



**An Equation to Coalition Success:  
Findings from the 2005-2013 Annual Survey of Coalitions**

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**Introduction:** Coalitions work by mobilizing diverse sectors of the community and creating comprehensive strategies that foster effective programs, policies and practices to create population-level reductions in substance abuse prevention. Since population-level outcomes are difficult to achieve, there is a need to look at intermediate outcomes or community and systems change (i.e. new or modified policies and practices) as evidence of coalition success. These intermediate outcomes change the environment of the whole community, which triggers changes in population-level outcomes. It is important to understand how community coalitions become change agents that are implementing environmental changes. However, there is limited research on how a coalition's capacity influences their ability to implement environmental strategies. This study will examine how elements of a coalition's organizational capacity impact a coalition's ability to implement environmental strategies to create community change.

**Methods:** Quantitative analysis was completed using CADCA's 2013 Annual Survey of Coalitions. 651 coalitions completed the 84-question survey, yielding a response rate of 31.7%. Using SPSS we identified the relationships between coalitions' capacity, environmental strategies, partner involvement, and creation of new policies and practices. Partner involvement was measured using a Collaboration Score that accounted for both the number of partners involved with the coalition and the level of involvement for each partner. Finally, we measured how many coalitions were successful in creating a new policy and, if so, how many new policies.

**Results:** Just over half (53.1%) of total respondents reported having created a new policy within the last 12 months. Using Coalition Score values, the average coalition is engaged with 25.55 organizations with an average depth of 3.24. Binomial logistic regression outputs revealed a significant relationship between capacity and new policies, yet with only 5% of the outcome variance explained. Collaboration Score was also significantly correlated with new policy, but with an explained variation of only 7%. Prediction levels were higher when considering the use of the four environmental strategies. Ordinal regressions showed that up to 80% of the variance of strategy engagement is explained by Collaboration Score. Those strategies, in turn, explained 28% of the variance in new policy construction.

**Conclusions:** The likelihood of coalition success is increased as the quantity and quality of coalition collaborators increases. Greater cooperation leads to strategies which produce positive outcomes. Coalitions which hope to achieve lower substance abuse rates will find greater success by expanding the number of collaborators and deepening their involvement with them.