

## Step 6: Creating Lasting Solutions: Maintaining and Sustaining Success

***Critical Task: To create a more comprehensive and strategic change process that will further improve oral health in the community.***

### **Introduction**

In Steps 1 and 2, this guide provided information to assist you in deciding whether and how to form an oral health coalition. Step 3 focused on the importance of building a strong foundation and common vision for coalition work. Step 4 reviews specific strategies that have been successfully employed by oral health coalitions. Considering information about what works, Step 5 walked you through a process for the development and implementation of an action plan. Step 6 now provides a time for reflection. This is when a working coalition looks back at their accomplishments and decides where to go next. The critical task for the continuation of a coalition is to *build connections with individuals, organizations and other collaborative efforts to create a more comprehensive and strategic change process that will produce even better results.*

Step 6 looks at the following topics:

- Assessing sustainability
- Building on successful outcomes
- Coalition membership
- Financial support
- Ending a coalition

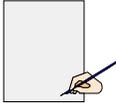
### **Assessing sustainability**

Throughout the guidelines, “outcome-oriented thinking” has suggested and supported on-going evaluation of your work. The core values of local ownership, cultural competency, and systems focus all reinforce the necessity for the coalition to keep focused on the changes they wish to achieve. Investing time and memory-stretching at this point can help the coalition look at their accomplishments and to decide whether or not the wish to remain constant, expand, or to disband.

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Start with a review of where the coalition began and where you are now. Spend time thinking about the kinds of activities, campaigns, and overall progress you have achieved. Celebrate these accomplishments with your stakeholders and then continue to tell the story to the broader community.(See Appendix  Evaluating Outcomes for Coalition Efforts.)

Worksheet # 15 can help you review your work and assess the sustainability of your coalition. The answers will also help you identify areas that need further development and can lay the foundation for future action.



### Worksheet # 15 Assessing Sustainability<sup>1</sup> (page 79)

Worksheet # 15
<b>Assessing Sustainability</b>
Asking yourself the following questions will help you determine whether your coalition is sustainable. This will also show you where you need further development.
<b>Leadership:</b>
1. Who are the leaders of your coalition (both informal and formal)?
2. How do you provide new leaders with skills development and training to support them in their leadership role?
<b>Public-Private Partnerships:</b>
3. Who are the influential stakeholders in service delivery and policy, consumers, and business leaders and are some of them involved with your coalition?
4. What foundations would be interested in your effort and how are they involved?
5. Is the media part of your coalition?
6. Is the faith-based community involved with your coalition?
<b>Rationale and Justification:</b>
7. How do you know this effort is making a difference?
8. Have cost-benefits analysis been conducted on the issues your coalition is addressing? (e.g. cost of untreated cavities vs cost of water fluoridation)
9. Have you evaluated the impact of the work of the coalition (such as decreased duplication of services, improved health outcomes, increased access to care)?
10. How have the partners been surveyed to obtain their feedback?
<b>Community Visibility/Public Relations:</b>
11. How visible are your efforts to the general public and those in positions of influence and power at the local and state levels?
12. How have the partners used information from the coalition in their own organizations or communities?
<b>Fundraising:</b>
13. Have you developed fundraising documents that describe the mission, goals and objectives and what support will do for the community?
14. Have you researched 2 to 3 major donors to target for fundraising?
<b>Innovation/Adaptability:</b>
15. How do you network and integrate with other health care issues?
16. How knowledgeable are you and members of your coalition of recent legislation and government policy changes?

<sup>1</sup> Rosenthal, R., G. Kaye and T. Wolff, *Coalition Building from the Ground Up*, Amherst, MA, AHEC/Community Partners, 1995.

## **Building on successful outcomes**

If your goal is now to continue and/or to expand the work of the coalition, it may be time to broaden the focus of your work. At the core of your success lies the reality that all of your strategic work is really about building (*and enjoying!*) relationships born of common concerns for improved oral health. The next step takes all of that energy and strengthens the connection to the overall health and well being of the community, all of which will help you attract new leaders and new resources.

“...communities are improved because individuals convinced other individuals to think and act differently.”  
--Winer and Ray<sup>2</sup>

As Ted Landsmark, former co-chair of the National Coalition of Healthy Cities and Communities, said at a recent conference of the Washington State Hospital Association in Seattle “The time and effort coalition members give, have to be viewed as investments in the community, and one expects a return on investment.” Learning to think and speak in terms of success is a way to articulate the positive return on the initial investments, while helping build the kind of continuity you need to sustain the work.

