Enabling & Constraining Advocacy Practices through Human Service Networks

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Engaging in public policy is an important and well established role for nonprofit organizations. Yet, initial research about nonprofit policy advocacy used frames established by social science disciplines, considering the organizations merely another form of interest groups, vehicles for social movement organizing, or civil society associations which enabled democratic participation (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Berry & Arons, 2003; Boris & Krehely, 2002; Mosley, 2010a). More recent work moves beyond disciplinary considerations to bring public policy advocacy, itself, to center stage, and documents that significant numbers of nonprofit agencies engage in civic engagement, policy advocacy, and lobbying (Mosley, 2010a; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Salamon and Geller, 2008). In fact, many large and formalized organizations deploy a range of tactics to share their knowledge and expertise in the public policy arena.

Up to this point, the limited research about these issues focuses on a few specific questions related to how government activity might affect advocacy and free experience. First, scholars differentiate policy engagement at the national level, from the activity at the state and local levels (Berry & Arons, 2003; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007). Whereas national nonprofits executive sophisticated tactics (Strolovitch, 2007), state and local activities are more modest. Some researchers explore how confusion about basic legal rules and regulations influences engagement levels and approaches among the whole population of nonprofits (Bass, et al, 2007; Berry & Arons, 2003; Reid, 2006). Others explore how government funding influences nonprofits’ advocacy practices. While scholars initially believed nonprofits’ resource dependency on government created disincentives for policy advocacy, empirical research has found little support for this concern. In fact, there is growing evidence that organizations receiving government funding are more likely to engage in public policy engagement (Berry & Arons, 2003; Chaves, et al, 2004; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Mosley, 2010b; Salamon & Gellner, 2008).

Recent descriptive accounts by Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies point to new areas for research. A 2007 survey and subsequent roundtables of nonprofit leaders convened by the Center highlight the role of coalitions and intermediate organizations as quite significant (Belzer, 2011; Geller & Salamon, 2009; Newhouse, 2010). In fact, this descriptive
finding inspired the analysis undertaken for this chapter. Through investigating nonprofit advocacy in a unique study of nonprofit service delivery organizations in one state, I highlight what is not yet visible in most research about nonprofit advocacy – the role of networks in developing, supporting, and reinforcing advocacy practices.

This study explores conditions within two networks of human service organizations, both of whose members provide safety-net and social service programs to low-income individuals and families. Each network has distinct organizational members and operates within the same state. The statewide, Community Action Partnership (CAP) was formalized in 1971 and strengthened in the early 1980s after federal retrenchment and funding consolidation. As such, it emerged in response to government initiated, top-down policy change. The other network, the Alliance for Connected Communities, was founded in 1999 among agencies in the state’s metro area with deep community roots as historic settlement houses and community centers. As such, it emerged from a bottom-up movement of agencies directors who wanted to build power in light of growing environmental uncertainty. Each network is held together by a unique history and a similar struggle for stable and flexible revenue to support daily operations within service-based organizations. Important to our purposes here, while agencies in both networks focus on service provision, they also engage in community building and policy advocacy like many other community-based organizations (Marwell, 2004).

In this chapter, I draw upon multiple sources of data to better understand how advocacy capacity is built in these types of human service organizations. While individual organizations in this sample report using many advocacy tactics, critical competencies influencing the effectiveness of deployment reside at the network level. As such, different sources of data illuminate distinct elements of advocacy practice. While surveys offer one picture, a more deep exploration of how policy advocacy is possible through drawing on qualitative data gathered over a number of years. To help interpret the practices uncovered by these methods, I turn to practice theory. It focuses on what actions occur and unpacking how experiences and understanding activates or impedes the development of resources. This theory does not see
resources as something provided merely through a foundation grant or government contract. Rather, it stresses that resources may also be human talent, collective strategy, or organizing tools. They can be activated, squandered or depleted. Understanding this unpredictable process can enrich our understanding of what is involved in developing nonprofit advocacy capacity and the ability of organizations and networks to deploy a range of tactics effectively (Berry & Arons, 2003).

Research Design & Methodology

This paper draws upon data from an in-depth study of these two human service networks I undertook from 2007-2010. Unlike some case studies, I did not seek to identify cases with strong reputations for effectiveness, either as networks or organizations, when designing this study; rather I identified two networks with similar characteristics to allow for systematic comparison. Both the Alliance of Connected Communities and Community Action Partnership (CAP) exist in one state, allowing us to hold constant the policy environment in the comparison. Both are organized by the same overall structure, a formal network with an incorporated nonprofit at the hub, supported by membership dues and agency directors as the governing board. Table 1 summarizes them on some key dimensions. As is shown, while the Alliance member organizations are smaller than the Community Action Agencies with average employment half as large, less revenue, and fewer overall programs, organizations in both networks are large, formalized and professional human service agencies. All receive significant levels of funding from public sources and, are thus, easily recognized as significant to the operations of the social welfare state. The full data-set for this study includes information across multiple levels of analysis; however, in this paper, I focus on network level data to explore public policy advocacy practices.

One source of data comes from an organizational survey of all network members conducted during the spring of 2008. This survey garnered a 75% response rate among the Alliance agencies and 86% among the Community Action Partnership organizations. The survey captured descriptive information about all agencies regarding programming, size, finances,
governance, management capacity, and policy engagement. A comparable survey also was fielded in a state-wide random sample of Minnesota’s nonprofit sector to allow for comparison between that population and organizations in these two networks (Sandfort and Rogers-Martin, 2008).² Measures about policy engagement activities were adapted from a survey Human Service organizations in Los Angeles (Mosley, Katz, Hasenfeld, and Anheier, 2003).

Secondly, I conducted 45 semi-structured formal interviews with leaders during 2007-2008, distributed equally across each network, about the network’s history, accomplishments, and major activities. A portion of these interviews uses a modal narrative approach (Clark et al. 2007) that offer hypothetical situations about three major trends in government and nonprofit relationships: the growing complexity of revenue, the increasing requirements to document program performance, and attempts to engage in public policy advocacy. This data collection technique helps capitalize on the richness of semi-structured interviews, yet enables more systematic comparison about how perception and action is related.

