalition over the long-term.
- **Chapter 2: Build a Credible Process** discusses how the coalition can sustain, over the long-term, the processes included in the **Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)**.
- **Chapter 3: Ensure Relevance** encourages the coalition to reach out beyond existing partners to a broad range of individuals and organizations to emphasize how the work of the coalition supports their visions, issues and concerns.
- **Chapter 4: Create a Sustainability Plan** provides a six step process for coalitions to ensure that both financial and in-kind resources are sustained long enough to achieve the coalitions long-term objectives.

When Should We Start Thinking About Sustainability?

Many ask this question, but most already know the answer. Coalitions should start planning for sustainability as soon as coalition formation and planning are under way. If you think of sustainability as a proactive extension of having the resources to make change and the strong capacity to use them well, you will see why **sustainability should be incorporated early on in your process**. As your coalition gets off the ground, you will need to focus on membership and startup activities. But once you are stable, do not get too comfortable.

True sustainability does not come from a grant application every few years—it grows from a strategic orientation to your coalition’s work and ongoing attention to the building blocks that make up your coalition’s vitality and viability.

“Tough love” about coalition sustainability. Coalitions are sometimes squeamish about engaging in sustainability planning, and many put off thinking about it or crafting plans for ongoing funding until deadlines loom and/or existing grants are set to disappear.

Let us be clear: **a coalition not thinking about sustainability may be unworthy of the community’s investment of time and resources.** Why take this hardline approach to sustainability? Recall that community change will take time. If your coalition means business about addressing the problem of substance misuse in your community, you owe it to your members, supporters, partners, and champions to be around to see things through.

Seven Habits of Highly Sustainable Coalitions

This primer presents ways to think about sustainability at different levels of your coalition's strategy, operations and stages in your activity cycles. However, there are seven habits or "super skills" that cut across many of these components. Ask yourself, to what extent does our coalition practice this? Where do opportunities exist to instill this habit and put it to work in our coalition's efforts?

- 1. Guard your capacity.** Sustainability encompasses much more than dollars. Your coalition's capacity—its membership, relationships, leadership and organizational strength—is like a goose that lays golden eggs. You have to take care of the goose. Sadly, some coalitions fall into the routine of working to maintain collaboration at the expense of crucial components of capacity that led to their initial success. In facing new decisions, think about how they affect your coalition's ability to work collaboratively. Are there creative opportunities for growth? Does a particular strategy or decision limit your capacity?
- 2. Track your progress.** While evaluation is an essential component of a coalition's process (see the Institute's Evaluation Primer for more information), tracking your coalition's general progress—even less formally—represents an extraordinarily powerful part of your sustainability tool kit. An ongoing sense of your group's status relative to its goals helps you clearly outline what additional resources are needed and how quickly results can be achieved.
- 3. Focus on the goal.** Substance use is complex and relates to other community and youth issues. Far too often, coalitions pursue strategies tangential to the main focus of their work, under the guise that they affect the same population or relate to the core issues. Beware of these distractions.
- 4. Seek local support first.** Smart coalitions know that the majority of resources—and the ones you can best rely on—will always be right at home. A "local first" approach means that your coalition will create more opportunities to engage partners, exercise a broader and more creative scope of funding options, and have local buy-in to demonstrate support of any external funding for which you do apply.
- 5. Always add value.** Your coalition functions because key stakeholders in the community see value in having a collaborative venue. Look for ways that various strategies can raise funds and develop partnerships that add value for diverse groups in the community.
- 6. Tell a story.** All too often, coalitions get so bogged down in doing the work that they lose track of how to talk about their contributions. All coalitions need to make sure that they continuously spread the word about their efforts and impacts. What does storytelling have to do with sustainability? Developing your coalition's story gives you a succinct way to communicate with potential funders and partners about your aims. Stories resonate, and because they connect with our emotions, they have a more memorable quality than mere facts and figures. Finally, stories build capacity by promoting solidarity and a shared sense of the coalition's past, present, and future among coalition members themselves.
- 7. Keep learning.** Smart coalitions recognize that there is always room to grow and more to know about preventing and combating community problems. By keeping an open mind and a learning orientation, these coalitions become more resilient and are better able to adapt to changing conditions.

A Word About Cultural Competence as it Relates to Sustainability

The relationship between sustainability and cultural competence deserves special attention, because both need to be managed closely and tend not to receive their fair share of attention. Both should be addressed at every stage of your coalition's work—from assessment through evaluation.

Fiscal worries can sometimes translate into short-term and shortsighted efforts to bring in resources—and may occur at the expense of culturally competent values and strategies. Guard against this, because you may find yourself gambling away your coalition's effectiveness and credibility with cultural groups in your community. Approaches for ensuring sustainability, in light of concerns for cultural competence, include the following:

- **Ask first.** How are the different strategies under consideration aligned, or not, with the values of different groups in our community? (Note: Be sure to engage members of those groups in these discussions.)
- **Let history be your guide.** Many community groups can share stories of how their cultural perspectives have been ignored or misinterpreted. Take time to learn the history so your coalition does not undermine its sustainability by repeating earlier mistakes.
- **Work with culture, not against it.** Remember, culture represents a resource, not a burden. Building on your community's cultures can yield creative ideas for outreach and fundraising, resources for communications and space, and more. For example, hold activities in the cultural venues in the communities of interest with which your coalition interacts. You may find free or low-cost space that meets community needs.

CHAPTER 1.

Engage Volunteers And Partners

Maintaining Involvement and Energy

While many coalitions hope that a hefty grant will be the end of their sustainability worries, in reality, coalitions need the commitment of volunteers and partners to work over a long period of time. Key strategies for thinking about and sustaining the effort behind your coalition's work include:

- **Build and maintain momentum with incremental goals and “small wins.”** During your coalition's assessment and planning phases, it identified a broad range of targets and several ambitious goals for addressing conditions that facilitate substance use in your community. Make sure that as the coalition creates its road map for change, it breaks these goals into smaller mini-goals. As your coalition achieves “small wins,” a sense of productivity and accomplishment, greater commitment by members and partners, and a reputation for your coalition as a group that “gets things done” will follow.
- **Use the power of “legitimate peripheral participation.”** This describes how groups can revitalize their membership by creating opportunities for participants at multiple levels, and the means for less-central participants/partners to fluidly become more central. The result: a deep bench from which your coalition can draw. Here are the keys to this:
 - Create many opportunities for members to participate in coalition and partner efforts.
 - Enable different *levels* of participation. “Peripheral” participation means that you create opportunities for low-intensity and low-commitment involvement in coalition activities so people can participate in ways that work for them.
 - Ensure that all participants are viewed as *legitimate*—regardless of their level of involvement. Commitment to your coalition will grow when peripheral members see that the coalition honors and accepts them as genuine contributors, even if they are not currently part of the coalition's “inner circle.”
- **Know when the time comes for a specific initiative or strategy to “grow up” and move on.** A coalition's overall energy for change can wane if it settles into a pattern of operating one or more static initiatives or programs designed to recur year after year. Remember that a coalition is not a

program. While it can make sense for a coalition to take ownership of developing and seeding a particular strategy, maintaining these initiatives limits your coalition's ability to be agile and to develop new partnerships and strategies for change. This can zap the vitality of your coalition and constrains the coalition's ability to add value above and beyond the work of individual organizations in the community. Have a frank conversation with the coalition about when it is time for a strategy to operate independently of the coalition. As a group, identify whether the strategy can be spun off into a standalone entity, continued under the ownership of a partner organization or evolved into something else entirely.

