

The Importance of Coalition Building in Ending Rural Unsheltered Homelessness

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Introductions

- Colorado Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC)
- Natalie Georgalas, she/her, BoS CoC Specialist
- Jeri Erickson, she/her, BoS CoC Manager
- Antonio Espinoza, Service Veteran, Executive Lived Experience Advisory Board Member



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Agenda

- Introduction of our topic
 - Why are we here?
 - What is coalition building
 - How does this relate to unsheltered homelessness
- Key Components of Successful Coalition Building
- Group discussion and activity
- Sharing out and wrapping up



What is Coalition Building and Why is it Important?

- A coalition is a group of individuals or organizations working together toward a common goal.
- Coalitions are proven to be more effective than individual work - why?
 - Conserving resources
 - Building trust and cooperation
 - Increased credibility
 - Resource sharing
 - Diversity in experience
- These are all critical pieces that can strengthen our work to end homelessness



Why Are We Here?

Before we jump into concepts surrounding this session - we want to talk about how coalition building looks in the real world and root into the realities of our work specifically in unsheltered homelessness.



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Key Components of Coalition Building



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Relationship Building

- Relationships are built at the speed of trust
- What does this actually look like in practice?
 - Showing up
 - Communication
 - Connecting as people
- This the foundation to successful coalitions and in our work to end homelessness particularly in rural communities



Community Engagement and Collaboration

- Building relationships and sustaining them leads to deeper and more authentic community engagement, which ultimately leads to collaboration.
- Collaboration is key to coalition building
 - Building inclusive and participatory systems
 - Bringing in diverse perspectives and experiences
 - Sustainable solutions and progress
- Bringing people together and creating the inclusive spaces and building trust along the way is success



Cultural Competency and Humility

- Culture is the behavior patterns, customs, and thoughts that influence the knowledge, beliefs, and values shared by members of a social group or society.
- Cultural competence is an understanding and learning of another culture's language, set of customs, beliefs, and patterns
- Culturally humility is the understanding that culture is not stagnant - there is always learning to be done, both internally and of others to understand the complex, intersectionality of culture



Cultural Competency and Humility

- Cultural humility in practice requires active listening and an understanding that:
 - Discomfort is okay
 - It is okay not to know
 - No one person is an expert in any culture but they are an expert in their own experience
 - It is good to ask. Focus on questions as a pathway to build connection.
 - Listen to understand rather than to respond
 - Be fully present in the conversation
 - Be prepared to not be welcomed or well-received



Understanding Power Dynamics and Power Sharing

- Broadly, power dynamics are referring to the balance of power between two or more people when they engage with each other. Depending on cultural and other relevant contexts, this can look very different.
- Power sharing centers communities, allowing them to decide for themselves what they need, how much they need, how they need to receive it, and how to define success.
- Giving power to the people and enabling community based decisions leads to sustainable and impactful coalitions

“Power sharing is lived, learned, and relational. It is not a science, and we cannot algorithm our way through the process. It is about relationships and trust.”



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Activity

- Take two minutes to write down the following:
- On the blue sticky note, an area of strength that you and/or your organization does really well related to one of the topics we just discussed.
- On the pink sticky note, an area of growth that you and/or your organization feel you could be doing better at related to one of the topics we just discussed.
- Once you are done, go and stick them each on the topics around the room.



Activity

- We are going to pair you (ideally) with someone who has a strength to match your growth and vice versa.
- You will have 10 minutes for a one on one conversation to discuss what you wrote down and what you can learn from each other. We will do this twice - so you will discuss your strengths and growths with a partner.



Wrap Up

- We will share these slides with you, which contain many resources to further your learning on what we discussed today.
- We encourage you to exchange contact information with the folks you discussed with today and follow up with each other after this.
- If there is someone else you would like to discuss with, take time now to exchange contact information or connect.
- Any questions?



Resources

- [Six lessons in building trust, bridging divisions, and changing minds](#)
- [How Coalition Building Promotes Community Engagement](#)
- [Cultural Humility 101](#)
- *The Purpose of Power - How We Come Together When We Fall Apart* By Alicia Garza
- [Kindle Project, Power to the People](#)
- [10 Things You Need to Build Clever Coalitions](#)
- [Strategies for Community Change and Improvement](#)

