

COALITION BUILDING AND NETWORKING

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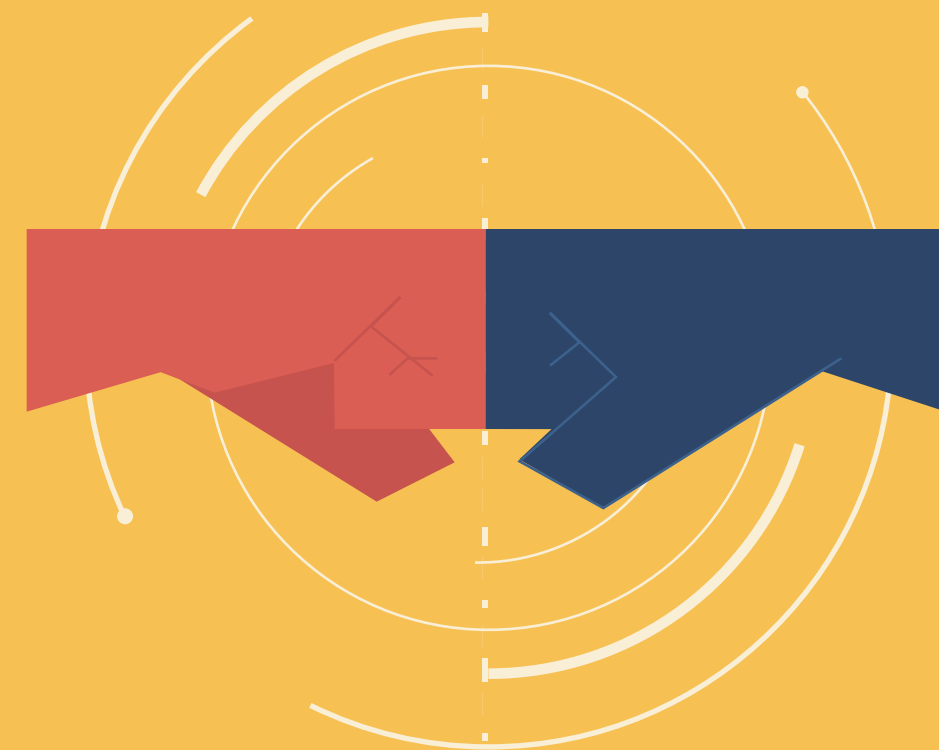


INTRODUCTION: VOCABULARY AND TYPOLOGY

Cooperation/collaboration refers to when people, initiatives and NGOs work and act together for a common purpose and benefit; they work in joint action. Collaboration is almost always necessary for any people-driven advocacy campaign, or for the implementation of projects. Building networks and coalitions of organizations and groups that care about the same issues is a must to ensure the success of campaigns.

Coordination refers to the organization of different elements or subsystems of a system, or people in a team, to enable them to work effectively.

Networks A network consists of individuals or organizations who share information, ideas or resources to accomplish individual or group goals (Jackson, 1991).



Networking is the ongoing process of meeting new people, organizations, politicians /experts and developing relationships. Network contacts do not always share a common set of principles or values, but may nevertheless gain benefits through their association.

Coalition A coalition is a group of individuals, representatives or organizations working together for a common cause, to achieve a common goal or resolve a problem that they have in common.

Coalition-building Coalition-building is the ongoing process of cultivating and maintaining relationships with a diverse network of individuals and organizations who share a common set of principles and values. In addition, a coalition will often work together towards a common goal or to execute a specific campaign. Because of these shared values and goals, coalitions may be stronger and more enduring than more informal networks.

