



Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

Louisiana Covering Kids & Families Project

Building and Sustaining Effective Community Collaboration Report

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Introduction

The Louisiana Covering Kids & Families (CKF) Project was developed to increase awareness of and provide enrollment assistance into LaCHIP. The community-based outreach and education project helps the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) to reduce the number of uninsured children by increasing the number of eligible children enrolled in LaCHIP. A key component of the project is to engage and mobilize the local communities through the development of regional coalitions to promote LaCHIP, perform outreach to locate potentially eligible families and provide enrollment assistance. Coalition building is an important part of engaging communities, and when adequately supported, coalitions can be useful vehicles for mobilizing communities. A coalition is the coming together of people and organizations to influence outcomes related to a specific problem or set of problems (Cohen, Baer and Satterwhite). The synergism of joint action allows a coalition to accomplish a broader array of goals than could the participants acting on their own (Rowitz).

The DHH engaged the Southern Institute on Children and Families over the past two state fiscal years to provide consultation and technical assistance to assist the Louisiana Covering Kids & Families (CKF) regional contractors in organizing and building community coalitions to support the CKF Project goals.

Background

The DHH created the CKF Coalition project to continue the efforts initiated under a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation nationally funded project. DHH worked closely with the RWJF funded Louisiana *Covering Kids Initiative* and *Covering Kids & Families* projects to enroll eligible children in LaCHIP over a seven-year period. After the RWJF initiative ended in 2007, DHH sustained and expanded the Louisiana CKF Project from the original four regional locations to 11 regions, encompassing all parish communities in the state to conduct outreach initiatives to enroll eligible children in Louisiana's public health coverage programs. DHH funds lead agencies, which are called "contractors." The contractors are responsible for engaging the communities in developing the regional coalitions and serve as staff support for the coalitions.

For the past two state fiscal years, DHH has offered consultation and technical assistance for the CKF Project through a contract with the Southern Institute, national experts on coalitions, community collaboration and promising practices for CHIP and Medicaid outreach. The objectives of the consultation and technical assistance included engaging and mobilizing community leaders and volunteers, establishing coalition infrastructure, and providing expertise on promising practices for outreach and enrolling eligible children and families in LaCHIP.

Unique approaches were tailored to meet the needs of the newly formed regional coalitions as well as support existing coalitions. Periodic onsite workshop sessions were conducted for the 11 lead contractor project coordinators, regional coalition leaders and DHH staff. Follow-up group and individual technical assistance conference calls were held to measure progress toward achievement of the work plan objectives and coalition development. Practical solutions to obstacles also were provided during these conference calls. Examples of obstacles the project

coordinators faced included competing priorities in the communities, limited resources, multiple communities within the parishes, turf issues and travel challenges.

The Southern Institute utilized multiple tools they developed to facilitate the learning process and provide technical assistance. The tools included Asset Mapping, Gap Analysis, Coalition Infrastructure Framework, Action Planning, Membership Assessment, Measuring Effectiveness, Key Elements for Sustainability and the Online Coalition Assessment.

One project coordinator shared the following feedback about the workshop sessions:

"I have attended other workshops on coalitions but these workshops have been the most useful of all."

Consultation Session Schedules and Curricula

Session One – March 25-26, 2008	
<p><i>Objectives for New Coalitions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding coalition functions and infrastructure ▪ Engaging community stakeholders and resources ▪ Team building among coalition members and peers ▪ Setting SMART, measurable objectives 	<p><i>Learning Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Infrastructure development ▪ Asset mapping and gap analysis ▪ Developing SMART objectives ▪ Measuring effectiveness and efficiency
Session Two – March 27-28, 2008	
<p><i>Objectives for Existing Coalitions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluating coalition functions and infrastructure ▪ Assessing membership and community support ▪ Team building among coalition members and peers ▪ Setting SMART, measurable objectives 	<p><i>Learning Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key elements for sustainability assessment ▪ Asset mapping and gap analysis ▪ Developing SMART objectives ▪ Measuring Effectiveness and Efficiency
Session Three – May 13-14, 2008	
<p><i>Objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building coalition infrastructure framework ▪ Engaging members and community support ▪ Building team support among coalition peers ▪ Setting SMART, measurable objectives for coalitions 	<p><i>Learning Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessing and enhancing membership ▪ Developing coalition infrastructure ▪ Measuring effectiveness and efficiency ▪ Developing SMART objectives

