

# NETWORKING AND COALITION BUILDING

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*The Capacity Development Resource Guides highlight the key technical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Each guide identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that individuals and organizations should possess in the area. The standardized indicators listed for each competency and capability map to the accompanying Capacity Indicators Catalog, which helps to generate a tailored tool for assessing and scoring an organization's capacity level. Each guide also includes a list of useful resources for designing and delivering capacity development assistance.*

## BUILDING NETWORKS AND COALITIONS FOR GREATER INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

### ■ DEFINITION

While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, a network is often a loose association of people or groups brought together by a common interest, whereas a coalition is a more formal organization created in pursuit of a specific goal (PACT Tanzania, n.d.). Networking and coalition building are important capabilities for a wide range of stakeholders, including individual champions; community-based organizations and groups; local, national, and international nongovernmental organizations; donors; professional associations; political leaders; government officials; the media; and policymakers.

### ■ RELEVANCE TO POLICY

“Networks and coalitions can be effective in mobilizing political will, influencing policy and financing, and strengthening health programs” (West Slevin and Green, 2013, p. 1). They leverage and shepherd collective voices toward common policy goals; create synergies among members; share information, ideas, and resources; and combine efforts to more efficiently plan and implement joint advocacy campaigns. “Greater size and visibility make it easier for networks and coalitions to mobilize resources and gain recognition from local governments” (USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, 2008, p. 1).

### ■ KEY CAPABILITIES

Creating and sustaining networks/coalitions requires different yet complementary skills. A network/coalition must outline communication systems, decision-making processes, and membership roles and responsibilities.

Structure and systems will ensure smooth functioning, as well as build trust and maintain bonds among its participants. Networks/coalitions must have strong leadership and the capability to recruit and engage members and partners in their activities (Davies & Lee, 2007). Sustaining networks/coalitions requires understanding barriers to involvement and linking with other networks/coalitions to identify strategies to overcome these barriers. Leaders must have strong skills in oral and written communication, agenda setting, consensus building, knowledge management, meeting management, decision making, team building, strategic and action planning, fundraising, and conflict management (Davies and Lee, 2007). These technical and relational skills are essential to bridging with power structures and decision-making forums and bringing the network/coalition's voice into the policy process (Ogden et al., 2013).

## ■ PERFORMANCE IDEAL

### **High capacity for networking and coalition building includes being able to**

- Leverage collective bargaining power to build and maintain strong, constructive relationships with relevant policymakers and decisionmakers who have authority and responsibility for policy change
- Collaborate to design and implement evidence-based advocacy campaigns based on the expressed needs and with the full and active participation of their communities and constituents
- Collaborate with other peer networks, coalitions, or groups that share their advocacy and policy objectives

Effective networks/coalitions are known within their community or by their constituents and are viewed as responsive to and representative of their constituency or community priorities. They operate in accordance with the network/coalition mission and goals; have internal systems, structures, and a culture that promotes collaboration and communication; and have systems and strategies in place to generate and manage resources to support the network/coalition's efforts. Externally, network/coalition members routinely communicate policy actions to their constituencies and mobilize them to become engaged in advocacy efforts. At the highest performance level, networks/coalitions proactively engage in and influence policy dialogue and are recognized and respected by policymaking institutions and leaders as key contributors to policy discussions.

### **In the ideal, the following would exist:**

- Opportunities and mechanisms for diverse coalitions, including those representing marginalized populations, to participate in the policy process
- Transparency and accessibility of information shared between and among government departments and civil society groups
- Funding and other resources available to foster networks and coalitions to promote shared learning and collective action

## INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES

### KNOWLEDGE OF

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Other organizations, networks, coalitions, etc. working in the same and related fields (e.g., media, government, civil society, donor community, coalitions, networks)	NC1
Local and national policy environment, laws, stakeholders, and institutions	NC2
Local and national policy and advocacy processes	NC3, NC4
Health sector issues	NC5

### SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO

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Cultivate relationships and work collaboratively to share and leverage information and resources	NC6
Listen to others, build consensus, and manage conflict	NC7
Prioritize opportunities, make decisions, and provide direction	NC8
Effectively communicate issues internally and externally through writing, interpersonal communication, or public events	NC9
Assess and build skills of other members in advocacy, policy analysis, and data use	NC10

