



# Building & Sustaining a Perinatal Coalition

We hope this will be a helpful resource to birthing communities in New Hampshire as they set out to convene around the shared purpose to improve perinatal health outcomes for all. It is simply a starting point and is not meant to be exhaustive.

The NHPQC represents a statewide network working collaboratively towards improving maternal and infant health care and outcomes in our state. A Perinatal Coalition focuses on the experiences and outcomes for all community members prenatal to 1-year postpartum.

## Getting Started As a Coalition

1. **Invite everyone to join in:** birthing people, community members, folks from local organizations and service providing organizations, as well as health care professionals. Engage anyone in your birthing community who has an interest in improving perinatal health
  - o Include and welcome ALL willing partners/members from all sectors, disciplines, and roles
  - o Always ask “*Who is missing?*”
  - o Aim to avoid gatekeeping
2. **Affirm your shared purpose:** The NHPQC vision, mission and goals are found on [the NHPQC webpage](#)
  - o Over time the group will collectively decide what specific work you all want to do together (goals, objectives, projects, activities, etc.) in your birthing community
3. **Co-develop a set of community norms or group guidelines** (a living document that is revisited regularly) that creates the conditions for what people need to feel comfortable to participate fully
  - o This may be a helpful resource on “[Forming Ground Rules \(Creating Norms\)](#)” [from the Center for Leadership & Educational Equity](#)
  - o Coalitions can draw inspiration from those of other coalitions and tailor

## How we will work together

Think about all the various considerations; over time these can be captured in a group charter (as formally or informally as we like).

4. **Always remember to build in time for relationship building**
  - o This can be a simple team building (chat) prompt at the beginning of the meeting, and/or intentional opportunities for people to work in pairs or small groups (give time for folks to get to know each other)

- It's helpful when prompts align with the work of the group to deepen connections
- 5. **Aim for flat (not hierarchical) structures**, as they are more conducive to equity and collaboration
  - Cultivate a culture of leaving titles at the door
  - Be attentive to power dynamics
  - Consider rotating who facilitates the meetings
  - Consider a coordinating committee or leadership team
- 6. **Make decisions collectively** in ways that build trust and relationship and that value everyone's input
  - Learn techniques for decision-making by consensus
    - See [Seeds for Change, Consensus Decision Making: A Short Guide](#)
- 7. **Encourage and support everyone's participation**
  - Consider rotating roles (meeting facilitator, note-taker, time-keeper, etc.)
  - Consider a "talking stick" so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute before speaking a second time
  - Avoid jargon; have a posted running acronym and definitions page for terminology that arises during the discussions
  - Consider meeting notes, rather than minutes (no identifying names; just ideas, to do's, responsible party, etc.)
  - Vary methods for engaging people's input to accommodate learning styles: use individual reflection and think/pair/share techniques, allow input after meetings end, use sticky notes or electronic white boards, etc.
  - Everyone co-create the agenda (begin at meeting's end for the next meeting, solicit input electronically before the next meeting, and review and welcome contributions at the start of the next meeting)
  - Accommodate any access needs. Be attentive to language assistance and communication access procedures, including statements on notices of public meetings, and knowing how to secure interpreters or CART providers, how to make materials available in the common languages of your area, etc.
- 8. **Continuously reflect on group processes**
  - Always ask: How did today's meeting go for us? What could we do better?
  - Periodic anonymous electronic participant assessment
    - Are all voices heard equally, etc.
- 9. **Appropriately value community members** whose time/contributions are unsupported by an organization
  - Stipends are a best practice, as well as a courtesy that builds trust
    - Check with the NHPQC backbone staff at Dartmouth-Hitchcock

**[NH Perinatal Quality Collaborative, NHPQC](#)**

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