**Author’s response to reviews**

**Title:** How does community context influence coalitions in the formation stage? A multiple case study based on the Community Coalition Action Theory.

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Reviewer 1

**Major Essential**

The reviewer is correct in that the domains are difficult to define clearly. We added a Table (2) per her suggestion, with definitions and an illustrative quote for each domain.

We added a sentence to explain why this study excluded one of the original primary sites (p. 7).

We added more detail on how the interviewees were selected and whether they were the same individuals over time (p. 8).

We added a sentence to explain that all data were analyzed, but most of the relevant information was from the planning year (p. 8). We did look for consistency over time, but this was not a major issue since the analysis focused on formation factors which tended to be most relevant in Year 1.

We clarified that the team for this analysis did not include anyone form the CHCC sites—it was a secondary analysis of the original evaluation data (p. 7).

This reviewer expressed concerns over our labeling of the geography-related themes. Our definition (Table 2) explains that we placed urban/rural differences under geography. Thus, themes related to small populations and few people with needed skill sets fall under geography with this definition (p. 11). We also clarified the language in this section to be more precise about how the themes were related to rurality.

We added a paragraph to the discussion to explain how our findings inform the CCAT model; this was a good suggestion (p. 20).

**Discretionary**

We added the Downey citation to the introduction (p. 4).
Reviewer 2
Discretionary
We made all of the suggested edits, which included switching to an active voice in several places and underlining the contextual factors as subheadings within the results section. We chose to leave the first paragraph in the discussion, despite its redundancy, to set the stage for the rest of the discussion.

Reviewer 3
Major Essential
This reviewer took issue with phrases such as “no consensus exists” and “hard to synthesize across studies.” We removed the phrase “no consensus exists” and simply listed the CCAT stages on p. 4.

We agree it would be useful to analyze similarities in meanings across contextual terms in the studies we cited. Unfortunately, the authors didn’t define terms, thus making it very challenging to discern common meaning using just the brief case descriptions. Reininger mentions “the first outreach worker…was not successful in overcoming conflicts and mistrust” but doesn’t define mistrust. Wandersman states “historically, racial tension existed” and that specialists working with coalition must consider “past historical dynamics”, again with no definitions. We did, however, add more detail to the findings rather than just listing what they studied (p. 5-6).

We selected the CCAT because it has an explicit proposition that contextual issues influence all stages of coalition development and because the lead author on this paper is also a co-author of CCAT and is interested in testing its propositions.

We removed the language of “major” themes throughout the manuscript.

We reviewed Yin’s discussion of theoretical generality. We believe we have strong findings, but we would like to replicate our findings over a broader range of coalitions before claiming theoretical generalizability.

Minor Essential
We added the Wells (2004) reference to our introduction (p. 3).

We added the years of data collection in the first paragraph of the methods section (p. 7).

We explained that one of the planned focus groups was not held (p. 7).

The sites were representative of the community types (e.g., rural region, rural municipality) and range of lead agencies across the 20 communities. However, the 20 communities were also diverse on socio-demographic characteristics so we are not claiming our sample was fully representative.

It is true we mentioned a few observations from more than one site, but didn’t
identify these as themes. For the “old-timers” finding, we added resistance to change to the community values that affected coalitions (p. 14). Historical tensions were also mentioned more than once, but were not consistently linked to a particular CCAT construct so we didn’t identify it as a theme.

Discretionary

We changed from “domains include” to “domains are” in the abstract.

The reviewer notes the stages seem ideal rather than based on practice, observing that many coalitions only have agency representatives. Although often true, definitions of coalitions typically include both organizational and individual members, and the CHCC program was explicit about engaging grassroots residents in governance.

The reviewer questions whether the coalitions were really in the formation stage. This is a good point and we’ve added this to the discussion (p. 18).