Session Four – January 21-22, 2009

Objectives

- Assess progress in the development of regional coalition infrastructure
- Measure progress and impact of regional coalition outreach objectives
- Measure extent of community engagement – community leaders, volunteers and resources
- Enhance team building among coalition members and peers

Learning Activities

- Building Infrastructure – guidelines, roles and responsibilities
- Community engagement – assessment mapping and gap analysis
- Effective coalitions – external and internal factors
- Public awareness – writing success stories
- Measuring efficiency and effectiveness
- Developing impact statements

Session Five – April 22-23, 2009

Objectives

- Assess progress in the development of regional coalition infrastructure
- Measure extent of community engagement – community leaders, volunteers and resources
- Identify areas for improvement for regional coalitions
- Measure progress and impact of work plan objectives
- Develop coalition building and outreach work plan objectives for program year 2010

Learning Activities

- Online coalition assessment data analysis
- Coalition improvements and priorities
- Outreach activity results and impact
- Work plan development
- Capacity building – CHIPRA

Community Collaboration

A coalition is often described as a vehicle for structured, purposeful interaction among a set of organizations, groups and individuals. The main roles of community coalitions are to serve as a catalyst for organizing the community around a cause or issue, a mechanism to bring together organizations to take on issues that are beyond the scope of any single entity and a catalyst for organizing the community around goals or issues significant to the community. Major functions of a coalition include:

- Mobilizing and advocating for change
- Coordinating, planning and taking action
- Pooling resources and expertise
- Establishing community investment
- Sharing responsibility, accountability and recognition
- Minimizing duplication of efforts

Transitioning from a single agency-led organization to a community-driven coalition can be challenging. The impetus for this transition is building trust and credibility in the community and leveraging community investment. The CKF Project leaders recognize the importance of raising community awareness of their coalitions to garner support and commitment of resources

to increase their capacity and sustain their coalitions. They also recognize the importance of accommodating the communities' uniqueness such as population diversity, geographic area, environment and other relevant factors. The regional CKF contractors have made significant strides in developing their local, individualized coalitions by focusing on expanding and diversifying membership engagement, establishing an infrastructure, developing the leadership, and formulating the meeting framework. For the majority of coalition participants, most of whom had little or no prior exposure to coalitions, collaboration is a new experience. As one participant stated:

"By being a new contractor, this workshop enabled me to know the exact meaning of a coalition."

In the initial workshop session, the participants collaborated in creating the mission, purpose and vision statements for the regional CKF coalitions:

Mission – Increase awareness of LaCHIP through education and advocacy while building community partnerships.

Purpose – Extending a helping hand and empowering families and individuals by providing access to healthcare.

Vision – Through collaborative efforts promote education and family access to comprehensive healthcare so every child in Louisiana is insured.

The Asset Mapping activity was used by the project coordinators and coalition representatives in assessing key stakeholders and organizations and other resources such as knowledge and expertise, community networks and in-kind support already engaged with the coalition. This assessment activity led to the Gap Analysis process where the participants identified stakeholders and community organizations that the coalition was lacking. The process was completed by developing plans for coalition member recruitment to fill the identified gaps. Stakeholders identified and recruited include faith-based entities, schools, advocates, Medicaid and other state and local government agencies, service providers, medical providers, elected officials, judicial services, law enforcement, businesses, media entities, foundations, and colleges/universities. Asset Mapping and Gap Analysis activities should be conducted periodically to assess a coalition's membership representation and accessible resources. The following is a quote from one of the participating coalition members:

"This (Asset Mapping) enables us to see what members we didn't have and for me to talk to these (potential) members so they can be a part of our coalition team."

