

Chapter Skill-Building Webinar: Working in Coalition at the Local Level



Welcome from National NOW Action Center



Erin Matson,
NOW Action Vice President
vpaction@now.org



Anita Lederer,
NOW Field Organizer
fieldorg@now.org

Agenda

- Coalitions and Campaigns
- Finding Coalitions in Your Community
- Establishing Coalitions
- Suggested Guidelines

Benefits of Coalition Work

- Leverage expertise of other groups (issues and skills).
- Expand the reach of a feminist perspective.
- Expand the diversity of your chapter's point of view.
- Avoid “recreating wheels.”
- More people at actions.
- Attract new members to your chapter.
- Raise your chapter's profile in the community.
- More opportunities for press.



Case Study: Santa Fe NOW

- Santa Fe NOW is very active in the New Mexico Coalition for Choice with local chapters of RCRC, Planned Parenthood, AAUW, ACLU and other local community groups.
- This group focus on stopping anti-choice bills in New Mexico.
- Everyone in this coalition has a clear role what their work in the coalition will be.
- The NOW chapter always takes point on the Roe anniversary rally and turns out press, speakers and attendees.
- The coalition fundraises for itself as a coalition. For example, the chapter is holding a fundraiser with RCRC to benefit the whole group.
- This coalition brought new momentum to the chapter.
- The chapter learned new skills, such as lobbying from the ACLU.
- Working in coalition increases your chapter's visibility in the community among the press, the legislators and other community groups.
- Always reach out to other organizations for partnership opportunities, but don't overreach.



Case Study: Austin NOW

- At almost every meeting, the chapter has a speaker from an allied organization speak, for example Planned Parenthood, YWCA, the Gender Studies program at UT, etc.
- This helps build attendance at meetings and helps the chapter build relationships in the community.
- Coalition cannot depend on only one person who has the personal connection to the other group. There must be a relationship between multiple people in the chapter and people at the partner organization.
- Try to connect other partner organizations to foster coalition building. For example, the chapter had a Love Your Body resource fair which brought other groups and led to organizational networking.
- Do not be afraid to reach out to groups who may see things differently than you. For example, the chapter works with the Texas Faith Network, which is made up of progressive clergy. They are very strong allies on healthcare and economic justice issues.



Types of Coalitions

- Organized around a specific issue
 - ↳ ongoing like choice
- Organized around a specific event
 - ↳ like an election
- Organized around a specific goal
 - ↳ like removing someone from office
- Organized around a specific action
 - ↳ like a rally

How Chapters Get Involved in Coalitions

- Elect/appoint delegates to standing coalitions at the local level, often chartered organizations
- Personal relationships between partners in the coalition or local organizations and members in the chapter (no formal agreements)
- National Action Center may send out an email to leaders or outreach to your chapter about a national campaign with local opportunities

Campaigns the Action Center Can Help You Partner Up with Locally

- Many local coalitions are formed on the grassroots level, but there are active national campaigns that the National NOW Action Center is working on.
- One of the most critical campaigns of the moment is the UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) Making Change at Wal-Mart campaign, which made up of local groups of union members, Wal-Mart associates, and progressive local groups (just like your NOW chapter).
- We are also working on AAUW's It's My Vote, I Will Be Heard campaign ensuring women, especially millennial women, are heard in the 2012 election season by registering and educating voters in various key states.
- We are also working with NCPSSM (National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare) to prevent cuts to these important programs.
- If you are interested in your chapter becoming more active on any of these time-sensitive campaigns, contact Anita Lederer at fieldorg@now.org.



Raise Your Hand

- Does your chapter work with coalitions on action campaigns?

Discussion Questions

- What issues does your chapter work with in your local coalitions?
- How do your coalitions fund their work?
- What are the advantages of working in a coalition when it comes to action campaigns?

Examples of Local Coalition Partnership

There are a variety campaigns that your chapter can work with a coalition including:

- Making sure an abortion clinic stays open;
- Promoting equal pay and promotion practices at local businesses;
- Advocating that a bill be passed or blocked;
- Ensuring feminist candidates are elected to local, state, and federal offices;
- Educating voters on dangerous or awesome ballot measures;
- Registering voters and get voters out to vote;
- And many more!!