- **Overcome issue “silos.”** Energy for change wanes when community issues are sliced too thin, dividing human and material resources in too many ways. While your coalition needs to stay focused on your main goal, you also can free up energy by seeking connections with groups working on related issues. Do not feel that your coalition has to take on all the problems of the community, but partner with others to find ways to reduce redundant efforts and find joint strategies that benefit everyone's interests.

Build a Strong Volunteer and Membership Base – The 6 R's

There are many available guides and books on effective volunteer administration. A brief review of the leading authorities suggests a strong consensus for what makes for a quality relationship between a coalition and its volunteers. The Community Tool Box (<http://ctb.ku.edu>) offers a succinct summary of this consensus with the memorable “Six R's of Volunteer Recruitment and Retention:”

- **Relationships.** One of the key reasons people volunteer is because they already have an existing relationship with a member of the organization. Additionally, many people volunteer just for the opportunity to work with like-minded neighbors who share a common concern or passion. Personal relationships are a key avenue for gaining volunteers and an important aspect of volunteer work. Coalitions should work to foster strong relationships among their volunteers.
- **Roles.** Volunteers require well-defined roles that are limited, immediate, and doable. After all, if there isn't something for a volunteer to do, why should they remain involved? Coalition members are often relegated to the generic role of “general advisor,” which can be poorly defined and fail to create a positive and lasting volunteer experience. Do not ask someone to join if there is not a specific opportunity for them to contribute to the coalition's work. Likewise, it is always easier to recruit volunteers when there is a role requiring the prospective volunteer's specific expertise and personal passions.

- **Respect.** How we ask volunteers to join our coalition communicates a great deal about whether we genuinely respect the volunteer and value their contribution, or if we are only asking for their involvement to meet a grant requirement. Volunteers should be sought for a specific role and, once on board, that volunteer has every right to expect their contribution will be respected. One of the important reasons for rules and by-laws is that they help foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and set clear guidelines for how business will be conducted. A frequent reason volunteers leave coalition work is a sense of disrespect, a feeling of being a token representative, and the very real experience of having no voice in the important affairs of the group.
- **Recognition.** The least expensive and most important thing coalitions can give their members is recognition. Recognition should be a regular part of coalition meetings. Name publicly what people have done and the results of their hard work. Coalitions can even inform employers about a volunteer's coalition work. Employers are often impressed by the civic work of their workforce, but are usually unaware of such outside volunteerism. The bottom line is that coalitions must devise creative ways to share the credit and share it often.
- **Rewards.** The truth is that everyone volunteers both to give and to get. Make what people will gain from working with the coalition explicit and then make sure these benefits of involvement are delivered. Skills development, connections to others, career opportunities, learning, and travel are some of the rewards all coalitions can provide to their members.
- **Results.** People should see the results of their work. What was their role in contributing to shared outcomes? Coalitions should work to map and honor this contribution. All too often, coalitions leave outcomes discussions for meetings with funders or board leadership. These same discussions that parse whether and how the coalition is making a real difference in the community should be held with all coalition members. When positive results are seen, coalition members deserve clear communication about how their specific work helped to achieve these shared goals.

By building the 6 R's into the ongoing coalition operations and infrastructure, the coalition can ensure that volunteers and organizations will become and stay committed to the coalitions and its goals.

The 6 R's in Practice

Relationships:

- *Names*: Ensure members know each other's names and roles
- *Socialize*: Provide opportunities for members to socialize in and out of coalition meetings
- *New members*: Provide 1) a new member orientation 2) handout an orientation packet and, 3) assign a mentor
- *Survey*: Survey members' skills, interests and passions
- *Thank you*: Provide handwritten or personalized notes

Roles:

- *Job descriptions*: Establish for leaders, staff, committees etc.
- *Sector representatives*: Create job descriptions and leadership roles
- *Clarify roles*: Survey/interview each member to clarify their role on the coalition (not just eating chicken sandwiches)
- *Work groups*: Create groups to spread the work on specific tasks

Respect:

- *Time*: Start and end on time
- *Meetings*: Ensure productive, action-oriented meetings
- *Electronics*: Establish ground rules for use of smart phones
- *Names*: Provide opportunities to learn names (e.g., name tags, table tents)
- *Ideas*: Encourage all members to express ideas
- *Opinions*: Provide appropriate opportunities for "less outspoken" members to express their opinions
- *Cultural competence*: Take steps to proactively enhance cultural competency and address culture and diversity throughout the SPF

Recognition and Rewards:

- *Recognition efforts*: Provide monthly awards, newspaper write ups, news stories about members, annual award banquets, etc.
- *Individual volunteers*: Provide a letter to active member's workplace/supervisor for their "personnel file"
- *Highlight partners*: Recognize partner organization's contributions to coalition efforts through announcement and awards
- *Milestones*: Awards volunteers for hours and years served
- *Youth*: Ask young people how they want to be recognized

Results:

- *Report cards*: Create and share an annual report of the coalition's efforts and outcomes
- *Celebrate*: Celebrate the little things on a regular basis
- *Accomplishments*: Spend five minutes each meeting when members can describe accomplishments of the coalition

CHAPTER 2. Building a Credible Process

Coalitions must ensure that their efforts will be in place long enough to achieve their long-term objectives. This means that the coalition must ensure its planning processes are ongoing and will allow the coalition to adapt to a changing community environment.

For sustainability purposes, the coalition must “institutionalize” the SPF into its ongoing activities so the work of the coalition can continue regardless of funding and staff levels. Coalitions can do this through:

- **Scheduling coalition processes to occur on a regular basis.** Using the SPF skills and processes as a guide, the coalition can create a timeline (also discussed below) that informs coalition members of when each phase of the SPF will be conducted each year. Over time, coalition members will become accustomed to engaging in their tasks at the appropriate time each year.
- **Creating and using the coalition’s planning products.** The coalition must insure that the products created by coalition members (e.g., community assessment, logic model, strategic and action plans) are shared within the coalition and the community. For example, the coalition’s community assessment can be a valuable tool for member organizations as they apply for funding for their own programs and services. The coalition can further define its unique role in the community by creating products that are useful to the broader community.
- **Dividing up the work.** The work of the SPF must be distributed across the coalition membership and not left to staff or a few key members. This is critical because if the staff or volunteers leave the coalition, the skills and expertise will be spread among many people.
- **Communicating the efforts with the coalition and community.** Do all coalition members know who is engaged in the SPF elements and what they are doing? This communication is about **transparency**. The more the coalition and community members are aware of the work of the volunteers, the more they can be recognized and supported in their valuable work.

Doing these things can help to ensure that the coalition’s planning efforts are not dependent on paid staff or a volunteer and is independent of any one funding stream.

Building Coalition Member Skills to Implement the SPF

Coalitions often find it useful to regularly assess their members' abilities to implement each element of the SPF: assessment, capacity, planning, implementation, evaluation, sustainability and cultural competence. The CADCA skills and processes for SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (found in this *Sustainability Primer* on page 4) provides the coalition a useful tool for assessing the capacity of coalition members to "do the work" of the coalition.

Assessing the Coalition's Ability to Implement the SPF

A simple method of determining if the coalition needs additional training of SPF related topics is to ask a group of coalition members and leaders to review the CADCA skills and resources for SAMHSA's SPF and rate their perception of the coalition members' (as a whole) ability to implement the SPF. The members can be asked to assign each element one of the following notes:

- + Yes, the coalition could complete the element on its own without staff or coalition development support.
- ✓ Sort of... the coalition could complete the element with minimal support and coalition development support.
- 0 No, the coalition could not do complete this element on its own, even with help.

Based on the responses the coalition could decide to provide training and resources to enhance the coalition's ability to implement the SPF.

