



Tips for Sustaining the Engagement of Cancer Coalition Partners

As a training and technical assistance provider for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (NCCCP), the American Cancer Society (ACS) Comprehensive Cancer Control Initiatives team is pleased to share this coalition resource.



Orient New Members

Develop and use materials for orienting new members.

- A new member/orientation packet could include:
 - One page on how and when your coalition was formed
 - Coalition mission and goal statements
 - List of current member organizations
 - Executive summary of your cancer plan ([See page 4 of Michigan’s Cancer Plan](#))
 - A **visual graphic** that shows the structure of your coalition
 - A list of workgroups and some of their recent projects and current objectives
 - Clear roles and expectations of coalition members, including a **member agreement form** that you ask to be renewed (bi)annually
- Conduct regular member orientation sessions, either in one-on-one meetings as people join, or annually or semi-annually in groups, depending on the needs and capacity of your coalition.
- Consider using a buddy system to link old and new members.



Find Members a Role

Play matchmaker by carefully matching the skills and interests of each coalition member with roles and responsibilities that fit them.

- Use a **core competency checklist** to have your members self-identify the expertise of their organizations and their own individual areas of interest, skill, and expertise.
- Check in with members regularly to see if they feel that their skills and the expertise of their organization are being utilized by the coalition. This can be done through one-on-one meetings or as part of a coalition member satisfaction survey.



Make it Easy to Be Involved

Choose times, venues, and food options that make participating straightforward.

- Conduct Doodle polls regularly, and hold meetings only at agreed-upon times.
- Choose virtual platforms that most of your coalition members use regularly.
- For in-person meetings, rotate your meeting location to give all members an opportunity to attend.
- Conduct meetings close to a mealtime and provide a free, tasty, healthy meal or snack. Everyone loves good food!



Offer Learning Opportunities

Offer coalition skill-building training on a regular basis.

- The professional development opportunities could be 10-minute Linked-In Learning videos on creating effective meeting agendas, virtual Lunch-n-Learn sessions on diversifying coalition resources, or in-person workshops on action planning.



Create Meeting Buzz!

Strive to make your meetings the gold standard for other groups to model.

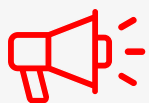
- Create an agenda and follow it. The agenda should clearly convey why attendees need to gather and what should be accomplished in the meeting.
- The agenda is a rudder that helps to steer wandering conversations back on course.
- Meet only if you need to accomplish something as a group. Updates and event announcements can be sent by email.
- Keep your meetings short and goal-oriented. Leave with action items. Discuss the next steps in the last few minutes of every meeting.
- Clearly outline who is responsible for what and what the deadlines are.
- Follow up within 24-48 hours with meeting notes and action steps.



Focus on Your Mission

Keep the coalition mission front and center.

- Type your coalition's mission statement at the top of every agenda.
- Consider having coalition staff use the mission statement as a tagline in emails.
- Make sure the mission statement is easy to find on your coalition website.
- Incorporate your mission statement slide into the beginning of all your presentations



Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

Communicate consistently with your members to sustain a healthy coalition.

- Use multiple communication channels often! Use website, newsletter, social media, email, phone, and virtual and in-person meetings.
- Determine how often you will communicate with members individually or as a group, how often you will update your website, how often you will tweet or post, etc.
- Develop a simple chart or checklist that holds you accountable for communicating with coalition members.
- Keep coalition members engaged by using consistent, clear, and concise messaging.
- Collect feedback from members on a regular basis. Whether it's through a membership satisfaction survey or one-on-one meetings, ask how they feel about the coalition's priorities and processes. Use or adapt existing coalition **member satisfaction surveys**.



Appreciate Your Members

Thank your coalition members regularly for contributing their time and expertise.

- Send a handwritten note.
- Give them a quick call with no ask – just an opportunity to thank them.
- Take a chairperson out to lunch.
- Bring a surprise celebratory snack to a group meeting.
- Email a coalition member's supervisor and thank them for their staff's involvement.
- Offer to cover mileage to and from a meeting.
- Give certificates or awards for years of involvement or special achievements.



Share Coalition Progress

Monitor your coalition's progress and share the results with members.

- Choose up to three priority objectives from your state/tribal/territorial cancer plan that your coalition will work on in the next year.
- Identify incremental milestones towards meeting the objectives.
- Decide when you will check up on progress toward milestones, and then communicate the results widely.
- Celebrate results – big and small. Celebrate the highest attendance since COVID-19 or getting time on a key legislative committee's agenda to educate them about a policy.
- Success breeds success!



Encourage Networking

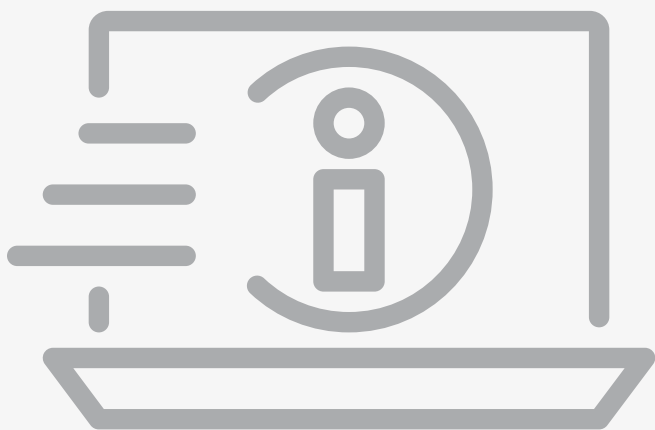
Provide networking opportunities for coalition members.

- Coalitions are networks of relationships, and relationship building takes time. Be sure to allocate meeting time so that members can hear more from one another.
- If your meeting is virtual, randomly divide attendees into groups of two and have each person share one significant thing that their organization is working on.
- Provide time for a member spotlight during regular meetings, when an organization can share for five minutes about aspects of their organization that are relevant to the coalition’s work.
- When you meet in-person, consider incorporating small-group sharing times where each person in each small group answers a question that you provide.
- Show up for the meetings and events hosted by other coalition members. This will give you an opportunity to bring the cancer coalition message to other groups and to show that you are a team player.

Helpful Websites

The American Cancer Society Comprehensive Cancer Control website has information on cancer coalition health at www.acs4ccc.org/acs-ccc-resources/program-and-coalition-health/.

George Washington University Cancer Center’s compilation of coalition building resources at [Comp Cancer Wiki](#).



References

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Cohen L, Baer N, Satterwhite P. [Developing effective coalitions: an eight step guide](#). In: Wurzbach ME, ed. *Community Health Education & Promotion: A Guide to Program Design and Evaluation*. 2nd ed. Gaithersburg, md: Aspen Publishers Inc; 2002:144-161.

[Nine Habits of Successful Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalitions, 3rd Edition](#). The guide was made possible through the collaboration of the Comprehensive Cancer Control National Partnership, with leadership in development from Strategic Health Concepts and the American Cancer Society.

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