



**Alliance**  
OF **ARIZONA**  
NONPROFITS



**PROCEEDINGS**  
**TOWN HALL ON THE NONPROFIT SECTOR**

**TEMPE, ARIZONA**  
**APRIL 2006**



## Town Hall on the Nonprofit Sector - Tempe, Arizona APRIL 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 Tempe Town Hall conducted in March 2006.



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 Tempe Town Hall was the second one held in Arizona. Approximately 60 participants gathered to discuss the state of the nonprofit sector in Tempe and Maricopa County. The event began with a welcome from Jeff Williamson, CEO of the Phoenix Zoo. Patrick McWhorter, President & CEO of the Alliance, then walked the participants through a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the history of the Alliance and provided information about Alliance's next steps across Arizona.

Tim Delaney, Town Hall facilitator and senior advisor to NCNA for the National Nonprofit Congress, next began his facilitation of the Town Hall by asking participants to introduce themselves and change seats to ensure organizational diversity at each table. Tim then walked the participants through an Arizona

nonprofit timeline that he had designed and posted on the wall. The timeline included Arizona historical information and the growth and development of the Arizona nonprofit sector including establishment of the Phoenix Zoo, formation of the Arizona Boys Ranch, 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 Information and Referral, creation of the Sojourner Center, and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alliance for Arts Education, among others.

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 .



## Tempe 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 are constantly fighting for **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**
  - “Nonprofits depend on the kindness of strangers for resources.”
  - “Nonprofit organizations have to paint a compelling picture of their organizations to attract donors and sustain themselves financially.”
  - “Fiscal survival is always a challenge.”
- Nonprofit organizations are **PASSIONATE**
  - “All nonprofit organizations have the passion to strengthen and improve the community and see that something gets done!”
  - Nonprofits are committed to the communities they serve.
- Nonprofit organizations are **MISSION DRIVEN**
- Nonprofit organizations serve a specific need and **FILL A ROLE** that is not being fully met by the public and private sectors
  - “Nonprofits fill a niche that does not make a profit.”
  - “Nonprofit organizations fill a gap in the community.”
  - “Nonprofits have a desire and commitment to serve their communities and societies as a whole. Throughout society, nonprofits have stepped up to serve those who are most in need and have often done so with little or no support from the public sector. The nonprofit sector continues to fill gaps today by providing resources.”
- Nonprofit organizations have **DEDICATED STAFF and VOLUNTEERS** who are not properly rewarded financially or otherwise
  - Nonprofits struggle with employee recruitment and retention.
  - Staff members of nonprofits are underpaid and undervalued.
  - Staff members often suffer from burnout.
  - Nonprofits struggle with volunteer and board leadership issues.

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits have the same IRS status.
- Nonprofits are working towards the betterment of their communities and they desire to make the world a better place.
- Nonprofits support the underserved population.
- Nonprofit organizations need to collaborate.
- Nonprofits need to create a “unified front” with one voice.
- The nonprofit sector can mobilize quickly for a cause.
- The nonprofit sector suffers from a “lack of awareness of the sector as a whole.”
- Nonprofits have difficulty in getting their missions and needs out to the public.
- “Nonprofits must be run like a business if they want to be ‘built to last.’”

## 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** and should not foster a sense of **COMPETITION**
  - “The sector should establish successful partnerships to enhance organizations’ missions.”
  - “Organizations with similar missions should work together to optimize impact with limited resources.”
- The nonprofit sector needs **INCREASED AWARENESS** about its work
  - “The sector needs to be recognized for the economic machine that it is.”
  - “We should be broadly recognized as a vibrant contributor to the vitality of the community.”
  - “There must be a realization of the importance of the nonprofit sector in attracting workers and industry to Arizona.”
- The nonprofit sector should **COMBINE RESOURCES** for such things as better health care, retirement plans, education, and leadership and training opportunities
  - Nonprofits need “collective bargaining.”
- The nonprofit sector should take a **PROACTIVE STANCE ON PUBLIC POLICY**
  - Elected officials need to be better educated about the work of the nonprofit sector.
  - The nonprofit sector should work in partnership with the public and private sectors in meet the needs of the community.

- The nonprofit sector needs **ONE UNIFIED VOICE**
  - “The sector can have more economic and political clout with a unified voice.”
  - “The sector needs to be unified in strength and numbers, recognizing its impact on life and communities.”
  - “We need to find a common voice, but at the same time no lose our individual voices.”
  - “I wish the nonprofit sector would unite in spirit and in practice, to recognize the strength that it has in numbers and the influence that it has in lives and in creating community change.”
  - “We need everyone on the same page so that nonprofits have support and structure.”