If the coalition determines that coalition members could improve on their ability to implement any of the SPF elements, there are several ways in which the coalition can provide training and skill building resources including:

- Provide the **CADCA primers** to coalition members. Ensure that each coalition member has access to each of the CADCA primers. Each month, a different primer (skill) could be referenced and highlighted for coalition members.
- Conduct a **"training moment"** at each coalition meeting. Spend 5 to 10 minutes at each coalition meeting providing members with information and skills regarding a specific SPF element. The CADCA primers can be used to supplement each training session.
- Send selected coalition members to a **CADCA conference**, either the National Leadership Forum (in February) and/or the Mid-Year Training Institute (in July). Coalition members may be selected based on their involvement in a specific coalition task or work group (e.g., develop an opioid logic model and strategies.)
- Ask selected coalition members to take a free **CADCA online course** related to the SPF. For example, the Core Essentials Online Course (which walks through the SPF) can be taken in its entirety or by just selecting specific modules (e.g., community assessment or sustainability.)

- Contract with CADCA or other providers for coalition training and/or coalition development support related to the SPF (i.e. core essentials training, evaluation).
- Reach out to our Coalition Development Support Team for additional resources.

These methods to provide training and information to coalition members can be implemented in combination with each other. Please contact CADCA Coalition Development Support at training@cadca.org to assist your coalition in building its capacity to implement the SPF.

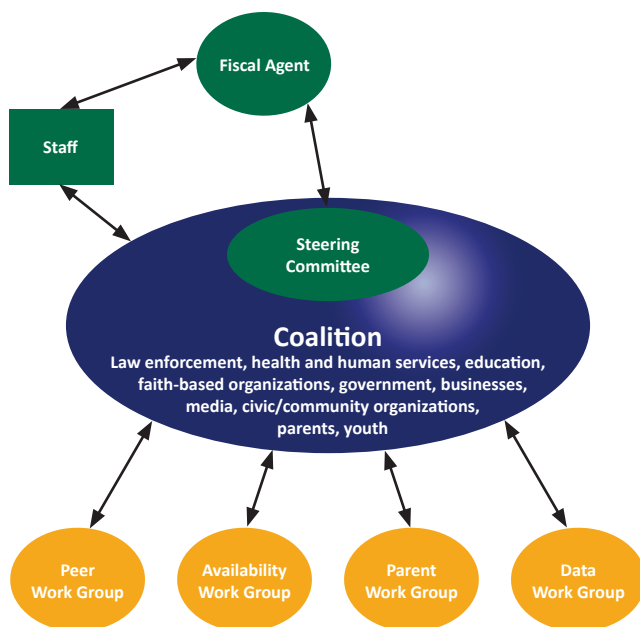
Planning for the SPF: Organizational Chart and Timeline

Organizational chart. The organizational chart is another powerful tool to institutionalize the on-going planning efforts of the coalition. The organizational chart provides transparency about how the coalition operates and provides a picture of:

- **Where the work is being done** (e.g. assessment or strategic planning work groups, staff, leadership).
- **Decision making.** Clarifying which decisions are made at which levels within the organization.
- **Communication channels** which can minimize confusion about who is supposed to be communicating what with whom.
- **Frequency of coalition and work group meetings.** The organizational chart can clarify which groups of the coalition need to meet when to accomplish their assigned tasks. For example, some coalitions only meet quarterly as most of the work is done in work groups and by the executive committee.
- **Legal and fiscal authority** can be clearly defined in the organizational chart.

The organizational chart below provides an example of a typical coalition structure that can include the following key elements:

- **Steering committee** – can also be called the leadership team, coalition board, executive committee, etc.
- **Fiscal agent** – an outside organization with legal and fiscal responsibilities for coalition funding.
- **Staff** – paid by grants or other coalition funds or donated from partner organizations.
- **Coalition** – general coalition members composed of individuals and representatives of community organizations and can include specific sector representatives.
- **Work groups** – Also called action teams, subcommittees, etc. These groups can be “ad hoc” (temporary) or “standing” (permanent).



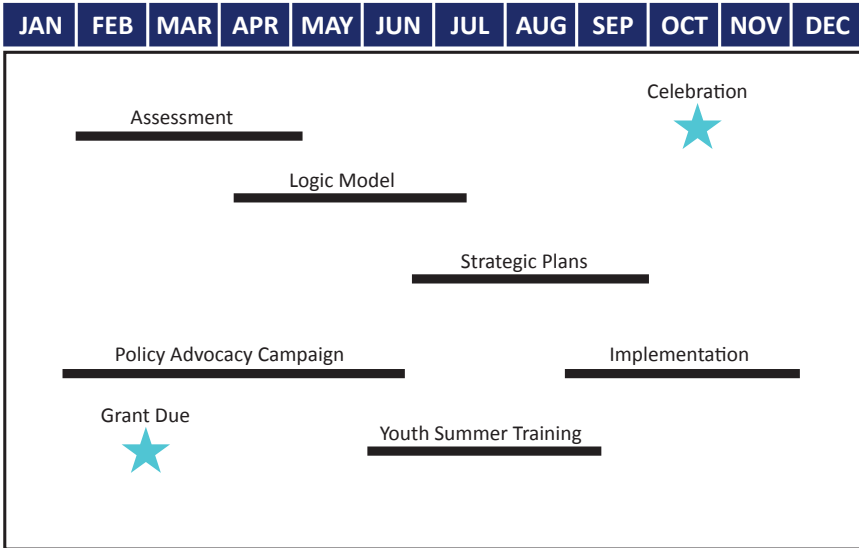
Given that there is turnover among both staff and volunteers, it is important to have a clear picture to remind both existing and new members how the coalition does its work.

Timeline. Coalitions should establish timelines that define the schedule for:

- Specific SPF planning tasks (e.g. community assessment, logic modeling)
- When coalition and community meetings will be held
- Key reporting and grant application due dates
- Dates for coalition and partner events
- Key community and political events and activities that may impact coalition work (e.g. school schedules, city council meetings, holidays)

When coalitions clearly plan and establish timelines for completing work, coalition and community members will be able to plan their own work schedules and identify potential conflicts. The timeline also creates the ability to hold coalition staff and volunteers accountable for what they planned to do. Finally, the timeline can build credibility within the community and allow other organizations to depend on the coalition to conduct its work on a regular and ongoing basis.

The sample timeline below provides an example of how the coalition’s key projects, tasks, and deadlines can be highlighted in a clear and easy to read format.





CHAPTER 3. Ensure Relevance

In addition to fostering volunteer participation in a credible coalition process, coalitions must work to remain relevant to current community concerns. This does not mean that the coalition’s mission changes with every whim of public attitude or change in political leadership. Rather, remaining directly relevant to community concerns can be accomplished by showing the connection between current “hot button” community issues and the coalition’s long-term interests.

This can be practically done by educating the community on how the coalition’s issue of substance misuse **shares the same root causes**. For example, if teen pregnancy is in the community spotlight the coalition can show how the same risk factors in the family, school, peer group, and community result in both substance use and teen pregnancy.

Additionally, a coalition can show how the current community concerns are **interconnected** with substance use. This is obviously true for an issue such as crime and violence where a coalition may embark on a media campaign that shows what percentage of crime is substance use-related. The same strategy could be applied to the earlier example of teen pregnancy. Young people are far more likely to engage in sexual activity when substance use is involved.

Strategies for staying connected to current community concerns include:

1. Show shared root causes.
2. Show how issues interact.
3. Reframe your issues.
4. Align with champions of current “hot button” issues to create mutually beneficial partnerships.

Sometimes reframing a coalition’s existing priorities can help maintain the public’s attention. Substance-free youth is the worthy vision of most coalitions, but such generic statements can lose their inspirational qualities after repeated use. **Reframing** the topic might be the best strategy. For example, focusing on how substance-free high school years can improve graduation rates and post-high school success may resonate with parents more than generic appeals for a substance-free lifestyle.

