



WOMEN'S FUND *of Omaha*

Creating a Public Policy Platform

CSN Training – July 15

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Advocacy & The Women's Fund of Omaha

In the beginning....

- Y1: Strategic Plan & Board (2013)
- Y2: Policy Committee (Board and non-board members) (2014)
- Y3: Limited Agenda (2015) - 3 issues: “low hanging fruit”, central to our mission, and a “reach” goal

Today....

- Led by Research & Policy Director
- Public policy work is highly supported by our community (funders, collaborators, donors).
- Advocacy is intertwined in all other facets of our work
 - Programs
 - Research
 - Grant-making
 - Public Awareness





How to Develop Your Agenda

Begin with the experts – those members of the community most impacted by systemic barriers & front-line program staff who work closely with community members.

Work with existing partners and coalitions; partner with more experienced advocates.

Research – What do we know about the problem and our proposed solution?







Organizational Considerations

Mission alignment


- How does this issue relate to our mission, vision and values?
- How does this align with our current funding and program priorities?

Evaluating our role

- Is our voice necessary? Helpful?
 - What can we contribute?
 - Funding, coalition management, research (data, information), public education, community stories and engagement, relationships, lobbying
 - Who else can we bring to the table?
 - What is our level of commitment?
 - How do we ensure sufficient capacity and resources for our staff/community of supporters to engage?
 - Who will be on the other side of this issue and how are we prepared to navigate their opposition?
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Foundational Equity Considerations

- Who is being centered in this policy work? Who does it leave out?
 - Have we considered all the ways gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, class, or sex impact this policy?
 - Does the research supporting this policy reflect the diversity of identities impacted?
 - Do diverse lived experiences inform this work?
 - Are we seeking out/listening to/giving space to people and organizations whose identities/experiences may differ from ours?
 - Are we looking for what we do not know and what/who is missing?
 - How are we providing a safe space for marginalized voices to speak out?
 - How are we making the advocacy available to everyone who wants to engage?
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Advocacy Basics


Get your board “on board”

- Bring in an expert to present; form an Advocacy/Policy Committee, including key board members.

NONPROFITS CAN LOBBY but advocacy is more than lobbying.

- The term “advocacy” encompasses research, public education, lobbying, and voter education - all can influence public policy.
- See Bolder Advocacy resource – “What is Advocacy”


Familiarize yourself with federal & state lobbying laws

- 501(h) election - See “Lobbying Under the Insubstantial Part Test,” from Bolder Advocacy.
 - Be careful around elections - cannot engage in “partisan” activities. See AFJ’s “Election Checklist for 501(c)(3) Public Charities”
 - When in doubt, call Alliance for Justice’s Free Technical Assistance Hotline: 1-866-NP-LOBBY or 202-822-6070
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Advocacy Entry Points



- Join CSN and other associations/coalitions engaged in advocacy
 - Follow other advocacy organizations – join their email list, follow on social media.
 - Utilize [Bill Tracker](#)
 - Build relationships with elected officials – invite them for a tour, meet & greet with staff/clients
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