

# Convening a Bipartisan Coalition

Are you interested in building or broadening a coalition around child care and early learning in your community or state? Do you need to build support for specific goals or policies, and need to speak with a range of stakeholders, but don't know where to start? Below is a guide to get you started.

## IDENTIFYING THE GOALS

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The first step is identifying what you want to accomplish.

- What is the issue, policy, and outcome you are looking to address or influence?
- What is standing in the way of achieving this vision?
- What will your message be?

## IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE COALITION MEMBERS

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The second step is identifying the existing actors and their roles. Who is missing from the conversation but could be helpful to your efforts? It is important to get the widest range of individuals possible on board.

### **Policymakers and agency officials:**

- U.S. senators and representatives
- State senators, representatives, and delegates
- Governors and their policy staff
- Mayors, county officials, community leaders
- Members on relevant committees, caucuses
- Federal and state agency officials
- Family-service agency officials

### **Local stakeholders and organizations:**

- Faith leaders
- Business leaders
- Parents and parent groups
- Schools and child care providers
- Teachers and early educators
- Police, fire, and similar groups
- Court system, juvenile justice system, etc.
- Local investors or philanthropy

## Questions to consider while planning:

- Who in these lists are currently involved and active in this policy area? What are their roles?
- Who are opponents of your goals—and why are they opposed?
- What is the perspective of each official, organization, or stakeholder involved? Is it helpful?
- Who is the most influential voice in this policy area? How can they support your goals?
- Who is currently not involved and active in this policy area? For each, assess:
  - Could they be a helpful addition?
  - What would their role be?
  - Who will reach out to them to get them involved?

## ENSURING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE

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After identifying members of the coalition, establish a common understanding of the issue in preparation for any meetings or discussions.

- What is each member's baseline knowledge?
- What background materials would prepare stakeholders for the discussion?
- Have you given stakeholders enough time to review background materials before any convenings?
- Have you provided contact information and opportunities for members to discuss questions and concerns before the group discussion?

## CONVENING COALITION MEMBERS

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Finally, bring the coalition members together to discuss goals and to develop a shared vision and process for reaching such goals.

- What is our shared goal?
- What is a general timeline?
- Who can make our vision a reality, and who do we need to convince?
- How will we communicate our goals and vision to such individuals?
- Who will communicate it? When will they communicate it? In what format?
- What materials are necessary to support these communications?
- How can the coalition use individual member strengths to reach these individuals?
- What ongoing communication will the coalition have as these activities progress?
- How can the group stay flexible to changing circumstances while staying on track?