A final strategy is for coalitions to forge **mutually beneficial partnerships** with other groups in the community. Many communities have multiple coalitions or other organizations that focus on social and health issues. For sustainability purposes, these organizations and the coalition must be intimately connected

and aware of how their work contributes to each other's goals and to shared outcomes in the community. There will be many times when the coalition needs to stand with and behind their coalition counterparts at news conferences and other events. In these instances, the coalition remains relevant, not by directly addressing the hot button issue, but by standing with those that do.

Maintaining External Ties

Effective coalitions function well because they cultivate and maintain strong connections with organizations and individuals representing key sectors of their community. Coalitions must ensure close ties with the community, or conflict may arise. Here are key strategies for maintaining strong ties and presence in your community and beyond:

- **Learn the language of value.** Many coalitions and nonprofit organizations are much better at describing a community need than communicating the value of what they do. Moreover, when they do think about their value, they frame it in terms that *they* care about. Your coalition will benefit when you learn to think about how your work creates value in addressing needs and issues and develop skills in specifically connecting your contributions to the perspectives, interests, and priorities of multiple audiences. Recognize the diversity of potential “selling points” when connecting different stakeholders to your efforts. As your coalition gears up for an organized effort—whether fund raising, partnership development, or general communication and dissemination—map out your audiences and discuss the following as a group:
 - How are we making a difference?
 - To whom are we conveying this information (i.e., which person, organization, stakeholder, funder, etc.)?
 - Why would—and should—*this* person, organization, stakeholder, funder, etc. care?
- **Get the word out early and often.** Find channels to communicate your coalition's efforts and successes with key stakeholders and the general public. If you want to maintain interest, energy, and awareness about your coalition, you cannot afford to fall silent to the larger community. Trust the fact that people want to know about your great work. The more activity they hear about, the more interest there will be in supporting your activities. Specific strategies can include:
 - News releases and press conferences marking successes or developments in your coalition's agenda (e.g., releasing your assessment report or strategic plan).

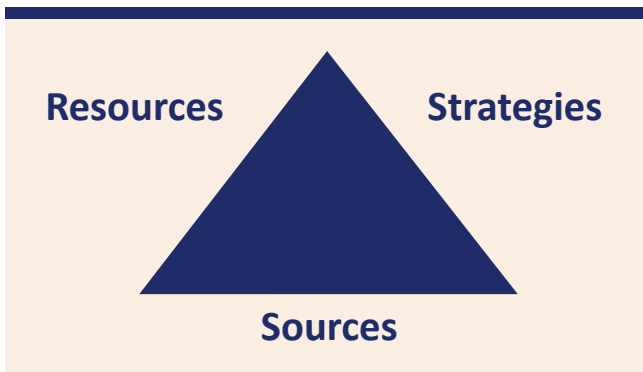
- Regular notices in the community section of your local paper, including updates about the coalition, mini-features on coalition members or partners, or short pieces about substance use in your community.
- A coalition website or blog: These are easy and inexpensive to set up and maintain, so coalitions have little reason not to have a web presence.
- Newsletters (electronic and/or print).
- Direct mailings.



CHAPTER 4. Create A Sustainability Plan

The coalition must address the first three topics covered in this primer before it can go to the community and elsewhere to seek resources to support its efforts. As such, when the coalition has a strong membership base, has institutionalized the SPF into its ongoing efforts, and is well-connected with and valued by the community, the coalition will be in a good place to seek resources.

The effort to obtain ongoing resources represents a combination of three key elements. The coalition must first identify the **resources** the coalition needs to sustain its efforts. Then the coalition can identify specifically which **sources** are most likely to provide those resources. Finally, the coalition can develop targeted **strategies** for each source. Each resource, strategy, and source trio create a specific opportunity for coalition members to contact a community partner and make a request for needed resources.



Coalitions need three types of resources: human, social, and material. Human resources are the volunteer knowledge and skills needed to do the work of the coalition. Social resources are the external connections and relevance to community issues that also were just discussed. Material resources take many forms including money, skills, technology, space, communication, and transportation.

Material resources are what most people have in mind when they think about planning for sustainability. Remember that it is just as important for coalitions to have a solid plan for maintaining their human and social resource needs as it is to develop a plan for finding material resources. Determining what material resources your coalition has, what material resources your coalition needs, and

how to acquire these material resources is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

Six Steps to Creating a Sustainability Plan

There are six steps the coalition volunteers will need to complete when creating a sustainability plan.

These steps include:

1. Inventory current material resources.
2. Identify the resources that are needed over the long-term.
3. Determine a set of diversified funding strategies.
4. Identify appropriate partners and sources.
5. Write case statements explaining why the sources should be contributed to the coalition.
6. Develop an action plan for contacting potential donors with the goal of making the request.

This six-step planning routine can be used to create sustainability plans for individual strategies and for the overall coalition. These are two distinct tasks. For example, to **sustain a strategy**, a coalition may be working with its partners to conduct up to 15 compliance checks of retailers each year. In this case, the coalition will work with law enforcement and other partners to determine all the resources needed to conduct a sufficient number of compliance checks each year and then identify permanent sources of funding and in-kind donations for the resources.

Sustaining a coalition is different in that the future resource needs of the coalition are not clear, as no one knows for certain what the community environment will look like and what substance use trends will be in place in five years. In this case the coalition must estimate the resource needs required in five years and identify potential funding strategies to obtain those resources in five years.

The six steps to create a sustainability plan will be covered in the remainder of this chapter.

Step 1: Inventory Current Resources

The first step is to inventory the resources necessary to run the coalition **at the present time**. This includes both cash and in-kind resources. The resources will generally fall into the following categories which include:

- **Communication.** This category includes communications equipment such as fax machines, phone systems, and cell phones. Also included are the monthly costs for phone and e-mail service, postage, and photocopying.

- **Space.** Coalitions need meeting space, space to conduct programs, and usually office space for coalition staff members.
- **Supplies.** This category is a bit of a catch-all that includes everything from basic office supplies to specific supplies for prevention programming. Supplies for general meetings such as chart paper and markers are also included.
- **Technology.** Websites, laptop computers, and printers are just a few of the technological resources most coalitions need to conduct everyday business.
- **Time.** Coalitions require dedicated volunteers and, if available, staff to support the work of the overall coalition. In addition to staff time, the coalition often needs the time of professionals with specific skills such as legal services or accounting. Lastly, the time associated with specific interventions such as teaching a substance prevention curriculum or supervising after-school activities should be included in this category. The coalition should account for all time for which it would normally have to pay.
- **Training.** Many coalitions fail to plan for the ongoing training and skill development of staff and volunteers. The opportunity to build skills is a major benefit of coalition involvement and costs associated with this process should be included in coalition budgets and sustainability plans.
- **Transportation.** For some coalitions, providing transportation to participants is key to overcoming barriers to participation. Transportation to out-of-town events and trainings is also included in this category.

These categories are listed to help volunteers plan for all the material resources they might need to run the coalition. Not every coalition requires resources in every category. The coalition budget (or accumulation from multiple budgets, if applicable) is a tool coalitions can use to create a complete and accurate inventory of their coalition's current resource needs.

The purpose of this first step, the resource inventory, is to understand what resources the coalition currently uses to do the work in which it is currently engaged. For example, at its current level of resources, a county-wide coalition may be able to address two substance problems (e.g., underage drinking and marijuana use by youth) and only able to reach three of the seven cities in their county. This provides a starting point (baseline) for the future planning (step 2) about the amount of resources the coalition will need to operate effectively in the future.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 1: Inventory current resources

ABC resources for the current year total: \$265,000

DFC grant:	\$125,000
In-kind contributions:	\$125,000
Auction fundraiser:	\$ 10,000
Donations:	\$ 5,000

Step 2: Identify Future Resource Requirements

Step one identified the resources the coalition currently utilizes to do its work. The second step requires the coalition to anticipate what growth or new interventions the coalition hopes to see in the future. This requires the coalition to engage all its volunteer members to discuss and agree upon the future plans of the coalition.

