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## BROADEN YOUR COALITION

Coalitions are the way we do business in the tobacco prevention movement. Every county is mandated to have a tobacco prevention coalition to receive Proposition 99 funds. These coalitions are broad, encompassing the full range of tobacco-related issues and the disparate organizations addressing those issues. Having 50 or more organizations in the county's main tobacco coalition is not unusual. The full coalition most often convenes monthly or bi-monthly and presents speakers, conducts training and encourages information sharing. People are recruited into committees, subcommittees or task forces where the real campaign and advocacy work occurs.

These committees and subcommittees are also coalitions. Depending on the issue involved, they may include the voluntary health organizations, youth groups, public health department staff, community groups and local activists—generally the traditional partners of the tobacco prevention movement. These committees carry the weight of the campaign. They need to be broadened and strengthened to provide the needed leadership.

### *A Healthy Coalition*

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Committees and subcommittees working on issue campaigns are really temporary coalitions, and as such should call themselves a “campaign committee” or a “task force,” not a “coalition.” The name needs to say, “We will disappear after this is over.” This is important for securing commitments from organizations that simply will not join another permanent coalition, and sends the clear message to other advocacy organizations that you are not creating a group that will be competing with them in the future.

A healthy campaign committee operates according to certain principles and at the same time strives to meet the unique needs of its member organizations. Some have called the job of building and maintaining coalitions the toughest job in organizing. These guidelines should help.

1. Choose an issue that unifies the core group. Use the Goal Setting Exercise in to select the group's issue goals.
2. Assign staff roles to people who will work for the whole coalition, not only their own organization. Health department staff can play that role, but when parts of the campaign require the county staff to take a back seat, the campaign committee should raise money to hire an experienced organizer. If that is impossible and the committee needs to rely on donated staff from a member organization, the staffer needs to be impartial, and make work for the campaign an important priority.

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*To broaden the coalition, you need a recruitment plan!*

3. Understand and respect institutional differences. Every organization has its own history, structure, agenda, rules, values and leadership. These can be strengths or weaknesses, but must be understood by other organizations to avoid conflicts and achieve success.
4. Help organizations achieve their self-interest. Organizations join campaign committees to achieve issue victories, but if the campaign also contributes to the organization's basic agenda in other ways, it will increase the organization's support. A campaign committee can help its members carry out the seven basic functions of any organization. In doing so, the campaign committee should avoid competing with its member organizations whenever possible. The seven basic functions of any organization are as follows:
  - Gain new members and raise money
  - Be perceived as powerful
  - Get media coverage
  - Build relations with other groups
  - Provide the members with an exciting program
  - Build internal morale
  - Give its leaders a public role
5. Develop a realistic budget for the campaign. You do that in the calculations required for the "organizational considerations" column of the strategy chart (see *Organizational Considerations* in *Develop a Strategy* section).
6. Agree to disagree. You do not need to agree with your teammates on everything; only on the issue campaign in front of you. Try to avoid those issues that divide and polarize the group.
7. Use moderate tactics. Campaign tactics that keep the committee united are best, and often those are more moderate. However, at times when more militant tactics are needed, those willing to pursue them can be encouraged, as part of the campaign strategy, to act independently in their own names.
8. Value the different contributions that members can make. Some can contribute funds, others can turn out their members, and still others can contribute research expertise.
9. Structure decision making, formally or informally, to insure that those contributing the most resources have the most say in the decisions that are made.
10. Achieve significant victories. Victory in the issue campaign paves the way for an even stronger campaign committee for the next effort; and the reverse is also true.
11. Require consistent attendance by qualified organizational representatives. The campaign committee requires politically skilled staff and volunteers representing the member organizations on a consistent basis to do its work.

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12. Ensure that campaign committee members understand and have approved a decision making process. What decisions require committee members to check with the Executive Director or organizational board? What decisions can be made on the spot?
  13. Share credit fairly. The amount of public credit organizations receive is often very important to them, especially if the issue campaign is the central issue of that organization. The committee should work together to find ways that each organization can take individual credit while also demonstrating the power of the campaign as a whole.

## ***Recruiting Plan***

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The main targets of your recruiting plan are identified in the “constituents, allies and opponents” column and the “organizational considerations” column of the strategy chart. These include the main organizations and community leaders you want on board, and people with special skills you need in your committee. Some of these organizations and individuals already support your issue, but you also need to recruit those whose interest in your issue is untested, but who have influence with the target; and you need as many individual volunteers as possible.

