



Advocacy for Nonprofits – WNC Nonprofit Pathways

Report Prepared for MANNA FoodBank

April 20, 2017

Introduction

We are pleased to submit this summary of the Advocacy for Nonprofits Training that was conducted on April 10, 2017, for MANNA FoodBank.

Our hope is that this information will support you in your efforts to strengthen your infrastructure and organization as you further develop your impact in our community.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this training is to help your organization develop a new and important avenue for leadership – public policy advocacy. The ultimate goal is for each Advocacy training to be followed by additional organizational development to strengthen your group's infrastructure and service to the community.

This is a confidential engagement. The organization participating in the training may choose to share some or all of this report, as appropriate, with stakeholders beyond the board and staff.

II. Approach

Greg Borom and Jennie Eblen served as the trainers on this project. The steps of the training included:

- Organization leadership spent brief preparation time with the trainer (pre-survey response attached).
- The training was held, including the following agenda:

I. Introduction – Defining advocacy and policy and policy advocacy

II. Fundamentals of Advocacy – Key elements and “in practice” examples. Board members learned about and discussed each of six categories:

- Why should nonprofits do advocacy?
- How does public policy impact the organization?
- The values-based advocacy model
- What is needed to begin a public policy campaign?
- What kind of actions might our organization take?
- How to evaluate advocacy work?

III. Prioritizing Our Work on Advocacy – What are 2–4 of the most important priorities for your organization to move ahead with planning an advocacy program? What next steps will we commit to?

- Board members attending were:
 - Bud Hughes
 - Janet Owens
 - Chuck Cloninger
 - Jeff Grindstaff
 - Jim Mathews
 - Judy Butler

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- Karen Olsen
 - Louise T. O'Connor
 - Mary C. Davis
 - Melody Dunlop
 - Rasheeda McDaniels
 - Ron Edgerton
 - Scott McLean
 - Steve Metcalf
- Staff members attending were:
 - Hannah Randall, Executive Director
 - Amy Meier
 - Nancy Flippin
 - Jill Hanson
 - Mary Nesbitt
 - A record of the group discussion was prepared (see section III, below).

III. Organization's Findings

Below are comments from the group discussion.

Policies that impact clients of the organization
<p>After small group discussions, the following ideas were shared back to the full group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal reduction in SNAP & WIC, drug screenings for benefits – both of these take food out of households • Free/reduced lunch impact children and that program can't be replaced by donations • Able-bodied adult provision for SNAP benefits is challenging in WNC because there is a lack of transportation and many adults with mental health issues • Possible removal of the charitable donation deduction • Immigration policies, health care, living wages – all of these impact foodbank clients • Medicaid expansion – increased health costs mean spending trade-offs for families who may not have money to pay for food

Discussion on creating Values, Principles, and Policy Directions for the organization
<p>We reviewed the mission and values. MANNA FoodBank has the building blocks for this model and we worked in small groups to brainstorm principle statements that linked to their stated values.</p> <p>Mission Statement: Our mission is to involve, educate, and unite people in the work of ending hunger in Western North Carolina. Our vision is a hunger free WNC.</p> <p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Integrity • Compassion • Collaboration <p>Four small groups chose "Collaboration" and provided the following ideas for principle statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraging impact, joining with other organizations to speak up

- We are more powerful together.
- Building a larger fence for discussing issues, telling a bigger story on poverty and hunger.
- We support collaboration with community partners across the continuum (donors, volunteers, sites) working to eliminate food insecurity [questions raised of possible broader statement: eliminating poverty or underlying causes of food insecurity]
- Common message to refute misconceptions on food insecurity
- Collaborating with business to make distribution efficient, solving the problem with a public/private solution

The small group choosing “Accountability” offered these ideas:

- We’re accountable to different constituencies and it means: stewardship of money, resources, and product; safety through food management, food recalls, work environment, and employee pride; and food policy awareness – to be at the table, educating and holding decision makers accountable

Small group choosing “Integrity”:

- Two kinds of integrity: organizational and integrity/consistency of our positions regardless of issue or problem
- Our role: Not just to feed people but to make sure people are fed

Small group choosing “Compassion”:

- Everyone deserves food
- Dignity
- People shouldn’t be afraid

IV. Priorities

At the conclusion of the training, the board members and staff were asked to talk about next steps, questions and priorities on moving forward from the training. MANNA FoodBank has a history of doing advocacy with elected leaders – including lobbying. There was confirmation that the board and staff engaged in this work are doing a good job, but that the board needs to engage at another level and set a framework for advocacy. There was consensus support for continuing to develop a Values-Based model.

