Building an Effective Policy Program for Your PSO

2018 PolicyWorks Institute
March 11, 2018
Liaison Capitol Hill, Washington DC
Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions

- Lessons Learned: Building Up a PSOs’ Policy Program
  David Biemesderfer

- What the Data Shows: Building a PSO Policy Program
  Dawn Roberts

- Critical Success Factors for a PSO Policy Program
  Erin Skene- Pratt

- Peer Consults
Lessons Learned From Florida: Building Up a PSOs’ Policy Program

David Biemesderfer
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

2009

- FPN becomes Regional Association
- Organizes FOTH delegation
- Forms Public Policy Committee
- Initial focus on federal tax policy
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

2010

- First affinity group forms, focused on education, soon decides on policy focus

- Education Affinity Group releases white paper & education policy briefs – first FPN policy effort focused on a funding issue
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

EAG’s Work Leads to Great Visibility for FPN

- 2012: FPN starts developing stronger relationship with FL Department of Education
- 2013: FPN CEO speaks to FL Board of Education – a first
- FPN now “at the table” for education policy in ways it never was before
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

2013

FPN Board approves position in support of Common Core State Standards

- First time FPN takes policy position on a funding issue
- Deep board discussion: “We can’t always be Switzerland or we risk becoming irrelevant”
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

2012

- Health funders affinity group forms
- Publishes issue briefs on key health policy
- Holds health policy briefings in Tallahassee
Florida Philanthropic Network’s Policy Evolution

2015

- Health funders affinity group issues statement related to Medicaid expansion
- 2 new affinity groups form, focused on homelessness and women & girls
PSO Public Policy Engagement Continuum

**Learning Up Together on Policy Issues**
- Convenings
- Webinars
- Newsletters

**Serve as Trusted Source of Credible, Independent Information on Policy Issues**
- Research
- Issue Briefs
- White Papers

**Strategic Relationships with Policymaker & Policy Influencer**
- Briefings
- Convenings
- State Policy Task Forces & Committees
- Statewide Collaborations

**Individual Funder Advocacy**
- Policy Advocacy Materials
- Convenings
- Joint Letters
- Bill Monitoring

**Collaborative Advocacy**
- Position Papers
- Public Statements
- Outreach to Policymakers
- Bill Monitoring

**Lobbying**
- Public Testimony
- Outreach to Policymakers

www.unitedphilforum.org
Lessons Learned

- Start slow
- Member support is vital – “pull” doesn’t work
- Member leadership is vital
- Issue-focused policy can help build general policy work
- Money matters
What the Data Shows: Building a PSO Policy Program

Dawn Roberts
Highlights from the Annual Survey on Policy Work
The Annual Survey on Policy Work at Regional PSOs

- 2009: Baseline survey conducted during PolicyWorks for Philanthropy planning year (n=31)
- 2010: 20 PSOs participate through formal MOU (n=20)
- 2011: (n=20)
- 2012: 20 PSOs participate through formal MOU (n=27)
- 2013: Project becomes a formal initiative of the Forum (n=29)
- 2014: (n=29)
- 2015: (n=28)
- 2016: (n=31)
- 2017: (n=32)

PolicyWorks community open to additional members.
Notable Changes Since 2009

- Allocated staff time to policy work: 2017 (84%) vs. 2009 (45%)
- Facilitated relationship building between members and local/state policymakers: 2017 (87%) vs. 2009 (43%)
- Provided resources and tools to help members engage policymakers: 2017 (71%) vs. 2009 (35%)
- Provided briefings to policymakers about public policy issues: 2017 (68%) vs. 2009 (21%)
Changes in Staffing and Budgeting for Policy Work

- Adequate budget to support the achievement of policy work objectives
- Staff have the right mix of skills and expertise
- Allocation of staff time is adequate to achieve policy work objectives

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Adequate Budget</th>
<th>Right Mix of Skills</th>
<th>Adequate Staff Time</th>
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<td>2015 (n=28)</td>
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<td>2017 (n=32)</td>
<td>56</td>
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Changes in Communication Practices