Michael Winer and Karen Ray, in their *Collaboration Handbook*<sup>3</sup>, suggest a three layered approach to promoting coalition results.

1. Develop a consistent promotional message that motivates the audience to take action. Expect to tailor the message to particular settings, but keep the language clear, simple, and direct. Be equally clear about the response you are seeking – funding, referrals, volunteers, etc.
2. Focus your message and communicate specific steps needed to achieve your overall goals. For example, asking for a major contribution to “improve oral health in the community” is a huge leap for any donor. Asking for printing costs for informational brochures is more likely to gain a “yes.”
3. Use a variety of techniques to promote the message. Nancy Waddell, Cavity Free Kids at Washington Dental Service Foundation (206-528-2331) has a great list of low-cost strategies for delivering your message. (See Appendix ) Regardless of the technique, gear the approach to the particular audience, plan carefully how to use the technique, use a mix of methods, and repeat the message frequently over an extended period of time.

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<sup>2</sup> Winer, Michael, Ray, Karen, *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey*. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>3</sup> Winer, Michael, Ray, Karen, *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey*. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

## Coalition membership

Have the stakeholders remained the same or changed? Are the current participants still committed to the work of the oral health coalition? Sustainable systems change is always a bit of a dance. The partners move about, form patterns of interaction, changing steps in response to environmental crisis and opportunities. This is one area that will demand a fair amount of flexibility on the part of the coalition leadership.

In a practical way, coalition work is about creating change. One of the changes that is bound to happen is that the coalition will indeed change or meld into another, larger effort. Often times, as the coalition engages new partners, individuals who were active in the early stages move on to other adventures. It is important to acknowledge and celebrate these changes for several reasons<sup>4</sup>



- People change, as do their interests, job descriptions, passions, and priorities. Its OK.
- Relationships change. Celebrating new opportunities for working together on new ventures is one way to support on-going success.
- Organizations may not change. Individuals who have participated in a focused, outcome-oriented coalition will ultimately need to return to their respective organizations and duties. Respect for the organization's contribution of staff or volunteer time leaves the good will door open for future efforts.
- Friendships are formed. Face it, there are people you really enjoy working alongside. Taking time to articulate that delight is one of the benefits of collaborative work.
- Endings must be marked so that you can move forward. Sustaining change means just that. "It" doesn't stay the same, nor do those who wish to create the opportunity for new possibilities. Learn from the journey just completed and look forward to the next.

Despite the variables that come into play over time, two sustaining factors will remain constant and ultimately support ongoing success.

1. Oral health improvement strategies are best addressed through *a systems approach*. Functional, focused partnerships with a specific area of focus, will succeed if the effort is well planned across multiple agencies and interests. Step 4 discusses this aspect of coalition development. For example, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Schools (OSPI) has funded a number of *Readiness to Learn* projects focused on oral health improvement. The partners for a school-based project may not necessarily be the same partners one would engage in a fluoridation project.

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<sup>4</sup> Winer and Ray, *ibid*.

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Oral health improvement is achieved, but the method, as well as the partners, are different.

