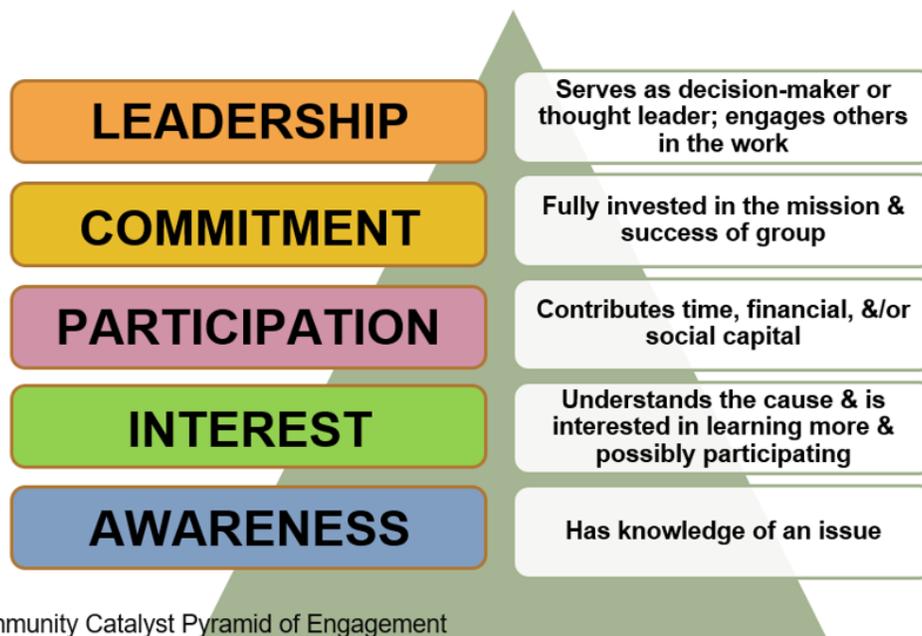# Solutions Dialogue: Engaging Coalition Members during COVID-19
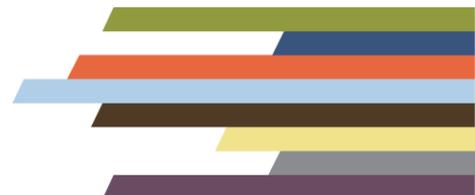
The primary function of any coalition structure is to bring together community resources for a common goal, but how can that be done during a pandemic? How do we keep coalition stakeholders and members engaged when in-person meetings are not an option? As many worry about increased levels of substance misuse while people shelter in place, and that increased misuse could continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing to engage coalition members and maintain momentum is critical.

Pyramid of Engagement

The Community Catalyst Pyramid of Engagement is a resource that can be used by coalitions to promote strong community connection and coalition membership, and sustaining coalition efforts. As you review your unique barriers, refer to this resource to assist in multi-level solutions to identified barriers.

LEADERSHIP	Serves as decision-maker or thought leader; engages others in the work
COMMITMENT	Fully invested in the mission & success of group
PARTICIPATION	Contributes time, financial, &/or social capital
INTEREST	Understands the cause & is interested in learning more & possibly participating
AWARENESS	Has knowledge of an issue

Source: Community Catalyst Pyramid of Engagement

Identifying Barriers

It is easy to think that "everything" has changed in our world due to the COVID-19 pandemic because it effects so many different aspects of individuals, schools, communities, and families. As part of any strategic plan, the coalition or other organization conducts a needs assessment according to their priorities and mission, and we can do the same for this time of change. Ask yourself, and fellow coalition members and stakeholders:

> **What are the barriers to continuing coalition engagement?**

By identifying individual, specific, measurable barriers, the process of finding solutions to fill the gaps will be much more manageable. Common barriers may include inability to meet in-person, ineffective communication, and loss of focus, just to name a few.

Suggestions

How have some coalitions utilized this time to engage, or re-engage their members? A few suggestions are listed below!

Networking/Check-In

Make sure, as the coalition leader, you are keeping lines of communication open with coalition members, and families of program participants.
- Host a "difference-maker" Zoom training/chat with someone in your community making positive changes (bonus points if they're on the coalition!)
- Ask members of the community and/or vulnerable population if they need assistance with tasks.
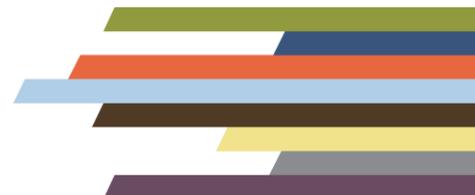
Educational Opportunities

Share and encourage sharing of educational opportunities! It is a great time to refresh and refine skills around specific coalition models, strategic planning, social change, public health, etc.
- Coalition model-specific videos can be reviewed on YouTube, and their official page.
- Sign-up for mailings! Many organizations are hosting free/reduced cost webinar series and advertising through mass e-mailings.

Data Review

Take the time to review community data relevant to the coalition's outcome goals.
- What is your main source of data to make decisions about your community? Take time to review the data, and think of other local data resources to enrich your primary data.
- Starting thinking as a group how COVID-19 may affect overall community data.

Recruitment

Who's missing from our table? Review your membership and sector representation.

- Ask that each current coalition member bring a friend to a virtual coalition meeting.
- Make lists of each community sector and specific coalition members associated with that sector. What sector has low representation? Identify either individuals or organizations to recruit from, and specify current coalition members to do recruiting.

Stay focused on the coalition's mission and vision!

Additional Resources/Suggestions:

The Community Catalyst Pyramid of Engagement

https://www.communitycatalyst.org/resources/tools/pyramid-of-engagement

Communities That Care

https://www.communitiesthatcare.net/

Drexel University Goodwin College of Professional Studies: Five Types of Communication

https://drexel.edu/goodwin/professional-studies-blog/overview/2018/July/Five-types-of-communication/

Kansas State Community Toolbox: Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships

https://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-coalitions-and-partnerships

Penn State University Edna Bennett Pierce Research Center EPIS: COVID-19 Resources

http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/news/COVID19_info