



Alliance
OF **ARIZONA**
NONPROFITS



PROCEEDINGS
TOWN HALL ON THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA
SEPTEMBER 2006



Town Hall on the Nonprofit Sector - Flagstaff, Arizona SEPTEMBER 2006

Background

With financial support from APS, the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits convened more than 275 participants in six Town Halls across the state from March through September, 2006. Titled *Town Hall on the Nonprofit Sector*, these sessions were held in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Prescott, Tempe, Tucson, and Yuma. Each session included diverse representation from the nonprofit sector and its supporters: from social service organizations to government agencies, from arts groups to business leaders, from civic organizations to health advocates. You are holding the proceedings of the Flagstaff Town Hall conducted in September 2006 in partnership with the Nonprofit Resource Center of Northern Arizona.



Each of the six Town Halls followed a similar format with the same five questions posed to the participants. The questions were:

1. What do all nonprofits have in common?
2. What is your ideal vision for the nonprofit sector in your state?
3. What are the obstacles common to all nonprofits—regardless of mission— that prevent us from reaching this vision?
4. What key short-term steps can nonprofit organizations collectively take to eliminate these obstacles?
5. What key long-term steps can nonprofit organizations collectively take to eliminate these obstacles?

Participants responded to these questions individually, then discussed them in small groups, and finally shared their responses with the entire room. Discussion was facilitated at all but one session by Tim Delaney, president of The Center for Leadership, Ethics & Public Service and one of the founders of the Alliance. In addition to collecting the individual and small group response forms, the sessions were fully documented by Susan Perkins Fry, a Tucson-based consultant.

All documentation was shared with the National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA), and used as part of a briefing book for delegates to the National Nonprofit Congress in Washington D.C. in October 2006. Those delegates developed a list of national priorities for the nonprofit sector, including

- Advocacy and grassroots community involvement
- Public awareness of the value of the sector
- Organizational effectiveness, with special focus on leadership and accountability

These national priorities are remarkably consistent with the Arizona agenda, developed as a synthesis of ideas and dialogue throughout these Town Halls. The Arizona agenda was published in the spring of 2007 as *One Voice Arizona*, which is available from the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits (find it online at [www.http://www.arizonanonprofits.org/arizonanonprofits/one_voice_arizona.aspx](http://www.arizonanonprofits.org/arizonanonprofits/one_voice_arizona.aspx)).

Town Hall Process

The Phoenix Town Hall was the fourth one held in Arizona. Approximately 45 participants gathered to discuss the state of the nonprofit sector in Flagstaff and the four counties of northern Arizona. The event began with a welcome from Kay Whitaker from the Flagstaff City – Coconino County Public Library. Patrick McWhortor, President & CEO of the Alliance, then outlined the history of the Alliance and provided information about Alliance's next steps across Arizona.

Tim Delaney then began his facilitation of the Town Hall by asking each of the participants to spend 15 to 20 minutes responding to the five questions to be discussed in the Town Hall. Forms were completed individually at each table. The five questions were then discussed at each table, with a facilitator designated at each. Finally, table facilitators reported out each table's responses. The tables' responses, along with selected individual responses are documented below.

After the Town Hall, the individuals' forms along with the tables' forms were sent to NCNA for their use in developing the briefing book for delegates to the National Nonprofit Congress in October 2006.



Flagstaff Town Hall Report

Table Sessions

1. Each person answered five questions on his/her own
2. The tables discussed the questions as a whole
3. One person from each table shared the table's responses

1. What do all nonprofits have in common?

The top five responses included the following:

- Nonprofit organizations **LACK ADEQUATE RESOURCES** – funding, skills, volunteers, and time
 - “We are trying to do good with little resources.”
 - “We have much more to do than there is funding to support.”
 - “Funding nonprofits is a low priority to government decision makers.”
 - “We struggle to survive and keep the doors open.”
 - “We have a constant need for energetic and enthusiastic volunteers.”
 - “We all need qualified and willing volunteers.”
 - “We need a strong volunteer base.”
 - “We need an adequate funding base.”
 - “Nonprofits lack sustainable funding.”
 - “We need to raise money from grants and private donations as at least one form of revenue.”
 - “We depend on others (business and public sector).”
- Nonprofit organizations are **MISSION DRIVEN**
 - “We work for the betterment of the community.”
 - “Our mission is to work for the greater good of the community.”
 - “We come together for a common cause and to help others.”
 - “We all have a mission to provide an under-funded but necessary service to our community.”
 - “We all have a belief that working together can make a difference.”
 - “Nonprofits have a desire to effect change in a particular segment of the community in a way that benefits that community and reaches to the public at large.”
- Nonprofit organizations have **UNCERTAIN VISIBILITY**
 - “Nonprofits live in the shadow of wealthy for-profit organizations.”
 - “There are public misperceptions about nonprofits, their missions, their effectiveness, and their clientele.”