The coalition budget is a tool that can be used to list those resources it believes will be necessary for future growth and new activities. It is the same basic form used for the inventory of current coalition resources with a few adaptations. Instead of listing what the coalition has, it asks the coalition to consider what it will need in the future.

Coalition Sustainability: Planning for the Future

Coalition sustainability planning requires a coalition to fully explore what it wants to look like in the future:

- **Will the coalition get BIGGER?** Some coalitions decide they need to grow to address more problems, expand their reach geographically, engage more diverse populations, and/or expand the number and reach of their strategies.
- **Will the coalition stay roughly the same size?** Some coalitions determine that with their current resources, they are currently addressing a significant number of relevant problems in the community and they reach the entire population with appropriate strategies. They are confident they can achieve their vision and objectives with the current level of resources.
- **Will the coalition get smaller?** Some coalitions decide that their role in the future will only be to coordinate and engage community partners in planning, rather than to plan and implement prevention strategies. In this case a coalition may get smaller with fewer resources needed for its coordinating role.

As the coalition engages in the discussion about future resources, consider the following:

- Step 2 is less about determining a future budget amount than it is about engaging all coalition members in a discussion about the future direction of the coalition.

- Some coalition members will not be comfortable with making predictions about the coalition’s future – others will be comfortable in dealing with the ambiguity of addressing the future. The point is to engage ALL coalition members and partners in the discussion about the coalition’s future operations.
- This discussion is not about how many monetary resources a coalition thinks it can raise in the future, it is about the coalition strategically thinking about its future role in creating a safe and healthy community and how many resources the coalition will need to fulfill that role.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 2: Identify future resource needs

By **2025** the ABC Coalition expects to need a total of \$350,000 in resources for the following purposes:

Salaries and benefits (2.0 FTE staff):	\$160,000
Supplies and materials:	\$ 15,000
Volunteer (in-kind) time:	\$ 80,000
Office space, phone, internet etc.:	\$ 5,000
Funding for 4 environmental strategies: (4 strategies & \$15,000 each)	\$ 60,000
Administration expenses:	\$ 20,000
Travel expenses:	\$ 5,000
Training and capacity building:	\$ 5,000

Step 3: Select Funding Strategies

Once the coalition identifies its future resource needs (Step 2) the coalition must identify a diverse set of strategies to obtain the resources **in the future**. Some coalitions base their entire sustainability planning on the expectation (hope) that they will obtain a single grant or allocation by a government agency. What happens to the coalition if that funding does not come through?

In order for a coalition to ensure its future, it must plan to obtain its future resources from a **diversified set of funding strategies**. There are four basic categories of strategies for gaining needed resources—share, charge, ask, or earn. Each of these strategies can be implemented by the coalition in many ways. The following section provides a brief overview of the seventeen methods coalitions can use to obtain resources.

Share

Ways coalitions typically share needed resources:

- **Asset sharing.** These are resources such as equipment and space that can be classified as assets on a balance sheet. Typical examples include sharing office space with other agencies, using copy equipment owned

by the coalition's fiscal agent, or sharing the use of a passenger van with several youth service programs. The key is that the coalition did not have to purchase or pay for these assets.

- **In-kind contributions.** This is when a person or organization donates something they already have, such as supplies, materials, and staff time. These items would not be considered an asset on a balance sheet. For example, to print the coalition newsletter, a local printing company agrees to donate the paper, printing, and time. A lawyer may donate their legal advice to help the coalition attain nonprofit tax status or a local public accountant may donate their time to audit the coalition's financial records.
- **Leverage shared positions.** This is different than loaned or in-kind staff time. This is when two or more organizations share a staff position. For example, a coalition may need a public relations person and so does one of its partners. Neither the coalition nor the partner have the financial resources to make the position attractive. They combine their resources and create a position that is responsible for work at both the coalition and the partner organization.

Charge

Ways coalitions typically charge to gain needed resources:

- **Fee for service.** Fee for service arrangements allow a coalition to charge for a service provided to the community. For example, coalitions may charge for training area nonprofit staff on the fundamentals of prevention or charge area businesses for consultation on effective personnel policies that address substance use.
- **Fine or penalty with revenue to prevention.** Many branches of government have the ability to assess fines or penalties associated with breaking laws and regulations. For example, when a judge assesses fines to those who are convicted of providing alcohol to minors, the revenue from the fines can be dedicated to the coalition or a community fund that addresses the issue of adults providing alcohol to minors. Coalitions across the country receive money from fines that range from property code violations to court orders.
- **Line item in a government budget.** Many coalitions receive money from city and county prevention budgets. This can take the form of a contract for service from the local funding authority for prevention services. Additionally, many localities designate all or a portion of funds received through DUIs and drug forfeitures to the prevention of like activities, providing another avenue for a coalition to become a line item in the police department's or prosecutor's budget. Some coalitions are "stand alone" items in their city or county budget—that is, their budget allocation is not

given through a city's police or human services department, but is given directly.

- **Line item in another nonprofit agency's budget.** Many times, this comes in the form of contracts for those things that the coalition can provide such as coordination or training that are outside of the capacity or mission of the sponsoring nonprofit. Some coalitions are almost completely funded through the United Way's capital budget. This means that the coalition does not apply for funding each year through the normal United Way allocation process, rather, it is a line item in the United Way's operating budget.
- **Membership dues.** Membership dues can be as informal as "passing the plate" at coalition meetings, or as formal as an annual requirement for monetary commitment. Remember, members will want something in return. This strategy is sometimes most successful coupled with value added services that only the coalition can provide (e.g., policy updates, lobbying efforts, evaluation, or research). This strategy can be very detrimental if it creates barriers to participation by anyone in the community who cares about reducing substance use.
- **Acquire tax revenue.** This requires legislation to make happen. County commissioners, city councils, or state governments may pass legislation raising tax revenue or dedicating tax revenue to specific entities. This strategy is successful when the tax revenue being sought is directly tied to the problem being addressed, such as "sin taxes." Some coalitions have helped create special purpose tax districts with the tax revenue generated going to area youth development efforts.

Ask

Ways coalitions typically ask for needed resources:

- **Grants.** Local, state, and federal governments, as well as family or community foundations are typical grantors. Grants can come in large and small amounts. They can be very competitive and restrictive, so a coalition should do their homework carefully. Most coalitions in the country receive some type of grant support.
- **Fundraisers.** Fundraisers are a logical and familiar tool in the coalition sustainability toolbox. However, many coalitions underestimate the cost and time associated with staging such events. The best fundraisers generate money and contribute to the mission of the group, such as recognition of community leaders and efforts or providing alternative activities for youth.
- **Individual donors.** Many coalitions avoid this strategy because they are afraid to ask potential donors for contributions or simply have not considered the opportunity. Donor funds offer a great way to develop discretionary funds for the coalition. The most successful individual donor

campaigns ensure a multi-year commitment, so the coalition can better predict their donation revenue from year to year.

- **United Way/payroll giving.** The United Way is a part of most American communities. United Way contributions can be like grants in that they come with strings attached. Payroll giving works best when one of the coalition members is a business or the chamber that is willing to undertake this on behalf of the coalition. This can be time consuming and coalitions should be cautious to not compete with their member agencies in this area.
- **Endowed funds/planned giving.** This is a relatively new idea to many coalitions. It takes time to cultivate the necessary relationships, but the time can be worth the effort. A special note, this is not a jumping off point for fundraising. It is part of a comprehensive strategy that is usually undertaken after other sustainability strategies have been successfully implemented, such as long-term individual donations and well-established fundraising events.