CROSS-SECTOR COOPERATION AS A WAY FOR REACHING CHANGE IN COMMUNITY

(Adapted from : Arthur Turov Himmelman: Communities Working Collaboratively for a Change in Resolving Conflict (ed. Margaret S. Herrmann), ICMA Washington)

Improvement and Empowerment The success of a majority of community initiatives is closely related to the concept of ownership of the process of social change, and that initiative starts within the community. We can observe two basic approaches to cross-sector cooperation: cooperative improvement and collaborative empowerment of the community. Each of these approaches has concrete consequences on the community perception of the ownership of the process of change, the possibility of self-determination and on the willingness for long-term cooperation.

Cooperative improvement arises outside of the community in public, private or non-profit institutions, and the process and its goals are usually brought into the community from the outside. This approach to cooperation can bring about changes in strategies that are part of public politics, and may improve social and other services rendered by public management, but it does not create long-term ownership of the change process within the community.

Collaborative empowerment arises from an initiative within the community which then spreads out to public, private or non-profit institutions. The strategy of empowerment includes two basic activities:

1. Organizing community cooperation through the realization of goals or aims that it has defined
2. Facilitating the process of involving outside institutions in support of this goal. The empowering approach can bring changes in the strategies of service-rendering and program-improvement at the local level. It will probably create long-term ownership of goals or aims, and the process to reach them and its results within the community.

Cross-sector cooperation built on the empowerment principle is increasingly perceived as an effective way for reaching long-term social change in the community. Its growing acceptance is based mainly on three factors:

1. Excellent results reached by local community organizations in the realization of the common plans of an initiative.
2. The increasing and competing pressure on the time and resources of bigger public, private and non-profit institutions that consequently have no capacity to manage such a process.
3. Community initiatives achieve great results when members know that they can influence them.

In practice, there is a scale of processes that can be placed in the continuum between improvement and empowerment.



KEY ACTIVITIES OF COLLABORATIVE EMPOWERMENT



Activity 1: Discussions about attitude, beliefs and values.
The process of empowerment can start with discussions with people and community representatives about attitudes, beliefs and values that motivate them.



Activity 2: Discovering trends.
Trends can come from stories or experience, as well as from information analysis. This moves community members to a more concrete basis for common activity.



Activity 3: Connecting the priority areas or problems with opportunities.
Discussing trends can uncover problems or areas that need change. It is important to direct discussions in a way that connects problems with opportunities for their solution.



Activity 4: Clarifying the purpose of community and vision of collaboration.
A mission defines the intention and purpose of the initiative in the community.



Activity 5: Research on other initiatives.
At this stage of initiative development, it is useful to gather information on how other communities or neighborhoods have created and organized their cooperative initiatives.



Activity 6: Increasing the power of the community.
The mission of the initiative should be shared by as many members of the community as possible. The goal is to gain wide support for common activities. The support of community members makes the requests of community organizations or community representatives legitimate in negotiations with institutions.



Activity 7: Strategic identification of partners.
The steering committee evaluates what public, private and non-profit organizations should be invited to create the collaborative initiative. The community needs to tap organizations that correspond to the diversity of its members.



Activity 8: Convening a meeting and formal approval of initiative.

As soon as the viability of cross-sector cooperation is ensured and confirmed, the community calls a meeting of all the partners. A formal approval and agreement is obtained. All partners get enough time to introduce themselves, to discuss their own motivation for joining the initiative, to share initial questions and expectations, and to comment on topics raised in the discussion.



Activity 9: Agreement on administration and management.

After a sufficient number of meetings that help to overcome any reservations against the participation of a partner, community organizations offer a plan for management and administration that includes: (1) a committee for strategic issues; (2) executive committee; and (3) action groups.



Activity 10: Ensuring power-sharing.

It is recommended to start negotiations of a relatively small number of community organizations, with a small number of institutions from outside the community. At the beginning, this small group can create the executive committee of the initiative within which basic rules are agreed upon, mutual trust is built and initial management processes are formed. This slow process enables the collaborators to build a common culture of cooperation in the decision-making process within the initiative.



Activity 11: Offering contributions and overcoming barriers.