Additionally, I consulted network documents and conducted participant observation throughout the four year period. The field notes (Emerson, 1995) captured observations and informal interactions from training programs, board meetings and public events, phone conversations, and other professional interactions. They recorded both notable events and participants’ interpretations of events. This source was an important supplement to the more formal interviews and added an ethnographic dimension to the research, probing the ways network participation shaped perceptions and actions among its membership.

Survey results were analyzed with SPSS and descriptive comparisons made between both networks and our state-wide sample of human service organizations. The indices of different types of advocacy tactics were developed using data from the full state-wide survey (described in endnote #1). I also compare results from network organizations with the 239 human service organizations in the statewide sample in this paper.³ All qualitative data were transcribed or audio recorded and introduced into NVivo for systematic analysis, using both inductive and deductive coding. Analytical memos were used to capture emerging themes that
inform the development of the grounded theory presented here. Because data collection occurred over a number of years, there was systematic refinement of coding scheme and understanding over the course of the study.

This comprehensive data collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative information about these two cases enables triangulation and improves the validity of the conclusions drawn. Specifically, the analysis provides rich description that allows me to illuminates important causal mechanisms largely obscured in conventional research based upon *a priori* assumptions of about how organizations carry out policy advocacy.

**Research Context**

The organizations in these two networks focus on providing human services for low-income citizens. They are multiservice organizations, offering a range of programming such as emergency food and shelter, early childhood and family services, senior services, supports to vulnerable families and youth. They are not, in any sense of the word, advocacy organizations (Berry & Arons, 2003; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Mosley, 2010a). While these two cases are comparable in many ways, there are some distinctions to note. While organizations across each network share similar struggles for stable and flexible funding and espouse values of social justice as central motivations, each is held together by a unique history. Their stories illustrate how developing an orientation to advocacy is often an incremental process within nonprofit service organizations (Berry & Arons, 2003: 164).

The organizations in the Alliance for Connected Communities are traditional social service agencies or community-based organizations (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Started in the early 20th Century, these settlement houses and mutual aid associations provided language instruction, childhood enrichment, and other family services for those in need. They were originally funded through private donations and community chests, but began receiving increasing amounts of public funding during the 1970s and 1980s (Fabricant & Fisher, 2002; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Much of these organizations’ public funding comes from county and city
governments, and school districts. Private philanthropy – from foundation, corporations, and individuals – and the United Way were significant funding streams for these organizations throughout much of their existence. Starting in the 1970s, many Alliance organizations began experimenting with community organizing. As social welfare agencies, they saw the importance of community mobilizing and sought private funding to support organizing, and less frequently, policy advocacy. Yet, this type of private funding is always in short supply (Salamon & Geller, 2008).

The formal Alliance network grew from informal meetings among the directors of these agencies starting in the mid-1990s. While many had known each other for years, they began to come together for a meal more regularly, to trade information about funders and emerging opportunities for influence and service innovation. By 1997, they decided to incorporate as a stand-alone nonprofit. As one of the directors of a large nonprofit explained, “I had tried for ten years to get something together; I realized that, as non-profits, we had to get bigger to command respect. Otherwise, we were going to get nicked to death.” Unlike the Community Action Agencies which have distinct geographic service areas and designated funds, the Alliance members initially were as much competitors as they were collaborators. But they worked diligently to build trust and collaborative capacity (Huxham, 2003). At first, they focused on joint buying of products, but slowly began to talk about sharing management services, program development, and policy engagement. By 2001, they hired staff and, a few years later, a full-time executive director. By 2007, when this formal study began, they had developed and were executing a shared public policy strategy.

While the Community Action Partnership operates within the same state and provides similar programs and services to low-income citizens, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) have a different history and funding legacy as government-established nonprofits (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). In fact, twenty-five agencies were founded in 1965 across the state to lead local efforts on the war on poverty, as was done throughout the country. Today, twenty-seven nonprofits span the state and receive the federal Community Services Block grant and designed state funding, both valuable and unusual public funds because they support general operating costs.
Many implement the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (targeted to low-income families to help defray high energy costs during winter), Weatherization Assistance (which helps improve low-income homes), and Head Start (a family support and early childhood education program). Virtually all agencies also receive state and local public funding, and some garner support from local United Ways.

At the core of the statewide network is the Community Action Partnership. Formally established as a nonprofit in 1971, soon after local community action agencies were founded, its activities initially focused on sharing program knowledge, promoting development of local resources, and coordinating resources across the full network. In the early years, it was not easy for the association to work effectively together. Agency programs and operations varied in quality and the locally constituted entities did not share a common vision. However, many saw themselves as the frontlines of the federal war on poverty and wanted to be recognized as the spokespeople for low-income citizens. They hired an executive director and, soon thereafter secured the state-level appropriation to support the general operations of the state’s CAAs. When Reagan Administration’s 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act significantly cut federal programs, the network again activated. Working together, the nonprofits encouraged state legislators to pass the first state law designating certain nonprofits as Community Action agencies, just when the federal special designation was rescinded. Legislative successes and participation governor appointed anti-poverty task forces built experiences of policy engagement into the foundations of the network.

My study of these organizations and networks occurred over a number of years within which funding for social welfare service was contracting. The Great Recession impacted individual donations, philanthropic endowments and grant-making, and government sources at all levels. While the state’s grant-making association reported consistent funding for human services during this period, there were significant changes in large funders who had been important supporters of these agencies. Leaders in both networks agreed with the sentiment expressed by one Alliance member, “It used to be we would talk about the perfect storm [with each funding source decreasing]. But things aren’t really that any more. Now we are thinking
more like an earthquake. We are starting to feel the tremors but know that a lot worse is coming as this hits the county, state, and feds, United Way, foundations and individuals.”

One additional element of the research context is relevant to this chapter on advocacy practices. Both human service networks exist in a one state with a vibrant and growing nonprofit sector. Significant to our purposes here, the state’s nonprofit membership organization is deeply involved in building the sector’s capacity for effective public policy engagement. They regularly offer training on legal responsibilities and regulations, publish newsletter stories about legislative initiative, and communicate about instances in which nonprofits act as a resource to government officials. They disseminate toolkits to enable direct service organizations to easily carry out get out the vote activities and host forums for candidates. During the period of this study, in fact, the theme of one of the associations’ annual conferences, attracting over three thousand participants, was Working with Government. These particularly resources should positively influence the deployment of advocacy tactics for all agencies across these networks and comparison sample.