Coalition Infrastructure

Some form of structure or governance is necessary for a coalition to be effective and sustainable. However, there is no one structure that fits all. Structure gives members clear guidelines by which the organization operates, distributes the work and responsibilities, binds members together, and gives identity to the members and to the coalition itself. The infrastructure or framework is decided internally usually by the leadership or steering committee with the membership's approval. Infrastructure design, roles and responsibilities, meeting framework, leadership development and succession plans are essential components of coalitions.

Using the Southern Institute’s Coalition Role and Responsibility tool, the CKF Project participants outlined the framework and identified clear roles and responsibilities of the lead fiscal organization, leadership or steering committee, sub-committees and general members. Community investment and ownership of a coalition is strengthened by an infrastructure that is community-driven where the coalition is chaired by a community stakeholder and the planning and decision-making involves the members. As a result of the workshop experience and technical assistance the lead agencies came to realize the value of a community-led coalition as opposed to an agency-led coalition and are working to make the transition. The following is a quote from one of the coalition member participants:

"I felt it (Coalition Infrastructure Model) was very useful in determining the roles each and every one of us plays as a member of the coalitions. It is so easy to think that one can do it all, but why when we have so many helping hands."

Participants were encouraged to finalize their infrastructure designs with their coalition’s leaders and members. For all coalitions there are multiple factors – internal and external – that influence their structures and thereby their effectiveness:

Internal Factors

- Coalition structure and governance
 - Mission and purpose
 - Membership
 - Organizational structure
 - Leadership
 - Resource support
- Coalition strategy
 - Vision
 - Goals and objectives
 - Plans and priorities
- Coalition processes
 - Leadership
 - Decision-making
 - Conflict management
 - Communication

