

Whole Community Representation: Diversity & Inclusion in Community Coalitions

A primary goal of community coalitions is to bring the community's voice into decision making around issues that affect people's health, well-being, and safety. If your coalition doesn't represent your whole community, you may be missing essential perspectives and buy-in. This means that the various populations who live in your community – age groups, racial and ethnic groups, people with different abilities, people from different socioeconomic groups, different genders and gender groups, etc. – should be core members and participants in your coalition.

If your coalition does not represent and engage the whole community – in other words, if your coalition is not diverse and inclusive – your impact will never reach its full potential.

Ensuring whole community engagement is not easy. Inviting people to meetings is not enough! Coalition members must be dedicated to building trust between different groups of people and maintaining a welcoming environment so everyone feels comfortable joining in. Trust building should be one of the first efforts the coalition engages in and should be foundational to every meeting, activity, and intervention the coalition supports.

Coalitions Lite highlights different ways to incorporate diverse groups and voices into your coalition and your assessment process but following those tips will never be enough. Think broadly about how you can engage different people, whether as coalition members, workgroup members, key leaders, advisors, or program participants. Make it work for them!

Remember a few key rules:

1. A twist to the Golden Rule: Treat people how *they* would like to be treated.
2. Respect and kindness go a long way!
3. Show up at community events.
4. Learn about the different cultures and groups in your community.
5. Consider the barriers people may have to joining the coalition and help them overcome those barriers. Does someone need childcare during a meeting to attend? Provide it! Does someone need a ride? Get them an Uber!

This is hard work - building trust takes time and commitment. But don't get discouraged! Your community will thank you for it!



Look for the all-hands sign throughout the Coalitions Lite tools and documents for suggestions on interweaving diversity and inclusion into your efforts.