When community organizations and partners from institutions agree upon the administration and management structure, they begin to discuss the contributions of each member to support the initiative's mission, as well as the barriers restraining the contribution of any member. This approach strengthens cooperation within the initiative and its style of work.



Activity 12: Formulating goals.

There are two basic kinds of goals in the model of cooperative empowering: (1) specific goals depending on the concrete mission and issues; or (2) universal goals that independently apply to a mission.



Activity 13: Connecting goals with tasks or action plans.

It is necessary to connect the goals of the initiative with clear tasks and realization strategies (they are called action plans in the model of cooperative empowering). Action plans for each goal are prepared by a separate action group. In this model of cooperative empowerment, all the plans of an action group are directly connected with an organization in the initiative.

The convener of each action group ensures that regular reports for each action plan are distributed to all members of the action group. S/he also provides a summary of these reports to the executive committee every month, and to the strategic committee every quarter.



Activity 14: Implementing plans and staffing.

To increase the involvement and sense of ownership of community members, action plans of the initiative are continuously discussed, both in public forums as well as with community members. To ensure good communication, all action plans should display timelines, evaluation criteria and data on financial requirements. It is also helpful when action plans contain an assessment of staffing needs and information on whether these needs can be met within the initiative or from outside sources.



Activity 15: Evaluating initiative functioning.

For many reasons, it is difficult to evaluate a complex process like cross-sector cooperation. When the cooperation process is designed with clear goals and action plans (that may include specific results and time frames), an evaluation plan can be created more easily. In the model of cooperative empowerment, community organizations are important evaluators because they render regular and public monitoring of processes.



Activity 16: Ending the functioning of the initiative without losing local involvement.

The initiative's functioning should be ended keeping in my mind the continued self-sufficiency and self-confidence of the community. Retaining a combination of financial, human and technical resources after ending the activities of the initiative is recommended. The empowering initiative may be termed successful if: (1) permanent operational support, and better access to development financial packages, was ensured; (2) technical competency was increased; (3) reliable connections between affordable housing and associated social services for community members were created or improved; and (4) more community members made better decisions about the future of their community.

NETWORKING

We can have a greater impact on our goals by using networks and coalitions as major tools to multiply our power and efforts.

If you network with ten individuals, and those ten network with ten more, you have increased the number of individuals with whom you can exchange information and resources from ten to one hundred!

We can do a great deal when we join efforts with those of other individuals.



USING AND EXPANDING NETWORKS

A collaborative network is a network consisting of a variety of entities (e.g. organizations and people) that are largely autonomous, geographically distributed, and heterogeneous in terms of their operating environment, culture, social capital and goals, but that collaborate to better achieve common or compatible goals, and whose interactions are supported by e-platforms. The discipline of collaborative networks focuses on the structure, behavior, and evolving dynamics of networks of autonomous entities that collaborate to better achieve common or compatible goals (typical example is Wikipedia). Using collaboration and networking, we can make full use of crowdsourcing or crowdfunding.

COALITION BUILDING

Types of Coalitions and Collaborative Organizations
(Wendy Wilson, River Network, 2006)

	INFORMATION NETWORK	ASSOCIATION	COORDINATING COUNCIL	CAMPAIGN	ONGOING COALITION
PURPOSE	Sharing info between like-minded groups	Promoting advancement of specific groups or individuals	Coordinating work on specific issues between groups with similar goals	Collective action towards a goal over a specific timeframe	Advancement of a group of related issues over a longer timeframe
MEMBERSHIP	Open to all interested	Open to all with member dues and services	Can have formal members or just a loose alliance of active leaders	Strategic partnership between diverse groups with few common interests	Longer term commitment of diverse, allied organizations
STRUCTURE	Loose. System for communicating between members	Defined structure. Volunteer-based or staffed.	Structured like a network with one or more leaders driving work	Steering Committee and committees often staff-driven	More structured and with its own board. Lead groups may provide staff.
FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS	Little cost to members. Grant funded or volunteer-based.	Dues, grants, and various fundraising strategies.	Various. May or may not have member dues.	Often dependent on external or grant funds	Higher dues or large in-kind contributions from member groups. May seek grants collaboratively.

