



# BUILDING COALITIONS TO SUSTAIN THE SAFETY NET:

*The Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm*



NEUAC Conference, San Diego  
June 10, 2013

# WHO IS THE COALITION

The Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm is a committed, collaborative of organizations including energy service providers, State government, non-profit energy assistance providers and concerned individual supporters. We work to increase the financial and human resources available to address the energy needs of Michigan's low-income households through information gathering, policy analysis and advocacy.

## WHEN COLD WINTERS HIT MICHIGAN

*The Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm (CTKMW) is always there to help our families, neighbors and friends in need.*

CTKMW is a committed group of organizations including energy service providers, state government institutions, non-profit energy assistance programs and concerned individual supporters. We work to improve the availability of financial and human resources that can meet the energy assistance needs of Michigan's low-income households.



COALITION  
to keep  
MICHIGAN WARM

To learn more about what the Coalition is doing for your community,  
VISIT: [WWW.COALITIONTOKEEPMICHIGANWARM.COM](http://WWW.COALITIONTOKEEPMICHIGANWARM.COM)



# PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

To name just a few...



# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- **Inform policymakers** about problems of energy insecurity faced by low-income households.\*
- **Increase awareness and build support for sustained funding** to *federal* programs like LIHEAP and federal weatherization programs, as well as supplemental *state* LIEAF funding.
- **Collaborate with state officials and among provider members** to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of energy assistance delivery.\*
- **Help low-income individuals understand and utilize** their energy assistance & weatherization options to the greatest sustainable benefit.
- **Build loyalty** with CTKMW members, supporters, decision makers, and the media to activate responsiveness at critical junctures.

# THE NEED

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS: POVERTY & UNEMPLOYMENT\*



### Over the past 10 years...

- Michigan has experienced the **largest drop in median income in the nation.**
- **Poverty in Michigan has grown by 66%, the fastest growth in the nation:**
  - Over 1.5 million Michigan residents (15.7% population per ACS/census) lived in poverty in 2011. One in every four were children.
  - 18% Michigan population currently receive food assistance, including more than 735,000 children.

More than **400,000** people are still unemployed.

*\*Sources: ACS/Census, December 2012 Poverty Report and Kids Count, Michigan League for Public Policy*

# ENERGY INSECURITY:

## KEY INDICATORS: INCREASING REQUESTS & LIMITED FUNDING



- “Housing & Utilities” is the highest call volume category among emergency calls to United Way’s 2-1-1 (150,000/yr. and growing):

- More than 600,000 Michigan households *annually* receive energy assistance from *federal/LIHEAP-funded* programs (only 50% of eligible).
- Since 2002, \$570 M in **supplemental *state-funded* grants** have enabled a network of non-profit agencies to address energy crisis for avg. **100,000 households per year** (more than 1 million in total).

- Traditional utility responses (budget/protection programs) aren’t effectively improving payment patterns.

- On average, 30,000 income-qualified budget plan defaults per month.
- More than 400,000 disconnect orders for non-pay issued each month.

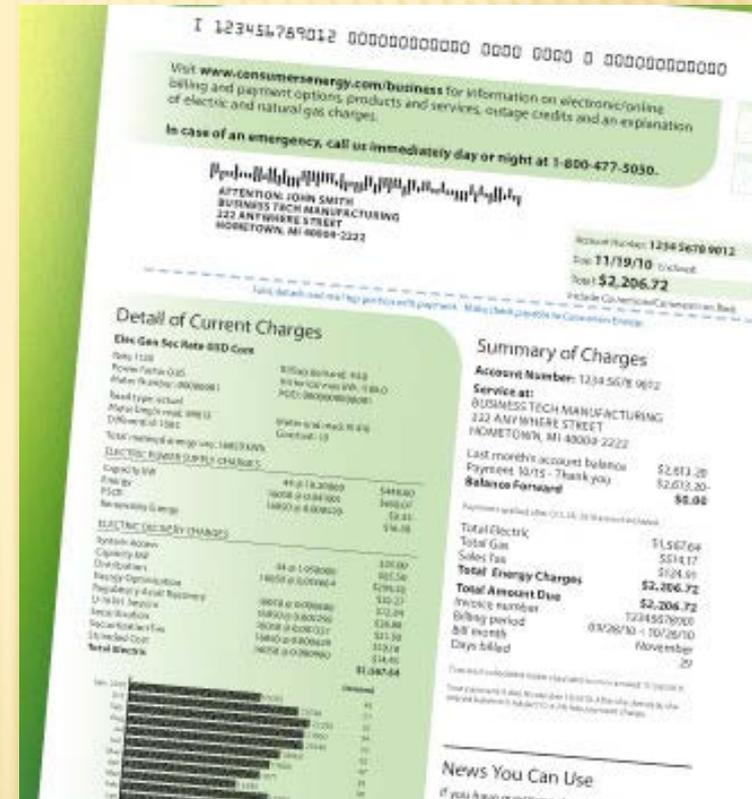
- Shut-off protection is not universal.

