

# Mays and May Nots: for 501(c)(3)/501(c)(4) Coalition Meetings

**Working in coalitions is an effective way for nonprofits to maximize resources and impact when working to create social change.**

By pooling resources, engaging in joint policy discussions and strategizing, coalitions can stretch dollars, draw on collective expertise, and maximize efforts to create a more just society. When coalitions are composed of a mix of organizations, questions arise about the scope of discussions and strategies in which c3s may engage in without jeopardizing their tax status. This factsheet offers tips on the types of discussions and activities that 501(c)(3) public charity members of mixed tax status coalitions may participate in without jeopardizing their tax status.

*In meetings of c3/c4 coalition members held to discuss goals and strategies, 501(c)(3) organizations:*

**MAY** be present when groups share plans about what each organization is doing, including discussions about lobbying/ballot measure/voter registration efforts and the election-related goals of non-public charity members such as c4s and unions. It is ok for c3s to hear about these efforts by others, but a public charity should not use the information to make decisions about its own activities.

**MAY** engage in joint discussions to plan how to address a shared goal, such as passing immigration reform or raising the minimum wage.

**MAY** strategize, contribute to, and participate in lobbying and nonpartisan ballot measure efforts.

**MAY** strategize, contribute to, and participate in nonpartisan voter education, voter registration, and GOTV activities.

**MAY NOT** be part of discussions when c4 organizations strategize on projects and activities they will engage in to accomplish c4 political goals.

**MAY NOT** strategize on, contribute to, or engage in activities designed to influence the outcome of an election.

**MAY NOT** strategize on how the c3 can supplement the partisan work of c4 participants in the coalition. For instance, after hearing a discussion of a tight gubernatorial race in Michigan, a 501(c)(3) should not offer to do GOTV in the key swing district for the purpose of influencing the outcome of the election.

*For more information, see Bolder Advocacy's [The Connection](#), and [Coalition Checklist](#).*

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