

Maintaining Involvement and Energy

While money may sustain the coalition in the short term, *commitment* of many people and partners to the coalition over the long period of time is a key element of true sustainability. The following strategies help build sustainability:

Build and maintain momentum with incremental goals and “small wins”. Break the large goals into smaller goals. This will increase the sense of productivity and accomplishment and produce greater commitment by the members.

Build membership through “legitimate peripheral participation” (creating opportunities for newcomers, and others at low levels of involvement to assume more responsibility as they acquire skills and become comfortable). Actively engaging coalition members occurs by:

- 1) Creating many ways to participate.
- 2) Creating different levels of participation. “Low intensity and low commitment” involvement allows people to participate in ways that will work for them.
- 3) Creating participation that is viewed as legitimate: regardless of level of involvement. Commitment to the coalition will grow when members see that the coalition honors and accepts them as genuine contributors even if they are not always actively involved in coalition “work”.

Know when the time comes for a particular initiative to move on. A coalition is not a program. While it makes sense for a coalition to take ownership of developing and seeding a project, maintaining and continuing these projects limits the coalition’s ability to be able to change and mature. It is difficult to add value beyond the work of an established project or program.

While the coalition needs to stay focused upon the main goal, it should also free up energy to connect with groups that are working on related issues, encouraging cooperation and collaboration.

Dean, A. (2005). Sustainability primer: Fostering long-term change to create drug-free communities. Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Community Anti-Drug Coalition Institute. To view PDF visit: http://www.coalitioninstitute.org/Coalition_Resources/PrimerSeriesHome.asp.