- Other human impacts:

- “Heat or Eat” scenarios compromise **health & safety**, esp. seniors & homebound.
- Disconnection is a common precursor to **family separation &/or homelessness**.

# PAYMENT PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

- State Emergency Relief (DHS)
- Home Heating Credits (Treasury)
- State-funded LIEAF Grants to Agency Agencies
- Utility programs:
  - Senior and Low Income credits
  - Shut-Off Protection/Winter Protection Plans
  - Utility-specific customer programs, pilots, and agency partnerships



Assistance dollars and shut off protection plans are bandages.

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

- **Weatherization Assistance Program** offered through Community Action Agencies install refrigerators, CFLs, insulation, furnaces, etc.
- **Energy Optimization Programs** funded by utility customers provide rebates and installations of energy saving measures.
- **Energy Education** classes & materials offered by non-profit agencies and utilities that provide tips on reducing energy usage.



**Affordability + Energy Education & Energy Efficiency = long-term solutions.**

# PATH TO SELF SUFFICIENCY

- Improve the connectivity to resources (**2-1-1**)
- Shrink the time between use and pay (**Utilities**):
  - Customizable billing options / e.g., pre-pay
  - Tools/technology to better manage consumption / Smart meters
- Deliver healthy interventions that prevent repeat occurrences (**Agencies – bill assistance & weatherization**):
  - Energy Case Management – habits/goal-setting, better budgeting + Weatherization, energy education, & DIY to lower usage.
  - Community & Peer Support Networks
  - Tracking Outcomes – to define success metrics
- Develop strategic operational partnerships with **State of Michigan's** social service agencies to maximize solutions:
  - DHS – Emergency services, MSHDA - Housing, OSA - Seniors, DMVA - Veterans, CMH – Mental Health, others

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

## *Be Collaborative & Strategic –*

1. Reach those in need
  2. Heighten public awareness
  3. Raise dollars to fill critical gaps
- **Customer Assistance events** – Utility CADs, DHS resource fairs, *Project Connect* events, County Fairs
  - **Senior & Veterans specific initiatives** – Gatekeeper (OSA), Older Michiganians Day, *Joining Forces Michigan* with 2-1-1
  - **Legislator-initiated** public forums, CtKMW coauthored op-eds/TV
  - **Statewide Walks for Warmth** (Community Action Agencies)
  - **The Heat & Warmth Fund (THAW)** – Week of Warmth, Radiothon
  - **PeopleCare** (Salvation Army | Consumers Energy) – 30 yrs. strong
  - **Coalition to Keep MI Warm coordinated events** – e.g. Traverse City Chamber of Commerce Sleep Out, Legislative Action Week

# POLITICAL REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

## Regulatory Landscape

- Protection of vulnerable customers (low-income & seniors)
- Reduction of bad debt expense

