Introductions

• Name, pronouns, and organization
• Personal/Organizational Experience in Advocacy
• I chose to attend this workshop because...
Nuts and Bolts

- Why advocacy
- Lobbying
- Relationships with elected officials
- Civic Engagement

Advocacy Toolbox
Public Policy at Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

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.

• 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

Stay involved and sign up for The Nonprofit Advocate!
What is advocacy?

**Advocacy** is a broad range of strategies, which could include lobbying, to advance a cause.
Nonprofits and Advocacy

Common types of tax exempt organizations engaging in advocacy:

• Section 501(c)(3) – private foundations and public charities

• Section 501(c)(4) – social welfare organizations
Direct Service + Advocacy

Direct Service
When nonprofits carry out their mission through direct service they address immediate community needs.

Advocacy
Nonprofits have a further opportunity to advance their mission through advocacy to affect long-term, systemic change.

Both are needed to build strong, thriving communities.
We can – and must – advocate!

• Advocacy and lobbying brings the voice of your organization and its constituents to the policy table

• Good things (and bad things) that happen in policy making are influenced by advocacy

• Legislators need public input to develop ideas into good public policy
Government is a critical decision-maker

- One-third of revenue for 501c3 nonprofits come from government through formal contracts and grants.
- On average, nonprofits have six contracts and/or grants per organization.
Ways to Advocate

- 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

Goals + Messages

Lobbying

Public Awareness and Education

Grassroots Advocacy and Organizing

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?
Engagement Opportunities

High Engagement
• Meet with elected officials
• Testify before a committee
• Be an active member of a coalition

Medium Engagement
• Write a letter to the editor

Low Engagement
• Social media
• Sign a petition
• Share a fact sheet

Engagement Pyramid

Lead
Contribute
Endorse
Follow
Observe
Strengthen Charitable Deduction

Minnesota nonprofits want lawmakers to encourage more giving

230+ organizations signed on!

Letters published throughout the state!

Media coverage!

Engaging legislators!

Testifying at the Capitol!
Why do nonprofits avoid lobbying?

- Misunderstanding of the law and what lobbying is
- Concern that it is inappropriate
- 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
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Grassroots Lobbying

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- a call to action
Dear Representative Noor,

We strongly urge you to increase funding so that all nonprofits can purchase treadmill desks and cots for their employees. This will help improve health and productivity. Rep. Becker-Finn is the chief author.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Coalition of Nonprofits
Lobbying or Not?

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Sincerely,

Minnesota Coalition of Nonprofits
Lobbying or Not?

At a forum on pet health, asked by a staff person for the Dogs Rule! organization: “Have you seen the latest polling on dog parks? Minnesotans want more dog parks, and they think government needs to do something about that.”
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Not Lobbying.
Lobbying or Not?

A radio advertisement on KOOL 108, paid for by Just Say No to Rodents:
“The Legislature is considering a bill that would require all households to have at least four pet hamsters. Call your members and urge them to vote no before the state is overrun with rodents!”
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Grassroots Lobbying.
Lobbying or Not?

Save the Beer is distributing flyers that read:

“On Election Day, vote NO on ballot measure 1, reinstating prohibition in the state of Minnesota.”
Lobbying or Not?

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The Rules for Lobbying

Limits on Lobbying. Insubstantial part test or (h) election?

Register as a lobbyist with the state and other levels of government.

