

Building and Strengthening a Coalition for Effective Advocacy

October 8, 2025



Welcome!



Put your name and city/region in the chat box



Type in one or two words that come to mind when you picture an effective coalition

Webinar Goals

- Learn why coalitions are essential for effective advocacy
- Understand elements of an effective coalition
- Learn how to build and strengthen a coalition
- Identify one or two action steps you can take following this webinar to contribute to a coalition



Context Setting



Family Café and FROM have led successful advocacy campaigns and have a strong reputation and relationships at the state level



With the current political context in Florida, it is more important than ever to unify advocates in a strong coalition



At stake are priority issues including managed care and continued funding for priority programs



This is an opportunity to strengthen your collective advocacy to meet the moment

About Your Webinar Host

- 15 years of experience in coalition-building at all levels (federal, state, local)
- Have secured key policy and funding wins while leading or facilitating coalitions
- Enjoy coaching people on how to be effective advocates, including as coalition leaders!



Why Coalitions Are Essential

- More votes=more power
- Increased capacity and efficiency
- Increased diversity
- More credibility
- More expertise
- Sustainable beyond the current leaders





Why Coalitions Are Essential: Example from the National Level

- In 2015, the Coalition for Community Schools worked with Congress to successfully authorize the Full-Service Community Schools program into federal law
 - Leveraged coalition member relationships with key Congressional champions
 - Coalition members mobilized affiliates in target states
- Following this win, we successfully increased funding from \$10 million to \$150 million in 10 years
 - Continued to grow and strengthen the coalition and supported launch of state coalitions

Photo Credit:
Wikipedia

Envisioning an Effective Coalition

What does it

- Look like?
- Feel like?



Photo Credit: Athena Sandrini

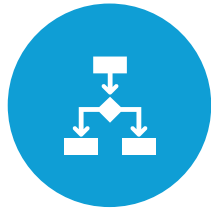
Building a Coalition: The Essentials



CONFIRM THE
NEED FOR A
NEW
COALITION VS.
JOINING AN
EXISTING ONE



DEVELOP AND
SHARE A
VISION/
PURPOSE
STATEMENT



CO-DEVELOP
PRINCIPLES/
VALUES AND
NORMS



ENGAGE
STAKEHOLDERS



BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS



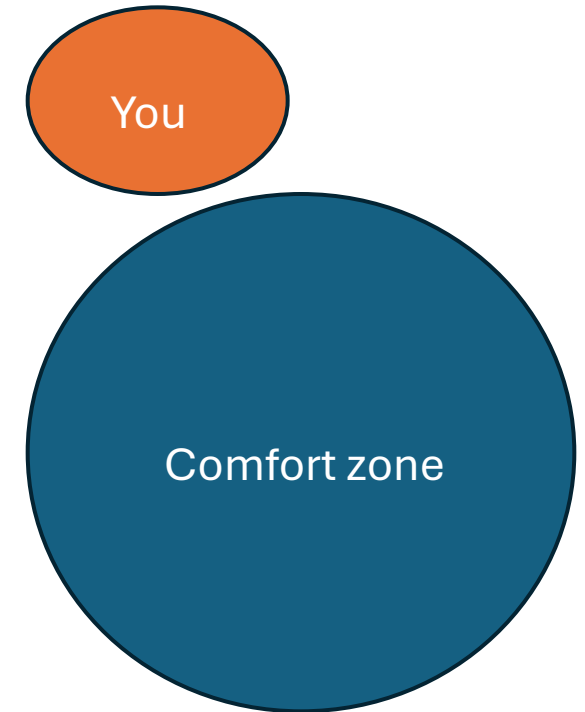
IDENTIFY AND
PURSUE A
SHORT-TERM
“WIN”