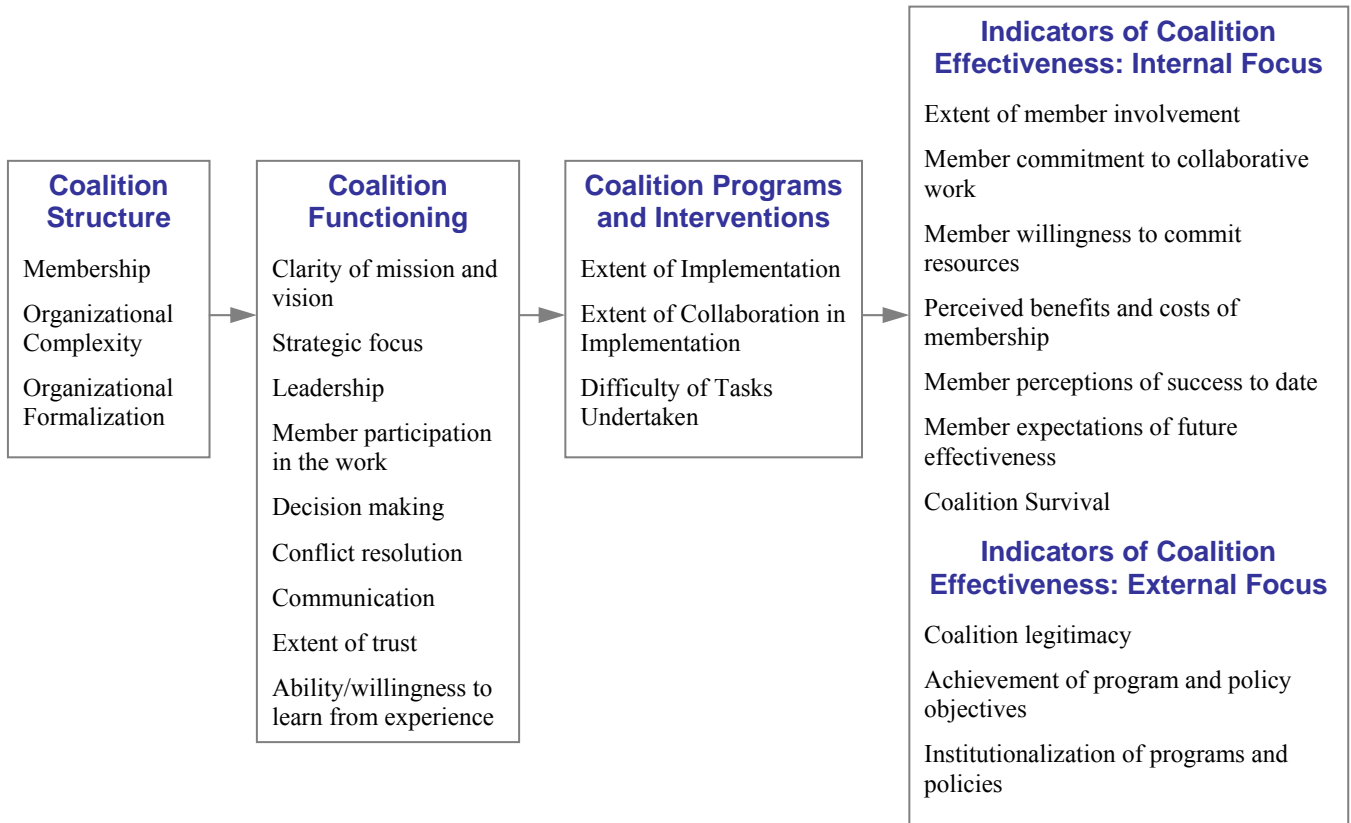
External Factors

- Community support
 - Level and extent of support
 - Priority in community or competing priorities
- History of community collaboration – positive versus negative
- Geography and social/economic environment
- Cultural diversity
- Resources – abundance versus scarcity

Critical factors influencing a coalition’s effectiveness, both within a coalition and between a coalition and its community, are communication and trust. A conceptual framework for coalitions is shown here in the Factors Influencing Coalition Effectiveness model.

Factors Influencing Coalition Effectiveness

A Conceptual Framework



Coalition Action Plans

Developing and implementing action plans should involve the coalition members, even though the project contractors are ultimately responsible for submitting action plans and progress reports to DHH. Well-designed action plans serve as a roadmap for a coalition to focus its efforts, track progress of its activities and measure the outcomes of the objectives. The Southern Institute utilized the SMART tool to assist the coalitions in developing objectives that can be tracked and measured for results. SMART is an acronym of components to include in writing effective objectives: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime Bound and is described in the following figure.