In identifying potential recruits, do not overlook your own personal contacts. The following exercise will help potential recruits surface within the core group’s circle of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

### **Who Do You Know?\* Exercise**

This exercise should be used after the campaign committee’s core group has set goals and identified the targets. Once you know your target, figure out how you can contact them. Who do you know? Who do you know who knows them? These names become part of the constituents and allies column in the strategy chart.

**Instructions:** Using the [Personal Contact List](#) form (see example on next page), make a list of all of the people you know who are connected to the target (e.g., the Mayor) or who by virtue of their position might exert some influence on the target. Your list could include your doctor, dentist, hairdresser, golf partner and child’s teacher. Do not leave anyone out. Fill out the name of your personal contact, title or position, your relationship to the personal contact, as well as your contact’s relationship to the target.

Most groups of veteran tobacco prevention activists will have a variety of personal contacts that can be helpful to the campaign.

Whether making a cold call on the executive director of an organization or approaching a neighbor, how you present yourself can influence the outcome of the meeting.

\* See the exercise “Who Are Your Personal Contacts” in *A Guide for Local Action*, American Lung Association of California, Educating Key Opinion Leaders Project, October 2001.

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## Personal Contact List

Name	Title/Position	Your Relationship to Personal Contact	Personal Contact Relationship to Target
John Smith	President, Chamber of Commerce	Golf buddy	Mayor's brother
Betty Jones	President of local PTA	Neighbor	Community garden volunteer with mayor's husband
John Brown	Station manager, KWAV Radio	Boss	President, Rotary Club, mayor is member

## Guidelines for Recruitment

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**Be Prepared.** Know the person's name. Have four or five sentences ready to introduce yourself. Who are you? Who sent you? Why you are here? Know what the person does and how that relates to the issue campaign. If it is an organizational call, know the organization's history, program, funding sources and tax status. Have some questions in mind to encourage the person to talk about himself or herself.

**Legitimize Yourself.** Quickly link the campaign's goals with the individual's or organization's goals to demonstrate that you are not trying to use them to advance some unrelated agenda. "I noticed in your last newsletter...that's an important issue to me too...here's why." Refer to someone they know who suggested you come talk with them. Mention other organizations and key individuals who have already joined; and remind them that they may already have heard about you. "We are the campaign that won that anti-tobacco ordinance in the city and now we are taking it to the county." Make sure to emphasize why their participation is crucial to victory. Establishing your track record and history of success is important to recruitment of new members. New members want to join a winning team.

**Listen.** Start by talking, but not too long. Just enough to introduce yourself and why you came. Then stop. You do not learn anything about the person you are trying to recruit when you are doing all the talking. Be an active listener. Ask good questions and be responsive to the answers coming back. "As you know, I am working for local programs that encourage kids not to smoke. How do you feel about youth smoking?" Listen for their self-interest in the campaign issue. "Youth smoking worries me a lot. I have a son who just started middle school." How much do they know about the campaign? About the issue? Look around on the walls. Family photos? College diploma? Newspaper clippings? Civic memberships? Be comfortable with a few moments of silence after you ask a question.

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*Be prepared when you approach people. Be specific about what you are asking for and practice what you will say.*

**Agitate.** Do not be afraid to put some passion behind the issue and explain your own personal commitment. “My Dad started smoking when he was a boy and smoked for 50 years. I tried to get him to stop. He died last year.” Or, “If the first cigarette ever was made today, it would be subject to review by the FDA and would never be approved for sale. At least you can make sure they do not sell it to your kids.”

**Get a Commitment.** Know what you want to ask for going in and have several back up requests. Whatever it is, it should be to do a specific task on a specific day. Join the campaign committee; come to an event; be a speaker at a press conference; recommend 4–5 people who support the campaign. When a commitment is made, make a note to call and remind the person. In most cases, even a reluctant volunteer will agree to do something; but leave room for the few who simply will not commit. They may be temporarily unavailable, and be more open in the future.

**Follow Up.** Follow up with a reminder of the commitment, and make certain to live up to things you promised to do. Get the materials to the person on time; make sure not to forget to stop by their office to take them to the event. Pay attention to them whenever they participate.

Recruiting individual volunteers for the campaign’s day-to-day work is also an important task in an issue campaign. You need people at meetings, help on the phones, someone to do research. The issue campaign should develop a program that is constantly asking people to join and create a special group searching for good people. Finding new people, however, involves more than just looking.

The people you want must be able to find you too. When you are out in the community giving talks, staffing a booth or circulating petitions, potential volunteers can find you. You are visible. Ask everyone who signs the petition you are circulating, “Would you like to help with our campaign?” If the answer is “yes,” get their contact information. At every meeting or presentation, be sure to ask for help and circulate a sign-up sheet for those who are interested. Holding publicly advertised events will bring out people new to the campaign who are dropping by just to check it out. Get everyone’s name on a sign-in sheet and follow up with a recruitment call.