## Governor's Energy Assistance Focus

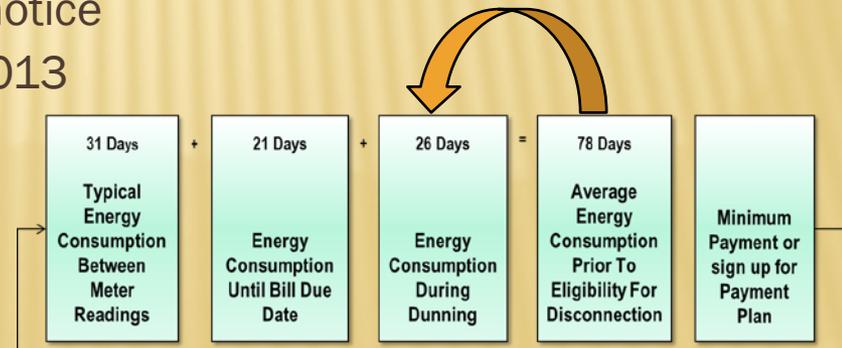
- Energy Message November 28, 2012: Emphasis on affordability and passage of low income energy assistance reform and funding legislation
- Proclamation naming February *Keep Michigan Warm month*
- 2014 Budget Recommendation (2/7/13) for \$60 M from utility surcharge

## Michigan Legislature

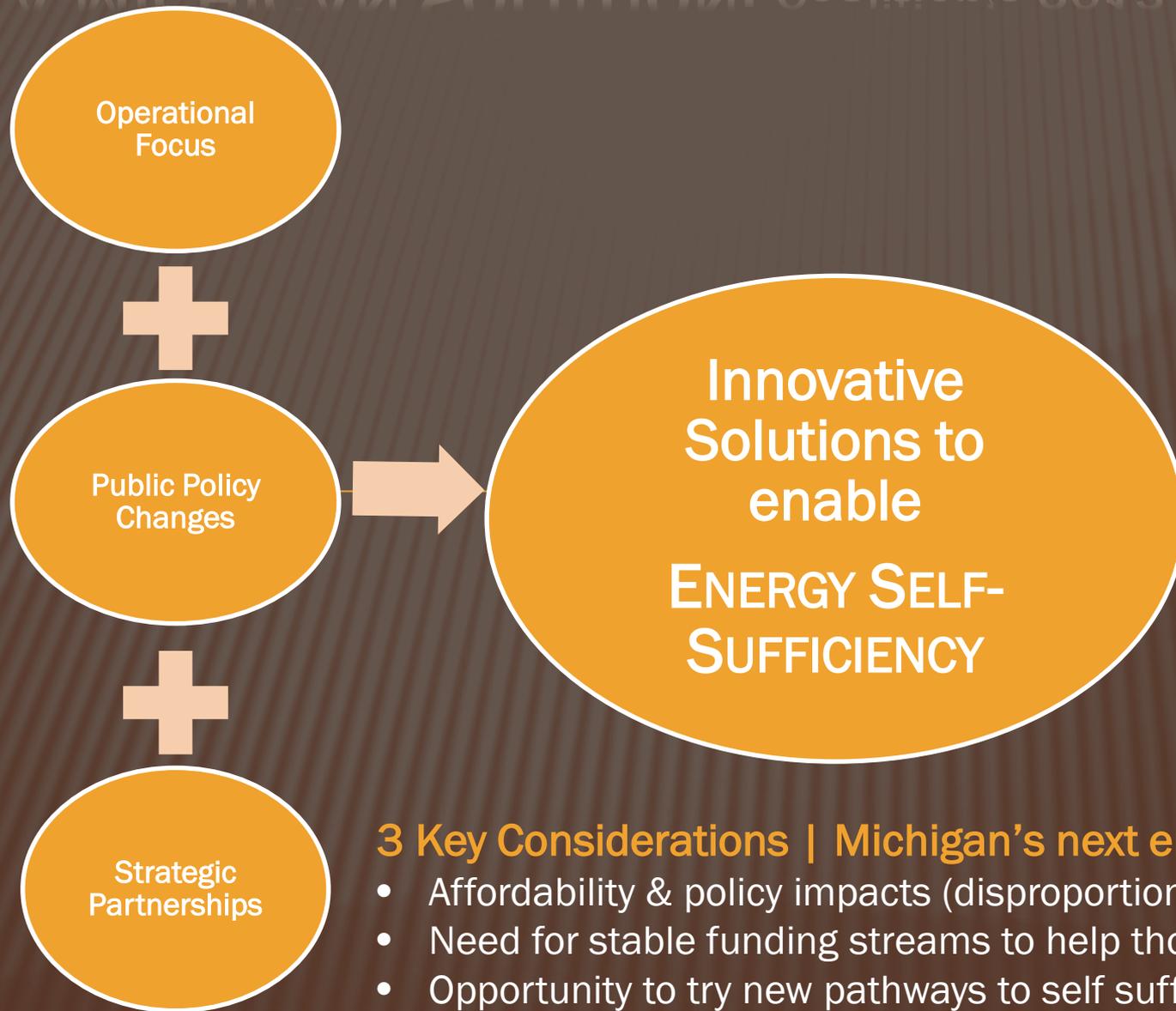
- Senator Bruce Caswell workgroup/enactment of SB 1135 (PA 615 of 2012)
  - Requires DHS to establish and administer energy assistance programs that lead low income customers to become **self-sufficient**
  - Crisis is redefined to include past due notice
- Stable state funding source is a focus for 2013

