

Core Competencies¹ that Facilitate Implementation of the SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework²

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the systematic gathering and analysis of data about the population your coalition serves in order to identify the current problem(s) and related conditions that require intervention.

1. Create and Maintain Coalitions and Partnerships

Potential collaborators should understand the key role local coalitions play in the work of community health and development. Specifically, local leaders should be able to determine potential membership, facilitate a shared vision, define the agenda, anticipate needed resources and begin the process of creating a formal structure for the effort.

- Skills:
- ✓ Identify, invite and include key collaborators for the initiative.
 - ✓ Establish meeting and decision making processes that connect individuals and build trust.
 - ✓ Facilitate brainstorming, encourage consensus and promote shared decision-making to the creation of vision and mission statements.

2. Assess Community Needs and Resources

Members should know that it takes a local coalition to understand community issues and concerns and to facilitate needed change. The variety of perspectives, data and information made possible by a large and diverse coalition membership base enables a more complete understanding of community problems.

- Skills:
- ✓ Conduct qualitative data collection via community forums, focus groups, listening sessions, key informant interviews and surveys.
 - ✓ Collect quantitative data from partners and outside sources, including related archival and survey data.
 - ✓ Complete "S.W.O.T." (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of current issues, specifically drug-related issues.
 - ✓ Reconstruct and build on the relevant local history of community mobilization and anti-drug work.

¹ The list of core competencies was developed by the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas and is the intellectual property of the University of Kansas © 2005. Used with permission through a license agreement with Community Systems Group, Inc.

² The Strategic Prevention Framework was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to facilitate implementation of prevention programming. This competency list demonstrates how the SPF can be implemented in the context of community anti-drug coalitions.

- ✓ Define the coalition's "community" (place, interest or experience) and boundaries (neighborhood, city, county, island, etc.).
- ✓ Construct functional problem or goal statements that reflect true community concerns and facilitate good problem analysis.

3. Analyze Problems and Goals

Once identified, community problems should be framed in a manner that is respectful of the community. Problems should be analyzed to discover root causes and local conditions that make these causal factors (often called risk or protective factors) more prevalent in the community.

- Skills:
- ✓ Facilitate group problem analysis techniques including the "But, Why? – But, Why Here?" technique, force field analysis and the nominal group technique.
 - ✓ Include and incorporate the experience and expertise of coalition members to thoroughly name and frame problems and goals.
 - ✓ Apply a risk and protective factor framework that focuses on both personal and environmental factors contributing to problem behaviors.
 - ✓ Facilitate prioritization of problems and related actions.
 - ✓ Identify and make use of targets and agents of change.

4. Develop a Framework or Model of Change

Diagrams of identified problems, root causes and local conditions enable concise and clear communication, planning and evaluation. Such diagrams, or logic models, also allow a coalition to critically analyze its progress toward shorter term or intermediate goals which can facilitate needed improvement and appropriate celebration.

- Skills:
- ✓ Facilitate group logic modeling processes (forward logic, reverse logic, nested logic models, non-linear approaches, etc.) including intervention maps.
 - ✓ Facilitate group critique and ongoing improvement of the logic model based on new information and the consequences of coalition action including testing underlying assumptions and the validity of the model's "line logic."
 - ✓ Ensure consensus for the logic model, especially the degree to which the model's language, elements and visual references reflect the culture and values of the community.

CAPACITY

Capacity refers to the types (such as skills or technology) and levels (such as individual or organizational) of resources that a coalition has at its disposal to meet its aims.

5. Increase Participation and Membership

Coalition partners must be able to create an atmosphere that promotes diversity, participation and success. A key element in this equation is how the group intentionally involves an ever enlarging circle of community members and sectors in the anti-drug effort. The coalition must also foster the ongoing and active participation of existing members and seek feedback from the membership on the functioning of the coalition and how it can be improved.