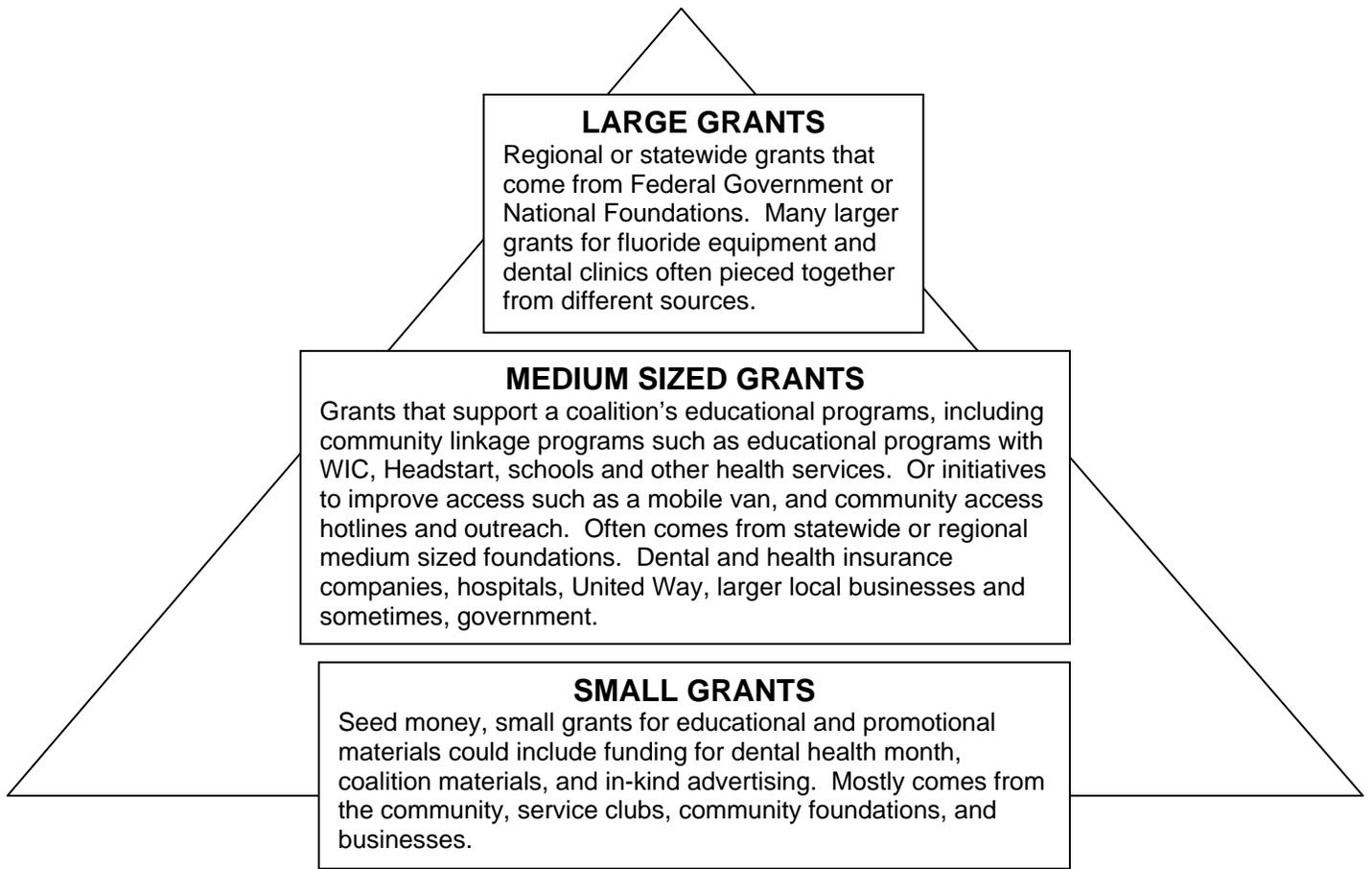
2. The people involved in the effort are committed to a systems approach and willing to work with others. They are skilled at working with others; knowledgeable in conflict management, and know how to address turf issues, coalition building, and systems development. Participants may be committed to the issue as well; however, if they understand and believe in addressing the issue through a systems approach, their commitment is likely to be strong enough to continue its effort.

### **Financial support**

Systems development encourages systems to be more responsive and to work better. Grant funding can often get the ball rolling to create sustainable systems. Coalitions that become good at getting funds are incorporating an important element for sustainability. Here is the pyramid of financial resources for coalitions.

The following diagram can help you focus on the type of funding you will need to sustain your work. The top of the pyramid is where the largest outcomes for the community will usually be. These may be your long-term goals. The bottom of the pyramid may be related to your short-term goals. If you are a new coalition you might want to set a goal on the top of the pyramid and some goals on the bottom end to establish the coalition's credibility. Smaller successes will help build momentum.

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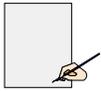


### Grant funding

The road to the successful grant writing includes the following:

- Planning for funding your priorities starts with your goals and objectives. Are they clear? Are the expected outcomes clear?
- Gather information about your coalition. This includes any data, including dental surveys fact sheets, newspaper articles, and coalition materials such as mission statement, officers and members, and brochures that include information on the coalition history and accomplishments.

Research funding sources. Start in your coalition and ask coalition members what resources they know of in or outside the community. Record contacts on an information sheet that has space to record name, agency, address, phone, fax, e-mail, funding priorities, application process and application deadline dates. Worksheet # 16 can be a helpful tool in keeping track of potential funding sources.