## U.S. Congress

- LIHEAP funding unpredictable/sequester



# A MICHIGAN SOLUTION: Coalition's 2013 platform



# CTKMW ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

## Key Activities

- Launched a redesigned website and a new online communications platform
- Re-mobilized the coalition members with a high level of engagement
- Led company outreach initiatives to enroll new coalition supporters
- Organized focused “calls to action” e-mail and letter campaign to legislators
- Engaged in media outreach and communication

## 2012 Advocacy Impact

- Launched coalition blog and calendar on the website.
- Launched newsletter.
- Participated in LIHEAP Action Day.
- Teamed up with Chamber of Commerce for Traverse City Sleep Out.
- Passage of Energy Assistance legislation

## 2011 Highlights

- 19 press releases issued.
- 126 individuals sent 419 e-mails to 17 elected officials
- 32 individuals sent 66 “Thank you” e-mails to Senators Stabenow and Levin
- 87 individuals sent 176 emails to 86 MI legislators on LIEEF.
- 10 grassroots e-mails sent since LIHEAP Action Day.
- 899 Facebook likes (room for improvement).
- 69 Followers on Twitter (room for improvement).

# CTKMW ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

## 2013 thus far...

### Activities:

- Coldest Day Campaign (Jan-Feb)
- Lansing Legislative Action week (Feb. 11-15)
- February 2013, Governor's appointed *Keep Michigan Warm month*
- Walks for Warmth promotion (January – April)
- NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day delegation (April 10)
- Coalition coordinator hire to elevate presence, among strategic goals (June)

### Impact:

- Grew to over 7,000 supporters
- 1,246 Facebook likes a 39% increase in the past year
- 235 followers on Twitter, a 241% increase in the past year
- 114 letters sent to Congress
- Created an audio news release to raise LIHEAP support awareness that was carried by 40 stations around the state

# QUESTIONS:

## Whitney Skeans

Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, Co-Chair

Customer Assistance Coordinator, Regulatory Affairs

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Visit the Coalition & join as a supporter at:

[www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com](http://www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com)

