

Heeding the Call to Action: Public Policy Engagement for Children

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What do individual motives and organizational factors have to do with individuals from public charities joining and participating in child-focused advocacy coalitions? A mail survey of members of child-focused advocacy coalitions in California was conducted in order to investigate the correlation between incentives for joining advocacy coalitions and level of advocacy activity. The study also examined the relationships among incentives and level of advocacy activity and other factors, including role in the coalition, job function, official duty, and organizational size. Four hundred surveys were mailed, yielding a final valid response rate of 36.8%.

The study found that strategic incentives, such as bringing about social change to benefit others and expressing important personal values, were the most influential incentives behind members' decisions to join advocacy coalitions, particularly for core members, whereas resource development incentives, such as protesting cuts or generating revenue, were the weakest influences on decisions to join. The results showed that strategic incentives had the highest positive correlation with action, followed by fellowship incentives, such as networking with colleagues, and then resource development incentives. The study also found strong positive correlations among incentives to join and incentives to remain, along with a significant increase over time in resource development incentives. Finally, coalition members without advocacy in their job description were significantly more motivated to remain with advocacy coalitions by fellowship incentives than subjects with advocacy in their job description. It is recommended that coalition leaders direct their attention towards assessing and nurturing strategic and fellowship incentives within the coalitions.