One Description of Policy Advocacy Tactics

Within existing research, a common method used to document nonprofit advocacy tactics is cross-sectional organizational surveys (Berry & Arons, 2003; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Mosley, et al 2003) and I draw upon that one source of data here. My survey results illustrate that few human service organizations in the state-wide sample (7%) and even fewer in both of the case study networks (less than 5%) report hiring lobbying consultants or filing 501(h) election with the IRS to report lobbying expenses. However, like other scholars (Bass, et al 2007; Berry & Arons, 2003; Mosley 2010a), my survey also explores other advocacy activities beyond formal lobbying. I conceptualize public policy engagement in three additional dimensions, ranging on a continuum, from insider to indirect tactics (Mosley, forthcoming). The first, acting as a resource to public officials, documents insider activities in which staff or board members bring their expertise formally to those with authority: participating in the development or revision of regulations; having meetings with policy officials; serving on a
commission or task force; providing formal testimony at a public hearing; or signing a letter to express their opinion to public officials. Table Two provides details about the index developed from these measures in our survey and illustrates that both the Alliance and Community Action Partnership agencies acted as such a resource more than typical human service agencies (statistically significant). On the 5-point scale, Alliance members reported an average of 2.88 such activities over the previous two-years, Community Action members reported 3.27 incidences, compared to 1.83 in the general population of human service agencies in Minnesota. Mosley (forthcoming) suggests that while these insider tactics require more expertise and are more resource intensive, they offer potentially more benefit because nonprofits develop closer ties to decision makers through using them.

The second dimension of public policy engagement focuses on more general activities to educate the general public about policy-relevant issues. This include: writing editorials or letters to the editor; issuing reports related to public policy issues; purchasing advertising to influence public policy; or hosting nonpartisan candidate forums. They are less direct than being a resource to a public official but still require substantive expertise. Again, the organizations in both the Alliance and Community Action networks were statistically more likely to be involved in these types of activities than other organizations. On the 4-point scale, Alliance members reported an average of 2.30 incidences, Community Action organization 2.75, compared to 1.0 in the other human service agencies in the state. Comparatively, these organizations use the direct means (resource to public officials) in similar amounts to this more general approach.

The final dimension of public policy engagement focuses on activities related to organizing constituencies about systems-level issues and, among these indices, this is the least direct. This construct includes: participating in nonpartisan voter registration efforts. participating in get out the vote activities; working to pass or defeat ballot measures; organizing citizens to influence policy making. While these tactics might influence the general civic environment, they are less focused on particular organizational or client objectives. Once again, Alliance and Community action organizations were statistically more likely to
demonstrate these activities than the state-wide sample of other human service agencies. On the 3-point scale, Alliance members reported an average of 1.5 activities, Community Action agencies reported 1.67 activities, compared to .65 in the larger human service agency comparison group. Comparatively, though, the survey results less use of these indirect methods than the other two approaches.

The survey also asks about levels of government the agencies sought to influence with these tactics. As Table 3 reflects, the descriptive results suggest they direct advocacy tactics towards levels of government most relevant to their own agency survival. Alliance organizations are more heavily dependent upon state and local resources to support their range service programs. They respond to state- and county-issued requests for proposals to secure funding for their food pantries, early childhood programs, and employment services. The CAAs secure financial resources from the state government, for energy assistance, food programs, employment, and enjoy a designative fund that supports general operations. Yet, they also receive significant federal resources as the main implementers of some federal programs. As a result of their particular financial dependencies, the leaders in these organizations report focusing their policy advocacy activities on the relevant levels of government.

To this point, the picture painted of policy advocacy by these survey results is consistent with previous research. Few service organizations report direct lobbying but many are involved in a range of advocacy activities, from resource-intensive insider tactics to more indirect tactics such as public education about issues or organizing constituents. The organizations involved in both the Alliance and Community Action networks are more engaged in public policy advocacy efforts than other human service agencies. We would expect this because they are larger, more formalized organizations (Bass, et al 2007; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Mosley, 2010a; forthcoming; Salamon and Gellner, 2008) operating at the state and local level where it is easier to use such tactics to gain access to public officials (Berry & Arons, 2003). However, this picture does not accurately reflect what interviews and direct observation reveal. How
advocacy tactics are actually deployed by these organizations, affiliated as they are in particular networks, is an important part of understanding advocacy capacity in these cases.

Another Description of Policy Advocacy Tactics & Results

Over a number of years, my research team and I gathered qualitative data about organizational and network efforts to lobby, serve as resources to public officials, support public education about policy issues, and organize citizens around policy issues. What emerged is a deeper understanding of the actual practice of policy advocacy within service organizations and networks suggest questions about how advocacy capacity is build and new opportunities for theorizing.

*Lobbying*. In both networks, organizational leaders express ambivalence about formal lobbying, albeit with different consequences. Alliance members often talk more abstractly about policy work, speaking frequently at board meetings about the need to engage in “systems change” or build new “power bases.” Often, when this value is expressed, other agency directors challenge the presumption, evoking various experiences or rumors that lend an air of uncertainty about the legitimacy of lobbying activities. When I followed up with one vocal critic, he explained, “[My organization] does not have the capacity to do [lobbying]. And it is not who I am. I was hired to run the organization the best way I can, provide the best services I can to the community. My board is not that type of board.” He – and others consulted subsequently – estimate that 40 to 50 percent of the Alliance members have deep ambivalence about lobbying. Yet, few organizations in the network have actual lobbying experience. One notable exception is a traditional service organization that, for years, used philanthropic grants to support community organizing, policy coalitions, and lobbying. This expertise was one of the resources the executive director eagerly offered to the Alliance when her organization joined. As she explained, “We are we are really known for our public policy, even though we only have two people on staff [doing it]. I believed we needed to come together with the others to help building the power.” The Alliance executive committee initially embraced this idea and contracted with her registered lobbyist for twenty hours a
month to lobby on behalf of the network. But this effort was short-lived. Few Alliance members felt lobbying capacity was necessary at the network level and, when the private philanthropic funding became uncertain, it seemed an unsustainable priority. Instead of using board meetings to plan lobbying strategy, Alliance members resumed their ongoing discussion about the lack of policy maker’s interests in low-income people and despair that this would ever change.

In contrast, the Community Action Partnership annually develops a public policy statement, articulating particular legislative objectives. It contracts with a part-time lobbyist, and the executive director and up to two additional staff also register as lobbyists. However, this investment in staff capacity does not reflect uniform support for lobbying within the network. Thinking about the board table, one director reflected, “...[H]alf the table doesn’t care about the lobbying. [They]...get money and do good things and don’t care where it comes from. Part of it is geographic, related to the sophistication of agencies and philosophy. But it also depends on the background of the executive director.” Unlike the Alliance board table, though, lobbying is understood by all members as legitimate activity. Rather than embedding the expertise within individual organizations, lobbying is understood as an essential strategy for the network. The ambivalence of individual leaders manifests in unequal engagement in the network’s legislative committee rather than a decision for the network not to engage at all.

In fact, the Community Action network regularly engages in heated debates about particular legislative issues and tactics. As Mosley (2010) points out, lobbying and advocacy tactics can be directed either toward organizational or client concerns, or as Chuck Atwood, the network’s director characterizes it, oriented towards “business or mission.” ‘Business’ lobbying focuses on assuring the state and federal funding streams so important to the network are protected from attacks. For some, the network is assessed on this dimension. “Our advocacy receives a B+ or A- because we’ve weathered some pretty rough storms. When the times come we need to do something, we do it. The minus comes because we are not as good at shaping policy as we should be.” ‘Mission’ lobbying focuses on policy issues related to the well-being of low-income citizens –minimum wage legislation, health care access, changes to food stamp
eligibility, establishing a legislative commission to end poverty. Assessing network effectiveness along these lines, another network member came to less favorable conclusions, “We aren’t on the foreground of changing social justice issues. I would give us a C. We’re passing, but not doing great. We aren’t rabble rousing like [other low-income policy advocates] but we offer services to those in need.” Differing perspectives are live within the network, shaping heated debates around the board table about the relative costs and benefits of ‘business’ and ‘mission’ oriented lobbying strategies.

Resource to Public Officials. As the survey results suggest, the organizations in both networks engage in a range of advocacy tactics beyond lobbying. Both attempt to engage in proactive strategies in both legislative and administrative advocacy, to develop relationships with public officials which could enhance their ability to affect systems levels issues (Mosley 2010a; Berry & Arons, 2003). But, again, the way this ambition is carried out differs significantly in each network.

In early 2007, the Alliance board decided it would develop a full strategy to improve its standing with state and local officials. They formed a policy working and invited legislators to join the whole board for a meeting at the state capital. A few showed up and they talked about their programming. But, as network members reflected on it later, it seemed difficult for the officials to fully comprehend the core mission of the network or understand the constituencies they represented. As a result, the network decided to catalogue their own assets; following the lead of a health membership organization, they hired a firm to develop a survey for staff across their member organizations to document the latent talents which might now be tapped. Yet, while such information helped increase internal information and was shared with member agencies, it wasn’t effectively leveraged into work with state officials. Instead of exploring the cause of the mismatch, members resorted to stories of moments of missed opportunities in building credibility with legislative officials: state representatives who show up at their organization at Thanksgiving or for flu shots; moments they weren’t asked to testify at the legislature; conversations where their knowledge of community issues wasn’t appreciated.
More progress occurred at the local level. Through another survey of their members, the director, Juanita Larson, discovered one metro county contracted with the network for a total of $8 million in various services, requiring 40 different staff members to manage all the contracts. She used this information to access the county’s administrator who was interested in increasing administrative efficiencies. They met over a number of months and, as a result, a county staff member was asked to join the network’s monthly meetings. While this was understood almost uniformly by network members as a positive development (for it allowed county officials to better appreciate the breadth and scope of the Alliance’s work), members also realize that relationships with one county doesn’t necessarily translate to relationships with others. In interviews, leaders repeatedly referenced the myriad of state, county, city, and school district that influenced their work. Assessing the overall progress, one network member said, “There are just so many municipalities. We can’t establish this type of relationship with all of them.” The task of positioning the network as a true resource to public officials, to invest the time in building the trusting relationships, felt overwhelming because its scope.

In contrast, proactive development of public officials is carried out by the Community Action network and central to their mission. Unlike the contested value of lobbying, network members uniformly believe to offer policy leaders their expertise. “We must be able to show working poor people who are in danger of becoming undefined families on the political radar. We need to always remind decision-makers that working poverty is important—and not to be replaced by the homeless or methadone addicts -- especially in rural areas.” When the network was successful in helping establish a legislative commission on ending poverty, member agencies mobilized to provide briefings to commissioners, open their offices for visits, and host community meetings. This type of investment yield results. Many members recount being called by state legislators for opinions about program details. This, in turn, makes them comfortable asking for technical modifications in legislation when modest tweaks can improve service options. In recounting one such story, one direct explained, “If I didn’t have a trusting relationship with a legislator he wouldn’t have done this for me at all. Also, knowing the funding agency folks, developing a trusting relationship with them, that’s also important. When you...do what you say you’re going to do, then they trust you.”
As suggested by this quote, the Community Action Partnership enjoys trusting relationships with administrative officials at the state and county levels, as well. The most notable of these is the state’s Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), so named because its origins in the War on Poverty era. Housed in the Department of Human Services, the office is committed to the entire network. They invest federal funds in the network which assist with general operations, research, and data analysis, regularly communicate the network staff and agency directors, and conduct monitoring visits in ways emphasizing mutual partnership. In developing a training program for emerging leaders, designers all assumed the office’s director, Linda Miller, would be a featured speaker. In that session, she told a story of implementing total quality management within state government and her realization that low-income people were not technically her office’s customers. The nonprofits were. As she explained, “We are the voice for the poor in state government. [But], someone needs to make sure that you get the resources you need. If we took care of you, you are able to care of the poor people.” In this way, Linda conveyed the shared mission between her office and the network, subtly communicating the special relationship existing between them.

Agencies in the network also enjoy a unique relationship with local public officials. By federal law, Community Action agency boards reflect a ‘tripartite board structure’; one-third of the members are local elected officials, one-third community members, and one-third low-income citizens. While this takes different forms in each locality, this helps to assure these nonprofits have unique access to county officials. Conservative board members appreciate how these agencies leverage local volunteers and help assure federal funding reaches rural areas. Policy briefs from the state Community Action network also provide timely information about state policy changes to local officials. One consequence of this unique board arrangement – and its difference from the Alliance whose board members are more typical nonprofit volunteers -- was documented in our survey; 85% of Community Action agencies report their boards are somewhat or very active in influencing public policy, compared to only 45% of Alliance agencies.
Public Education about Policy Issues. For the Alliance, mobilizing the resources to do public education about policy issues is challenging. Members operate different programs – youth development, child care, preschool, mental health groups, food shelves, employment programs – each with distinct funding portfolios. The network does not have much research capacity to document the scope of these programs or their collective impact. The active working group on youth development draws staff from all agencies, but its activities focus on sharing program information and trying to hammer out common program outcomes. As part of the networks intentional public policy strategy developed in 2007, a number of organizations hosted candidate forums. While there was good turnout at some agencies, it was not uniformed. The next year, a fewer number of organizations hosted and, after a few years, this tactic faded from discussion, as more pressing issues took their place. Finally, while individual agencies might occasionally write letters to the editor of neighborhood papers or use food shelf statistics when trying to raise funds from individuals, leaders never discuss proactively engaging the media around the board table. When asked about this, many were surprised by the question, itself. It never occurred to them that public education would be a collective concern.

In contrast, the Community Action network has many tactics oriented to educating the public about policy issues related to their work and needs of their clients. The network publishes a comprehensive, 80-page report every two years documenting current policy or program issue and profiling individual organizational successes. It lists each network members, contact information, and key program areas and results. It presents comparable data about clients served and longer-term results assessed through a network-wide self reliance achievement scale. Lobbyists use this report in working with legislators and county officials; copies are shared with important stakeholders from state agencies, universities, other nonprofits, and private foundations.

Other tactics are used to advance education relevant to client situations. As a network of service-based organizations, the Community Action Partnership is regarded as an important venue for state-level advocacy groups to disseminate research, solicit volunteers for pilot programs or research, or develop outreach plans. Niche advocacy organizations focused on
employment, public assistance benefits, free-tax preparation regularly attend network meetings to discuss policy challenges and potential solutions, asking the network to get the word out. More, though, than merely disseminating information to clients, the network also proactively cultivates media attention in areas like asset development or home weatherization to showcase local organizations’ expertise. The Community Action partnership has developed many different tactics for educating the public and clientele, even when time is limited.

Organizing Constituencies about Systems-Level Issues. One commitment which holds the Alliance organizations together is a formally stated goal: “to create asserts and tools to amplify community voice.” Members claim it is a distinguishing characteristic of the network, which differentiates members from other human service agencies. The iconic illustration of this ambition was a get out the vote tool kit they developed and share nationally with other. With promotional materials, voter guides, and contact tracking for staff and volunteers, it was uniformly recognized among members as particularly valuable. In 2007, they contacted training across the agencies and registered 1000 voters using the tool-kit. Juanita Larson then tried to take their model to the state’s nonprofit association and was shocked to discover they had developed their own voter initiative. Rather than partnering with the association, she decided to distribute the kits nationally. But the next year, the network registered far fewer voters and found few were using the Community Power vote materials. In fact, rather than building more capacity within their own network for this type of activity by 2009, the Alliance decided to join a larger coalition – ironically spear- headed by the state’s nonprofit association – to participate in get out the vote activities.

The Community Action network also evokes the tradition of community mobilization, as part of the War on Poverty legacy. Yet, like the Alliance, it is difficult to sustain tactics at the network level consistent with those aspirations. One federal funding, the Community Services Block grant, mandates ‘community needs assessments’ on a regular basis and agencies comply. Some organizations use the results of these assessments to inform planning, but none use it to inform a policy agenda. The networks’ previous executive director hired a consulting firm to develop a state-wide grassroots organizing plan strategically focused in particular legislative
districts. During that period, the network employed a full-time organizer who tried to build a deeper base of constituent support for anti-poverty policy. This type of approach – only feasible at the network level where service organizations can pool expertise -- was not sustained by the current network director. Members were ambivalent. This strategic, campaign-style organizing just felt too risky.

*Elements Visible in the More In-depth Description.* There are a number of things interesting about this comparison. Service organizations in both networks looked to a collective group to help build out their policy advocacy capacity. From a management perspective, this strategic choice makes sense. The knowledge and skills necessary for effective advocacy are quite distinct from what people managing a service organization, supervising staff, or delivering programs possess. Within the collective, more potential resources existed; they could hire staff with knowledge of legislative processes, utilize and cultivate relationships with other policy-advocates and officials, deploy effective planning and prioritizing processes. They could also build concrete tools, such as list serves, reports with program facts, organizing tool kits. Yet, as these two comparison cases show, such resources are not always further developed or deployed. The collective capacity for policy advocacy is not always built, although the resources might be present.

**Assessing Policy Advocacy Capacity**

It is difficult to definitively assess the consequences of policy advocacy tactics carried out by any coalition or network. Yet, groups regularly assess the results of their actions, considering the relative costs and benefits and informing future actions. In this study, I examined network members own sense of the success of their advocacy practice. I am also able to compare how both networks tried to use their capacity during the unprecedented implementation of federal stimulus funding in 2009 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
Conventional wisdom encourages nonprofits to be modest in their aspirations, to be prudent in their activities, and to educate funders and board members that long time horizons are often necessary. Such sentiments were heard often within the Alliance. While many members spoke frequently about the need to engage in “systems change” work and board meetings focused on their collective desires to share their expertise with public officials, little progress was made on these ambitions. Survey results confirmed that members did not value the advocacy activities attempted by the Alliance. Among the nine different network activities, they rated policy advocacy activities near the bottom of the list. As I have described, the Alliance pursued many different tactics during this study period: hiring a part-time lobbyist; convening a policy work group; hosting annual briefing meetings at the capital; commissioning research to gather data; meeting with county officials; developing a get out the vote initiative. Yet, in the end, network leaders could point to no real achievements of this activity, either for their own organizations or for the clients on whose behalf they work.

The consequences of Community Action’s advocacy tactics were quite different, yielding significant benefits in the minds of member organizations. They were successful in curtailing challenges to their state appropriation, a significant accomplishment given growing state budget deficits. They also secured federal funds to develop a network-wide performance management system and leadership development program. Yet, their efforts also helped to pass an increase in the minimum wage (immediately before this study began), stabilize a state-funded asset development program, and increase general awareness through the Commission to End Poverty. Unlike the Alliance members, CAAs explicitly recognized the significance of the network’s advocacy tactics. In our survey, when asked about a comparable list of nine activities, they rated business and mission policy advocacy as the first and third most important. In open-ended responses, respondents drew particular attention to the consequence that access to the legislature, rapid response, and general understanding of lobbying had on their abilities to focus their own actions during critical times.

Another way to assess the consequences of advocacy practices is to compare each network’s response to a particular situation, implementation of the federal stimulus funding.
By early 2009, the community circumstances of the Great Recession seemed dire. As lay-offs grew, low-income working families were losing their homes to foreclosure, struggling to make ends meet and pay for food and energy bills. With the new Democratic leadership in the White House and stimulus funding flowing, Alliance members tried to garner the attention of public officials. For the third year in a row, they held a board meeting at the state Capital and invited their own legislators to join them. Few showed up. They then asked one member’s lobbyist to try and insert the whole network into an employment bill, an emergency assistance bill, or any legislation that might be able to tap federal stimulus funding. All attempts to engage as a full network went nowhere. While they could read the legislative summaries showing that increases in funding for the very services they provided for needy families, children’s care, and unemployed workers, there was no way for them to leverage their collective expertise.

So Alliance leaders tried to another strategy and focused on the local level. Juanita Larson met multiple times with the same county executive she had developed a relationship with earlier and asked him to convene a meeting with historic foundation partners. At that meeting, the Alliance described the needs of communities, the potential of a significant public-private partnership, and their unique ability to respond as a network. Yet, nothing resulted. While the county continued to imagine there would be a way to contract with the network as a whole and save administrative dollars, the internal barriers to making this change impeded progress. Foundations merely acknowledged that financial resources were short all around.

So, the network changed course, yet again. The Alliance policy work group recommended and members voted to join a coalition, HIRE, of over 70 nonprofit members initially focused on “advocating for the fair allocation of federal stimulus dollars.” They believed this coalition would create more contact points with the legislators than Alliance-only efforts. They mobilized staff and board members to attend a rally at the state capital in April where the coalition argued that public investments should lifting people out poverty. Reflecting afterwards, Juanita felt it was one of their most successful efforts to engage in public policy process because it was visible, tangible, out in the open. Yet in reality, like many indirect advocacy tactics, it did little to change the allocation of stimulus funding.
At this unique moment when public funds actually were available to meet clients’ needs, the Alliance’s inability to influence the policy process was glaring apparent and it caused dissention among them. Many board meetings during the spring and summer focused on diagnosing the challenge and possible solutions. After all the dust settled, one organization did secure a new group of AmeriCorps volunteers and shared them with other network agencies. But this rather modest benefit also carried costs (a required agency financial match and supervision). It was a small consolation. As one member said, “We were on the outside looking in, all the while we knew that others were benefiting disproportionately.”

The experience of the Community Action partnership was a strikingly different. From the beginning, the network had its eyes focused on the ARRA funding. In fact, lobbying of the National Community Action Foundation helped assure specific expansions in Community Action program staples -- Community Services Block Grant, Weatherization, Head Start -- and enabled specific information about other programs, such as energy-efficiency tax credits, increased food and shelter assistance, and expanded federal housing programs to be shared early within the network. As one network member said in testimony before the state’s House Finance and Policy Committee, “The stimulus package for someone in my line of work is like a kid in the candy store. There are so many things, so many programs funded it in.”

From the local and state vantage point, the network’s well-established advocacy practices were easy to activate. Network staff and paid lobbyists tracked relevant committees at the state legislature and communicated about federal legislative development to members. Local agency staff mobilized for legislative testimony and supportive phone calls or emails at critical moments. As the potential for significant federal investment in the weatherization program began to crystallize, the network hired as an additional lobbyist. Chuck Atwood also effectively monitored the changing environment. As the HIRE coalition which the Alliance jointed mobilized, he decided to lay low even though proposed cuts to their state funding was on the table; they proceeded with caution, least their own success become a liability.
Due to their national membership organization, the Community Action partnership, itself, received federal funding to evaluate ARRA investments. They contracted for an economic impact analysis of weatherization program expansion and documented increased economic activity, including direct funds, jobs, and additional earnings in related industries, creating a resource which network leaders shared with public officials to document their successes. The Office of Economic Opportunity also stepped into the action. While the Office technically had oversight of funding sources with relatively modest increases, Linda Miller believed they should share information with the network. She asked for a special session of the network’s board to be convened and, after that initial information sharing, helped assure future meetings focused on sharing implementation plans, management experiences, and problem solving strategies. This allowed state officials to learn more quickly implementation challenges and document modifications that could prove helpful to the Congressional delegation. In the end, the 28 Community Action Agencies accessed over of $118 million federal ARRA funds from various funding streams over a fifteen month period.

While certainly there are many potential causal factors behind each network’s experiences during implementation of ARRA, the differences in advocacy strategy – shaped in large part by the repertoire of practices and resources already present in the network – is relevant to our discussion here. Like the description of how lobbying, working with public officials, public education, and organizing constituents occurs in these networks, this instance highlights the significance of practice within the network context.

