



Alliance
OF **ARIZONA**
NONPROFITS



PROCEEDINGS
TOWN HALL ON THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

PHOENIX, ARIZONA
AUGUST 2006



Town Hall on the Nonprofit Sector - Phoenix, Arizona AUGUST 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 Phoenix Town Hall conducted in August 2006 at Arizona State University West Campus in Phoenix.



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 third one held in Arizona. Approximately 60 participants gathered to discuss the state of the nonprofit sector in Phoenix and Maricopa County, especially the West Valley. The event began with a welcome from Diane Bruger from Arizona State University. 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 walking the participants through an Arizona nonprofit timeline that he had designed and posted on the wall. The timeline included Arizona historical information along with the growth and development of the Arizona nonprofit sector including

establishment of the Arizona Community Foundation and the beginning of the Arizona State University Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management.

Tim then asked the Town Hall participants to take time to write down some additions to the timeline that were pertinent to them and to the organizations they were representing at the Town Hall. Additions to the timeline included the establishment of the West Valley Arts Council in 1989, the start of Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development in 1972, and the beginning of Free Arts Arizona in 1993.

After the timeline exercise, Tim asked 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.



Phoenix 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 need **FUNDING** and are faced with **FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES**
 - "All nonprofits have struggles and challenges with resources."
 - "Nonprofit organizations have an ongoing concern regarding financial sustainability."
- Nonprofit organizations feel **PASSIONATE** about their cause and the work of the nonprofit sector
 - "We have a passionate belief in the potential of society to change."
 - "We hold a belief that society can change for the better and a belief that government is not the solution."
 - "We have a collective passion to work on behalf of the improvement of the lives of people in the community."
 - "We have a collective passion for community improvement."
 - "We have a passion to make a difference in the lives of others."
 - "We have a passion and good intentions to promote a particular cause that is usually neglected or ignored by society."
 - "We have a desire to serve as an agent of change."
 - "Nonprofits have good intentions and a desire to help."
- Nonprofit organizations are **MISSION BASED and MISSION DRIVEN**
 - "We have a mission or purpose to promote change in society."
 - "Our mission is to do something that improves a condition or state."
- Nonprofit organizations have **TAX EXAMPT STATUS**
 - "We are 501c3 organizations and we have a board of directors."

- Nonprofit organizations have **COMMITTED STAFF, VOLUNTEERS and COMMUNITY SUPPORT**
 - “We have human resources issues.”
 - “We have volunteer power.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits rely on public support.
- Nonprofit organizations are “solving a problem.”
- Nonprofits struggle with accountability.
 - “Nonprofits need to demonstrate results of their efforts and the effect on clients.”
- Nonprofits have a need for marketing assistance.

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

The top five responses included the following:

- The nonprofit sector should be **COLLABORATIVE**
 - “We need to have strength and power through collaborative efforts that result in financial and programmatic stabilization.”
 - “Collaboration enables us to reach more of the population in need of our services.”
 - “We need to create a collaborative environment to solve Arizona’s issues.”
 - “We need to collaborate rather than compete.”
 - “We need to come together and make a stronger network.”
 - “We should come together to achieve common goals.”
 - “Stronger alliances are important.”
 - “We must partner and collaborate!”
 - “Interagency sharing”
- The nonprofit sector should be **ADEQUATELY FUNDING**
 - “We need to be supported to meet our missions.”
 - “We need a new kind of philanthropy – not a ‘who-knows-who’ state of giving.”
 - “We need adequate funds for all, so you can feel more open to collaboration.”
 - “We need to be financially sound.”
 - “We need to tap into retirees for resources.”

- The nonprofit sector needs to **INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY** by **SPEAKING with ONE VOICE**
 - “We need one voice that will help shape public policy for the underserved.”
 - “We need to speak with one voice!”
 - “We need to help the State Legislature understand and support the need to fund services at an appropriate level.”
 - “We need a united presence at the State Legislature and Congress to ensure support for the work we are doing in the community.”
 - “We need to be a cohesive and consistent voice with common goals.”
 - “We must not be considered as an afterthought.”

- The nonprofit sector needs **LEADERSHIP**
 - “We must create a nonprofit sector that attracts, develops, and keeps the best of the best.”
 - “We need to draw the best, develop the best, and keep the best.”

