

BEST PRACTICES FOR JOINING, SETTING, OR GROWING A COALITION TABLE

WHY JOIN, SET UP, OR GROW A COALITION

- **Power in community.** There is power in the larger whole of a coalition, particularly in the appropriations advocacy process when resources are finite and lawmakers face myriad funding requests. Being able to say to a lawmaker that your coalition represents a significant portion of their constituents and community matters. It is critical to center in your coalition those communities intended to benefit from your budget ask. Working in partnership ensures the funding ask is grounded in their lived experience and needs. It is an equitable practice to offer compensation to these partners for their time.
- **Clarity and alignment.** Engaging in appropriations advocacy as a part of a coalition focused on your issues ensures alignment on your funding request among all or at least most groups working on your issue. A coordinated, collective ask from a coalition that represents a larger constituency can be extremely impactful for lawmakers.
- **Diversity of perspective and strengths.** Ideally, a coalition is made up of a diverse array of organizations, including those rooted in different types of communities, with membership and organizing ability, political power, communications skills and tools, policy and budget experts, and more. When faced with quick-moving appropriations bills and lawmakers influenced by different factors, a coalition is stronger when each organization brings unique expertise to the table to create a broad range of strengths.



TIP: Before starting a coalition focused on your issue, do a scan of organizations working in this space to assess if one already exists, and if so, find out more information about their goals, membership, appropriations engagement, and how to join.

- **Shared resources.** Another benefit to joining a coalition is shared resources. One organization may not have the capacity or all the skill sets required for an appropriations advocacy campaign. When many organizations join together, resources can be combined and leveraged to build a comprehensive campaign plan.

SET CLEAR GOALS FOR THE COALITION

- Be clear about which issues the coalition will focus on. The goals directly impact the advocacy scope of target appropriations bills and line items, budget agencies and committees, etc.
- For appropriations advocacy, consider how broad or narrow you want the focus to be (e.g., children and families, prenatal to three, maternal health, child care, SNAP, etc.).

RECRUIT MEMBERSHIP

- The [coalition's goals](#) provide clarity about the scope of groups to recruit as members.
- Coalition membership should represent different types of people impacted by your issue (e.g., a child care coalition should include groups representing children, parents, providers, nontraditional groups focused on workforce development, etc.).
- Membership should take into account differing levels of expertise, interest, and capacity and offer different levels of commitment and engagement.



CO-CREATE AND ESTABLISH A STRUCTURE

- Establishing a structure for coalition leadership and decision-making is essential to achieve alignment on goals, funding requests, and strategies and tactics for advocacy. Co-create the coalition's operating guidelines and decision-making process to make expectations clear.
- Set up an executive committee to own strategy and action steps. This group shouldn't be too large. If many groups are interested in coalition leadership opportunities, consider establishing rotating roles, such as membership on the executive committee, meeting facilitation, and management of particular campaign tactics. Determine the executive committee's role and authority to act, speak, and make decisions on the coalition's behalf and under which conditions (e.g., rapid response moments, media opportunities, etc.).

ENSURE REGULAR COMMUNICATION AND MEETINGS

- Communication is essential to effective coalitions, so plan on [regular meetings](#) (e.g., weekly when legislatures are in session and monthly when they're out).
- Before the budget and appropriations cycle starts, align your coalition on appropriations goals for the year and strategies and tactics to advocate for them.