Earn

Ways coalitions typically earn needed resources:

- **For-profit business.** Examples of this include an ice cream shop that is owned by a job training organization through which they meet their job training objectives and meet some of their financial needs. Initiatives like these can be a very difficult undertaking. Most nonprofit organizations lack the necessary experience to run a for-profit business. Additionally, for-profit businesses can take away from the mission and purpose of the nonprofit entity. The most typical for-profit businesses run by substance use prevention coalitions are employee assistance programs. Coalitions must seek advice and expert guidance before undertaking this type of endeavor.
- **Business planning.** This is essentially the products or services the coalition has, their relative value, and how the coalition intends to market them, to whom, and a timeline for implementation. This is a logical extension of what many coalitions do with the addition of a significant marketing plan and an emphasis on identifying what of value the coalition has to “sell” to the community.
- **Partial ownership of for-profit enterprises.** This can be a helpful alternative to the coalition starting its own business. Coalitions can develop a relationship with an existing business that shares their values and mission. This strategy comes with the same inherent dangers of starting a business, but spreads the risk and builds in some of the necessary expertise. This type of effort is called “social entrepreneurship.”

This list of resource-generation strategies is not exhaustive, but provides a good starting point for leaders to consider as they plan for the coalition’s long-term

sustainability. Which strategies are chosen depends largely on the specific strategy and amount to be raised. The best choice will be different for every coalition based on the community they serve and the resources that community provides.

A Win-Win Fundraising Effort

One coalition conducted a **three-on-three basketball tournament** that served as part fundraising activity and part comprehensive strategy.

The coalition had identified a set of comprehensive strategies to address a local condition of youth drinking alcohol in a park on Friday nights. This included promoting more positive recreational activities and youth-friendly public spaces and providing clear messages about acceptable behavior. Additionally, the coalition wanted to partner with other organizations in the community as a fundraiser to support youth activities in the community. A three-on-three basketball tournament served both those purposes.

The coalition took advantage of every opportunity to synergize the event with the coalition's long-term development and communication plans. They invited the parks and recreation department as an organizing co-sponsor, and it provided supplies and equipment. The coalition:

- Recruited sponsorships from local businesses, who in exchange displayed banners and merchandise.
- Reached out to local celebrities, who served as announcers and referees, and ensured the event received positive press coverage.
- Created team sponsor sheets to enable individuals to set both a base sponsorship amount and an additional amount for every round advanced in the tournament. Donated prizes went to the winning teams and those who produced the most sponsorships.

Everyone had a great time, the coalition drew a diverse crowd to hear its message, and business sponsors were so pleased by the turnout and well-placed advertising that they promised to contribute again next year.

The following example demonstrates a diversified funding plan. The plan includes six distinct strategies – each of which will be focused on to obtain the resources needed to run the coalition. If one strategy is not successful in reaching its goal, other strategies can be adjusted or added to make up for the loss of funds.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 3: Select funding strategies

By 2025 the ABC Coalition expects to need a total of \$350,000 from the following strategies:

Grant (state, federal, and foundation):	\$150,000	43%
Volunteer (in-kind) time:	\$ 65,000	19%
Fundraising:	\$ 35,000	10%
Line item in govt budget:	\$ 50,000	14%
Leverage shared position:	\$ 35,000	10%
Donations:	\$ 15,000	4%
Total:	\$350,000	100%

Step 4: Identify Potential Sources and Donors

Volunteers bring many things to the coalition, and key among these is a first-hand knowledge of the community's resources and personal connections to organizations and individuals in the community. This is one reason to involve a broad cross-section of the coalition's membership base in the sustainability planning process. Brainstorming potential sources requires volunteers to understand (and own) the coalition's resource needs and be creative about possible strategies. With the list of needed resources and potential strategies in front of them, a group of coalition members should brainstorm possible sources. Brainstorming rules apply to this activity, meaning no idea is a bad idea, thinking outside of the box is encouraged, and the more ideas the better (quantity vs. quality).

The results of the brainstorming will vary depending on which potential strategy is being considered. For example, if the strategy is to obtain a line item in a government budget, the coalition members should brainstorm which governmental budgets are most likely to be able to support the coalition, and which elected officials would look favorably upon the coalition's eventual request. Looking to the future, the coalition might also identify which individuals in the community will potentially run for elected office in the future. In general, for each funding strategy the coalition should determine:

- Which individuals & organizations have an interest in achieving the coalition's goals
- Which foundations and grantors are funding coalitions and community change efforts
- If coalition members have connections to these individuals and organizations

One challenge coalitions face in sustainability planning is that they stop with one donor for each needed resource. When this source is not able to provide the group with what it wants, the group has no other options ready to implement. The brainstorming process described is designed to provide the planning team with multiple options for securing each resource.

Funding From Tobacco, Alcohol, Marijuana and Rx Industries?

What is your coalition's policy toward accepting funding from the Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana (if legal in your state) and Rx Industries?

Regardless of the resource development strategies your coalition decides to employ, it is a good idea to decide up front which funding sources are and are not acceptable to your coalition and community. Local prevention coalitions often receive offers of support from companies representing what one might broadly term the “alcohol industry:” alcohol producers, tobacco companies, or casinos.

Some community coalitions categorically refuse monies from these sources, either to avoid any appearance of “sleeping with the enemy” or sending mixed messages to the community, or because they wish to counteract real or perceived targeting of their community by these corporate interests (as sometimes occurs, in particular, with communities of color).

Other communities and coalitions have no problems accepting these funds – but accept with “strings attached,” such as no promotion by the donor. The important thing is to have a clear policy one way or the other, so your coalition's efforts are not distracted or derailed by conflict when potentially controversial funding opportunities arise.

Once the potential sources are identified, the coalition can begin planning how they will start to build relationships with the individuals and organizations (see Step 6: action planning). This effort should involve providing information about the coalition, inviting the individuals to appropriate coalition events, and sharing the coalition results and accomplishments. The overall goal of this effort will be to create a relationship where the potential funder will say “you had me at hello” when a request is finally made.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 4: Identify potential sources and donors

Strategy	Potential Sources & Donors
<p>Grant: Apply for four grants – three will be to fund specific strategies and one will be to fund coalition infrastructure. <i>Target amount: \$150,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal: SAMHSA, DFC State: Dept. of Health, Family Services Private: Howard Foundation, Smith Co, Inc. Foundation
<p>Volunteer (in-kind) time: Ensure participation and ownership by coalition members and partners. <i>Target amount: \$80,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stakeholders include: law enforcement, education, hospital, county and city government
<p>Fundraising: Conduct one large fundraising event and partner with other organizations on 2 events. <i>Target amount: \$30,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABC Coalition fundraising auction Partner with Boys and Girls Club and ABC Family Services
<p>Line item in government budget: Provide regular updates and demonstrate cost-benefit of the coalition’s work. <i>Target amount: \$50,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABC County Cities (six): Jackson, Trevor City, Millbrae, Central City, Meyersville and Danport
<p>Leverage shared position: Build mutually beneficial relationship with partner who can fund a shared position. <i>Target amount: \$35,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School district County sheriff ABC Hospital
<p>Donations: Establish coalition as a 501(c)(3) to obtain donations from coalition and community members. <i>Target amount: \$15,000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition members Residents of six cities 5th & 6th grade parents from throughout the county

Step 5: Create Case Statements

The first four steps in the sustainability planning process helped the coalition identify what resources are needed to sustain the coalition and potential strategies and sources to obtain those resources.

