Nonprofits as Advocates

MCN Annual Conference, October 24th, 2019

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Agenda

1. Introduction
2. MCN overview
3. Advocacy
4. How to advocate
   ◦ Lobbying
   ◦ Relationships with elected officials
5. Trivia
6. Debrief / Q & A
Introductions

- Name
- Pronouns
- Organization
- 1 word you think of when you think of advocacy
Learning Objectives

- Know the various ways to advocate for your nonprofit
- Promote civic engagement among constituents
- Understand what lobbying is and isn’t
- Increase comfort in building relationships with elected officials
MCN and Public Policy

We believe that advocacy is a powerful catalyst for change. MCN supports nonprofits and Minnesota’s nonprofit sector to be their own voice in the public policy process.

- We provide training to help nonprofits grow their advocacy muscle.
- Serve as a resource to policymakers on the nonprofit sector.
- Advocate on issues that impact all nonprofits.
Advocacy:
A broad range of strategies to advance a cause.
Differences

501(C)(3)
- Tax-exempt
- Charitable contributions are deductible
- Lobbying work is limited
- No political campaign activity

501(C)(4)
- Not tax-exempt
- Charitable contributions are not deductible
- Unlimited lobbying work
- Political campaign activity is allowed, as long as it is not the organization’s primary activity
Why advocate?

- Elected officials need our expertise
- Pass important legislation that impacts nonprofits and their constituents
- Build power and liberation
- Heart of our democracy
How do I advocate in my nonprofit?

- Educate Public
- Nonpartisan Voter Education
- Organize Communities
- Lobbying Exceptions

- PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY
- Regulatory Efforts
- Educate Legislators
- Educational Conferences

- Litigation
- Encourage Voting
- LOBBYING
- Research

- Skills Training
- Change Corporate Behavior
Approaches to Advocacy

Core Questions
1) What is the problem or opportunity?
2) What do you want to have happen?
3) Who decides?
4) How do you influence them?
Why do nonprofits avoid lobbying?

- Concern that it is not legal or appropriate
- Misunderstanding of the law and what lobbying is
- Lack of process to develop positions on issues
What is lobbying?

- **Electioneering**
  - An attempt to influence the outcome of an election
  - Partisan activity

- **Lobbying**
  - An attempt to influence specific legislation
  - Specific legal and IRS definition for nonprofits

- **Advocacy**
  - Identifying, embracing and promoting a cause
  - Broad range of activity -- education, issue based generally

- **Direct Lobbying**
  - Communication, and
  - With a legislator or decision maker, and
  - Expressing a view, making an ask, and
  - On specific legislation

- **Grassroots Lobbying**
  - Communication, and
  - With the general public, and
  - Expressing a view, and
  - On specific legislation, and
  - A call to action
Direct Lobbying

- communication, and
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Grassroots Lobbying

- communication, and
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Building Relationships with Elected Officials

Why?

- You are the expert!
- You can tell the story of your organization and the concerns of your constituency!
- Bring attention to issues in your community
- Bills, bills, bills
Legislature Timeline

- Session goes from January/February to late May. Odd years are budget, even years focus on bonding.
- Session starts on February 11, 2020.
- Bills are introduced and committees hold hearings.
- Small bills are rolled into large omnibus bills, then conference committees hash out differences.
- Best times to build relationships with legislators: the beginning of session and anytime outside of session! (Right now!)
Who represents me?
Roleplay with an Elected Official

- Get into pairs
- 1 person will be the elected official, 1 person will be the nonprofit leader (you will switch!)

Task:
- Nonprofit leader: introduce yourself to the elected official, tell them your story, what would you like them to know? What is your nonprofits mission? What is the main service you provide?
- Elected official: introduce yourself, listen to the nonprofit leader, are you able to provide support in anyway?
#mnleg

BREAKING: You saw it here first ;) @mnlegturkey with House Speaker on #tptAlmanac @tpt

Tweet

Matt Little @LittleSenator

Whether you’re a Minnesotan has nothing to do with race, religion, or birthplace. It’s about whether you love your neighbor, obsess about the weather, and hold the door open for the next person even if they are an uncomfortable distance away.

9:03 PM · 8/1/19 · Twitter for iPhone

56 Retweets 592 Likes

Mike Freiberg @RepFreiberg

Representative Lucero’s jackets as My Little Pony: a thread #mnleg

1:41 PM · 4/26/19 · Twitter Web Client

70 Retweets 343 Likes
501c3 nonprofit organizations must remain nonpartisan.

501c3 nonprofit organizations can do...
- Voter registration
- Voter education
- Get out the vote activities
- Support or oppose ballot measure questions

501c3 nonprofit organizations cannot...
- Support or oppose specific candidates for office
- Support or oppose political parties
Civic Engagement and Nonprofits

- Constitutional mandate to count U.S. population every 10 years
- Nonpartisan
- Promotes civic engagement and participation in democracy
- MCN supporting nonprofits through grants, resources, and marketing any nonprofit census events.
Grant Types

$700- to support the cost on a one-time community census event

$2000- to support the cost of ongoing “get out the count” efforts

$5000- same as above, for culturally specific organizations

Census 2020 Grants!!

MCN will be offering grants (up to $5,000) to Minnesota nonprofits to promote participation in the 2020 Census!
Trivia time!!
Upcoming Public Policy Events

Coffee with Commissioners Series
MDHR Commissioner Rebecca Lucero
Thursday, Nov 7th, 2019
8:30am-10am
Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Cowles Auditorium

DEED Commissioner Steve Grove
Wednesday, December 4th, 2019
8:30am-10am
Wilder Foundation, Auditorium B

Save the Date
Session Lineup
Friday, February 14th, 2020
Location & Time TBD
Questions?

Contact us!
Michelle Chang, policy and equity coordinator
Marie Ellis, public policy director
Ileana Mejia, public policy advocate

Sign up for the Nonprofit Advocate!