**Worksheet # 16 Foundation Resource List (page 80)**

Worksheet # 16

**Foundation Resource List**

Foundation/Funder	Address/Phone	Contact Person	Funding Priority	Application Deadline

- Check with other coalitions doing similar work in your state or region. Check with your state department of health to find others doing similar work in your state if you do not know how to reach others.
- There are also good books and resources on the Internet. Two good resource books are the “Grantseekers Guide” and the Foundation Directory.
- Once you have a good list of potential funders check and see if they have a website. A website can tell you about the kinds of projects that are funded by a particular foundation or corporation. If you feel that the funder is a good prospect, call or write them and tell them about your coalition, its membership and GOALS. Ask the foundation representative about the kind of programs they are interested in funding. Tell them you are considering sending a proposal for a particular project and ask for feedback on whether you qualify to apply. Remember people fund programs. 
- Send for applications. Discuss with the coalition, or a subcommittee of the coalition, what potential funders are interested in the vision and goals of your coalition.
- Select foundations that match your funding priorities. Write and submit proposals tailored for each potential source. Be careful not to be distracted from your coalition’s identified vision and mission. Sometimes groups end up changing their direction in order to meet funding guidelines.
- Call and make sure that the foundation received the proposal. If you get funded, you want to acknowledge the funder in as many ways as possible. If you don’t get funded it may be helpful to find out if you may reapply, and what suggestions they would have for strengthening the proposal.

### **Public private partnerships and in-kind help**

Matching the right “program” to the right private sector organization can be an appropriate role for an oral health coalition. Too often potential private sector partners are not aware of oral health problems and/or do not know how to help. They can be encouraged to institute internal programs; programs aimed at their own employees or members, and external programs, aimed at the public.

### **Ideas of things to ask for:**

#### To support the coalition

- Participation on coalition or workgroup of the coalition
- In-kind contributions of mailings, copying, materials production
- Training or facilitation

#### To educate parents, teachers, target audiences

- Dental education or coalition articles in any newsletter they produce for their employees or the community
- Paid advertising (for example to announce a dental clinic)
- Sponsor billboards, bumperstickers, websites, videos, pamphlets, hospital baby bags, or other avenues to get your message out
- Educational materials for parents, school children, daycare’s or teachers
- Incentives and gifts
- Public Service announcements



#### For Health Providers

- Educating providers on “best practices”, for example fluoride varnish protocols
- Tippy cups, tooth brushes
- Dental education displays for medical and nursing conferences

#### For pharmacists

- Free fluoride prescriptions or refills

### **The 501(c)(3) question**

The question of whether to be or not to become a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization usually comes up at some point for a coalition. Basically, a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service allows a group to raise tax-deductible contributions and solicit grant money on its own. If your group

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decides to go this route, you will need to write articles of incorporation and formalize your bylaws and rules of governance.

Some oral health coalitions have formed partnerships with pre-existing not-for-profit organizations, instead of establishing an independent organization.

The advantages to this may include:

- Funders often prefer funding organizations with a track record of successful grant administration. (Be sure to get your agreement in writing about the coalition’s relationship to the fiscal agent, management fees, and the terms and conditions of the grant itself.)
- Staff policies and procedures are in place.
- Fiscal accounting systems are in place.
- In-kind resources may be contributed by the sponsoring organization.
- Additional partnerships can build the coalition’s credibility. The number of stakeholders may be expanded.

The disadvantages may include:

- The oral health coalition can lose focus.
- There may not be an existing group that shares the vision and mission.
- Coalition members may not feel as involved when another group serves as an umbrella organization.
- The autonomy of the coalition is sometimes lost.
- Oral health may not be a very high priority in the “parent” organization.

### **Ending a coalition**

Since coalitions are fluid and dynamic organizations, there may come a time when the coalition needs to consider disbanding. The momentum slows, commitment wanes and contributions cease. Members may want to move on to other endeavors. A coalition is not necessarily meant to continue indefinitely.

Remember that it is the effects of the coalition, or the *outcomes* from your work that you wish to sustain. By definition, the coalition itself is secondary to its achievements.

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It is time for a collaboration to end when:<sup>5</sup>

- It has accomplished what it set out to do.
- The grant or contract supporting the coalition has ended.
- Participation wanes and meetings lack a purpose and sense of direction.
- The coalition failed to achieve its goals, and the members do not want to stay together to try something else.
- Resources are diminishing and maintaining the effort is consuming too much energy for too few results.

Coalition building is a process, not a destination. Ending a coalition can be a time for celebration and closure. Whether or not a specific goal has been accomplished, relationships have been nurtured and a sense of common purpose has been developed during the duration of the coalition. As with each step of coalition development, this is a time to celebrate and acknowledge the work that has been done.

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<sup>5</sup> Rosenthal, Beth and Terry Mizrahi, *How to Create and Maintain Interorganizational Collaborations and Coalitions*, Education Center for Community Organizing at Hunter College School of Social Work, 1994.

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<sup>6</sup> John Snow Inc., Denver Colorado

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