Coalitions: Strength in Diversity

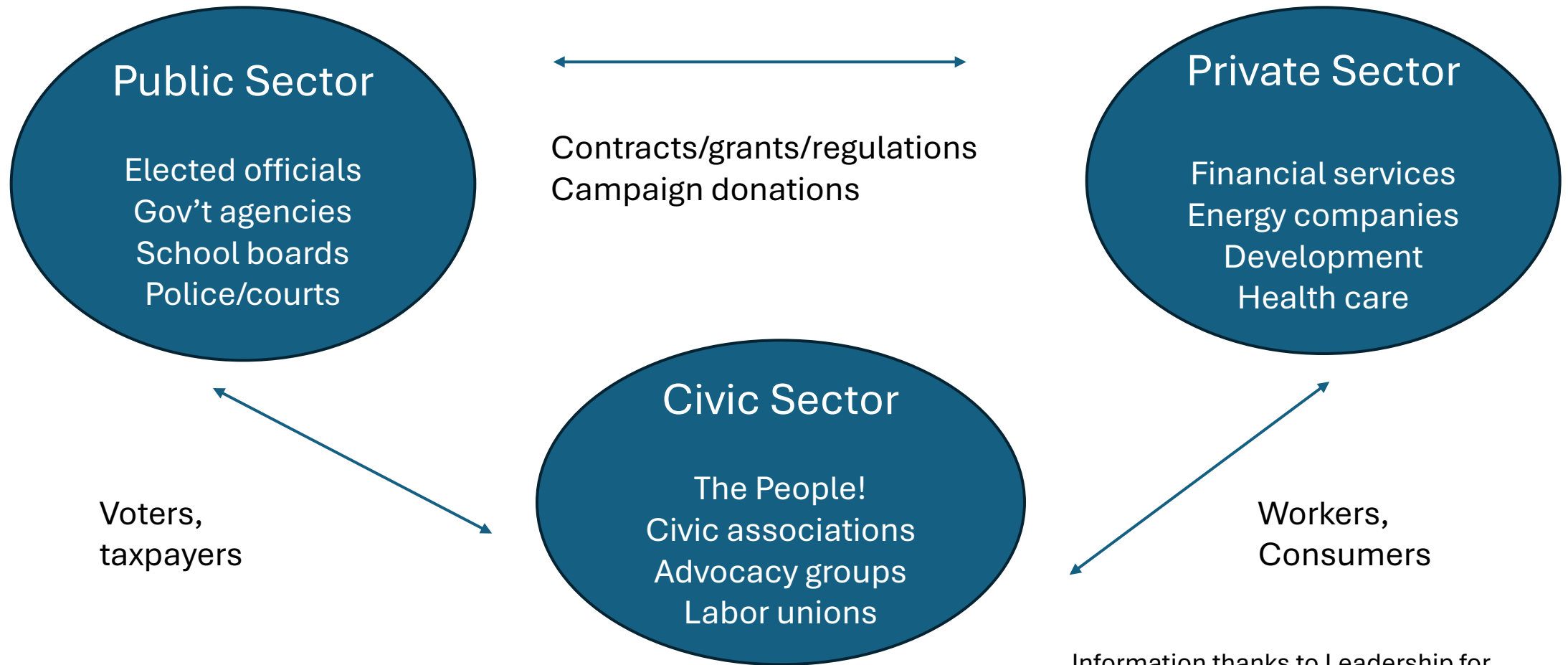
“If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition.”

