

**Washington State Coalition for
the Homeless Conference**

Kennewick, WA
May 11, 2011

Project Sponsors:

Campion Foundation

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Project Lead:

Common Ground

Project Partners:

**Washington Low Income Housing Alliance;
Building Changes; Housing Development
Consortia of King, Pierce, and Snohomish
Counties; and Spokane Low Income Housing
Coalition**

What is the Board Advocacy Project?

- The Board Advocacy Project (BAP) is preparing thousands of Board members statewide to be effective advocates for agencies and programs working to end homelessness and providing affordable housing.
- The vision is to fundamentally change the culture of nonprofits so that lobbying and advocacy are institutionalized into the expectations and practices of all board members.

The BAP Program:

- Workshops for executive directors and staff
- Website with resources
- Videos
- Skills building trainings for Boards
- Connections to advocacy partners

Board Members Make Great Advocates

Because They Are:

- Community members and constituents
- Volunteers
- Passionate about the mission and programs
- Informed but not employed by the agency
- Connected community leaders
- Organized and part of a larger campaign
- Responsible to the organization

What Are Some of the Barriers to Board Members Advocating?

- Fears around legal lobbying restrictions
- Other priorities and limited time
- Executive Directors
- Partisanship
- Inadequate support and information
- Other?

Is Advocacy Legal?

- YES! Absolutely...it's even encouraged!
- Advocacy is a broad area that encompasses many activities, including lobbying.
- There are distinct differences between advocacy and lobbying.

Key Differences Between Advocacy and Lobbying

- There is no limit to the amount of non-lobbying advocacy your organization can do. While lobbying activities are restricted to a percentage of your operating budget.
- Lobbying involves attempts to influence specific legislation at the local, state, or federal level while advocacy is focused on educating about an issue.
- Lobbying makes up a small portion of the total amount of advocacy efforts by most nonprofits.

What Can Your Agency Gain from Advocacy?

Group Exercise: Take five minutes (each) to talk with the person next to you about the following:

1. Estimate the percentage of your agency's budget that comes from government sources (federal, state, local). How would your agency respond if lawmakers cut this sector's funding for core programs dramatically...or entirely?
2. With respect to those your agency serves, can you identify barriers or limits that government policies, programs, or regulations that impede them from getting the assistance they need?

Effective Messages

An effective message addresses three questions:

1. **What is the problem?** - Give a specific example/proof of the need for affordable housing.
2. **Why should I care?** - Use a value statement (see next slide).
3. **What is the solution?** - Define a specific needed policy step and action that the listener can take.
Example: fund the Housing Trust Fund at \$60M in 2011-12 biennium!

2008 WLIHA Messaging Research Results

In focus groups & polls, the following messages rose to the top:

- Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, and affordable home.
- It should be possible for working people to afford housing and still have enough money for such basics as groceries, gasoline, and child care.
- Children deserve a chance to succeed in school and in life, which all begins with their families being able to afford a decent place to live.
- It's better for society, the environment and families if people can afford to live close to where they work.

Practice Role Play

Instructions for legislators:

- Graciously receive your constituents to talk about Disability Lifeline or the Home Security Fund.
- Keep in mind your own personal priorities for this session.
- Listen carefully and ask questions.

Role Play for Advocates

- Appoint an ED or expert resource
- Be gracious, warm, and appreciative
- Establish your credibility
- Get the point and make the ask
- Create urgency
- Suggest next steps

Role Play Debrief

- How did you feel to play your role?
- How did the legislators respond?
- How well did the advocates make their case?
- What would you do differently next time?

Next Steps for You, Your Agency, & BAP

- Join the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
- Visit the BAP website – join the peer network, download resources, watch videos, follow links, & more
- Consider forming a Board Advocacy Committee
- Use the knowledge and skills garnered today regularly!
- Determine the best next step for the agency & schedule a Level 201 Skills Training.
- Plan on knowing all your state and federal representatives.

For more info on BAP or to schedule a training, contact:
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