In step five, the coalition turns its attention to collecting and preparing information about the coalition, its efforts, and accomplishments that can clearly describe what the coalition does and how it makes a difference in the community. The coalition must “build the case” that it is “worthy” of the donations or “investments” that the donors and sources will make.

The thought of going to community partners and asking for needed resources may be intimidating to most volunteers. It is intimidating because they feel

ill-equipped to explain why the resource is needed. It is intimidating because they may not know “what to say.” If the coalition is going to tap into the personal connections of each member, it will have to make their members comfortable with the task of talking to friends and connections about coalition needs and issues.

A key tool that coalitions can create to help their volunteers with resource requests is a **case statement**. Case statements can provide volunteers with “what to say.” Case statements can help volunteers communicate the importance of the coalition’s work and how the coalition makes a difference. Case statements can help members share recent accomplishments and coalition success stories.

A case statement is simply a concise, written story that uses everyday language to answer key questions held by potential supporters and donors. These questions include:

- **Why is the coalition needed at all?** The answer is usually answered based on the coalition’s vision statement, which describes the “ideal” future for the community and the results of the coalition’s community assessment, which describe the current issues in the community.
- **Specifically, how does the coalition make a difference in substance use outcomes?** The answer is usually based on the coalition’s logic model and strategic and action plans, which identify how the coalition implements comprehensive strategies to change local conditions in the community.
- **What is the unique role of the coalition?** The answer speaks to the coalition’s mission statement and what the coalition does to achieve a healthy and safe community. The coalition’s strategic and action plans provide a detailed description of how the mission is implemented.
- **Who is involved in the coalition?** The answer speaks to the membership list and coalition partners, and also must emphasize the whole community’s responsibility to make things better and the strong commitment that has already been made.
- **Is the coalition a cost-effective way of addressing substance use?** The answer is usually based on results of the coalition’s evaluation, which describes how the coalition has contributed to changes in the community.

Sitting down and crafting written answers to each of these questions can be a powerful team exercise. These are questions or key issues every coalition leader and member should feel comfortable addressing with the community. Many coalition members have a “general sense” of what they might say or how they could answer these questions for their own coalition, but this is not adequate. Everyone in the coalition should have a shared understanding of key answers the group wants to communicate.

Providing volunteers with a written case statement gives them a powerful tool to use when making requests for resources in the community. The case statement gives the volunteer clear language to use, key points to make, and an important reminder to leave behind with potential donors.

In addition to the value case statements hold in fundraising, coalitions will find many other uses for this tool. Excerpts from the case statement (or sometimes the entire statement) can be used in volunteer, staff, and board training or orientation. Portions will inevitably be used in grant applications and for sharing the coalition's story at special events or as a part of other public relations efforts.

Case statements must be written in language that is easy to understand. The language used by prevention professionals is rarely helpful when writing case statements. Community members do not normally use words like capacity, resilience, perception of harm, and personal efficacy, nor many of the acronyms used in the field. It is very difficult to make an emotional appeal for the value of coalition work using unfamiliar or overly scientific language. Case statements must be written in the language members would use with neighbors and friends.

Case statements should be crafted so they can be customized and targeted to specific donors, supporters, community members, and volunteers. This means that the answers provided should speak to the specific interests of the targeted audience. When the coalition's case statement is used with potential supporters and donors, the document may have to be adapted slightly. The case statement should name specifically what the benefits are to the donor for involvement and donation. The adapted case statement should also note those community benefits of coalition work that are of specific interest to the donor.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 5: Create case statements

The ABC County CARE Coalition has been instrumental in reducing marijuana and alcohol use by youth in our community. The coalition makes a difference by utilizing strategies that have been proven successful and are driven by scientific research.

The work of the ABC County CARE Coalition has proven to be an essential component to reducing substance use and misuse in our community through prevention efforts such as community and family education, coalition partner trainings, student programs, special events, and advocacy. It is imperative to sustain our work, which has produced a verified decrease in substance usage and made significant strides in building stronger families for ABC County.

Step 6: Action Plan for Contact and Requests

The action plan is not necessarily about taking steps to obtain the funding in the short-term (although the coalition should not reject any funding offered), rather the action plan should identify the steps the coalition can take now to build relationships that will reap the necessary resources at some point in the future.

This final step of the sustainability planning process is to describe specific action steps the coalition will use to:

- Engage, support and recognize current and potential coalition members whose involvement over the long-term is critical to the coalition's future success.
- Identify potential donors based on the proposed funding strategies identified in Steps 3 and 4.
- Reach out and build long-term relationships with potential donors.
- Create a case statement describing the role and value of the coalition – customizing the case statement for specific donors.

The traditional principles of effective action planning apply here.

The key elements of an action plan include:

- **Who?** Action plans detail specifically who will be responsible for each action.
- **Will do what?** Each step required to accomplish an overall task or effort is spelled out. If the coalition hopes to contact the chamber of commerce, then the action plan will spell out all of the individual steps required for the assigned individuals to have an effective meeting with the chamber representatives.
- **By when?** A specific deadline or timeframe is provided for every step or task to be completed. This creates accountability for assignments made to group members. If deadlines are not met, the group can assess the specific action step by asking if the deadline was appropriate, if the volunteer was given a reasonable task, or if unexpected issues or resistance were met.
- **What resources are required?** To succeed, those willing to assume responsibility for a given task or action usually require some support and resources. Resources can vary from money and transportation to technology or a specific skill. Part of effective action planning is ensuring that volunteers have the resources they need to successfully complete their responsibilities. Case statements are one such resource. If the volunteer is expected to take a potential donor to lunch, the action plan should note if the coalition will pay for this expense. If the volunteer assigned the task has never made donor requests, then the action plan may need to include a partner with more experience as a needed resource.
- **Who should know?** When action planning is done well, many people will be taking action on the coalition's behalf. In order to ensure good coordination, the planning team should ask themselves, "who else should know?" Is one of the coalition partners particularly involved with the government agency targeted in the action plan and should be made aware

of the coalition’s intention to request support? There are a host of reasons why other coalition members, partners, and community leaders should be made aware of the coalition’s planned action steps. Taking a moment to think about and include effective communication in an action plan will facilitate better coordination.

The contents and process of action planning are not difficult to understand. It is the most concrete and tangible part of planning for coalition sustainability. The sixth step of action planning is where the “rubber” of strategy meets “the road” of execution. While easy to understand, action plans do take a bit of time to complete.

Example: ABC Coalition

Step 6: Action plan for contacting sources and donors

The following excerpt depicts each of the action plan elements:

Strategy	By who?	By when?	Resources required	Who needs to know?
1. Approach Kiwanas Club to discuss potential fundraiser.	Ron Cey	June 25	One-pager coalition description	Kiwanas leadership
2. Research, prepare, and submit requests to applicable foundations and grant opportunities	Steve Garvey	Aug 15	Access to foundation database	Coalition board of directors & partner organizations
3. Conduct quarterly presentations to county commissioners	Bill Russell	July 4	Format for one-pager for county commissioners	County commission staff

Conclusion

This primer has presented sustainability within the overall context of developing an effective coalition capable of creating and maintaining population-level changes in substance use rates. True sustainability is not just chasing dollars. Rather, it means being very clear about the aims of your coalition and mobilizing your community to join in the effort. Too often, coalitions get sidetracked and derailed by pursuing funds for initiatives that are not germane to their central purpose. Avoid falling into that trap by periodically reviewing your logic model and other planning materials.

Building and maintaining the sustainability of your coalition to achieve its goals is an effort, but other coalitions have succeeded, and so can you. Keep sustainability in mind as an integral part of your coalition’s overall strategy and refer to the action steps described throughout this primer, and your community

will be celebrating your successes and reaping the rewards of your dedication to substance use prevention for many years to come.