- Nonprofit organizations have **PASSION**
- Nonprofit staff and volunteers suffer from **BURNOUT**
 - “We need to avoid burnout.”
 - “The staff of nonprofits are exhausted!”

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits have high ideals and intentions
- “Nonprofits are tax-exempt and that status permits greater capturing of resources.”
- “Nonprofit organizations lack benefits and have low salaries compared to for-profits.”
- Nonprofits lack training and staffing

2. What is your ideal vision for the nonprofit sector in your state?

The top five responses included the following:

- The nonprofit sector should have **ADEQUATE FUNDING and STAFFING**
 - “We must remove funding competition that creates conflict among nonprofits.”
 - “We deserve credible funding consideration since we are a ‘rural’ area and most funding tends to go to the bigger metropolitan areas.”
 - “We need generous donors.”
 - “Nonprofits should have robust financial support and volunteer participation.”
 - Nonprofits must be able to combine resources to be more effective, individually and collectively.”
 - “...to have sufficient funding, personnel, and expertise to be successful over the long-term.”
 - “To gain credibility and fair funding consideration due to our location and rural status.”
- The nonprofit sector should be **COLLABORATING** more often
 - “The sector should be a unified collaborative effort.”
 - “We should be a highly organized and networked true partnership for the good of the community.”
 - “We must have cooperation and knowledge sharing among nonprofits.”
 - “Nonprofits need to band together to collaborate on projects.”
 - “The nonprofit sector should be a highly organized, networking group of nonprofits that have political clout and basic operational needs are met.”

- The nonprofit sector needs **VISIBILITY and RECOGNITION**
 - “We should be recognized by the community for our value.”
 - “We should have positive media coverage.”
 - “I wish that the general public knew and appreciated our contribution to the community.”
 - “We need a wide public understanding of how nonprofits impact all of our lives.”
 - “...a vibrant collaborative coalition that earns respect and support from the public and for profit sectors.”
 - “That people understand how nonprofits impact all of our lives. It is not ‘charity’ or handouts, but nonprofits contribute to all positive facets of life – We need more communication about the doings of nonprofits.”

- The nonprofit sector needs a **UNIFIED VOICE**
 - “We should be working together as one voice.”
 - “We need a voice at the state and national levels.”
 - “Nonprofits must be invited to the ‘power table’ where decisions are made.”
 - “Nonprofits need a place at the decision-making table.”

- The nonprofit sector should support **NONPROFIT ASSOCIATIONS**
 - “That regional nonprofit associations and resource centers will be united through the Alliance and with the ASU Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management to provide capacity building programs and collaboration building opportunities.”

Additional responses included the following:

- “Nonprofits need to be strong, connected, and competent in achieving and communicating goals and objectives.”
- “A thriving economy where nonprofits shift from providing basic needs to sponsoring arts and humanities.”
- “To know well our own nonprofit community, as in knowing all of the resources, what they offer, and how they work together.”

3. What are the obstacles common to all nonprofits?

The top five responses included the following:

- The nonprofit sector **LACKS FUNDING**
 - “We are always trying to do too much with too little.”
 - “We are never getting paid for what we are worth.”
 - “There are numerous restrictions imposed by funders.”

- “Funders fund projects and not salaries.”
 - “We all have dwindling financial resources.”
 - “It’s like fitting a round nonprofit into square funding restrictions.”
 - “There is funding and resource competition among local nonprofits.”
 - “The nature of nonprofit work is to have too much to do and not enough time and resources to do it.”
- The nonprofit sector suffers from **POOR PUBLIC PERCEPTION**
 - “We lack recognition and visibility.”
 - “There is a lack of awareness of what nonprofits do and don’t do.”
 - “We have ineffective PR individually and as a sector.”
 - “We depend on public perception.”
 - “We need to get the media interested.”
 - “We have no time to do PR and tell our story.”
 - “We don’t have a good image in the community.”
 - “We’re below the radar screen of the public.”
 - “There is a public belief that nonprofit staff should be paid low salary or should all be volunteers.”
 - “We are seen as ineffective, disorganized charity groups.”
 - “There is a lack of general public understanding of the scope of importance of the problems.”
 - “Marketing – lack of knowledge in the community as to the services and benefits that nonprofits contribute.”
- The nonprofit sector need better **EDUCATION and TRAINING**
 - “We have underdeveloped professionalism in the sector.”
 - “We lack leadership.”
 - “Nonprofits lack training opportunities and resources for training staff, board, and volunteers.”
 - “We need a toolkit or manual or consultant on starting a operating a nonprofit.”
- The nonprofit sector needs to **COLLABORATE**
 - “Personal and organizational egos interfere with organizations working together.”
 - “There is a fear of appearing inadequate if sharing funders or resources.”
- Nonprofits suffer from **BURNOUT**
 - “We have burnout and exhaustion of board, staff, and volunteers.”
 - “Volunteers are not always reliable, don’t know what to do, and get tired.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits need to focus on evaluation – “Ensuring effective outcome measurements for an agency to gauge its mission fulfillment.”
- Nonprofits lack information technology (IT) support – “there is a lack of technology resources for us.”
- “There is isolation and competition of nonprofits in the same line of business.”