**Enabling or Constraining Advocacy Practice**

The data from this comparative case study suggests that something important occurs as groups of organizations grapple together with how to develop effective and sustainable public policy advocacy strategies. The human service agencies in this study resemble others in that there are palpable tensions between their service roles and policy advocacy work (Mosley 2010a). Yet in these two networks, this tension is resolved differently. While executive directors’ attitudes about lobbying are understood to be significant, in the Alliance case, these
attitudes were deterministic for individual organizations and, ultimately, the whole network. In the end, the benefits were not sufficient given the costs and the board decided to lay down that ambition. In the Community Action network, individual agency directors also varied in their support for lobbying. But their attitudes were merely mediating forces in determining the scope and direction of the overall advocacy strategy. Success at receiving and maintaining public funding and addressing client concerns helped create the conditions for a robust and multi-pronged advocacy approach.

Experiences create a collective understanding that informs how these networks understand what is possible and learn how to direct resources to achieve their aims. This dynamic, described by Feldman (2004) as resourcing, does not presume that organizational characteristics, such as size and receipt of government funding, should be used to predict advocacy techniques (Bass, 2007; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Mosley, 2010a, forthcoming; Salamon and Gellner, 2008). Rather to understand nonprofit advocacy, and build more capacity for it, we must probe more thoroughly how actions – informed by collective knowledge – generate, activate, or deplete necessary resources.

In fact, to better understand the data from this comparative case study, theories of practice are quite helpful (Orlikowski, 2002; Nicolini, et al 2003; Feldman, 2004; Feldman & Quick, 2009). This theoretical framework directs us to examining what people, organizations, networks do to resolve problems. In this case, it privileges the way each network tries to execute its various advocacy tactics. To uncover the deeper processes, though, it then directs our attention to both how resources are generated or activated through particular practices and how shared understanding evolves which either supports or challenges the practice.

In this study, the Alliance kept busy executing a number of advocacy tactics. While the policy work group developed a proactive strategy, board meetings focused on other topics understood to be more important – management and program collaborations, financial uncertainty, changes at historic funding partners. As a result, ambivalence about the whole policy ambition continued to surface and activities depleted, rather than built, the network’s
resources. From the beginning, network leadership assumed the only way to sustain the lobbyist was to raise external dollars from foundation grants. Yet this is a difficult path because of changeable philanthropic priorities (Belzer, 2011; Newhouse 2010). Because their ambivalence and the belief in an external locus of control, the network did not activate other potential resources. The policy committee had unstable membership; the annual process of establishing a network-level policy agenda happened only sporadically; the staff professional development trainings did not discuss policy work or dispel myths about government relations; the important discussions with members about roles never happened, leaving many unanswered questions. While a few members received national legislative updates or funding from national advocacy organizations, they only rarely shared it within the network. There seemed many more important things on the Alliance’s collective agenda. The ambiguity surrounding advocacy quelled the potential resources of time, strategic thinking, and program insight from being unleashed. This, combined with a predominant sense of victimhood in the network’s relationship with government, caused the network to be ineffective in its attempts to engage in public policy work.

The Community Action network similarly uses a number of tactics for public policy advocacy. Yet, as we have seen, they were deployed significantly differently. For this network, public policy engagement was a vehicle for enhancing resources and building the overall strength of the network, yielding more benefits than trying to partner on local service delivery efforts. Lobbying activity was supported by member dues. Information about federal, state and local policy successes and failures was shared and enhanced the overall knowledge base. Research evaluating the network’s activities were commissioned and shared with decision makers. Through the practice theory lens, all such actions help activate the multiple types of resources in the network, including funding, staff time, strategic thinking, and program expertise. The practices reinforce a feeling of agency rather than disillusionment. With more positive collective experiences, the practices form a whole repertoire that is activated when unexpected events like stimulus funding occurred. The Community Action network built and sustained advocacy capacity through their shared practices.
Through comparing how two service networks actually carry out advocacy tactics, we are reminded that actors make choices about how to interpret events and create or use the resources collectively available. Experiences shared by network members – around meeting tables, informal conversations, formal training sessions – influence the development and deployment of advocacy tactics. In networks, such as the Alliance, the stories highlight avoidant public officials, disinterested communities, and competition from other associations. While others’ stories, like Community Action, recount difficult fights, they also convey the benefits of insider tactics, prudent environmental analysis, and shrewd public communication. These collective understandings influence how resources – a formal lobbyist, technical program knowledge valuable to legislators, reports about accomplishments -- are developed, activated, and sustained. Practice theory helps us to differentiate between potential resources and resources in use. In assessing the ways networks may build the capacity of organizations to effectively carry out policy advocacy practices, the theory emphasizes the recursive way that resources and shared understanding generate action. Resources don’t just exist because they are given by a philanthropic gift or brilliant leader. Rather they are activated and can be further developed when a network is willing to work through ambiguities to carry out actions. Resources can also be squandered and depleted, when found in a network unwilling to overcome past challenges.

**Concluding Thoughts**

With this unique comparative case study, I have tried to move the emerging research focused on nonprofit advocacy beyond categorizing or predicting particular advocacy tactics. It has yielded some interesting insights.

First of all, this approach highlights the potential significance of the contexts within which nonprofit organizations operate. If we merely see advocacy tactics as bounded by organization, we will miss many elements important in how advocacy is practiced. It also shows that mere reports of advocacy tactics might say little about the capacity involved or the effectiveness of those efforts.
Second, policy advocacy capacity is not merely focused on proactively developing and winning legislative agendas. As these cases illuminate, it can be evoked to assist in policy implementation or deployed reactively to stave off legislative assaults. But because there are so many potential sites of advocacy activity, capacity involves being able to frame collective understanding of the issue at hand and use resources to enable effective action. While using various advocacy tactics, the Alliance does not actually build capacity. Instead, they react haphazardly to events that occur, never quite gaining traction on systems-level change. While carrying out a similar number of tactics, the Community Action partnership deploys them in ways that build collective will, knowledge and insider relationships.

Finally, policy advocacy is resource intensive; it requires time to develop strategies, knowledge about policy systems, programs, communications, and relationships. Yet, this package of inputs is often in short supply in service organizations like those examined here. It is natural that, when faced with these limitations, organizations might turn to collaborative efforts and work through networks, coalitions, or intermediary organizations (Mosley, 2010b). As Salamon & Gellner (2008) conclude, “Squeezed by an increasing need to interact with the policy process but limited resources with which to do so, organizations have turned to intermediary organizations and advocacy coalitions to help, gaining in the process expertise and focused attention that they cannot easily provide internally.” Yet, the analysis presented here emphasizes that mere participation in networks or coalitions does not guarantee effective deployment of advocacy tactics; practices may be enabled or constrained by network participation, depending on the setting.

