

Tips on Building Partnerships: Coalition-Building Dos and Don'ts

Efforts to promote the vote can be amplified through partnerships with local and national groups who share NCJW's goal of ensuring broad participation in the electoral process. Coalitions unite a group of individuals and/or organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal. An election year provides an opportunity to seek out new partners. The effectiveness of your promote the vote efforts can go hand-in-hand with building trust and working relationships with organizations and individuals with whom you may not typically work.

Getting Started:

- ▶ Investigate whether there are existing nonpartisan coalitions working to promote and protect the vote. Don't reinvent the wheel!
- ▶ Contact interested 501 (c)(3) organizations to invite them to participate in your Promote the Vote, Protect the Vote activities.
- ▶ Follow up written invitations with personal phone calls.
- ▶ Build on connections you already have.
- ▶ Develop a plan with coalition members and implement, monitor, and adjust the plan together.

DO:

- ▶ **Use activities to build working relationships with other organizations.** Just make certain the effort is nonpartisan. Participating organizations and individuals cannot make any statements in support of or in opposition to any particular candidate or party, or participate in any other activity designed to reflect a preference or recommendation for any political candidate or party.
- ▶ **Use available resources.** Before creating something from scratch, check out the resources included and/or referenced in this guide or those available from other agencies or groups.
- ▶ **Be inclusive and participatory.** Work at making the coalition a group in which anyone in the community will feel welcome.
- ▶ **Acknowledge diversity among your members.** Your coalition may represent a diversity of opinion and types of members. Make sure to take everyone's opinion and restraints into account and to use diversity as a spur to discussion, rather than a source of division.
- ▶ **Communicate.** Open communication will assure that no one feels left out of the loop, and that everyone has the information necessary to make coalition efforts successful.
- ▶ **Set concrete, reachable goals.** Achieving reachable goals can help a coalition develop the strength and motivation to pursue and achieve longer-term goals.
- ▶ **Be realistic and keep your promises.** If you're not sure you can do it, don't say you will. If you say you will, be sure you do.

DON'T:

- ▶ **Work in partnership with parties, candidates, or other more political organizations such as 501(c)(4) advocacy organizations.** If working with a 501(c)(4) organization, or a 501(c)(3) organization that also has a 501(c)(4) component, be absolutely certain that the activity will be conducted in a nonpartisan fashion.
- ▶ **Reinvent the wheel.** One of the benefits of working in coalition is that you can share the resources of your partners. Save time and money by taking advantage of your partnerships.
- ▶ **Give the impression of partisanship.** Be careful not to allow your efforts to be timed in such a way as to appear to coincide with politically significant events in a particular candidate's campaign.