4. What key short term steps can nonprofit organizations take to eliminate these obstacles?

The top five responses included the following:

- Nonprofits need to **COLLABORATE**
 - “We must collaborate to strengthen functions and avoid redundancy.”
 - “Focus on collaboration to avoid duplication of services and share resources.”
 - “Let’s develop regular ‘roundtables’ or ‘sharing time’ for nonprofits.”
 - “Nonprofits should collaborate in sponsoring training and technical assistance to improve quality or public relations.”
 - “Nonprofits should work together to streamline functions and resources.”
 - “We need collaborations and consortiums to improve purchasing power.”
- Develop better **PUBLIC AWARENESS** for the sector
 - “Nonprofits need to educate the public about the nonprofit community.”
 - “We need to have good publicity for the sector.”
 - “We need to improve visibility in the community by education.”
 - “Nonprofits need increased visibility – as a group and as individual organizations – perhaps using trends in the larger community to piggyback specific ‘ad’ campaigns.”
 - “Nonprofits should continue to speak at public meetings and events.”
 - “We need public praise and acknowledgement.”
 - “Nonprofits need to increase the visibility of individual nonprofits, regional resources centers, and state level efforts.”
- Nonprofits need **COMMUNICATION with FUNDERS**
 - “Nonprofits need to educate funders about our needs and those of our clients.”
 - “Nonprofits should educate funders on how much time and effort nonprofit staff spends on activities.”

- Nonprofits need to **BUILD a STRONG VOLUNTEER BASE**
 - “We should develop a volunteer model for all agencies which includes volunteer resources.”
 - “Take time to orient and train volunteers.”
- Develop **TRAININGS and RESOURCES** to support nonprofits
 - “Nonprofits need clear, effective, realistic systems for programs and finances that sustain agency operations.”
 - “We need more services for board development, staff training, and volunteer management.”
 - “Nonprofits need professional development.”
 - “Let’s set up systems to share information and resources with each other.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Lobbying for the nonprofit sector
- “Provide results of these town hall meetings to nonprofits and funders.”
- “Join the Northern Arizona Resource Coalition and other nonprofit organizations that advocate for the sector.”
- Advocacy at the state and local levels
- Effective evaluation
- “Nonprofits need to sit at the decision-making table.”

5. What key long term steps can nonprofit organizations take to eliminate these obstacles?

The top five responses include the following:

- Develop a sustained **FUNDING STREAM** for nonprofits
 - “Educate donors and funders to understand the nonprofit value to the community.”
 - “Communicate better with funders.”
 - “Educate donors about how to assess the work of nonprofits.”
 - “Develop a single database for all funding resources and historical information on grants awarded.”
 - “Build a benefactor list.”
- Unite as a **POLITICAL FORCE**
 - “We need to be proactive with elected officials, media, and the business community in advocating for the nonprofit sector.”
 - “We need to be proactive, rather than reactive, in advocating for the sector as a whole.”

- “Educate public officials.”
- “Advocate!”
- “Consider legislative advocacy.”
- “Organize to unite in a political way.”
- Develop **PUBLIC EDUCATION** opportunities
 - “We need to be willing to speak for the sector.”
 - “Utilize social marketing to make it clear to our culture that what we do is important.”
- **COLLABORATE** as a sector
 - “We need more collaboration and more efficient service delivery.”
 - “Cooperation and mentorship among large and small nonprofits to create a synergy with organizations.”
- Support the **ALLIANCE and REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTERS**
 - “Establish regional resource centers to provide leadership and resources to nonprofits to reduce redundancy and duplication.”
 - “Develop local, regional, and state directories.”
 - “Work together through organizations like the Northern Arizona Resource Center.”

Additional responses included the following:

- “We need new blood. We must find ways to entice young people into the sector and make nonprofit employment more economically stable.”
- “Nonprofits need training opportunities.”
 - Training for new board members and staff – written into the ruling documents of the organizations so that it is ongoing.
 - Toolkit or manual for training and maintaining healthy organizations.
- Volunteer management – honor the concept of not assigning volunteers work that they don’t want to do – we need recruitment, support, and recognition for people doing this work.
- “Develop a well maintained, functioning IT support system.”
- “The Arizona State University Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management is a great start.”
- “Change our United State President.”
- Continue to professionalize

For questions regarding the Arizona Town Halls, please contact Patrick McWhortor (patrickm@arizonanonprofits.org) at the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits.