

# Sustainability: Principles of Collaborative Leadership

[http://www.coalitioninstitute.org/SPF\\_Elements/Sustainability/Sustainability\\_Principles.htm](http://www.coalitioninstitute.org/SPF_Elements/Sustainability/Sustainability_Principles.htm)

Strong leadership is essential to sustaining community coalitions. Having a leader who takes responsibility for the success of the coalition by setting the public agenda for change, brokering connections among people and resources, and leveraging additional or new resources for projects can go a long way in supporting the longevity of a coalition. Effective leaders see the big picture.

This article presents the 11 important principles of leadership that help coalitions improve effectiveness and sustainability over time. Coalitions that effectively address local problems are typically made up of diverse members of the community. The challenge for coalition leaders is to encourage positive communication and group decision-making across the variety of personalities, agendas, and skill sets of members. Research suggests a collaborative style of leadership helps sustain coalitions. Leaders can focus on developing skills that are based on the principles of collaborative leadership as one method for improving the long-term outlook of their organization.

## LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

- **Keep the coalition focused on goal:**  
Successful collaborative leaders keep the diverse members attuned to their common goal while keeping an eye on the big picture to help inform group processes.
- **Locate, persuade and utilize influential champions and partners within the community:**  
Strong leaders bring community ties to the table and develop partnerships with organizations and individuals that help sustain the coalition.
- **Maintain and protect collaborative decision-making, planning and infrastructure building process:**  
Instead of being the decision-maker, collaborative leaders actively seek to continue the group decision-making, planning and infrastructure building processes.
- **Diversify, motivate and energize your coalition's volunteer base:**  
In order to increase your coalition's sustainability, leaders should help recruit diverse community members, get them involved in ways that are meaningful to the volunteer, and keep them feeling upbeat about their experience as a member of the team.
- **Help resolve member conflicts:**  
Collaborative leaders can make deliberate efforts to help resolve member conflicts in open, unbiased ways that encourage compromise.
- **Communicate with the community:**  
Coalition leaders that bring excellent written and verbal communication skills to the table help get the coalition message out to the community and potential partners.
- **Cultivate leadership in coalition members, including youth:**  
Coalitions gain momentum under the initial inspired involvement of those who establish the coalition. However, in order for a coalition to sustain that momentum, it is crucial that new leadership is both allowed and encouraged to develop.

These leadership principles require a high level of commitment and connection to individual team members, the coalition as a whole, and addressing problems that are negatively impacting the health and safety of the community.

