

Working Together

This section provides suggestions on how to engage others in political action and form coalitions. Some changes could be championed by an individual however some are easier to move forward with many voices. Once you have framed your issue and determined your goals, you have to decide if you will tackle it alone or by working in a group. Factors to consider when deciding include, the benefits and challenges to working in a group, the type of advocacy you are planning to engage in, the types of skills and resources needed to achieve your goals, and if the potential partners with have similar values and are invested in the proposed outcome.

Mobilizing Involvement - Where to Start

If you are not a member of RNAO, consider joining and becoming active in the association. Ask someone you know who has an interest or expertise in your RNAO Chapter (a provincial region outlined by RNAO that you are a part of based on where you work or live) or Interest Group (an RNAO group you can join based on a unique specialty or population) if they would be interested in working with you on your issue.

- ✓ Create a participant tree – you ask someone to participate and have that person ask someone else.
- ✓ Contact your Chapter President, Interest Group Chair, or Policy Executive Network Officer to discuss your issue and how to best approach members. Contact RNAO's membership department for their information.
- ✓ Raise the issue you would like to address at a meeting of your Chapter or Interest Group, and ask those in attendance for support.

Approaching people

- Face-to-face is the best way to ask people to participate. Newsletters and emails tend to be least effective.
- Be prepared to answer the question: “Why should a registered nurse, nurse practitioner or nursing student care about this initiative?”
- Recognize that the people you are talking to are busy, and present the different ways that they can be involved. Be clear about the level of commitment required.

Types of involvement

Each person will bring something different to the table – some will be able to commit more time to the project than others; some will enjoy speaking in public, while others will prefer to stay behind the scenes; and some will have links to another organization relevant to the issue, while others might just want to get involved. The more resources you have, the more comprehensive your efforts can be. However, if there is a particular skill that you think will be helpful in achieving your goals, you may wish to focus on looking for individuals who have experience in this specific area.

Building and Participating in Coalitions

What is coalition building?

A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity. Coalition building is the process by which these parties come together to form such an alliance. RNAO is a member of several coalitions, including

Campaign 2000, or historically the Elder Health Coalition and the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

What are the benefits of working in a coalition?

Working within a coalition is especially useful for groups who have limited access to resources, since members can pool information and expertise. Coalition building is the “primary mechanism through which disempowered parties can develop their power base and thereby better defend their interests” (Spangler, 2003).

Coalitions can create new opportunities for leadership. As more experienced leaders move forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups (Kendall, Muenchberger, Sunderland, Harris & Cowan, 2012). These new leadership opportunities will strengthen both the individual groups and the coalition as a whole.

Working as part of a coalition will increase the impact of each organization’s efforts. The activities of a coalition are also more likely to receive media attention, which raises the public profile of members’ efforts.

Building coalitions with collaborative foundations could result in long term partnerships and build capacity within you and/or your organization (Kendall et al., 2012).

What are some of the potential challenges encountered in a coalition?

Member groups will differ in resource accessibility and experience. Organizations that provide the coalition with a larger share of resources and leadership may become frustrated with other members who are unable to do so.

Similarly, individual organizations may not be recognized for their contribution to the coalition’s work. Members who are particularly active in their coalition may feel that they deserve more credit than they are given.

Negotiating tactics can be a lengthy and difficult process, as each group brings differing backgrounds, viewpoints and interests to the table. Coalition members must be able to respect each other’s differences and work together to accomplish their common goals.



As an RNAO member, you, your Chapter, or Interest Group may wish to form a coalition with other individuals and/or organizations when you perceive that it may be of mutual benefit to work together in order to accomplish a common goal or objective. For example, a strategic alliance may be formed between an elder abuse prevention organization and groups working on social determinants of health issues such as addressing poverty or affordable housing.

To build or not to build?

The first step in building a coalition is to assess whether similar individuals or groups already exist in your community. If the issue is broad there may be other organizations interested in joining a coalition (Summers, 2012). While they may not deal with your specific issue, some organizations may have very similar messages and objectives.

Ask yourself:

- Should your group join an existing coalition or build their own?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of joining an existing coalition?