CREATION OF ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

Although the most important reason for creating a coalition of non-profit organizations is to increase the power and ability to achieve objectives, good cooperation within a coalition has a number of advantages.

Coalitions of non-profit organizations:

- provide a forum for the joint consideration of a problem
- combine financial, material, and human resources
- reduce competition for access to resources
- mobilize the interest of other people and groups
- attract the attention of the media and people in influential positions
- strengthen solidarity and unity in the third sector
- build the image and significance of the third sector in the eyes of the public

Challenges and benefits of working in a coalition:

Despite its many undeniable advantages, working in a coalition also has its drawbacks. Some of the problems include: more complicated organization and logistics, the achievement of a consensus in dividing competencies and in directing the activity, and possible rivalry between the participants.

In establishing a coalition, it is a good idea to understand, and continually repeat, the reasons why you are trying to form the coalition. Essentially, there are three main reasons:

- The power of coalition through strength in numbers
- The power of a coalition through the diversity of its members
- The power of a coalition enabling the diversification of competencies, capabilities, and expertise.



8 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COALITION-BUILDING

1. Discuss and analyze the group's objectives and determine coalition need(s)

A coalition is a prevention tool, so groups must be specific about what needs to be accomplished.

Groups must ask the following questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What are our community's strengths and needs?
- What are the pros and cons associated with the proposed collaboration?
- What are our objectives and what types of activities seem logical?

2. Recruit the right people

The group's objectives will prescribe the type of coalition to be developed. Some groups may choose to start small to accomplish specific tasks and then strategically expand. Depending on the needs of the coalition, either program directors or frontline staff should be encouraged to attend. In addition, invite community members, youth leaders, politicians or experts.



3. Adopt more detailed activities and objectives suiting the needs, interests, strengths, and diversity of the membership

The key to a successful coalition is the early identification of common goals and benefits of working together. The coalition must avoid internal competition when it comes to funding. An important consideration for adopting specific coalition activities is to identify some short-term outcomes.

4. Convene coalition members

A coalition can be convened at a meeting, workshop, or conference. It is appropriate to prepare a draft mission statement and proposal for coalition structure and membership. Anticipate that not all invited members will become coalition members.

5. Develop budgets and map resources and needs

Lead organizations usually provide staff time to keep the coalition up and running and to handle detail work. Though coalitions can usually run on a minimal budget, each member's time is a valuable contribution.

6. Devise the coalition's structure

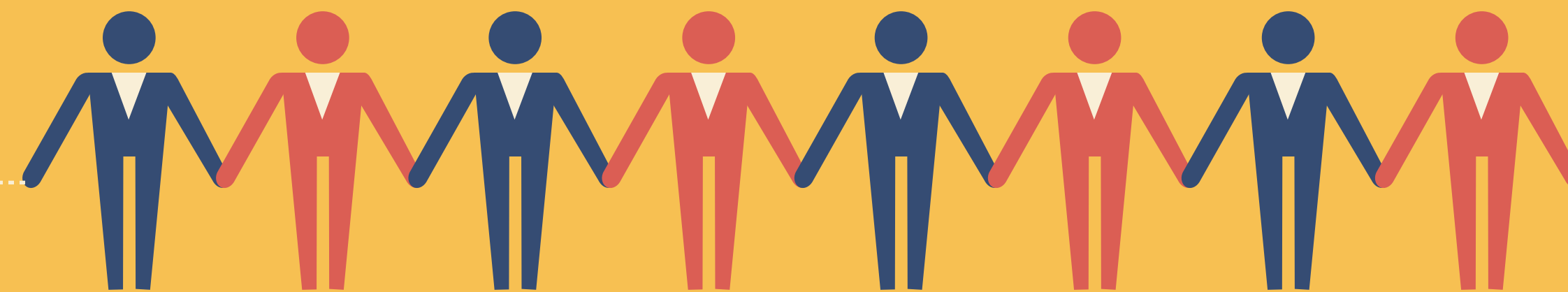
Structural issues of the coalition include: how long the coalition will exist, meeting locations, meeting frequency and length, decision-making processes, meeting agendas, membership rules, and participation between meetings by subcommittees or planning groups.

