

Reference Material on Collaborations

Definitions: Coalitions, Networks and Alliances

Parameter	Network	Alliance	Coalition
Primary function	Facilitating information exchange	Encouraging alignment in the independent actions of its members	Facilitating the planning and implementation of a specific joint initiative
Formality of structures and membership	Limited, 'loose affiliation'	Moderate, 'loyal but independent allies'	Considerable, 'partners in a specific joint initiative'
Scope of common interests	Broad	Broad	More focused
Scope of joint action	None	Limited, with individual workplans coordinated where possible	Considerable, with workplans for shared activities developed jointly
Common plan of action	No	Possible, but limited	Yes
Profile and platform	May be public or not	May be informal, sometimes without a public profile	Public profile, sometimes including a 'branded platform' and common messaging
Direct funding	Possible, to support limited information-related functions	Not usually, but possible	Possible At minimum, participating organizations contribute resources to the coalition
Levels of trust	Limited May increase if strategic information is shared	Moderate, increasing as strategic information is shared	Considerable
Coordination	Required	Limited or none	Required
Duration	Variable	Longer term	May be short or long term depending on the scope of specific activities

Terminology for Coalitions

- *Alliance:* A close association of organizations working cooperatively toward a shared goal(s).
- *Coalition:* A group of organizations and individuals that work collaboratively to achieve specific shared goal(s) sharing common resources and specific plans.
- *Collaboration:* Collaboration occurs when parties who see different aspects of a problem agree to explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible (Gray, 1991c).
- *Constituencies of support:* The community of individuals or organizations that offer support for the activities of one or more of the participating organizations in a coalition.
- *Convenors:* Individuals or groups that catalyze the formation of coalitions and provide the forum for negotiating the terms of formation. Convenors can be third party intervenors, funders, members of participating organizations, or others who share the interests of the coalition.
- *Funders:* Individuals or organizations that provide support and financial resources for coalitions, such as philanthropic foundations.
- *Intervenors:* Third party individuals or groups that are invited to assist participating organizations or the coalition as a whole to advance the coalition's shared interests and/or operational efficiency, such as facilitators, organizational development consultants, or mediators.
- *Members:* Individuals or groups that have formally established relationships with a particular organization, enabling them to participate in that organization's activities or as a demonstration of their support for its activities.
- *Network:* A loose association of organizations that agree to share information and that may periodically agree to work together toward shared goal(s).
- *Opponents:* Individuals or groups that oppose the efforts of the coalition either actively and explicitly, or to the extent that their interests are fundamentally incompatible with the shared vision and goals of the coalition.
- *Participating organizations:* Those organizations that have elected to participate in the coalition, that are acknowledged by other members are legitimate participants, and that have agreed to abide by the rules or guidelines set collectively by the partners.
- *Representatives:* Individuals or groups with delegated authority to represent the interests of their organization within the coalition.
- *Strategy:* A term borrowed from military usage, literally meaning 'the art of disposing troops or armies in such a way so as to engage the enemy on terms and at a time and place preferred by oneself.' In the context of advocacy organizations, strategy refers to a coherent plan that integrates goals, policies and actions for a given organization or endeavour. A strategy helps to marshal and allocate resources, takes advantage of organizational strengths and weaknesses, anticipates changes in the political environment, and takes into account counter moves by the opponent.
- *Tactic:* Also drawn from military usage, tactics is the art of deploying military forces in actual contact with the enemy, and generally refers to skilful methods calculated to gain advantage. In the context of advocacy, tactics refer to types of activities (e.g., media publicity, public demonstrations, legal actions, engagement in public planning processes) that serve strategic ends.

Conceptual Model for Coalitions

Figure 1: Research domain for this study, illustrating usage of key terms