- Strategic communications plan created to advance legislative agenda and/or policy reforms
- Communications/outreach plan to build member engagement in policy work
- Educating the public and the media regarding policy issues of interest to members

![Graph showing changes in communication practices from 2013 to 2017.](chart.png)
Collaboration for Policy Reform at the State and Local Levels

- Working systematically with the local/regional nonprofit community to impact policy
- Participating in regional/state coalitions to change public policy

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Working systematically</th>
<th>Participating in coalitions</th>
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<td>2017 (n=31)</td>
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Most Common Infrastructure for Policy Work in 2017

- Members provide leadership and expertise to achieve policy work objectives: 63%
- Board policy for whether/how PSO takes a policy position: 59%
- Member affinity groups focused on policy reforms: 58%
- Staff has right mix of skills and expertise: 56%
- Formal body with clear lines of authority for planning policy work activities: 56%
- Board has formally agreed on policy work objectives: 53%

Percentage of PSOs (n=32)
Most Common Member Services in 2017

- Facilitating relationship building between members and local and/or state policymakers: 87%
- Educating members about their legal rights and responsibilities related to advocacy: 77%
- Providing resources and tools to help members engage policymakers: 71%
- Offering education about legislative or regulatory issues affecting the work of charitable foundations: 71%
- Supporting members in promoting policy reforms on specific grantmaking issues: 68%
Most Common External Relations in 2017

- Initiated communication or meeting with policymaker to influence policy objective: 78%
- Collaborating regularly with the local/regional nonprofit community on educational activities: 74%
- Providing educational briefings for policymakers about public policy issues: 68%
- Contacted by policymakers or the media regarding the protection of the philanthropic sector: 66%
- Working systematically with the local/regional nonprofit community to impact policy: 52%

Percentage of PSOs (n=31)
Most Commonly Reported Changes in 2017

- Improved understanding of current trends related to policy issues: 57 (Forum directly supported change), 23 (Forum indirectly supported change), 3 (Forum had no role)
- Increased flow of information on policy to members: 47 (Forum directly supported change), 30 (Forum indirectly supported change), 17 (Forum had no role)
- Conducted education about how/why grantmakers should help to ensure accurate census count: 45 (Forum directly supported change), 23 (Forum indirectly supported change), 3 (Forum had no role)
- Improved legislative monitoring: 40 (Forum directly supported change), 20 (Forum indirectly supported change), 7 (Forum had no role)

Percentage of PSOs (n=31)
Tips for Building an Effective Policy Program

- **Define realistic objectives for policy engagement**
  - Build awareness and commitment of your members and board
  - Articulate goal(s) and objectives as part of strategic planning process

- **Plan systems and processes for achieving policy objectives**
  - Staff time
  - Dedicated budget
  - Board policy on PSO taking position on policy issue
  - Authority for planning and decision-making
  - Member outreach
  - Partnerships/alliances
  - Strategic communications
  - Evaluation

- **Participate in the Network**
  - Use resources and activities provided by the Forum
  - Interact with other PSOs to share resources and collaborate on activities
Critical Success Factors for a PSO Policy Program

Erin Skene-Pratt
Taking the Road Often Traveled

- Raising Awareness
- Building Skills & Systems
- Catalyzing Action
Raising Awareness/Building Support

- Thinking about support
- Thinking about members
- Thinking about strategies
- Thinking about messages
Building Skills & Systems

Roadmap:

- Policy action plan
- Job descriptions
- Position statements
- Public policy committee
- Board policy
Catalyzing Action

“We constantly share the message that we—specifically our members—are a resource to policymakers.”

“We want them to know who we are. We want them to return our phone calls. We want them to give us a seat at the table.”

“Making sure there isn’t a mismatch between how the official sees you and how you see yourself takes a lot of proactive relationship building and being open to some frank feedback.”
Catalyzing Action

“We’ve had success with folks who have been in agencies for some time—staff, more than elected or appointed officials.”

“We’re pounding away at the message that philanthropy can’t fill the gaps. You’d think that would be an easy message but it’s not.”

“Bring the person who will tell the strongest story. Who will be the best proponent for the message you want to deliver that day?”
Peer Consults

Facilitated by Erin Skene-Pratt