
MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS, LA CASA NORTE
FROM: STACEY RAY ROTH
SUBJECT: ADVOCACY COALITION
DATE: 11/22/2015
CC:

CITY ADVOCACY COALITION

We have been invited to be involved in an advocacy coalition at the city level that works for policies to reduce homelessness, and provide additional funding for mental health and addiction services. Just recently they have taken a stand to increase the minimum wage city-wide to \$15/hour above the \$13/hour already approved. Their objectives clearly align with our own mission and efforts, as we are already doing work to reduce homelessness as well as partnering to offer access to mental health and addiction services and support. I strongly believe that it would be in our best interest, and more importantly the interest of those we serve, for La Casa Norte to join the coalition in its advocacy efforts. Our mission is to serve those confronting homelessness and we can do this more effectively by targeting the root of the problem and helping to drive positive change.

Creating Substantial Change

Getting involved with the advocacy coalition would allow us to create more substantial change within an arena that we are deeply committed. "Nonprofits have long been directly connected to politics through advocacy work, which starts with the premise that social change occurs through politics, and that the power of the state can be moved to act on behalf of people (Frumkin, 2002, p. 51)." Our involvement with the coalition would allow us to put pressure on political bodies to help shape policy and public opinion and in the end, make a bigger difference towards alleviating homelessness. We witness and respond to the impact of public policies on the people we serve (Nonprofit Association of Oregon, 2015), therefore we will help to shape the environment in which we operate, exercising more control and influence and having greater effect (Frumkin, 2002).

Advocacy will not only allow us to influence local priorities, affect policy, and build consensus around solutions that affect our constituency, but it will also allow us to give political voice to those who need our help most but may be excluded from the political process or feel to helpless to voice their concern. We can be the bridge between policy makers and our constituents (Nonprofit Association of Oregon, 2015). It is our responsibility to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people that we serve, and advocacy will allow us to do that.

Engagement and Partnerships

Through advocacy efforts we can help individuals transform their commitment to alleviating the issue of homelessness into concrete collective action through mobilization, connectivity and political engagement (Frumkin, 2002). We have a wide network of people who care and are eager to help in any way that they can, and we have the opportunity to engage them in advocating for policy to affect

greater change. Nonprofits play a vital role in the development of public policy and we have the opportunity to influence a democratic community by helping organize people around this cause, empower them to advocate for change in their own way and to engage in the political process.

The advocacy coalition will also allow us to build partnerships to advance our efforts towards a common goal, and build linkages at the community level. These partnerships and connections can build trust and confidence within the community.

Commitment and Awareness

Our advocacy efforts will demonstrate our deep commitment to the larger issue, further ensuring community trust. We have firsthand experience and knowledge of the seriousness of homelessness in our community, and the obligation to inform and educate the public and policy makers of this issue, generating greater awareness of homelessness on a local level and beyond. I strongly believe that the expressive, political role of nonprofits lies at the heart of the sector, allowing organizations such as La Casa Norte to fight for change that meets the needs of their constituents in the greatest way possible (Frumkin, 2002).

Lastly, joining the advocacy coalition and engaging in advocacy efforts will raise awareness of our organization's mission, mobilize our constituents and attract positive media attention, further improving our outreach and spreading our mission and values to affect greater change.

Challenges

We will face some challenges by adding this additional responsibility, specifically staffing, but I believe that it will only increase our effectiveness towards our mission in the end. "Instead of converting nonprofit resources into units of service on a one-to-one basis, advocacy work takes a small number of resources and tries to multiply their impact by changing public priorities (Frumkin, 2002)." It leverages fewer resources but in a more impactful way that reaches larger numbers of people. If we can advocate for policy changes, we will eventually be able to have a greater impact on homelessness, furthering our own resources and benefiting our constituency.

References

Frumkin, P. (2002). *On Being Nonprofit: A Conceptual and Policy Primer*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Nonprofit Association of Oregon. (Visited November 22, 2015). Public Policy Advocacy: What, Why and How. Nonprofit Association of Oregon. Retrieved from: http://www.nonprofitoregon.org/advocacy/nonprofit_advocacy