7. Plan for ensuring the coalition's vitality

Methods for noting and addressing problems, sharing leadership, recruiting new members, providing training on identified needs, and celebrating success can help ensure a coalition's vitality and success. It is very important to recognize both the individual and organizational contributions to a coalition each step of the way.

8. Evaluate programs and improve as necessary

Each coalition activity and event should include evaluations. This can be as simple as a satisfaction survey or it could be the more formal use of pre- and post-tests of specific subject knowledge.



COALITION START-UP CHECKLIST

IS A COALITION RIGHT FOR YOU?

A set of questions to help your group decide whether a coalition is the right organizational structure for meeting your group's goals.

- Is the issue complex, requiring information and expertise from various sectors of the community, region or country?
- Does a gap in services or programs exist, such that no existing organization is clearly mandated to take on this work?
- Do other organizations see this issue as a priority?
- Are other organizations willing to work together to address this issue?
- Is this issue best addressed through joint ownership and responsibility of a number of organizations?
- Are there resources that can be shared or obtained to assist with the work?
- Is there a true commitment to work together to produce results, irrespective of funder commitments for collaboration?

If any of the answers is “no”, you should reconsider creating a coalition.
If the answer to all questions is yes, you may start preparing for the next steps.

5 stages of coalition development:

- Pre-formation
- Formation
- Implementation
- Maintenance
- Institutionalization

RULES FOR COALITION BUILDING

These ideas about “coalition etiquette” were formulated by Z. Miller (1983) almost 31 years ago, but they are still fresh and valid.

- Community outreach and coalition-building on the local and national level can be politically complex and sensitive. Because stakeholders you may want to influence may judge you based on the behavior of others in your coalition, seek out partners who share not only your values and goals but also who agree on the suitable methods for achieving them.
- You may need to make small compromises with regard to your desired goals but make sure these are compromises you can live with and that they do not undermine your central objectives.
- Before joining or forming a coalition, thoroughly research the working practices and past statements of the groups involved. Speak with others who have worked with them before about their experience; your credibility and reputations are at stake.
- Before approaching a coalition or partner, prepare your message for them. Similar to preparing a media message, clearly articulate the reasons why your situation should be a matter of urgent concern for them or the constituencies they represent.
- If time permits, contribute to work on your issues. These are good opportunities to network and develop relationships for possible future coalitions, and may include public awareness initiatives, advocacy work or other projects.



COALITION ETIQUETTE: THE BASIC RULES FOR BUILDING UNITY

UNDERSTANDING

1. Each member of the coalition should understand not only the way in which other members make decisions within their own organizations, but also the impact that this has on procedures and the functioning of the coalition.

2. Members of the coalition should clarify the areas in which they have similar interests – i.e., those in which they want, and are able, to cooperate – along with those upon which they do not agree and in which they have conflicting interests.

STANDARDS

1. Accept the diversity and division of tasks. A coalition cannot expect uniformity from its members in their actions and beliefs, but must respect their diversity and learn to utilize it.

2. Before causing a commotion, collect and verify information. Do not depend upon one source of information – listen to various viewpoints before you make decisions. Issues are rarely simple and uncontroversial.

3. Learn to politely disagree. If you are to work together, you must learn to disagree in a way that allows further cooperation.