Building Relationships

- Networking lays the groundwork for coalition partnerships.
- Always keep your eyes open for any upcoming opportunities to work with other groups.
- If you see an action, a facebook event, a flier--make a note of the groups involved and try to talk to someone from one or more of those groups.
- Google AAUW, League of Women Voters, unions, etc. to see if they have branches and events in your area.
- Be sure to follow local progressive chapters on twitter and facebook, so you see when they are having meetings, events and actions.
- If you attend another group's meeting or event, let them know you are NOW member and see if they are interested in working with you. Be sure to bring along your NOW business cards and/or brochures.



Establishing New Coalitions

- Coalition groups don't form overnight.
- New coalitions make sense when there is a shared goal that no organization can accomplish on its own.
- Decide what role each organization will take before things get rolling---make sure to play on each group's strengths.
- Make sure that your coalition represents the vast diversity of the community; and if it doesn't, make sure to further extend the reach of the coalition.
- Be aware that all organizations will have their own timing and funding priorities that will define the scope of what the coalition can accomplish.



Raise Your Hand

- Does your chapter work with coalitions at the local level?

Discussion Questions

- What groups does your chapter work in coalition with?
- Does your chapter take part in multiple local coalitions?
- How did your chapter find out about these local coalition(s)?

Is Coalition Work Right for the Issue?

- Does your chapter have a enough time and members to take care of your chapter's issues first?
- Does the coalition fit with the direction that your chapter wants to go?
- Is it possible to achieve your goal as a chapter goal?
- Will working in a particular coalition make your campaign a success?
- Does your chapter have something to gain from working within the coalition?
- Will your chapter add something new to the coalition, and get something new out of the coalition's work?



Should You Give It A Shot?

- Many communities offer a variety of organizations for people from the great AAUW branch to your awesome NOW chapter.
- Groups often collaborate on actions, events, campaigns, fundraisers, etc. -- but do you know if a coalition is right for you?
- It always a good idea to get your chapter involved with progressive coalitions in your community, at least go to a meeting or action, you never know---you may get more members or find that the coalition is willing to make sure women's rights are included in their goals.
- Your chapter could also be a real leader within the coalition.
- Networking is always a good thing, so give it a shot.



Coalition Overload

- Your chapter may be so bogged down in coalition work that there is no time to do a variety of actions or if something comes up, there is not enough time to plan quickly enough.
- The coalition may not value the mission of NOW above the overall mission of the coalition.
- What coalition is working on may be an important issue, but it may not be as relevant and/or there may be more pressing things going on.
- Timing may be off for certain events.
- Your chapter may be a part of too many coalitions already; there needs to be a limit.
- There is a possibility that members may be burned out by all the work from the chapter and the coalition.
- Most of the time the benefits of coalition work outweigh the drawbacks, but every situation is different.

Your Chapter and Coalitions

- Ultimately, when deciding to work with a coalition or not, the most important thing to consider is your chapter.
- When working with a coalition, make sure that you still continue to meet as chapter and ensure that the issue of women's rights are included in all coalition actions.
- Don't be afraid to work with multiple coalitions on multiple issues--- sometimes the more allies, the better the result.
- Don't be afraid to leave a coalition if it moves in a direction against the priorities of NOW.



Raise Your Hand

- Does your chapter do both coalition and non-coalition work?

Discussion Questions

- How does your chapter decide whether or not to join a coalition?
- What are some of the benefits that your chapter has experienced from joining a coalition?
- Are there certain groups that your chapter always partners with in coalition work?

Resources from National NOW

- Check the Chapter Organizing Manual on the chapters' only site.
- Contact Anita Lederer, NOW Field Organizer at fieldorg@now.org for questions and support.



Next Chapter Skill-Building Session

- Working in Politically Challenging Communities
- Wednesday, August 22, 2012, 8 p.m. EST
- Contact Anita Lederer at fieldorg@now.org if you have any questions.
- Give us feedback at:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZ25Z93>