In light of these findings, it is also important to strive for theoretical ways of understanding these dynamics. A conventional answer – implied by Salamon and Gellner’s quote – is that networks help reduce transaction costs. Thinking from the perspective of political economy, networks enable resource and knowledge to be shared and organizations to be more effectively buffered from environmental turbulence. Resources are fixed assets that are pooled to aggregate power in the collectives (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Zald, 1970). But Salamon and Gellner’s quote also suggests another dynamic that is more iterative; that
nonprofit organizations gain expertise and ‘focused attention’ through this process, not available without working with other organizations. The use of practice theories for assistance interpreting field conditions provides a more systematic way to explore this presumption.

As others have stressed, nonprofit organizations are constrained policy actors, with limited capacity often manifested in staff time, knowledge, and skills (Berry & Arons, 2003; Reid, 2006; Geller & Salamon, 2009). Research can now move beyond documenting nonprofit advocacy tactics consider how the practice of advocacy enables or constrains the future capacity. By examining how the actions generate or deplete resources, we will move closer to appreciating what it takes to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations to engage more fully in policy processes on behalf of citizens for whom too few institutions speak.
Table 1: Comparison of two Human Service Networks, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alliance of Connected Communities</th>
<th>Community Action Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Status</strong></td>
<td>501(c) 3</td>
<td>501(c)3 and 501(c)4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established in 1999</td>
<td>Established in 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members</strong></td>
<td>24 Nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>27 Nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half founded in early 20th century, half in 1970s</td>
<td>All founded in mid-1960s to early 1970s as a result of federal initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographic Reach</strong></td>
<td>7 county metro-area</td>
<td>State-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board</strong></td>
<td>Full representation of all members</td>
<td>Full representation of all members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member Clients</strong></td>
<td>Low-income individuals &amp; families</td>
<td>Low-income individuals &amp; families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network Services / Resources</strong></td>
<td>Executive &amp; staff development</td>
<td>Executive &amp; staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program development</td>
<td>Legislative advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to administrative services</td>
<td>Federal &amp; state funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of Member Organizations</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Revenue</strong></td>
<td>$2,281,767</td>
<td>$6,558,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programs</strong></td>
<td>Average = 19, Range 5 to 90</td>
<td>Average = 23, Range 5 to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Four Most Common Programs of Member Organizations</strong></td>
<td>Youth Services</td>
<td>Head Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Stabilization Services</td>
<td>Weatherization &amp; Energy Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Services</td>
<td>Family Financial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Juvenile Supervision</td>
<td>Senior Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Survey of Advocacy Activities, Comparison between two service networks with Human Service Organizations from state-wide nonprofit survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource to Public Officials</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Index mean =1.75 (2.78), Cronbach alpha = .784)~</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in development or revision of public regulation</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Met in person with a public official</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Served on government commission, committee or task force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provided testimony to elected officials at a public hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Signed on to a letter expressing an opinion to public officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Education about Policy Issues</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Index mean =.70 (1.04), Cronbach alpha = .683)~</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wrote editorial or letter to editor of a newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Issued a report on public policy issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purchased advertising to influence public policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hosted or co-hosted a nonpartisan candidate forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Constituencies about Systems-level Issues</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Index mean = .51 (.844), Cronbach alpha = .689)~</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in nonpartisan voter registration efforts</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in nonpartisan “get out the vote” efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in an effort to pass or defeat a ballot measure within the past two years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organized members of your community to influence public policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05, **p<.01
~ Index measures calculated from the full-random sample of the state’s nonprofit organizations.
Table 3: Locus of Focus for Organization’s Public Policy Advocacy Activities~

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alliance for Connected Communities organizations</td>
<td>39%***</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action partnership organization</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>50%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Human Service Organizations</td>
<td>Infl_fed</td>
<td>Infl_st</td>
<td>Infl_loc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***statistically different at p<.001

~ In response to question: what level(s) of government has your organization sought to influence through these activities.

1 This research grows out of larger consideration of how public funding might influence nonprofit board governance, professionalization, formalization, and organizational effectiveness (Gronbjerg, 1993; Smith & Lipksy, 1993; Sandfort, et al, 2008; Stone 1996).

2 To create an accurate sampling frame that defines the entire population of nonprofit organizations in the state, we defined four strata according to the following revenues (during 2005 or 2006): under $100,000; $100,000 to $1 million; over $1 million; and no financial data. In total, the stratified random sample included 3,113 organizations across these strata. The distribution by field reflected that of the population. 622 organizations completed the survey for a 20% response rate. This response rate is similar to other mailed surveys of nonprofit organizations (Durst & Newell, 2001; Zimmermann & Stevens, 2006). Analysis comparing survey respondents with the complete random sample showed no statistical differences on either total revenue (criteria of sampling) or National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) (denoting substantive field expertise), suggesting no response bias.

3 In the statewide survey, we used the conventional way of classifying NTEE codes to define human service agencies: Education NEC (B99), Crime & Legal related (I), Employment (J), Food Agriculture & Nutrition (K), Housing and Shelter (L), Public Safety, Disaster & Relief (M), Youth Development (O), Human Services (P), and Community & Neighborhood Development (S20).

4 By 1968, there were more than 1,000 in the national network, covering more than 65% of the nation’s counties (Clark 2000).


6 This approach is also maintained in other states. As of 2007, eight other states made state-level appropriations totally more than $13 million to supplement the federal Community Services Block Grant. “Sources of all CSBG Funds expended in FY 2007,” retrieved on March 26, 2009 from http://www.nascsp.org/documents/FY07APPENDIXTABLES2-25-09.pdf.

7 This state law became the model for eleven other states, including New Jersey, Florida, Virginia, and Missouri, that developed similar designation in state law.

8 From 1995 to 2005, the state’s nonprofit sector grew 67% to 7,339 organizations in IRS data (Wing et al. 2008).
References


