

# Sustainability for Community- Based Coalitions

The Anatomy of Social Change



# Blue Sky Programs

- Community-based coalitions are a breed of their own.
- A world apart from traditional direct-service programs in terms of purpose, strategies, and funding.
- They sell “blue sky” – the hope that things can get better.



- A plan for sustainability must be based on an understanding of the process of community coalitions working for social change.



# The Four P's of Social Change

- **PASSION**
- Passionate commitment to address the real causes of problems and willingness to see that the “emperor has no clothes” creates the momentum.



# The Four P's of Social Change

- PUBLIC AWARENESS
- Public awareness fuels the momentum



# The Four P's of Social Change

- PERSISTENCE
- Persistence ensures success. When you care enough to stand your ground, over and over again, even though it doesn't benefit you directly (i.e. enlightened self-interest) you can win. Your motivations can sustain you longer. Vested interests eventually withdraw because it doesn't pay to be on the losing side.



# The Four P's of Social Change

- PEOPLE POWER
- Gathering together with others who support you builds strength, commitment, staying power, and clout.



# The Four P's of Social Change

- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead



# Common Stages of Building a Movement – Reaching the “Hundredth Monkey.”

- Interested individuals take action. Groups working in defined areas with specific constituencies. Little coordination.
- Individual successes begin to generate pressure from economic interests. Public health groups are overshadowed by the money and influence of big alcohol.



- Groups work towards influencing public opinion. Media advocacy becomes important.
- More groups get involved. Although still limited, more funding becomes available.



- Pressure to water-down the agenda due to political concerns. Differences among groups about strategies and priorities. Differences about compromise with vested interests. National coordination still difficult.
- Momentum slowly builds. More funding becomes available for national efforts. Public awareness grows.



- Eventually, galvanizing events: natural occurrences that command media attention; planned symbolic events and actions; charismatic individuals; lawsuits; whistle-blowers; movies; books; etc. A critical mass of awareness has been reached. *[Get ready for the ride stage]*



- Increased efforts to change policy. More key decision-makers embrace issues. The balance slowly changes so that the majority embraces the policy changes. Other players get on board to be on the winning team.



- Many players, many agendas. Must manage conflicting interests. Potential power shifts. Need core groups to watchdog direction.
- Major policy changes. Noticeable shift in public perceptions of the issue.
- Need to be ever vigilant about backsliding.



# Just How Viable Is Your Coalition?

## Self-Assessment Tool for Community-based Coalitions



# Stage 1 – The heart of the matter

- Rate your coalition on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest rating for effectiveness, in the following categories:



- Passion (*Do members care enough, and are they committed enough to continue no matter what?*)
- Public awareness of your priorities (*Does your community recognize the problems and are they interested in solutions?*)
- Persistence (*What is the motivation to continue?*)
- People power (*Who are your partners/ allies / supportive VIP's?*)



# Stage 2 – Priorities

- Identify your top three to five priorities for environmental strategies. Know the why as well as the what. Why will your priorities make a difference?
- Involve as many of your coalition members as possible in the process.



- Identify at which level your community is along the continuum of social change



- Level 1- Status quo/unconsciousness
- Level 2- Awareness of problems
- Level 3- Taking action to change environments
- Level 4- Battling with vested interests of status quo



- Level 5 – Passage of policies, prevention of backsliding
- Level 6 – Environmental change creating healthier community norms, and stimulating action by many groups
- Level 7 – Significant reduction in problems



# Stage 3- Identify leadership

- Who are your leaders now, and will that change if there is a loss of funding?
- Are your leaders burnt-out?
- Who will lead you into the future?



# Stage 4 - Funding

- What are your current funding sources?
- Source
- End date
- For environmental strategies? (yes, no)
- Total funding available for the next year
- Who manages grants?



# Stage 5- Develop Your plan

- Your most important tool is the passion and commitment of coalition members
- When there is a will, there is a way.
- Know where you want to go. Be careful not to chase funding that doesn't fit your priorities.



- If you are losing significant funding, decide whether or not your coalition can do more individually-focused strategies (for which there may be more available funding) without interfering with your environmental strategy priorities.



- Identify potential sources of funds.
- Foundation grants
- Government grants
- Membership fees
- Donations
- Partners incorporating coalition work within existing budgets



- Consider scaling down. You may not need as much money as you think.
- The loss of security that comes with losing a funding source can also be a gain in freedom to chart your own course.



- Be REALISTIC!
- Develop a fall back plan. You may not get every grant you apply for.
- Gather a core group of leaders and develop a doable plan that leaders will act on.



# Getting FUNDING Isn't Easy!

- Funding for coalitions working on “environmental strategies” is rare.
- Coalitions aren't designed to apply for or manage grants, unless there is paid staff.
- Coalition priorities may not be consistent with grant maker priorities.
- Finding a “host agency” or getting a 501 C3 or a 501 C4 may be difficult.



# The Half-Full Glass!

- Many coalitions have several years of funding to build their identity and constituency, so they can move beyond a dependence on paid staff.
- The absence of funding requirements often means less administrative demands.
- Coalitions that are not dependent on outside funding can develop their own goals.



# Alternatives- Status Quo on Slim-Fast

- Keep existing structure (simplified) and find new source(s) of funds to continue in a similar fashion.
- Keep some of the existing priorities and patch together several different funding sources.
- Slim down priorities and find one of your partner organizations who can dedicate their staff to work for the coalition.



# Alternatives- Lean, Mean, Policy Machine

- Distill priorities to three major environmental strategies.
- Simplify and rely on volunteer leadership.
- Eliminate most administrative functions.
- Get members to support the coalition with in-kind donations of supplies, e-mail support, printing and mailing, travel expenses, donated meeting space, and limited clerical support, etc.



# Lean, Mean, Policy Machine

- Identify volunteer leadership, and a central contact point for telephone, e-mail and mail.
- Charge a membership fee to coalition members to defray costs.
- Identify organizational members who can take on some of the work of the coalition, consistent with their organization's mission.



# It Takes People

- When there is a will, there is a way.
- Build on the existing base.
- Be creative. If enough people care, change happens. The money is secondary.
- Actions speak louder than words. If you are making a difference, others will follow.