Report on lobbying activities and/or expenditures to IRS and State Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Boards.
Legislature Timeline

• Session goes from January/February to late May. Odd years are budget, even years focus on bonding.
• Session starts in 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!)
Building Relationships with Elected Officials
Who represents you?

www.leg.mn
Rep. Tou Xiong

Rep. Tou Xiong (DFL) District: 53A
533 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-7807
E-mail: rep.tou.xiong@house.mn
Join my email updates list

Legislative Assistant: Anna Fineanganofo 651-296-4110

Committee Assignments:
- Higher Education Finance and Policy Division
- Property and Local Tax Division
- Subcommittee on Local Government
- Taxes

Biographical Information:
- Home: 2702 Margaret Ave. E. Maplewood, 55119 *
- Occupation: Nonprofit executive director
- Education: B.A., economics, St. Cloud State University; J.D., William Mitchell College of Law
- Elected: 2018
- Term: 1st
- Family:

Member Links
- Bills Chief Authored
- Co-Authored
- District Map
- District Demographics

News Items
- POCI Caucus Members Announce Meeting on Child Abuse and Neglect at Southern Border, Impact of Potential ICE Raids in Minnesota - (Wednesday, June 26, 2019)
- Legislative Update - May 8, 2019 - (Wednesday, May 08, 2019)
- MAP Caucus Statement Celebrating AAPI Month - (Wednesday, May 01, 2019)
- Archived News Items

Audio & Video
- Audio Commentary
Purpose + Outcomes of Building Relationships

Purpose
• To be a resource;
• To connect to people with specific leverage in policy making;
• To tell the story of your organization and the concerns of your constituency

Outcomes
• Increased awareness of your organization’s role and mission
• Increased awareness of the needs of your organization’s constituency
• Opportunities to advance the policy objectives of your mission
Building Relationships with Elected Officials

• Elected officials are expected to have general knowledge on a wide range of issues.

• Each elected official has some areas of personal interest or issue areas in which they are willing to take leadership.

• Elected officials put their primary relationship building efforts into their own constituency.

• Elected officials need research, data and stories, and individuals respond to and make use of this information differently.

• Elected officials have enormous demands on their time and intellectual capacity.

• Elected officials are often very interested in understanding and being connected to the people and institutions in their community.
Pitfalls and Things to Consider

- Don’t be shy—you’re both doing your job.
- Never burn bridges.
- Find a balance between high and realistic expectations.
- **Never support or oppose a candidate for political office.**
- Avoid building relationships solely with members of a single political party.
- Always listen and tailor your approach to their needs. Assume they are also listening carefully.
- Always follow through—a critical way to maintain your credibility.
- **Never make up answers or give misleading or false information.**
- If you say you will get back to them with information, do so.
- Avoid gossip.
#mnleg

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

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**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
Pair Share!

Does your organization already do some of these advocacy activities?

Which do you think your organization could take on next?
Nonprofits + Civic Engagement
Nonprofits + Elections: Rules 101

501c3 nonprofit organizations must remain nonpartisan.

501c3 nonprofit organizations can...
  • 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
Electioneering is not allowed by 501c3s. Electioneering and political campaign activities refer to the attempt to influence the outcome of an election – either the party or the candidate.

In order to successfully stay nonpartisan, think of your nonprofit election activities as exclusively focused on the goal of engaging the community in the connection between your organization’s mission and democracy.
Census 2020

- 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.
Everyone can play a role!

Tier 1: Easy to do

Tier 2: Medium level of capacity

Tier 3: Requires significant work
Tier 1

• Use your social media channels to encourage staff, volunteers, board members, community partners, donors, and others to be a voter!
• Send an all-staff email
• Adopt a Time Off To Vote Policy
• Add a reminder in your email signature
Tier 2

• Attend a public forum, debate, or a community event with legislators
• Distribute outreach materials
• Plan a community event
• Send an external email
• Write a blog post
Tier 3

- Create a webpage
- Register people to vote
- Commit people to fill out the census
- Get Out the Vote
- Get out the Count
More Resources!

- **Minnesota Secretary of State**
  - Register to vote
  - Election day voting
  - Early voting
  - Sample ballot
Pair Share

• Did your organization work on Census or Voter engagement in the past? What did your organization do? What groups did you involve?

• Is your organization planning to do Census or Voter engagement for 2020? If yes, share those plans. If no, what are some ideas you could bring back to your organization?
Questions?

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