

Coalition Organizing Principles

To advance our mission to build power across the intersections of geography, race, culture, and issues in the Twin Cities region to eliminate systems of oppression and advance our collective liberation, *the Alliance convenes and works in coalition*. Recognizing the role and impact of coalitions in major policy and organizing wins, we believe that no single organization has the capacity to create the level of systems and policy change necessary to deliver racial justice to our communities. We also know that collaboration among organizations requires great intentionality and resources. *We do this work with the following principles.*

Rejecting silos

Among coalition organizations, we hold space for and work across areas of difference, including issue areas, skill sets or expertise (legal, policy, organizing, service), cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds and geographic communities.

In our organizing together, we challenge how institutions of power address issues (like housing, transportation and economic development) in isolation, withholding information and power from impacted communities who experience these issues in intertwined ways.

Leading with a racial justice & power lens

Because structural racism and white supremacy are foundational to the systems in this country and region, we know we cannot solve the inequities and injustices that exist without dismantling systemic racism and directly challenging the “logic” of white supremacy in our work with BIPOC communities.

Because white-led nonprofits have historically been better resourced by foundations and more readily recognized by decision makers, we focus explicitly on racial justice and reciprocal and accountable relationships with BIPOC-led organizations and communities.

Because racialized capitalism and exploitation depends on a collective belief in scarcity and competition, we operate from a sense of abundance, sharing visibility, credit, relationships, and resources, with the goal of ensuring that philanthropic organizations and governments increase investments in BIPOC-led community organizing efforts and organizations.

Co-creating a liberatory culture and centering reciprocal relationships

Rejecting the fallacy of individualism, we take an ecosystems approach that builds and holds space for BIPOC organizers and BIPOC-led organizations to lead, collaborate and develop their capacity.

To challenge white supremacy culture, we co-create our own culture in which:

- White norms are decentralized
- Humor and joy are present
- Tension and conflict are named and navigated in ways that allow for people to feel heard and relationships and commitments to work together remain intact
- Space is made to actively ensure that everyone understands what’s happening and is invited to ask questions
- Participants bring their culture and ways of being into our coalition spaces and we adapt the spaces to them, rather than the other way around

We center reciprocal relationships as a core value in transforming internal and external systems, making time to connect with and know each other as individuals, and showing up for each other in ways that support and elevate our organizational work.

Building power & shifting narratives

We recognize that systems and policy change requires the application of power in multiple ways, including:

- Changing the perception of “expertise” from (often) white institutions and thinkers to center impacted communities as essential stakeholders and experts in their cultures, histories, and lived experiences
- Replacing racist, harmful narratives with community- and justice-centered narratives that reframe public logic on our issues and broaden what is politically possible

To build power, we invest in and grow the capacity of our organizers and organizations to build the knowledge and skills sets to advance policy and systems change — and cultivate and maintain relationships with each other and key stakeholders to not only secure but sustain those changes over the long term.

Our goals are broader than simply “winning” a specific policy. We also measure our impact in the number and depth of our relationships, and the strength of our alignment and power across organizations in our coalition.

Bridging grassroots & coalition organizing

We recognize that community organizing has many different styles and pedagogies, and winning change is accelerated by strategic engagement of stakeholders aligned for racial justice.

In our work, we seek to bridge:

- **Grassroots organizing**, which is accountable to community members who are directly impacted by a particular issue or part of a specific constituency
- **Coalition organizing**, which is led by and accountable to the organizations within the coalition that are working with directly impacted communities
- **Issue advocacy**, which brings specific knowledge or expertise to support or uplift the interests and goals of directly impacted communities

We also recognize that coalition organizers navigate both personal self interest and organizational priorities in the work.

The Alliance Role in Convening Coalitions

We know that the Alliance is not unique in its ability to hold and advance these principles. However, we also know that the complexity of this work demands dedicated staff and specific knowledge to maintain and grow powerful coalitions. In the coalition spaces we convene, we play the role of:

- Scheduling, organizing the agenda, and facilitating coalition meetings
- Building, maintaining, and deepening relationships with partner organizations and staff
- Working with partners to develop strategies for how the coalition will achieve the systems changes and/or policy goals that they want to accomplish

We believe in shared leadership and aim to operate in alignment with “**Snowflake Model**” (pictured right), which builds an interconnected network of leaders rather than holding up an individual leader within our work. While Alliance staff typically hold the tasks of moving coalition work forward, as organizers we are not the leaders of the coalition but rather the people who support the leadership of our base of partners.