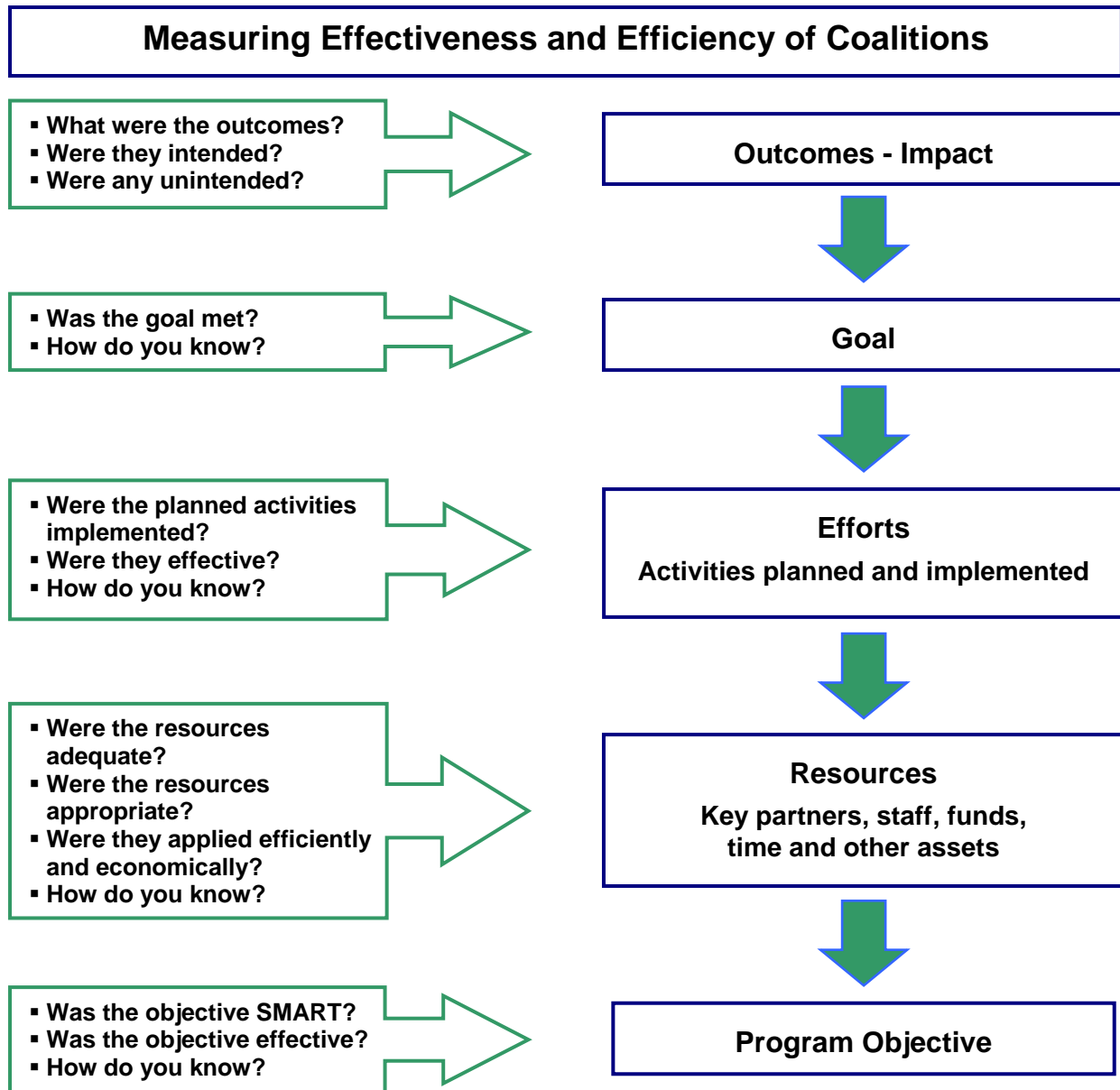
Developing SMART Objectives
Are Your Objectives SMART?

SMART is an acronym to help in the writing of objectives.

<u>Specific</u>	<u>M</u> measurable	<u>A</u> ttainable	<u>R</u> elevant	<u>T</u> ime Bound
Objectives should be clearly expressed and specify what they need to achieve	You should be able to measure whether or not you are meeting objectives	Achievable and realistic, given the resources, environment and timeframe	Extent to which the objective is consistent - results oriented	Target dates to measure progress and achieve the objective
<u>Specific</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the action? Is the objective described with action verbs? ▪ Why is this important to do? ▪ Who is going to do what? Who is to be involved? ▪ When does this need to be completed? ▪ How are we going to do this? 			
<u>M</u> measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the measurement source identified? ▪ Can these measurements be obtained? ▪ How will you know the change has occurred? ▪ Is the intended outcome clear? ▪ Will the objective lead to the desired results? ▪ Are there interim measures to track the progress along the way? ▪ Is the objective qualitative – who, what, when, where, why and how? ▪ Is the objective quantitative – how many, how often and how much? 			
<u>A</u> ttainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will you be able to get it done in the proposed timeframe? ▪ Are the limitations and constraints understood? ▪ Can this be accomplished with the resources available? ▪ Is this possible? 			
<u>R</u> elevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will the objective lead to the desired results? ▪ Are the resources available, accessible and appropriate to achieve the objective? ▪ Will the resources be used appropriately and economically? ▪ Is the objective a priority for the coalition and its members? 			
<u>T</u> ime Bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When do we expect to accomplish/complete the objective? ▪ When will the objective be accomplished? ▪ Is there a stated deadline? ▪ Is the deadline achievable and realistic? ▪ Is the timeframe agreed upon by the members? 			

To garner support and engagement of the action plan the coalition membership should be fully engaged in setting the objectives, strategies, activities and responsibilities for the plans. The participants learned of ways to check the progress and measure the effectiveness of their work plan objectives and activities, using the Southern Institute’s Measuring Effectiveness and Efficiency of Objectives tool (see figure below). As one participant stated:

"This (Measuring Effectiveness and Efficiency) was useful in determining your times and dates and to work together with each coalition member to find out what is most important for the coalition."



