We make the invisible visible.

The Institute for Coalition Building takes the invisible process of community collaboration and makes it visible and concrete by creating a common language and a set of shared practices for community leaders. We study the ingredients and the structure of the coalition building process to create the frameworks and tools that form the underlying foundation of the practice.
ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

“Architecture is something you can see. You can’t see a spirit or a temperament or a character, though, and there’s an invisible part of this community that I’m very proud of because, in a democracy, I think that the process is more important than the product.”
—J. IRWIN MILLER, 1986

OUR WORK: MAKING THE PROCESS VISIBLE
At the Institute for Coalition Building, we take the invisible process of community collaboration and we make it visible and concrete by creating a common language and a set of shared practices for community leaders.

Collaboration is more than just a spirit. It’s a process. This is where the art of building coalitions comes in. Coalition building is the practice of bringing together a diverse collective of stakeholder organizations to solve a community’s grand challenges. It is the work we do. We study the ingredients and the structure of the coalition building process to create the frameworks and tools that form the underlying foundation of the practice. We then teach and share the practices broadly with other communities so we, in turn, learn how to further improve the process itself.

THE PROCESS OF COALITION BUILDING
With coalitions, the process is the product. Many times community collaborations fail simply because there is no agreed upon process for working together. Without a process, communities tend to place a few smart people in a room with a flip chart and hope that a creative miracle somehow occurs.

There is a better way. The coalition building process is based on the idea that relationships among stakeholders in successful community collaborations form through recognizable and recurring patterns of interaction. The process can then be mapped out and replicated. The process has its roots in complex adaptive systems, sociology, continuous improvement methodologies, change management, stakeholder leadership practice and design thinking.

A coalition is formed when people realize that no one organization, however well managed and funded, can single-handedly create lasting large-scale change when dealing with complex problems. Addressing the challenge requires shared learning on the part of the organizations involved in the problem who must change their own behavior to create an effective solution. The word coalition, in fact, derives from the French word meaning “the growing together of parts.”

HOW WE WORK
The Institute is not a consulting firm. We don’t write reports espousing “expert” opinion. Instead, we are pragmatic practitioners who teach and share the principles of community and regional collaboration. Our collaborative approach is encapsulated in our motto: “Start small. Think big. Aim high.”

We seek long-term relationships with all of the communities we serve. And we adhere to and promote a philosophy of stewardship which is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of a community by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us.

OUR SERVICES
We help communities build coalitions in two ways. First, we create the next-generation of community coalition facilitators through our “community of practice”—a year-long, immersive training, coaching, and networking experience.

Second, we facilitate the growth of coalitions by walking communities “once around the process circle.” This service includes a collection of leadership development workshops, guidance from experienced fellows, and facilitated support services delivered during the critical early formation and emerging growth stages of a community coalition.

WHO WE SERVE
The Institute serves organizations whose success is deeply interconnected with the flourishing of their communities including foundations, educational institutions, community governments, corporations, and community development organizations.

The Institute is managed by the Community Education Coalition of Columbus, Indiana. Formed in 1997, the Coalition is a nationally recognized partnership of education, business, and community leaders focused on aligning and integrating the region’s community learning system with economic growth and a high quality of life.

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