4. Strictly divide your role as a member of an organization from that as a member of a coalition. It is particularly important to avoid speaking in the name of the coalition (or sounding as if you are doing so), if you, as an individual or an organization, have not been entrusted with this role by the coalition.

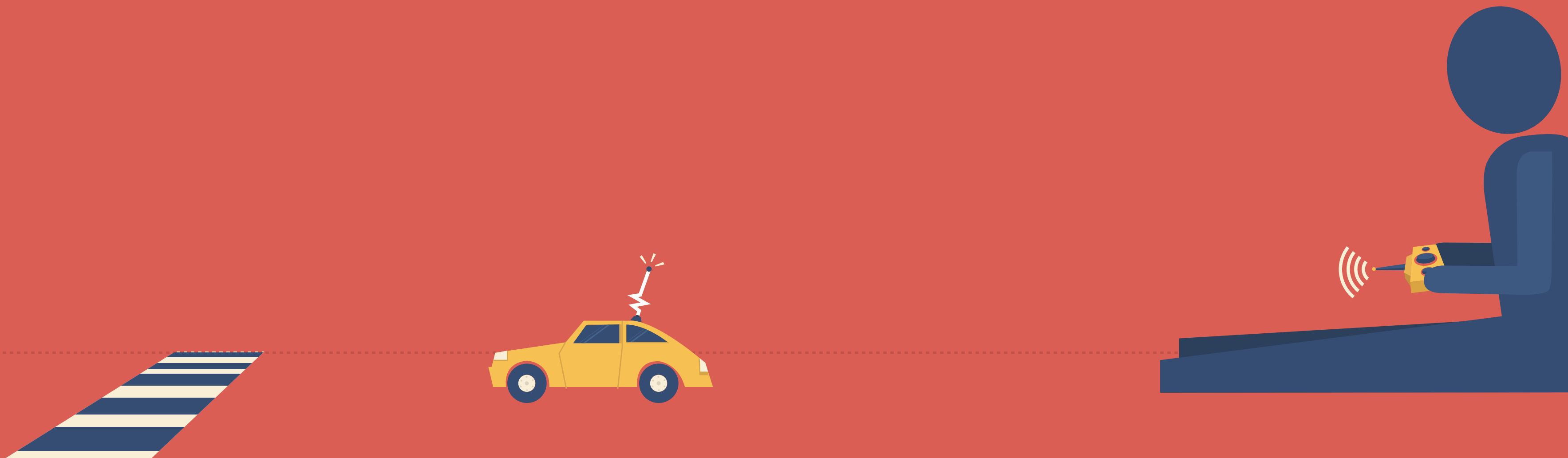
5. Do not use the media to express your disagreement with the coalition. If you disagree with it, resolve this problem within the coalition itself.

6. Share the credit and successes. If people and organizations work diligently, they should also receive praise. It is better to praise people too often than too infrequently.



PROCEDURES

1. Early on, decide upon the method of decision-making within the coalition. Each member should be familiar with the decision-making procedure; it should be clear, accepted by everyone, and thoroughly applied.
2. Decide upon the method of directing meetings of the coalition's steering committee (the length of the meeting, regularity, basic rules, the minimum number of participants, etc.). Procedural issues of this type may lead to sharp conflicts despite the goodwill of members. It is therefore a good idea to prevent them with clear and mutually accepted rules.
3. In advance, clarify the areas and level of decision-making freedom for the executive arm of the coalition. According to the decision type, divide them into areas within which the steering committee must decide, and those within which the executive arm may decide.
4. Agree upon the decision-making process in situations where a sharp conflict arises or persists between members. If there are important differences between members, which you are not able to resolve alone, you may use an independent mediator, arbitrator, or panel. It is a good idea to agree upon procedure before such problems arise.
5. Agree upon the conditions under which it is possible to re-discuss an already-approved decision. Effective decision-making is very important for the effective functioning of the coalition, and part of this is a common awareness of when it is appropriate to return to an approved decision and when it is not.





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