## Appendix | How to *Build* a Successful State Coalition

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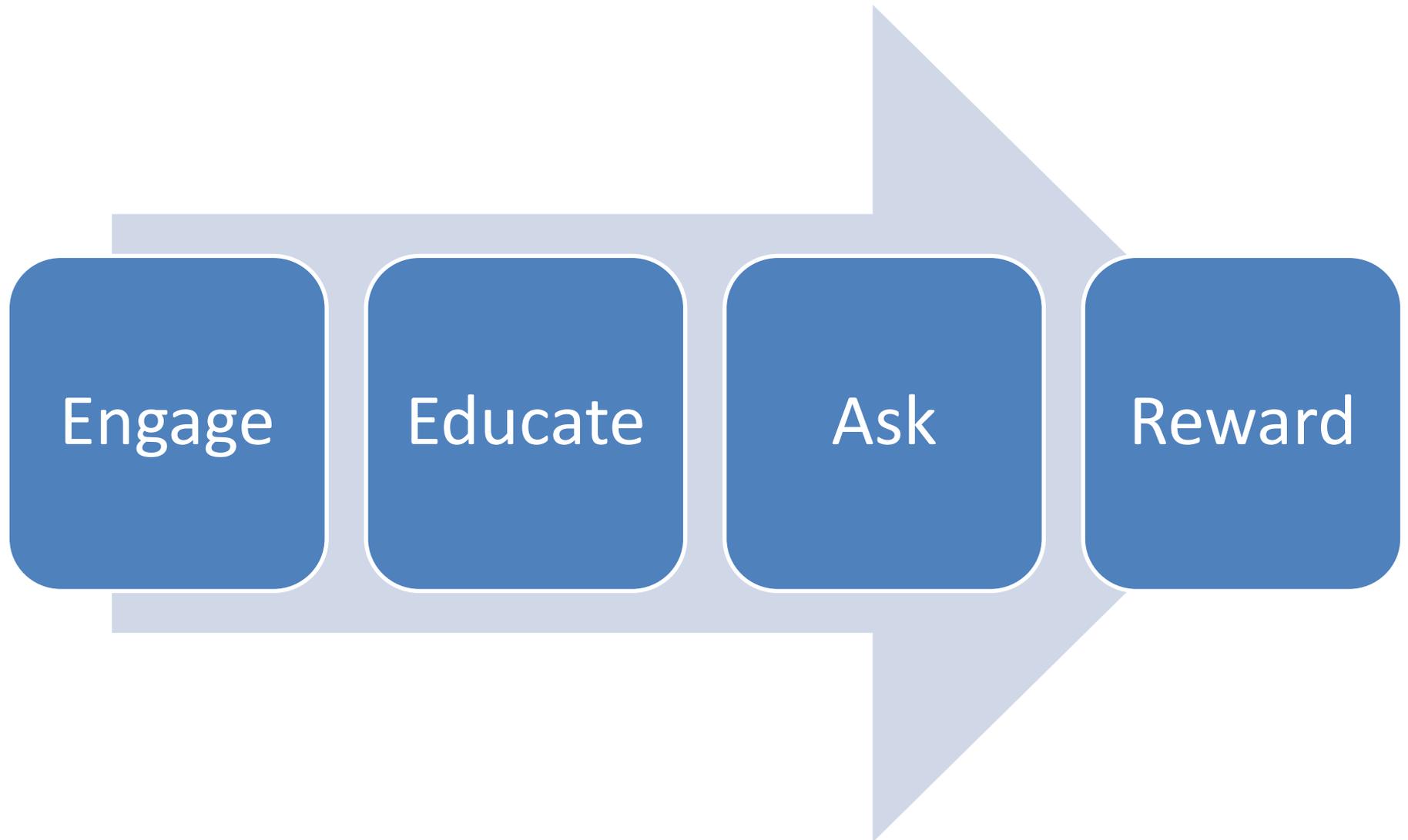
- **Elements of a Successful Coalition**
- **A Coalition Model to Yield Success**
- **Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment**
- **How to Have the Most Impact**

# Elements of a Successful Coalition

- Provide your coalition with a **Digital Hub** that is the public face of the coalition.
- Enhance the **branding** by promoting the coalition in local communities, media opportunities and online.
- **Recruit and sustain** coalition supporters that provide the mass of the coalition—keep them engaged, updated and provide opportunities for them to advocate alongside the coalition.
- **Empower** the core membership of the coalition to participate in advocacy activities—make it easy—and provide tools, opportunities, and ideas for them.
  - Core members and supporters will run the coalition if they are empowered and know they have the support to participate in advocacy.
- **Diversify** the coalition—a coalition is like a community—various voices, with differing opinions—who at the end of the day band to for the common cause.
- Keep coalition members and supporters **engaged** during downtime periods when there is little to no legislative action.