Bernice Johnson Reagon

composer, historian, musician,
and civil rights activist



Engaging Stakeholders Across Sectors



Information thanks to Leadership for Educational Equity

Elements of a Strong Coalition



Learning/Sharing

Exchange of knowledge and skills among members



Communications

Strategies for internal and external messaging



Policy and Advocacy

Efforts to influence policy outcomes



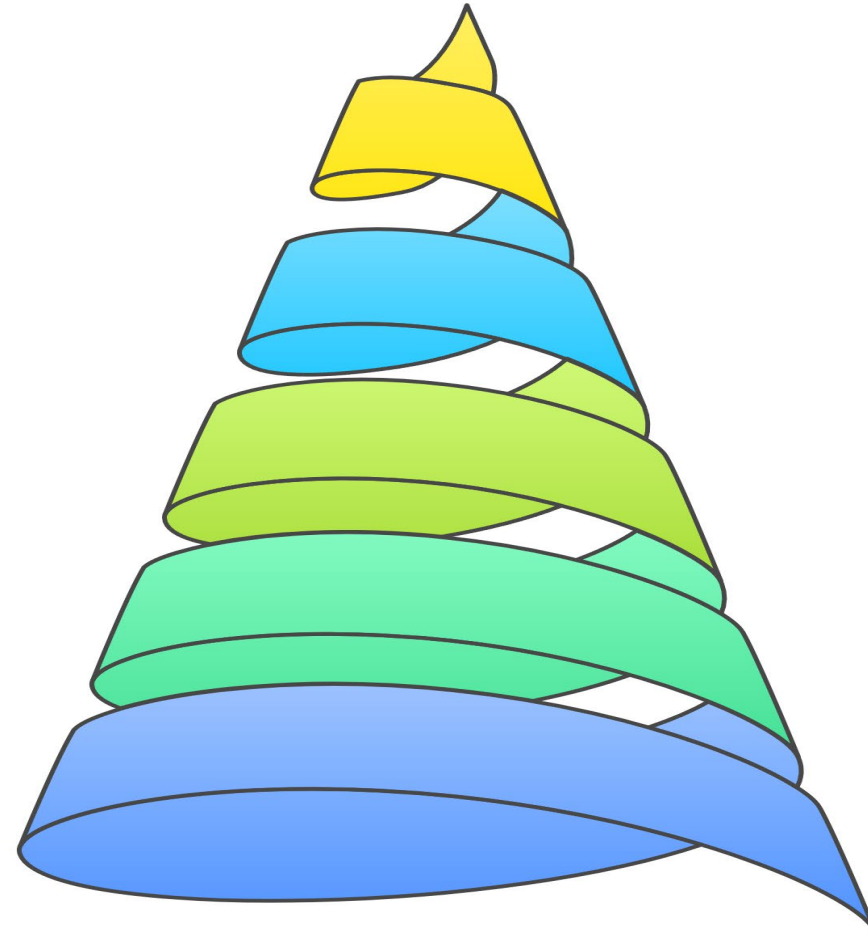
Governance

Framework for decision-making and oversight



Relational Trust

Foundation of effective coalition dynamics



Foundation: Relational Trust

- This term was coined by two researchers studying how schools work, but it can be applied to any professional community
- They identified 4 considerations for developing this trust:
 - Respect
 - Personal Regard
 - Competence in Core Responsibilities
 - Personal Integrity
- Also developed through:
 - time, listening, being curious, and creating space and opportunity for people's voices and contributions



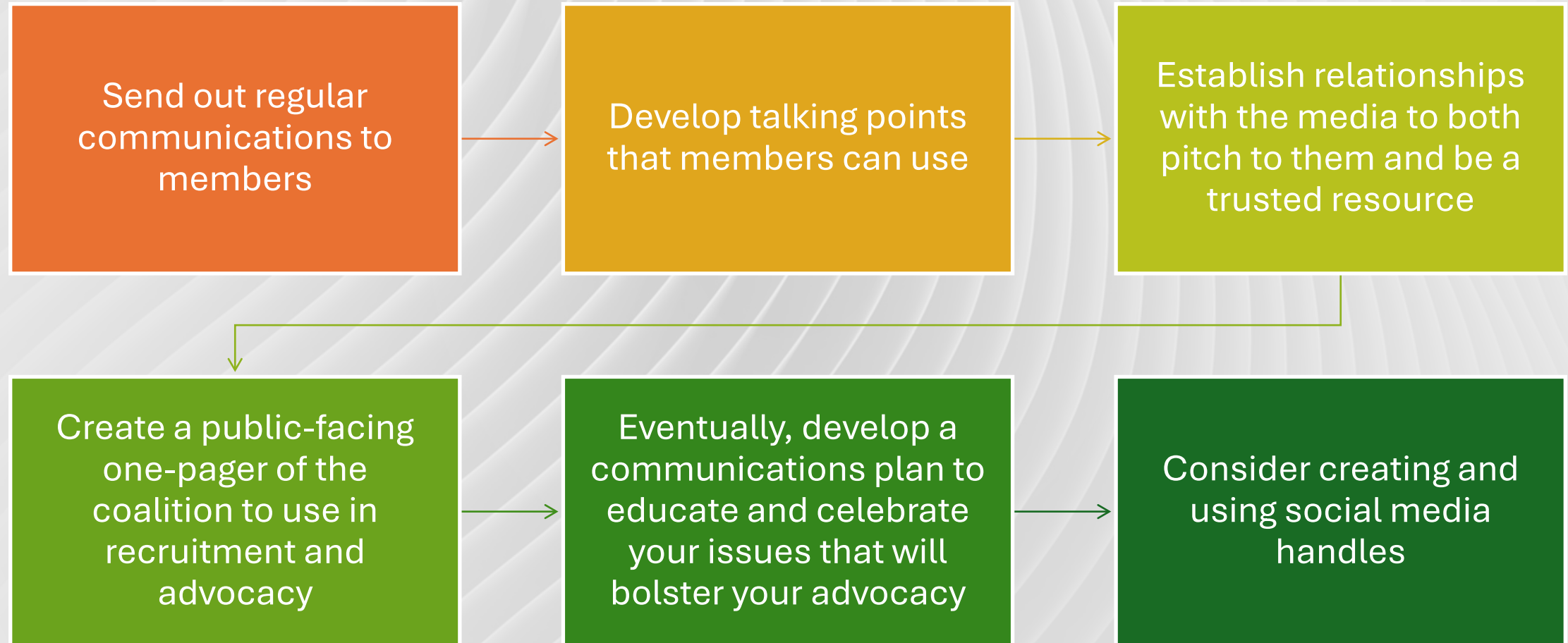
Element: Governance

Define	Establish	Center	Identify
Define member expectations (time, resources, etc.)	Establish decision-making processes (voting, steering committee, working groups, etc.)	Center the voices of people most impacted: Recruit people most impacted by the issue(s) and invite them to take on leadership roles	Identify backbone support: Identify an organization or a few people to lead and convene the coalition