Challenges and Solutions

A number of barriers to collaboration have been identified in literature and by practitioners in the field. One of the most challenging barriers identified by The Commonwealth Fund is the issue of control – who owns the project. Other common barriers are competitiveness, lack of mutual compelling interest, lack of accountability and lack of skill in coordinating. Typical obstacles to community engagement that have been identified by the project coordinators include competing priorities, unfavorable history of previous collaboration, limited resources (particularly time and human capital), geographic expanse, territorial issues, retaining members and maintaining momentum. Individualized technical assistance was provided to the coalitions to resolve or minimize these obstacles. For instance, in some rural regions there are several smaller, local communities that prefer to focus on their own community priorities and interests rather than be a part of a larger, more diverse group. Transportation also is a challenge in the more remote, rural areas. To address these barriers, the coordinators are developing a sub-coalition group structure in multiple communities to reduce travel barriers, minimize territorial issues and address efforts locally. The members of the sub-coalition groups join together for the inclusive regional coalition meetings.

Another strategy for some regions has been to form a collaborative partnership with another area coalition that shares a focus on LaCHIP outreach and enrollment. This strategy helps reduce duplication of resources and competitiveness of priorities and membership and can build capacity for the CKF Project goals. The project coordinators are encouraged to discuss barriers that arise and identify possible solutions with their peers and DHH staff. Lessons learned and promising strategies should be documented and shared with all who are involved in the project.

Areas for Improvement (Members' Priorities)

In March 2009 all members of the 11 regional coalitions were invited to participate in an assessment of their coalition's development, effectiveness and sustainability. Members were asked to complete the Southern Institute's Online Coalition Assessment, providing their individual perspective on the following areas:

- Leadership development and succession planning
- Infrastructure development, including the vision and purpose
- Membership development, including key stakeholder engagement
- Community support of the coalition's purpose and goals

The respondents identified their perceived coalition's strengths, challenges, areas for improvement, priorities and technical assistance needs. The assessment results provided useful information to guide the coalitions' structure development, priority planning, focus and sustainability planning. The Southern Institute presented its summary reports along with recommendations for each coalition at the April 2009 workshop session. The project coordinators were encouraged to share the information with their coalition members, conduct follow-up discussions on the assessment report findings and recommendations, and then develop action plan steps and timelines for the priority areas of development. The following highlight the common strengths, areas for development and technical assistance priorities for the coalitions as identified by the assessment respondents.

Strengths

- Collaborative spirit
- Collaborative partnerships with local government agencies
- Knowledgeable members with expertise
- Members from key agencies
- Valuable resource for knowledge and information
- Continued growth of coalitions
- Networking, forming partnerships, building capacity

Areas for Development

- Leadership and structure development
- Improving communications
- Enrollment and renewal LaCHIP data
- Membership recruitment
- Key community leaders/organizations engagement
- Resources to support coalition

Technical Assistance Priorities

- Membership development
- Garnering community support
- Data identification, collection and analysis
- Grant writing

Coalition Sustainability

The future success of a coalition lies within its plans for sustainability. Each regional coalition should continue to focus on garnering community support, building capacity in membership and resources, developing the infrastructure, building leadership and leadership succession and demonstrating results. The Southern Institute guided the participants on the Key Elements for Sustainability that should to be addressed by their coalitions as described in the following figure.

Key Elements for Sustaining Coalitions

Research has found several key elements that sustained coalitions have in common and that have helped promote their longevity. Sustainability is not just about funding; it includes ensuring community support and resources by establishing and maintaining partnerships that can collaborate effectively toward the coalition's efforts over the long term.

Key Elements for Sustaining Coalitions and Their Efforts

- **Leadership**
The coalition leaders take responsibility for setting the public agenda for change, brokering connections among key stakeholders and resources and leveraging additional or new resources. A process should be in place for fostering new leadership.
- **Infrastructure**
The coalition has a structure that maintains its focus and supports its work. Structure varies among coalitions, but strong coalitions usually include a chair or co-chair, a steering or executive committee, administrative support and work or ad hoc committees.