The campaign should run an ongoing entry-level program for new recruits so that they quickly become oriented to the issue and get involved in some useful activity. That first activity should not be a meeting, if at all possible. It should be passing out literature at a forum or collecting signatures on a petition or phoning other prospective volunteers. You are looking for action-oriented people; placing new recruits in activities rather than meetings will encourage their interest and support. It will also make them feel useful and productive. Sometimes, volunteers can provide services, like childcare or transportation, which will allow other people to become active.

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## Recruiting Role-Play\* Exercise

Purpose of the role-play: to allow campaign committee members to practice their “pitches” and to give them confidence as they prepare to recruit organizations and opinion leaders to their cause.

**Supplies needed:** Guidelines for Recruitment (see above)

**Step 1:** Ask for two volunteers from the committee. One will play the role of a community leader. Assign that person a role he/she will feel comfortable playing (e.g., High School “Teacher of the Year,” president of the local chamber of commerce, local religious leader). The other volunteer will play himself/herself.

**Step 2:** Have the group make a list of various activities the committee member can ask the community leader to do (e.g., speak at an upcoming press conference, write and submit an opinion piece to the local newspaper, attend a campaign meeting to help strategize).

**Step 3:** Have the two volunteers role-play a conversation between them, with the committee member asking the community leader to do one or more of the activities on the list. Take 10 minutes, then allow the group to debrief.

**Step 4:** Repeat the role-play with the same two volunteers or two new ones. Debrief again.

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## Organizational Endorsements

Some organizations and individuals are willing to endorse the issue campaign but will not contribute their time and energy. Depending on the individual or organization, even name-only support can be important. A targeted councilwoman may read an endorsement for the issue campaign from the pastor of a large church in the district as a warning light. If the councilwoman does not support the ordinance, there may be trouble in the next election. An endorsement by the local hospital board sends chills down the back of the target because members of that board contribute thousands of dollars to her re-election campaign. Pick those organizations and individuals that send a strong political message to the target, even with name-only endorsements.

When you first sit down with the executive director or health committee chair of an organization, you probably have a lot of ideas about what the organization might do to help. You need an endorsement, money, troops; you want their leader to be a spokesperson for the campaign and join delegations to visit the target, and more. At some point in the conversation, you learn that certain of your requests are out of the question, but that others are appropriate and will be

\* Adapted from a role-play in *A Guide for Local Action*, American Lung Association of California, Educating Key Opinion Leaders Project, October 2001.

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considered. This is valuable information and should be incorporated in the packet you are preparing for the committee in charge of recommending endorsements. You may or may not be allowed to address the committee in person. In either case, you need a well-designed and attractive information packet with a cover letter prepared after discussions with staff or leadership.

The information packet should follow many of the same guidelines you use in making a pitch. In the cover letter or attachments, identify the elements of the organization's mission that support the issue campaign and find examples in the organization's history that are a precedent for what you are asking. Discuss up front how their organization might benefit from the success of the issue campaign. Document the campaign's legitimacy with a roster of members, clippings, current endorsements, the campaign plan and the budget. Include information that presents the urgency and seriousness of the issue from an unimpeachable source. In the cover letter, be specific in asking for what you want in descending order of importance; but be appreciative of whatever level of support they can provide.

Building and managing the campaign committee in the ways that have been suggested will increase the power you can focus on the target. The campaign, however, can take a year or longer to produce victory. During that period, full of small victories and defeats, it will be important to maintain the energy and focus of the campaign committee. Below are some final tips to sustain you over the long haul.

## ***Sustaining Your Campaign Committee***

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### **Tips on Maintaining the Committee's Energy \***

- Stay focused and goal-oriented.
- Be open to everyone's ideas.
- Be a taskmaster—make sure everyone leaves the meeting with something to do and a deadline.
- Make the meetings interesting; start each one with something new.
- Do not waste time at the meeting—stay on task. Everyone has something else he/she could be doing.
- Bring food/drinks.
- Congratulate the team for even the smallest victories.
- Address failure in a constructive manner.
- Recruit constantly for new people/new blood—new energy is usually a good jumpstart.
- Make sure everyone understands that you are working as a team; no one is in it alone.
- Ensure that everyone has input, every step of the way.
- Stress the equal status of everyone in the group and give them an opportunity for input at every stage.

\* Adapted from *A Guide for Local Action*, American Lung Association of California, Educating Key Opinion Leaders Project, October 2001, p.13.

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