Element: Policy and Advocacy

Develop	Develop a shared understanding of the policy landscape
Consider	Consider creating a SWOT analysis for your issue(s) against this landscape
Develop	Develop policy goals for the upcoming legislative session, and an advocacy strategy with key activities
Establish	Establish relationships with key policymakers
Develop and publish	Eventually, develop and publish a policy agenda aligned with your coalition's principles
Coordinate	Coordinate your advocacy with other aligned coalitions/organizations

Element: Communications



Element: Learning/Sharing Knowledge and Skills



ORGANIZE
FORMAL AND
INFORMAL WAYS
TO LEARN AND
SHARE
KNOWLEDGE AND
SKILLS



ASK PEOPLE TO
HOST A SITE VISIT,
LUNCH AND
LEARN, OR OTHER
WAYS TO LEARN
FROM ONE
ANOTHER



CAPTURE AND
SHARE BEST
PRACTICES



LOOK FOR RESEARCH
AND EVALUATION
PARTNERS FROM LOCAL
COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES,
NONPROFITS,
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS, ETC.

Reflection on the Coalition Elements

- When you think about a coalition you are in currently, which of the elements that we discussed do you feel is the strongest right now? Which has the most room for improvement?
- If you are not currently involved in a coalition, which of these elements are you most excited about working on? Why?
- Elements:
 - Relational trust, governance, policy and advocacy, communications, learning/sharing knowledge and skills



Lessons Learned from My Experience Leading and Facilitating Coalitions



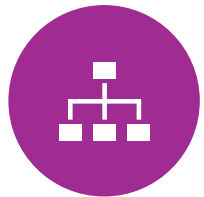
Be clear on and able to articulate the coalition vision/purpose and how it aligns with members' priorities



Co-create specific goals to work towards



Be clear on the vision and flexible on the strategy and tactics



Balance time for both whole-group and 1:1 meetings



Become an amazing listener, facilitator, and consensus-builder



Keep people engaged and energized



Model and reciprocate the values and norms you want to encourage



Stay motivated by your long-term vision while acting and adapting to what is needed right now

Strengthening a Coalition

Relational Trust:

- Continue to cultivate relationships through whole-group, small group, and 1:1 conversations

Governance:

- Continuously assess other stakeholders to engage: “Who are we missing?” “Who else should be here?”
- Refine governance processes (e.g. add a steering committee, working groups, leadership rotations, etc.)
- Set up and use shared tools (e.g. Google Drive, etc.)
- Seek funding for the coalition
- Create pathways/rotations for new leadership
- Reflect on progress and how to continue to strengthen the coalition

Strengthening a Coalition

Policy and Advocacy:

- Create and share a policy agenda
- Organize group advocacy activities (state legislative day, sign-on letters, etc.)
- Cultivate champions

Communications:

- Organize public events (site visits, panels, etc.)
- Create social media handle(s) for outreach and advocacy
- Celebrate progress and wins, both informally and publicly

Learning/Sharing:

- Organize regular convenings to learn and share about issues and best practices

Strengthening a Coalition: Assessing Your Impact Beyond Policy and Funding

Questions to reflect on:

- Which groups and individuals are now part of our coalition and advocating with us that were not involved before?
- How are we centering the voices of people most impacted by our issues? Are they driving our advocacy? Are they being heard more and understood better?
- Which groups and individuals have we helped to become aware of our priorities who were not aware before?





Strengthening a Coalition: Assessing Your Impact Beyond Policy and Funding

Questions to reflect on:

- How is the conversation changing around our priorities due to our education, outreach, and advocacy? (What is different about how people are thinking and talking about our priorities?)
- What new policies or ideas are emerging around our priorities due to our coalition work? What is now possible regarding policy and practice that perhaps was not possible-or seen-before?

Your Next Action Step

What is one action step you will take based on what you learned today?

- Some ideas:
 - Reach out to someone you want to invite to join your coalition, and schedule a call or coffee
 - Work with your coalition members to create a clear vision/purpose statement
 - Help organize the next meeting for your coalition and articulate the meeting goals
 - Or any other action step that feels right to you now!



Use Your Toolkit!

- Use the toolkit resource that accompanies this webinar to jot down your action step plus reflections on other prompts
- Share this toolkit with other coalition members and fill it out together!



Building and Strengthening a Coalition for Effective Advocacy

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Photo Credit: Ann H