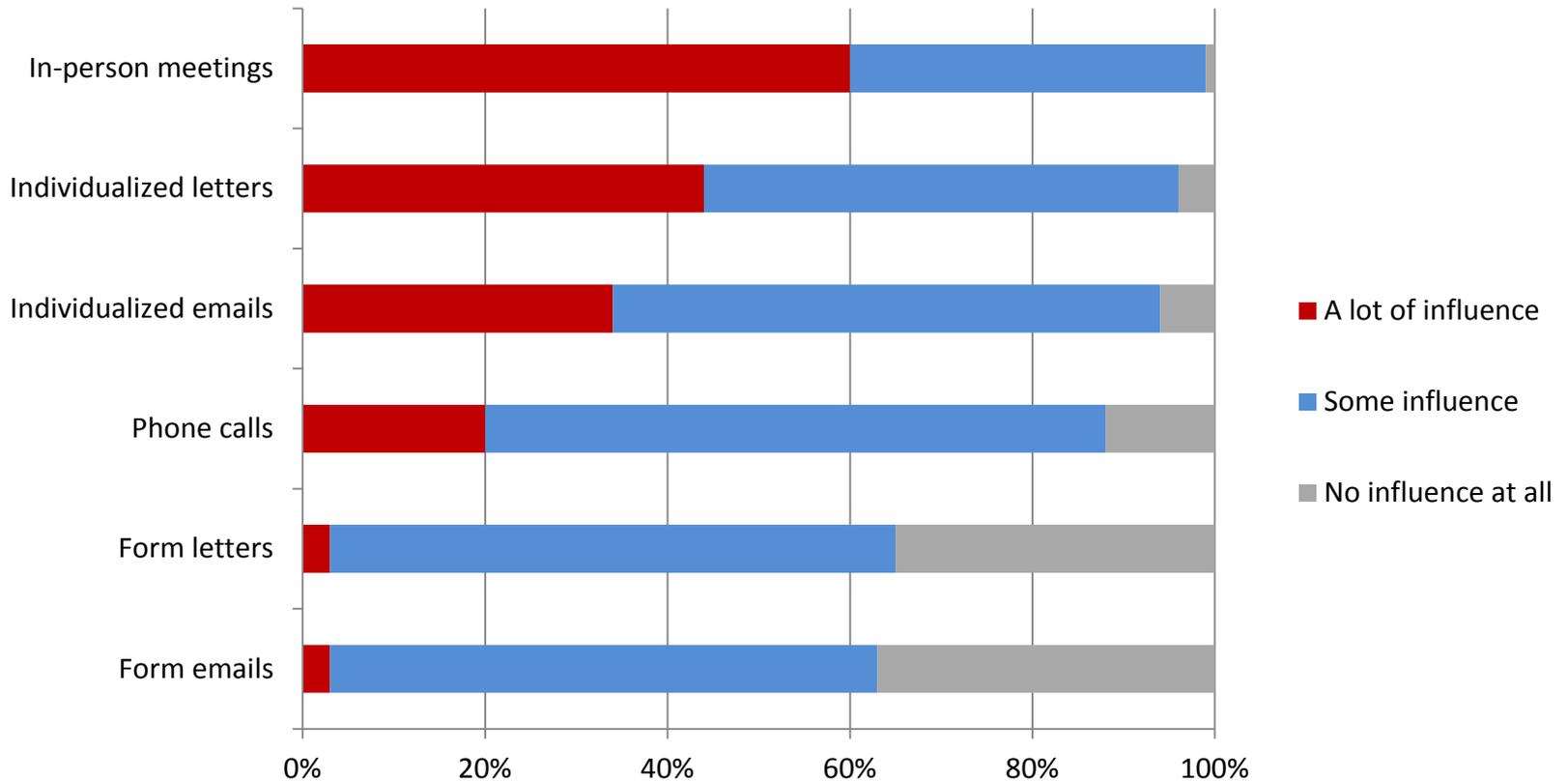
# A Coalition Model to Yield Success

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# Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment

## Influence of Advocacy Communications on Legislators



Source: Congressional Management Foundation

# How to Have the Most Impact

## *The ultimate goals of a coalition should be...*

- To impact policymakers by providing them with the information on why your issue/legislation is important.
- Be seen as a pillar of community working to help others in need of assistance.

## *Champions...*

- Are highly **committed** to your issue
- Have a compelling **personal story**
- Are willing and eager to get **more involved**

