

# Strengthening Your Impact through Collaboration

Collaborating with other individuals or groups to effect change not only increases your strength in numbers, influence, and resources, but also brings the unique assets of multiple people together to aid in creative problem-solving and shared purpose. Simply put: the more people you can involve, the bigger your potential impact.

## Be Strategic

Consider these possible benefits as you decide whether to collaborate, and with whom:

- **Widening your reach.** You can boost attendance at events, amplify publicity around your activities, and bring in diverse voices to strengthen your message.
- **Pursuing bigger goals.** Different interpretations, experiences, and expertise can contribute to a more comprehensive approach. Additional volunteers, relationships, funding, and ideas make ambitious goals more realistic.
- **Build credibility.** Different communities with the same concerns and message add credibility and show solidarity. Bringing together your connections builds a positive reputation and political clout.
- **Creating community.** Especially in a challenging political climate, having a shared space to discuss issues can revitalize everyone involved and allow for an exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.

Common activities for collaboration include: pooling resources, hosting a public event, attracting press coverage, writing or sponsoring a public statement, working on a research project or educational materials, coordinating joint actions (e.g., letters, meetings), or sharing news, intelligence, and best practices.

There is a strong ethical and strategic value in working with others and ensuring that your efforts support relevant work of the local communities most affected by attacks on science-based safeguards, including those communities facing disproportionate health and environment hazards. The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) encourages you to do your homework on local environmental justice or public health equity-based groups in your area as you consider organizing activities or events to defend science-based safeguards.

## Scout for Strengths

Think about what resources or skills you need to ensure the collaboration maximizes impact. They may reside in any of three key areas:

### WITHIN YOUR PERSONAL NETWORK AND AFFILIATIONS

- *Technology or computer skills* to help with the creation of websites and online event invites, digital advertising and social media promotion, and audio/visual needs at events



Collaboration brings the unique assets of multiple people together to aid in creative problem-solving and shared purpose.

- *Design or writing skills* to help write a press release or article, create a flyer or fact sheet, etc.
- *Media contacts* that can help garner newspaper, radio, television, or online coverage
- *Influential connections* such as business executives, government officials, professional groups, or relevant societies/associations/organizations that can promote and add clout to your work

***It's important to be clear on the "what, when, where, who, and how" of partnerships.***

#### WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

- *Local institutions*, whether religious or cultural, women's groups, or chapters of national organizations, may offer useful perspectives and assets
- *Popular venues* for an event can help garner added attention (keep in mind your target population and ultimate goal when deciding your locale)
- *Local businesses* can be a source for donations, political clout, and publicity
- *Community websites* make publicity and outreach quick and easy

#### WITHIN YOUR ACADEMIC INSTITUTION (IF APPLICABLE)

- *Faculty members, visiting or guest professors, and affiliated institutes or associations* willing to act as sponsors or co-organizers can contribute to a well-rounded, well-funded, and well-attended activity; a letter, phone call, or appointment may be all that's needed to make the connection
- *Campus-based media outlets* can help you reach out to the academic community for education or publicity
- *Small grants* may be available to help fund your activity

## Stay Positive

**Come to an explicit agreement on the activity and outcome.** Communication is key to a smooth and successful collaboration. It's important to be clear on the "what, when, where, who, and how" of the partnership.

**Choose unifying issues.** The most effective collaborations come together in response to an issue that reflects the values all of the partners share. Make sure the development of group goals is a joint process, rather than one or two group representatives deciding on the goals and then inviting others to join.

**Understand and respect each partner's self-interest and internal processes.** There must be a balance between the goals and needs of the collaboration and those of the individual groups/people, as well as a respect for their unique systems and policies. Make sure to take everyone's opinions and constraints into account and consider your partners' diversity as a source of rich discussion, rather than a source of division.

**Structure decisionmaking and communication carefully.**

Finding consensus is important when making decisions in partnerships, and that requires listening and discussion. Make sure the lines of communication within your collaboration are inclusive and clearly understood.

**Distribute credit fairly.** Each partner will have something different to offer—volunteers, meeting space, funding, copying, publicity, leafleting, passing resolutions, or other resources—but they all contribute to the overall success of your collaboration, so show your appreciation to each one.

**Celebrate and evaluate together.** When debriefing after the collaboration, ask yourselves: Did you achieve your goals? What lessons might you take away from this experience? Would you collaborate on another project? And be sure to get together to celebrate whatever accomplishments you had.

## Learn More

If you have any questions about partnerships or want to learn about the UCS Science Network's scientific partners, email [ScienceNetwork@ucsusa.org](mailto:ScienceNetwork@ucsusa.org). And for more information on how to foster effective collaborations with community groups, visit [www.ucsusa.org/scientistsandcommunities](http://www.ucsusa.org/scientistsandcommunities).