Additional responses included the following:

- The sector needs to have maximized efficiency.
  - “The sector must be an efficient mechanism that works with government and other nonprofits to effectively serve the common good with maximum efficiency and professionalism.”
- The Nonprofit sector should operate like a business with an entrepreneurial style.
  - “Nonprofits should use business practices for success and get past the ‘culture of scarcity’”
- “The sector needs to be working ethically, responsibly, and with integrity.”
- The sector needs forums for collaboration and discussion.

### 3. What are the obstacles common to all nonprofits?

The top five responses included the following:

- The nonprofit sector **LACKS ECONOMIC STABILITY**
  - Government cuts funding to social services first.
  - All nonprofits have fundraising and development challenges.
  - “Nonprofit resources are spread too thin.”
  - “There are finite resources available for an ever-growing nonprofit sector.”
- Nonprofits **LACK ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY** to accomplish goals
  - Nonprofits lack human resources, facilities, and boards.
- The nonprofit sector **LACKS RECOGNITION**
  - “The nonprofit sector is misunderstood and/or invisible.”

- Nonprofits are in **COMPETITION** with each other
  - “Perceived competition prevents collaboration and sharing of resources and contracts.”
  - “There is constant competition for funds, audiences, and resources.”
  - Competition leads to failure to share information.
  - “There are too many nonprofits!”
  - It is too easy to become a recognized 501c3 organization.
  - “Nonprofits are constantly battling territorialism and turf issues.”
  - “There are issues of territorialism or ‘turf protection’ that hinder the efforts of true collaboration and partnership.”
  
- Nonprofits have **STAFFING AND VOLUNTEER LIMITATIONS**
  - “As new nonprofits constantly start-up there is a constant draw to try to get established which also ties into the issue of high turnover.”
  - Organizations lack effective board members.
  - “The boards of nonprofits are typically the people with the money who have never set foot in the nonprofit world. They make decisions lacking the necessary insights.”
  - Nonprofits have difficulty attracting and retaining skilled workers.

Additional responses included the following:

- Nonprofits are inflexible to adapt a business model.
- Nonprofits have difficulty with operating costs, especially personnel costs.
- The nonprofit sector lacks community awareness.
- Nonprofits have intangible end products.
- The sector does not have an alliance.
- The nonprofit sector is known for duplication of services and work.
- The sector has “inept leadership.”
- The sector lacks sophistication.
- “Individual and organizational egos get in the way of the work.”

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

The top five responses include the following:

- Create **PARTNERSHIPS** with other nonprofit organizations
  - “Change the paradigm that collaborations take away from an organization’s identity. The wave of the future is about building strategic partnerships. We can do more by combining our talents and resources than by always re-inventing the wheel individually.”

- “Approach collaboration from an abundance mentality and not a scarcity approach.”
- Nonprofits need to develop strategic alliances.
- Invest in the **ALLIANCE of ARIZONA NONPROFITS (AAN)**
  - Nonprofits need structured networking opportunities
  - Nonprofits need a master calendar of trainings, workshops, etc.
- Create **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** and **LEADERSHIP TRAINING** opportunities
- Facilitate **PARTICIPATION** in advocacy, public policy, and outreach
  - “We must become advocates at the legislature on behalf of the nonprofit sector.”
  - “Nonprofits should create a public awareness campaign highlighting the need for nonprofits and nonprofit accomplishments.”
- Facilitate **COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES** within the nonprofit sector
  - “We must create more forums for dialogue.”
  - “Nonprofits should meet, discuss, and share common ideas.”
  - “We must communicate that the nonprofit sector us a force to be reckoned with.”

Additional responses included the following:

- Hold additional town halls.
- Identify best practices and adapt them from other states around the country.
- Nonprofits must “invest in the next generation of leadership.”
- The nonprofit sector should consider consolidation of organizations.
- We should focus on nonprofits as businesses with an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Nonprofits need to share resources.

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

The top five responses include the following:

- Create a **LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**
  - “Create a statewide agenda for nonprofits that addresses political and business issues.”
  - “We must brand commonalities into political force.”

- Promote **PUBLIC AWARENESS** of the nonprofit sector
  - “Educate leadership about the collective impact of the sector.”
  - “Nonprofits need to constantly stay in the public eye.”
  - “We need to educate our state and national leadership about the impact and influence that we wield as a sector.”
- Establish **ONE VOICE** for the nonprofit sector
- Develop **ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS** and long-term evaluation plans including data collection and accountability standards
  - “The sector needs to be doing long-term assessment and evaluation.”
- Facilitate **RESOURCE SHARING**
  - “Nonprofits need to create a structure to share resources.”

Additional responses include the following:

- Market the sector differently.
- Develop a business model that is unique to the needs of the nonprofit sector and that includes technology.
- Focus on long-term strategic planning and development.
- Work together to enhance buying power with insurance, rent, and other discounts.
- “Close doors if an organization is not adding value.”
- “Invest in the next generation of leaders.”

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