Planning for Sustainability

No time is the wrong time to start thinking about sustainability. The following consideration will be helpful in developing a useful sustainability plan:

- **Start with an overall coalition plan.** To sustain your coalition's strategies, clearly spell out what they are and have your members agree that these are efforts worthy of their commitment.
- **Know what the work entails.** The strategic plan may provide the higher-level view, but you must know what kinds of volunteers and resources you need for the sustainability planning effort.
- **Scan the environment.** Stay apprised of who is in the community doing work that could mesh with, support, or potentially work against your efforts. Expect change and monitor local, state, and national trends that could affect interest in and support for your coalition's work. Recruit coalition supporters to be on the sustainability planning work group.
- **Overcome barriers.** Examine resistance to your coalition when incorporating sustainability as an ongoing part of the work. As a group, discuss ways to overcome this resistance.
- **Brainstorm possible strategies.** Use the ideas presented here as a preliminary guide, but do not feel you need to stop there.

Create a sustainability planning work group. Sustainability planning can be an exciting process, as the future of the coalition is at stake. Before you begin, it is a good idea to bring a team together to help implement the sustainability planning steps.

Members of the team should include individuals from agencies such as law enforcement, schools, public health, social services, and treatment who care about the coalition and are committed to ensuring the coalition is around long enough to achieve its objectives.

These individuals may already be members of your coalition and should be ready and willing to help in this effort. Your team should also include others with fund development and sustainability planning experience.

Eliminating Barriers to Sustainability Planning

Developing sustainable resources takes effort, organization, and savvy. Some of the greatest barriers to resource development do not stem from lack of inherent skills, but are grounded in perceptions and attitudes that create psychological blocks to taking action.

Two of the most basic of these blocks are the fear of rejection and an aversion to “selling.” Nobody likes to be turned down, and as a society we have a negative perception of people seen as too “self-promoting.” Sometimes we fear appearing conceited or opportunistic. Coalitions will have to accept that they may be **turned down** sometimes. No one gets every grant for which they apply, and not every request to a donor is greeted with a smile and a check. In fact, one could argue that if you are not getting rejections, you are not making enough requests. Help improve your approval rate with these tips:

- **Meet as a coalition to review your tactics.** Brainstorm alternative ways to describe your work that may garner a warmer reception.
- **Follow up rejections with questions to identify issues or sources of resistance.** For example, “I would like to understand your concerns so that we might address them and win your support next time. What could make our request more appealing?”
- **Consider outside technical assistance to build capacity.** Attend professional workshops on fundraising strategies, hire a grant writer, or ask professional contacts not embedded in your coalition’s work to lend a fresh eye to your request language and tell you what they find compelling about your approach.

The following table describes potential barriers the coalition may encounter as it embarks on its sustainability planning efforts.

Barriers to Coalition Resource Development Efforts		
	Thinking that <i>blocks</i> resource development	Thinking that <i>opens up</i> resource development possibilities
Fear of competitive backlash	“Sure, we’d like to raise more money and bring in more volunteers—but so would our member organizations. Won’t we be in competition with them?”	“Our coalition serves a different purpose than our member organizations, and our work is about facilitating changes that no member organization can do on its own. We’re not competing with their work—we’re adding value to it.”
Myth of the zero-sum game	“There’s only so much to go around—how can we ask the community to support our work that takes away from so many other organizations and issues?”	“What are the win-win opportunities? If our work is meaningful, not only will there be enough to go around, but we can strengthen each other by finding synergies—joint fundraising campaigns, local business sponsorships...”

Barriers to Coalition Resource Development Efforts *continued*

	Thinking that <i>blocks</i> resource development	Thinking that <i>opens up</i> resource development possibilities
Resource-poor community	“Our community is resource poor as it is... the funds just aren’t there.”	“Our community has a lot going for it— we need to think broadly about ‘assets’ and consider all of the creative ways in which people pull together and make things happen here.”
Fat grant syndrome	“We already have a big grant— won’t we be seen as greedy if we keep pursuing resources?”	“We do have a grant to accomplish certain things, but we need a strong base as well. We can connect with our community and make our grant money work harder if we create opportunities for organizations, individuals, businesses, and others to invest in our work.”
Too new	“We’re really just forming—isn’t it a little premature to expect a lot of community support?”	“Sure, we don’t have results yet, but we’ve done our homework and have a clear process and a plan that shows where we’re heading. We’ll start with small requests and grow our donors as we grow our success.”
Too comfortable	“Our funding continues for another year and a half—when that’s done, I’m sure we’ll get another grant.”	“Times are uncertain—let’s show our value and build a base of local community investment. Also, let’s take a look at where we plan to be in the next couple of years and see what kinds of partnerships and funding strategies will position us for the next phase.”

Checklist for Developing and Implementing a Sustainability Plan

The following checklist suggests activities that your coalition should incorporate across its lifespan to develop and implement effective sustainability plans and practices.

Checklist for Sustainability
Identify Potential Partners; Build and Maintain Relationships: <i>(From the beginning and on an ongoing basis)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Build and maintain relationships. <input type="checkbox"/> Overcome barriers. <input type="checkbox"/> Scan the environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Document and periodically review your impacts.
Do Your Homework: <i>(Concurrent with every coalition planning cycle)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Start with a good overall coalition plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Define what resources the work entails. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop your talking points.
Draft the Plan: <i>(Start in year 1 and update annually)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify what must be sustained. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify what resources are required. <input type="checkbox"/> Create case statements. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine funding strategies. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify potential partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop an action plan to contact and present to potential partners.
Implement, Review, Learn, Adjust
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement your resource development strategies. <input type="checkbox"/> Review your progress and adapt.

A Word About Words

As noted at the beginning of this primer, there are a number of terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. Often, the difference depends on who is funding your efforts or the field from which you come. The following chart highlights terms that are often used to describe the same or similar concepts.

A Word About Words

What you want to accomplish?	What will you do?	How do you know what has been accomplished?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim • Goal • Objective • Problem Statement • Target • Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity • Approach • Initiative • Input • Method • Mission • Policy • Practice • Program • Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark • Indicator • Intermediate • Outcome • Impact • Measure • Milestone • Outcome • Output • Result

Glossary

Logic model. Presents a diagram of how the effort or initiative is supposed to work by explaining why the strategy is a good solution to the problem at hand and making an explicit, often visual, statement of activities and results. It keeps participants moving in the same direction through common language and points of reference. Finally, as an element of the work itself, it can rally support by declaring what will be accomplished, and how.

Material resources. Those things that can be used to improve the quality of community life—the things that can help close the gap between what is and what ought to be.

Members. Organizations, groups, or individuals that agree to affiliate themselves with the mission of the coalition, participate in coalition meetings on a regular basis, and contribute to community-wide planning and evaluation efforts.

Objective. The specific, measurable results a coalition plans to accomplish. An objective serves as the basis by which to evaluate the work of the coalition. Each objective should have a timeframe by which it will be accomplished.

Outcome. Used to determine what has been accomplished, including changes in approaches, policies, and practices to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors as a result of the work of the coalition.

Partners. Groups or organizations that work with the coalition on specific issues or projects.

Social entrepreneurship. Ways to create goods or services that simultaneously promote a coalition’s message and bring in additional income. The process must complement the coalition’s change strategies.

Social resources. A coalition's ties to and relationships with stakeholders inside and outside the surrounding community that enables the group to serve an important niche in the community's "ecology" as it relates to the problem of substance use.

Stakeholders. Groups, organizations, or sectors of the community with interest in and/or perspective on a common issue, such as reducing substance use.

Strategy. The overarching approach a coalition uses to achieve its identified and intended results.







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