The group identified next steps that included the following:

- Look at creating a committee for a two step process: addressing immediate needs for policy advocacy happening now and developing a values-based framework for the organization
- Review and work more on values/principles in order to be more fluent with them
- Have a discussion on how MANNA manages the public policy advocacy function to answer questions around staff/committee/board involvement and responsibilities.

Additional recommendations from the consultants (these are added to this report by the consultant):

During the initial “word association” warm-up with the terms “Advocacy” and “Public Policy” the group displayed a much more positive view of public policy than other groups the trainers have worked with. The group offered definitions that public policy is something that is a greater good and addresses population health. This positive view will be important to communicate to volunteers, donors, staff, and clients as the organization moves towards a more defined public policy advocacy process and activities.

MANNA FoodBank does have experience with policy advocacy. However, the decision-making infrastructure and embrace of this work is not well-defined at the board level. In this way, the organization is more advanced with

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understanding the benefits of policy advocacy than others we've trained, but still has work to do to integrate this into board culture and develop transparent/accountable infrastructure for board/staff/volunteers.

The consultants encourage MANNA FoodBank to move forward with the identified next steps. The consultants believe that taking time to fully develop principles and policy directions and create the infrastructure for decision-making and communication between board and staff will be critical for ensuring that leadership feels comfortable with policy advocacy efforts. One possibility for follow-up is training around the messaging worksheet in the handouts since we didn't have time to cover that in the training.

V. Future Capacity Building and Evaluation

We hope this training leads to future "capacity building" in key areas, which can help strengthen your group's infrastructure as well as your service to the community. **Specifically, your organization is eligible for up to four hours of "follow up support" from the trainer in the next four months. Here are the parameters:**

- Work is usually done by phone or email; on-site can sometimes be negotiated, at the trainer's discretion.
- Topics must be related to the priorities determined in the training.
- Sample uses of Advocacy follow-up time include: Assistance completing the Values, Principles, Policy Directions and identifying possible advocacy campaigns; Reviewing/adopting internal decision-making/prioritization processes for choosing advocacy campaigns.

Talk with your trainer about utilizing this important resource.

Additionally, for evaluation purposes, Pathways will be contacting your organization to ask about progress on the identified priorities – as a way to measure the success of this process.

Thank you for your participation and commitment to Board leadership.

Organizational Pre-Survey for Board Advocacy Workshop with WNC Nonprofit Pathways

To be completed by the Director and Board Chair in advance of the board training.

1. What is your organization's experience with advocating to elected leaders on policy issues?

We regularly speak up on policy issues with elected leaders.- MANNA has gone through busier and not busier times interacting with elected officials, but in the past couple of years, we have had multiple in person, phone, and email interactions with elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels. One of our staff has attended Feeding America's Advocacy Academy and has had at least 5 in-person meetings with federal and state elected officials in the past year. The CEO was in DC within the last month and had appointments with the staff of both senators and the Representative Meadows. We have frequent interactions with state elected officials through both the CEO, outreach coordinator, and a board member who works in Raleigh at the legislature.

2. What is your organization's experience educating your board/volunteers/stakeholders about public policy decisions that impact your programs/community?

We have some experience.- In the past, MANNA has had some focus on public policy, particularly those that directly relate to hunger such as SNAP/FNS and child nutrition programs. MANNA sends calls to action when requested by either the State Association of Food Banks or Feeding America. However, we have recently expanded our policy discussions to other issues affecting poverty, the prevailing cause of hunger.

Please share your mission statement (and vision statement if you have one):

Our mission is to involve, educate, and unite people in the work of ending hunger in Western North Carolina. Our vision is a hunger free WNC.

Does your organization have a list of values it has adopted? If yes, please share your values:

Accountability, Integrity, Compassion, Collaboration