### ATTITUDES/VALUES/ATTRIBUTES

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Values working in collaboration, and cultivates a spirit of partnership with others	NC11
Is politically astute and diplomatic and can accurately analyze power dynamics	NC12
Shares resources and responsibility for work, and acknowledges joint credit for achievements	NC13
Values transparency, inclusiveness, and open communication	NC14

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

### TECHNICAL ABILITY TO

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Shape a clearly articulated network vision, mission, goals, etc., shared by members	NC34
Monitor, analyze, and document implications of existing policy and proposed policy alternatives, especially from perspectives of gender, equity, and inclusion	NC15
Monitor, evaluate, and document network/coalition activities and progress	NC16, NC17

**TECHNICAL ABILITY TO (CONTINUED)**

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Assess and provide capacity development support that responds to members' expressed needs and priorities	NC18
Design and institute systems to collect, maintain, analyze, and synthesize data on key program areas and the policy environment	NC19
Develop and implement an advocacy strategy based on a clear analysis of constituent/ stakeholder needs, opportunities, and power dynamics	NC20
Link with/participate in global advocacy efforts/campaigns	NC21

**RELATIONAL ABILITY TO**

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Establish and maintain collaborative and mutually supportive relationships with external groups and organizations representing diverse constituencies (e.g., youth, women, service providers, marginalized groups, health professionals, media) and diverse sectors (e.g., health, labor, economic, youth and sport, human rights, gender, women, military, education)	NC22, NC23
Maintain constructive links with various policy stakeholders, including communities, decisionmakers, and peer organizations	NC24
Earn the trust and credibility (have legitimacy) with the public, constituents, media, and donors	NC25, NC26, NC27
Attract/recruit and retain members from relevant groups and organizations from various sectors and constituencies and with diverse organizational skills/resources	NC28, NC29, NC30
Communicate routinely and transparently with all members on network activities, governance issues, resource requirements, etc.	NC31
Engage member organizations in network activities, decision making, governance, etc.	NC32
Promote network's image and achievements externally via media, publications, conferences, etc.	NC33

**ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT**

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Fundraising for network activities and operations, as well as systems to document member contributions (e.g., human, financial, in-kind) and cost-share	NC35, NC36
Effective and efficient financial management of a budget and organizational resources	NC37
Strategic and advocacy planning	NC38

**ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT (CONTINUED)**

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Decision-making and technical structures that clearly define leadership, governance, and membership roles, responsibilities, and functions	NC39
Systems and procedures that ensure participatory decision making, delegation, and teamwork	NC40
Strong internal (among network members) and external (with constituents, media, decisionmakers) communication systems and structures	NC41, NC42

## ■ ILLUSTRATIVE CAPACITY- STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

- Conduct workshops to
  - Create a network/coalition mission, structures, objectives, roles, and responsibilities
  - Conduct strategic planning among interested organizations and individuals
  - Build advocacy capacity and develop advocacy strategies
  - Train trainers to facilitate “cascade” training
  - Train network members in use/presentation of data
- Propose and award small grants and technical assistance to form, expand, or develop competencies of network/coalition members
- Support/invite network participation in technical seminars, conferences, or briefings at the national and global levels
- Support/invite network participation in policy-related events, roundtables, meetings, press conferences, etc.
- Conduct ongoing technical assistance/support in sustaining network activities (e.g., improving communications and knowledge management systems, evaluation)
- Exchange visits with other networks and coalitions
- Support linking with/participating in global advocacy campaigns

## ■ RESOURCES

Cohen, L., N. Baer, and P. Satterwhite. 2002. *Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide*. Oakland, CA: Prevention Institute. Available at: [http://www.nysnavigator.org/documents/Developing\\_Effective\\_Coalitions-8\\_Step\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.nysnavigator.org/documents/Developing_Effective_Coalitions-8_Step_Guide.pdf).

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WRA for Safe Motherhood. 2012. *National Alliance Capacity Self-Assessment Facilitation Manual*. Washington, DC: WRA.

Wurzbach, M. E. 2003. *Community Health Education & Promotion: A Guide to Program Design and Evaluation, Second Edition*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers. Available at: <http://www.textbooks.com/Community-Health-Education-and-Promotion-A-Guide-to-Program-Design-and-Evaluation-2nd-Edition/9780763725969/Mary-Ellen-Wurzbach.php>



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