- **Involvement of Key Stakeholders**
 The coalition includes key stakeholders who are well-positioned to assist in addressing the coalition's goals and strategies. Key stakeholders can include state officials, program managers from the state and local lead agencies, schools, providers, businesses and faith groups. Coalitions also should include representatives from the target populations so coalitions will be informed about problems and barriers to the solutions. All partners should be engaged in and contributing toward the coalition efforts. By working together with partner organizations, coalitions can build capacity, raise public awareness and avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Focus on Coalition Goals and Strategies**
 The coalition enlists all of its members to work toward the goal of reducing the number of uninsured, eligible children and adults. With this focus, the coalition can become more effective in achieving community support and funding.
- **Demonstrated Results**
 The coalition is results-oriented and has documented outcomes for its goals and objectives. Coalitions encourage and maintain participation of key stakeholders by effectively addressing their goals and objectives.
- **Community Awareness**
 The coalition gathers ongoing feedback from the community to validate the coalition's objectives and priorities.
- **Comprehensive Coalition Planning**
 The coalition has a comprehensive plan that builds coalition sustainability and includes short-term and long-term goals, evaluation and data collection, communications, training and technical assistance, administrative support, fundraising and other resources.
- **Diversified Funding**
 The coalition strategic plan includes fundraising activities, which can lead to a greater capacity and further increase the chances for sustainability. Coalitions can increase their capacity and their chances for sustainability with diversified funding streams, such as government, private foundations, businesses and in-kind donations.

Recommendations

Current stages of development and structure among the 11 coalitions vary, but the regional coalitions are continuing their progress in establishing the infrastructure, leadership, meeting schedules, communications and engaging stakeholders. Coalition building is a continuous effort to help organizations transform into an effective, sustainable community-based organization that has garnered trust and credibility in the community. The participants have been very receptive to the Southern Institute's consultation and technical assistance and could benefit from additional technical assistance as the CKF Coalitions work to advance the development and sustainability of the community coalitions. The Southern Institute recommends the implementation of the following activities for the coalitions:

- Evaluate the development of the coalition's infrastructure and engage the coalition to plan action steps to formalize the coalition's identity, structure, leadership and responsibilities of the leadership team, subcommittees, members and lead agency.
- Conduct an annual asset mapping process to identify the current constituency groups and resources and conduct a gap analysis to identify potential community partners and resources to recruit. Develop a process for identifying and recruiting members.

- Develop a one-page fact sheet to promote the coalition’s mission, purpose, goals, accomplishments and priority areas. Include a list of opportunities for members to contribute to meeting the goals.
- Communicate membership expectations, roles, opportunities and associated benefits.
- Examine the leadership and structure to determine opportunities to actively engage coalition members. Create and promote opportunities to allow more members to become engaged in leadership roles, such as leading a specific task, activity or committee.
- Plan for leadership succession to strengthen and sustain effective leadership.
- Promote the work and accomplishments of the coalition through partner newsletters and Web sites, local newspapers and other media.
- Celebrate accomplishments by recognizing members’ efforts and community champions.
- Develop a sustainability plan and consider options for soliciting additional resources.

Summary

The CKF Project contractors have made significant progress in working through challenging obstacles to engage and mobilize communities in their parishes. It is apparent that collaboration is valued among the project contractors. Evolution of this paradigm shift – transitioning from a lead agency-driven to a community collaborative-driven initiative is demonstrated by the project leads’ application of the knowledge and strategies gained from workshops. There is a strong commitment among the contractors and DHH in continuing the development of community-driven coalitions invested in the CKF Project goals to increase awareness of LaCHIP through education and advocacy, assist in the LaCHIP application process for eligible children, and ultimately reduce the percent of uninsured, eligible children in Louisiana. Louisiana's CKF Project for engaging and mobilizing communities by using regional coalitions supported with extensive consultation and technical assistance is a model that other states could adopt in support of their CHIP and Medicaid outreach and enrollment efforts.