- Skills:
- ✓ Identify who to recruit and conduct outreach to those who can contribute to the coalition's work.
 - ✓ Build relationships and motivate participants to engage in the shared work.
 - ✓ Assess whether current involvement is sufficient - how and why members are engaged, remain engaged or leave the effort - and make needed changes in the participation plan.
 - ✓ Communicate memorable messages that capture the attention of recruits and increase their interest in the coalition's work.
 - ✓ Recognize talents and use the membership base to maximize the coalition's success and ensure continued participation.

6. Build Leadership

Leadership is universally recognized as an essential element to coalition success. Successful coalitions do not leave the presence of needed leadership to chance. Rather, they intentionally nurture the abilities of members to assume leadership roles and to serve the group with an increasing set of skills.

- Skills:
- ✓ Describe and apply the varied attributes and forms of leadership, including collaborative leadership and servant leadership.
 - ✓ Determine if a certain leadership approach will move an effort forward or hold it back, understanding the context to enable individuals to tailor their leadership style appropriately.
 - ✓ Create group leadership development plans that recognize the gifts and skills of the membership base and nurture future leaders for the organization.

7. Enhance Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is not an added benefit or feature of coalition work, rather it is a prerequisite to coalition success. Viewed organizationally, coalitions can institute processes that promote cultural competence and build on the value of diversity. Cultural competence is an essential aspect of every other individual competency and coalition process.

- Skills:
- ✓ Assess the level of cultural competence in the coalition’s processes and work through cultural audits.
 - ✓ Communicate the importance of diversity and cultural competence in community work to reduce substance abuse.
 - ✓ Establish training and group conversations that identify the steps required to promote cultural sensitivity.
 - ✓ Ally with multiple cultural groups and create an honest and open space for collaborative work on shared goals and concerns.

8. Improve Organizational Management and Development

The “business side” of coalition work must be attended to. The skills to manage financial resources, legal requirements and liabilities and to foster human resources are required for coalition success.

- Skills:
- ✓ Develop governance and management structures.
 - ✓ Manage and enhance human resources – both staff and volunteers.
 - ✓ Create sound business and financial operations and systems.
 - ✓ Ensure effective internal and external communication.

PLANNING

Planning is a process of developing a logical sequence of steps that lead from individual actions to community-level drug outcomes and achievement of the coalition’s vision for a healthier community.

9. Develop Strategic and Action Plans

Strategic plans align coalition work with larger and often long-term priorities and opportunities. Action plans ensure that all coalition members are involved in carrying out the work of the coalition and that they are doing so with sufficient support and appropriate accountability.

- Skills:
- ✓ Based on problem analysis and the coalition’s logic model develop population-level objectives for changed community conditions and behaviors.
 - ✓ Effectively link coalition assets and resources to identified community needs.
 - ✓ Identify needed action steps and then outline the actors, timelines, required support and communication through a group process that invites members to “own” or publicly accept responsibility for implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation puts into motion the activities identified in the planning process.

10. Develop Interventions

Creating a comprehensive response to identified community concerns is the central task of coalition work. Comprehensive interventions are those that use multiple strategies in multiple sectors to change the conditions that make substance abuse in the community more likely. Coalition members need to have a thorough understanding of the strategies at their disposal. They need the ability to select interventions with proven effects and then to adapt these interventions to fit the local context. Further, coalition members must be able to develop unique local interventions based on their understanding of community needs and resources.

- Skills:
- ✓ Identify, adapt and implement best programs and practices appropriate to the community's needs and resources while being aware of the cultural and ethical issues involved in this process.
 - ✓ Develop unique local responses that employ multiple strategies in response to identified needs.
 - ✓ Prioritize needed community and systems changes and advocate for their adoption.
 - ✓ Based on the coalition's logic model, develop an intervention map that ensures the coalition's work is not limited in the sectors or strategies used but rather envisions a truly comprehensive response to substance abuse.