For more information on coalition building, contact RNAO's Health and Nursing Policy department. A staff directory is available for members through my RNAO, or you can send an email through the Contact Us page (<http://RNAO.ca/contact>) and specify which department you would like it directed to.

Who should I build with?

When deciding which individuals and organizations to partner with consider the following four questions (Kendall et al., 2012):

1. What level are you planning to advocate on?
 - individual, organizational, program, etc
2. What types of capacity or skills do you need to assemble?
 - strategic planning, governing, operational, increasing community readiness
3. What stage of advocacy are you in?
 - scanning the environment, engaging stakeholders, sharing key messages, developing action plans
4. What type of strategy is best aligned with your advocacy work?
 - top down, bottom up, relationship building, changing a culture

Once you know what needs are required to move on your political issue you will be better prepared to seek out partners that align with those needs.



Be cautious of joining groups or coalitions that use tactics or have values that go against RNAO's mission or ENDS.

Refer to RNAO's Mission Statement for an outline of the organization's values and ENDS:
<http://RNAO.ca/about/mission>

Tips for building successful coalitions:


- Be a strong leader that facilitates the collaborative process.
- Set aside time for team building at the outset of your partnership.
- Ensure that every voice is heard and everyone has an active role.
- Have realistic expectations and shared objectives.
- Keep the best interests of everyone involved at the forefront.

(Tomajan, 2012)



Example: Coalition Work

In 2007, the Ontario government enacted a regulation requiring all remaining coal-fired electricity generation in the province to end by December 31, 2014. During the 2011 provincial election, this regulation was further supported with all the major political parties agreeing to phase out coal-fired electricity generation. Despite the regulatory strides, RNAO remained passionate about seeing coal-fired electricity generation come to an end. With that goal in mind, RNAO joined the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), the Lung Association, Asthma Society and the Ontario Clean Air Alliance (OCAA) to advocate for an immediate ban to coal burning instead of waiting until 2014.




Doctors and Nurses Support Green Energy

We must support the phase-out of coal-fired power.

In 2010, our coal plants caused over 150,000 illnesses, including asthma attacks, and over 300 deaths. They're the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario – the equivalent of several million cars.


Ontario doctors, nurses, and other health professionals support energy conservation combined with wind and solar power – to help us move away from coal.

Ask your candidates where they stand on green energy and closing our coal plants.




ONTARIO COLLEGE OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS


Canadian Association of
Physicians
for the
Environment




PHYSICIANS FOR GLOBAL SURVIVAL
MÉDECINS POUR LA SURVIE MONDIALE



Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario



Asthma Society of Canada



THE LUNG ASSOCIATION™
When you can't breathe, nothing else matters.™

General Resources - Working Together

For information on how to Build Collaborative Relationships refer to:
Beyond Intractability. (2012). Core Knowledge Overviews. Retrieved:
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/library/coreknowledge-alpha>

The Community Toolbox (University of Kansas)
<http://ctb.ku.edu/>

Wisconsin Clearinghouse of Prevention Resources – Coalition Building
<http://wch.uhs.wisc.edu/01-Prevention/01-Prev-Coalition.html>

References - Working Together

Kendall, E. Muenchberger, H., Sunderland, N., Harris, M., Cowan, D. (2012). *Collaborative capacity building in complex community-based health partnerships: A model for translating knowledge into action*. Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 18(5), E1-E13.

Spangler, B. (2003). *Coalition building*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/coalition-building>

Summers, L. (2012). *Finding the path to success in state-level APRN advocacy*. American Nurse, 44 (2), 10.

Tomajan, K. (2012). *Advocating for Nurses and Nursing*. *Advocating for Nurses and Nursing*. The Online Journal of Issues of Nursing, 17(1), Manuscript 4.

Working Together Work Sheet

Issue

What level you are planning to advocate on?

What types of skills do you need?

What stage of advocacy are you in?

What type of strategy are you using?

Should a coalition be built?

Advantages to Building a Coalition	Disadvantages to Building a Coalition

Who are potential partners to build with?

Partner	Values/Agenda	Decision (Y/N)