**10 Steps to Jump Start Your Coalition! How to Use This Toolkit**

Coalitions are a necessary part of prevention in higher education. The health and well-being concerns of students are broad and diverse, and one individual (or one entity on campus) cannot deal with these problems alone. It should be noted that coalitions are a strategy to utilize in prevention work; the mere existence of a coalition is not enough to produce outcomes without defining, building, and evaluating the coalition and implementing an evidence-informed strategic plan.

Let’s think about coalitions and the work they do as people going on a road trip. The coalition itself and its structure are the car – it’s what provides support and movement; you can’t go anywhere without it! The coalition members are the people on the trip, and they all have various roles (think of the driver as the coalition leader, and other members as the people who provide support - to navigate, bring supplies, etc.). Different people might need to come along depending on the trip, and their roles might change. Similarly, various people will have different levels of engagement in the coalition and will fill different roles. Your strategic plan is the roadmap – it’s how you know where you’re going (what your goals are) and how you’re getting there (what strategies and action steps you will take). Just like any trip, there will be challenges to navigate along the way, you might take a detour, and everyone must work together. Additionally, you’ll need to do maintenance to keep everything running smoothly.

  

 **Coalition Coalition Members Strategic Plan**

Building and sustaining effective, action-oriented coalitions is hard work. This toolkit will provide you with resources around 10 key steps to starting and maintaining a coalition. You can do these steps in or out of the order listed, and some steps will occur simultaneously. Use each step as a guide when you need it rather than as a checklist that must be done one after the other.

**Step 1: Cultivate broad, diverse coalition membership**

This portion of the toolkit will provide you with tools to recruit and engage coalition members. You’ll find:

* A formal coalition invite;
* An informal partnership invite (such as a coffee talk);
* Discussion points for a coffee talk;
* A list of potential coalition partners;
* Tips for new coalition member onboarding; and
* Coalition talking points

**Step 2: Determine the strengths and resources of your coalition and its members**

While identifying partners and building relationships, it’s important to take time to assess the strengths and resources that your coalition has and that individual partners bring to the table. In this step you’ll find:

* A process to define the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) of your coalition; and
* How to determine the resources that coalition partners have

**Step 3: Institute a coalition structure with strong governance**

Defining the coalition structure and how it will operate provides a strong foundation for the work. Additionally, building strong leadership is vital for sustainability. This step includes resources on:

* Coalition structures; and
* Coalition leadership tips

**Step 4: Encourage buy-in for your coalition**

Buy-in is the acceptance and willingness to actively support or participate in something. Understanding how to engage new members and/or generate buy-in among upper administration for coalition efforts is important. Tools in this step will help you with:

* Developing Buy-In for Your Coalition;
* Building Trust Within Your Coalition; and
* Developing Win-Win Situations

**Step 5: Use a data-informed decision-making process**

Data is vital in prevention to identify problems and related behaviors, determine gaps in the work, and understand the outcome of strategies and interventions. Data should drive what the coalition does and be utilized when making decisions. In this step you’ll find:

* Basics of a data-informed approach;
* Sharing data with stakeholders;
* How to conduct a needs assessment; and
* How To use data

**Step 6: Write a strategic plan that includes a clear mission and vision**

A strategic plan is the guide for prevention work, but it can be tough to know where to start. Resources in this step will provide information on the strategic planning process including:

* Strategic planning tips;
* A strategic planning ‘how to’; and
* A guide for reviewing and revising a strategic plan

**Step 7: Meet regularly and facilitate effective coalition meetings**

Coalition work is continuous and requires regular meetings and communication to be effective. This step includes:

* Coalition meetings topics and facilitation tips and
* Sample coalition meeting agendas

**Step 8: Train and educate coalition members**

A strong coalition is one that has well-trained members who understand prevention in higher education and have the capacity to implement evidence-informed strategies that work well for the campus. This step has resources related to training and education, including:

* Identifying training needs within your coalition;
* Prevention education training resources; and
* Suggested reading for prevention in higher education

**Step 9: Recognize the hard work of members and celebrate accomplishments**

Providing rewards and recognition for coalition members and their work is key to making members feel important and valued. This step provides:

* Top ways to recognize coalition members

**Step 10: Sustain your coalition**

Finally, sustaining the coalition and keeping members engaged and working is the key to long-term success. This step has resources including:

* Potential coalition activities and
* Sustaining coalition engagement