11. Advocate for Change

Coalitions are well-suited to asking both their own members and the general community to make needed changes to reduce the risk for substance abuse. These changes can take the form of improved working relationships (such as between police and the faith community), new or improved programs (such as expanded after-school activities), new practices (such as police officers attending neighborhood meetings), altering the physical design of the environment (such as "crime prevention through environmental design" or "CPTED" programs) and new policies (such as new workplace rules that limit smoking). Coalitions are uniquely positioned to both identify needed changes in community practice and to bring such changes about.

- Skills:
- ✓ Conduct advocacy research.
 - ✓ Identify potential allies and opponents.
 - ✓ Design an advocacy campaign.
 - ✓ Ensure that advocacy efforts simultaneously build community capacity and willingness to effect change.

12. Influence Policy Development and Enforcement

Many local policies affect adolescent development generally and the risks for substance abuse specifically. Coalitions are often looked to by community and organizational leaders for education on the potential effects of policy options under consideration. Coalitions provide needed information by bringing those affected by policy choices into the community dialogue.

- Skills:
- ✓ Conduct policy research.
 - ✓ Identify needed resources and assets.
 - ✓ Ensure community voices are heard in local decision-making processes.
 - ✓ Support effective policy implementation and enforcement.

13. Write Grant Applications for Funding

Most of the resources needed for coalition work are found in the local community. Grants, however, often allow coalitions to elicit or leverage local resources through matching strategies. However, cash resources can be difficult to create in many of our most distressed neighborhoods and grants provide the money that when married to local physical, human and creative resources enable a strong community response to substance abuse.

- Skills:
- ✓ Identify and create working relationships with potential funders.
 - ✓ Ensure alignment between grant opportunities and local intervention plans.
 - ✓ Assemble coalition planning products into a coherent and responsive grant application.
 - ✓ Negotiate a response to funder feedback and concerns.
 - ✓ Maintain positive working relationships and communication with funders.

EVALUATION

Evaluation measures the quality and outcomes of coalition work. Evaluation enables the improvement of interventions and coalition practices.

14. Evaluate the Coalition

Coalition evaluation should help the team *improve* its work, *coordinate* more effectively, be *accountable* to participants, funders and the community for the effects of coalition work, *celebrate* progress along the way to achieving community-level outcomes and *sustain* the coalition effort long enough to make a difference in community life. Evaluation of coalitions is fundamentally different from program evaluation since the target of coalition work is the health and behavior of the entire community.

- Skills:
- ✓ Based on the coalition's logic model, identify workable measures of success.

- ✓ Identify stakeholders and stakeholder concerns that must be addressed.
- ✓ Ensure accountability requirements of funders are cooperatively met by the coalition.
- ✓ Use appropriate evaluation tools for process, intermediate and long-term evaluation of the coalition's work.
- ✓ Create evaluation plans and distribute the work of coalition evaluation appropriately among members, staff and outside providers.
- ✓ Justify conclusions, facilitate coalition understanding and use of findings, communicate findings effectively with stakeholders and the broader community.

15. Sustain Projects and Initiatives

Grant funding is an important part of coalition work. Grant funding by itself, however, will not assure that a community coalition is around long enough to make a difference in targeted community outcomes. Successful community coalitions do not leave their survival to chance. Rather, they develop sustainability plans that chart precisely what resources the coalition needs and appropriate strategies to secure these resources. Good sustainability plans, like good intervention plans, do not rely on single or limited strategies, but seek to ensure success through a comprehensive approach.

- Skills:
- ✓ Evaluate the nature, purposes and accomplishments of the effort to make an informed decision as to whether and how to continue the work.
 - ✓ Through a business planning process, identify the specific technology, money, personnel, space and communication needs of the coalition.
 - ✓ Match identified needs with the appropriate resource development strategy and source.
 - ✓ Use full membership participation in implementation of the sustainability plan with regular opportunities for feedback and improvements.