- The nonprofit sector needs **FEEDBACK and INVOLVEMENT from the COMMUNITY**
 - “We need acknowledgement.”
 - “We need to be recognized.”
 - “We need education for the public.”
 - “We need to create a sense in everyday people in the community that they are capable and empowered to create change.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits need public awareness
 - “Nonprofits need to get their word out.”
- The Nonprofit sector should work with the other sectors
 - “We need to create a synergistic entity that bridges and is supported by all sectors to address community needs.
- The nonprofits sector should help people understand the term “nonprofit.”
- The nonprofit sector needs to focus on accountability
 - “We can increase sustainability by demonstrating results.”

3. What are the obstacles common to all nonprofits?

The top five responses included the following:

- The nonprofit sector **LACKS FUNDING**
- Nonprofits **LACK VISIBILITY and PUBLICITY**
 - “Many people still perceive us as begging and don’t understand what we do.”
 - “The term nonprofit creates an idea that we are less than for profit and we must convince the public that we are legitimate.”
 - “Nonprofits have difficulty communicating with the public.”
 - “We are not clearly promoting results.”
- The nonprofit sector has **DUPLICATION, OVERLAP, and COMPETITION**
 - “We have competition instead of collaboration.”
 - “We lack the knowledge of what other nonprofits do.”
 - “We lack time to collaborate.”
 - “There is a perceived competition for support.”
 - “We have turf battles!”
 - Redundancy of missions
- Nonprofits lack qualified **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**
 - “We need to attract a new generation of professionals.”
 - “We have a need for professionalization and increased training.”
 - “We have an inadequate ability to attract leadership.”
 - “We need to engage boomers.”
 - “Nonprofits battle founders’ syndrome.”
 - “We have a general lack of leadership.”
 - High staff turnover is a problem
- Nonprofits need **stronger BOARDS and better BOARD DEVELOPMENT**
 - “Board development would lead to organizational stabilization.”
 - “Boards of directors do not believe in moving forward or are afraid of change.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits lack adequate technology
- The nonprofit sector lacks a voice for the sector as a whole.
- The nonprofit sector lacks legislative support.

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

The top five responses included the following:

- Develop a **PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**
 - “We need to get the word out and involve the media.”
 - “We should inform people that our bottom line is social change.”
 - “The nonprofit sector needs to collect success stories as a sector and get them out.”
 - “Media, media, media.”
 - “We need a public awareness plan.”
- Work with the **ARIZONA STATE LEGISLATURE**
 - “Develop our political muscle through data collection, numbers, and successful stories.”
 - “Develop a political voice.”
 - “We need to actively talk to Legislators.”
 - “We must educate public officials!”
- Consider **MERGING or COLLABORATING**
 - “We should partner to leverage financial resources and staff time and reduce duplicative efforts.”
 - “Duplicative nonprofits should consider merging.”
 - “We need to help consolidate like organizations, encourage it.”
- Encourage the development of the **ALLIANCE for ARIZONA NONPROFITS**
 - “We can educate the public through organizations like the Alliance.”
 - “The Alliance may allow us to collaborate with purchasing power, insurance, etc.”
 - “We need to promote the Alliance!”
- Facilitate **NETWORKING** of nonprofit organizations
 - “We need to get to know what others are doing.”
 - “If we network, we can share resources.”
 - “We need to get to know each other better.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Build working boards
- Develop measurement tools
- Recruit and retain staff and volunteers
- Professionalize the culture of the nonprofit sector

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

The top five responses include the following:

- Develop a **PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**
 - “Marketing, marketing, marketing.”
 - “We need to be promoting ourselves.”
 - “We should promote the academic centers and what they are doing for the sector.”
- Promote **COLLABORATION** within and outside of the nonprofit sector
 - “Collaboration needs to be happening with the other sectors (government, business, etc.)”
 - “We need greater connectivity with the business sector.”
 - “If we collaborate, we can develop partnerships with like-organizations to share resources and services.”
- Develop **TRAINING** opportunities within the nonprofit sector
 - “Education should include training of younger students in the benefits of nonprofit work.”
 - “We should establish programs for young people to help them learn about nonprofit organizations.”
 - “Include more learning about nonprofits in school.”
 - “Use academic centers as training grounds.”
 - “Train our boards!”
 - “We need to develop inexpensive trainings for nonprofits.”
- **ADVOCATE** at the Legislative level
 - “The nonprofit sector needs to develop a voice.”
 - “We need one voice to advocate for resources.”
 - “We need organized lobbying efforts at the state and national levels.”
- **SUPPORT** the **ALLIANCE** for **ARIZONA NONPROFITS**

Additional responses include the following:

- Consolidate similar organizations and blend them when appropriate
- Strengthen networking and relationship building
- Develop additional funding sources
- Develop a nonprofit directory

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