

Healthy Caribbean Conference 2008

Advocacy and Coalition Building
Workshop

Barbados, October 2008
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Advocacy and Coalition Building Workshop

Agenda:

1. Introduction (5 mins)
2. Presentations by co-leaders (35 mins.)
 - definition of topic
 - examples of use of effective use of tools and approaches
1. Questions and Answers (10 mins.)
2. Participants' discussion (35 mins.)
 - sharing experiences of examples of tools used and ways in which tools could be more effectively used
1. Final comments and summary (5 mins.)

Advocacy and Coalition Building Workshop

Objectives:

1. To demonstrate and discuss tools and approaches available to, and successfully used by, civil society, to bring about change
2. To provide a forum for participants to share and exchange their experiences in the application of the tools for change
3. Discuss ways in which participants may enhance the use of the tools and approaches within their organizations, countries and the region

Advocacy and Coalition Building

Definition of Advocacy:

- Active support for a cause, policy or legislation with the express goal of influencing opinion and mobilizing action
- Aims to influence those who make decisions
- Can be local, regional, nationwide, international
- Can be direct (asking in person) or indirect (influencing public opinion through the media)
- Many different approaches to achieve goals

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Key Questions:

1. What do we want?
2. Who can give it to us?
3. What do they need to hear?
4. Who do they need to hear it from?
5. How can we get them to hear it?

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What do we want?

- What is our goal? (Define the problem; define the solution)
- Is the goal specific enough?
- Is our goal realistic?
- Is it winnable/achievable?
- Is this the right time? Do we have the appropriate time-frame?

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Who can give us what we want?

- Decision makers and influence figures (opinion leaders) are the target audience of advocacy efforts
- The more you know about the decision-makers, the greater the likelihood of success

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What do they need to hear?

- The core message:
 - what we want to achieve
 - why we want to achieve it
 - how it can be achieved
 - what specific action you want them to take

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Who do they need to hear it from?

- People who are credible, trustworthy, well-received (have influence)
- Credible people are well-researched and are known for their expertise in the subject
- People of influence and/or high standing can get you in the door, and carry weight
- People who represent a large number of other people

Advocacy and Coalition Building

Who do they need to hear it from?

- Credible people who are well-researched and are known for their expertise in the subject
- People of influence and/or high standing can get you in the door, and carry weight
- People who represent a large number of other people
- Working in coalitions and partnerships allows you to recruit additional messengers

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How can we get them to hear it?

- Meetings and negotiations with elected officials and their staff (lobbying)
- Meetings with civil servants on policy issues
- Identify potential champions and leaders; build strategic relationships
- Provision of information and analysis to decision makers

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How can we get them to hear it?

- News media (earned media): contacting reporters, editorial board visits, news releases, news conferences
- Paid media (mass media – radio/TV ads)
- Campaign media: brochures, posters, bulletins
- Internet communications
- Promotions: buttons, t-shirts, stickers

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How can we get them to hear it?

- Building broad and diverse coalitions – numbers count in a democracy
- Organized letter writing campaigns to elected officials
- Organized local lobbying visits to elected officials by their constituents
- Grass roots activities such as demonstrations and rallies

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Additional Key Questions:

1. What have we got?
2. What do we need to develop?
3. How do we begin?
4. How do we tell if it's working?

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1. What have we got?

- Identify strengths, weaknesses re: financial and human resources, trained spokespeople, key allies, public awareness
- Who do we have to do the work and do we have any money to spend, and if so is it adequate for the task at hand?

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2. What do we need to develop?

- Strategies to achieve the goal
- educational resources (brochures, fact sheets, posters, etc.)
- Media strategy (goal, target audience, message, method of delivery) and trained spokespeople
- strategic alliances; build coalition
- relationships with media, politicians, civil servants

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3. How do we begin?

- Develop overall strategic plan of action
- Establish timelines and specific goals within those timelines
- Establish minimum budget need to accomplish goals
- Map of assets and needs
- Identify the opposition, ways to counter

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4. How do tell if it's working?

- Have we built alliances, partnerships (coalitions or otherwise?)
- Have we managed to reach and influence the decision-makers, media public?
- Is there measurable progress towards achieving the goals

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Working in Coalitions

- Coalition is a group of individuals and/or organizations united around a common issue or goal
- Short-term goal: campaign for new policy or law
- Common interest: quasi-trade associations, national voluntary organizations
- Institutional partnerships: ongoing policy development and representation (i.e., chronic disease alliances with Heart, Lung and Cancer Societies)

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Working in Coalitions

Reasons for Coalitions:

- When advocacy goal requires resources or activities that your organization cannot manage alone
- When there is support for a cause in diverse organizations who are not otherwise able to undertake a campaign
- When there are several organizations involved in the issue, and consistency in strategies is desired

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Working in Coalitions

Advantages of Coalitions:

- Increases resources, and allows economic use of shared resources
- Increases visible support for goal
- Creates a common front and consistent messages
- Educates and mobilizes concerned citizens and groups
- Expand reach of campaign

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Working in Coalitions

Challenges of Coalitions:

- Sharing control
- Balancing goals and needs of coalition and of member organizations
- Sharing credit and visibility
- Differing cultures and constraints
- Differing strategies

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Working in Coalitions

Managing Coalitions Requires:

- Desire to set and achieve common goal
- Respect for each others self-interest
- Willingness to make decisions together
- Give and take

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Campaign for Effective Warnings

- In 1999, Canada's Health Minister had been criticized for a number of decisions by his government favouring the tobacco industry
- He needed to re-position himself as a public health leader on tobacco
- He decided to strengthen Canada's warnings and made his announcement in that year
- He released a Discussion Paper proposing to increase space for package text-based warnings from about the top 35% to the top 60%, front and back of the package
- No pictures or graphics were proposed

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Campaign for Effective Warnings

- A national coalition – The National Tobacco OR Kids Campaign was formed to advocate for effective picture-based warnings
- 130 Canadian organizations endorsed the Tobacco OR Kids campaign and began letter-writing campaign to MPs and visits to their offices
- The coalition leaders designed a totally new warning system, which they called the Black Box project
- The Black Box contained 6 mock-up packages with proposed picture-based warnings

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Campaign for Effective Warnings

- The Black Box was released by the Tobacco OR Kids campaign at a press conference
- Copies of these proposed packages sent to all Members of Parliament
- This helped garner media and political support for use of pictures in warnings
- Brochures on effective warnings systems were sent to health groups across the country, who were asked to visit their MPs

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Campaign for Effective Warnings

- Opposition by the tobacco industry was strong
- Their arguments:
 - not technically possible in Canada for them to print pictures as part of colour warnings
 - new warnings would not be effective at decreasing smoking
 - warnings constituted an expropriation of their packaging
 - cost to the industry would be millions of dollars

Advocacy and Coalition Building: Campaign for Effective Warnings

- Media was used to counter tobacco industry arguments; the health side won
- Health Minister announced in 2000 new package warning system – 16 rotated picture-based warnings occupying the top 50% of the front and back of the package
- Images included a lung with a cancer tumour, a brain after a stroke, a damaged heart, a diseased mouth, and a limp cigarette as part of a message on impotence