



*Giving Voice to Mission Final Report*

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*I would like to express gratitude to Tabitha Bivens, Gita Gulati-Partee, and Nikki Harris for their coordination efforts during the data collection process of this project. Thank you to Barbara Metelsky, Director of the Institute for Nonprofits at North Carolina State University for her support in the development of this document. Special thanks to the participants in the workshop and evaluation. Their responses were essential to compiling this report.*



### *Giving Voice to Mission Executive Summary*

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#### **Introduction**

Most nonprofits, because of their relationships with funders (including the government), are increasingly regulated by external policies. These policies often leave nonprofits vulnerable to the vagaries of policy makers who may or may not be educated on the specific issues relevant to nonprofits. Therefore, it is tremendously important for 501(c)(3) entities to engage in advocacy and lobbying as a means of educating and influencing funders, constituents, and policy makers.

However, many nonprofit leaders believe it is “illegal” to lobby and engage in advocacy for their organization (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003). Additionally, many nonprofit managers assume advocacy and lobbying require lots of money, lots of time, and automatic access to policy makers (Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, 2004). However, these and other myths need to be debunked to increase the advocacy efforts of nonprofit organizations. Advocacy and lobbying are powerful tools for reaching organizational mission and vision.

#### **Sample & Methods**

Individuals who attended the advocacy workshop/training sponsored by the Institute for Nonprofits were asked to complete the pre and post-tests to begin to explore advocacy and lobbying activities among North Carolina nonprofits. The survey instrument was self-administered paper-based survey including both a pre-test and a post-test. Forty-one individuals attended the training and the post-test response rate was 78%.

The sample was 66% female and 86% white with a median age of 47. The majority of the participants (72.2%) were agency staff members. Most organizations had less than 11 employees, served North Carolina or a portion of the state, and largely classified themselves as direct service and advocacy organizations. The median budget was \$600,000. The majority of participant organizations (64%) *did not* have a paid staff member for these activities.

## Survey Results

Most participants simply wanted additional knowledge about nonprofit lobbying, one participant even referred to it as the “murky world of advocacy and 501(c)(3) organizations.” Other participants were interested in learning how to increase their organization’s profile in the community and with legislators and/or advancing their careers through networking or knowledge development.

### *Personal Advocacy*

Most participants were confident that citizens had some say in the public policy process. A full 94% of the participants believed that ordinary people did have a say in or could understand politics and government. However, about half of the participants believed that ordinary people have influence on decisions made by public officials, but paid lobbyists *are more influential*. An additional 44% responded that ordinary people can overcome the power of paid lobbyists through grassroots campaigns on selected public issues. When asked about their own power in the political process, 89% felt at least confident that they knew where, and how to contact the right people if they wanted to make their views known on a policy decision or legislative issue. Overall, the participants were positive about the capacity for ordinary citizens to engage in social change or influence the policy process.

Personal advocacy behaviors included attentiveness to news about politics, voting, attending community meetings, and expressing views on public or political issues, volunteering, and general involvement in community based advocacy. An overwhelming majority of participants were engaged in civic participation. Participants voted in most elections (97%), paid attention to politics in the news (89%), and attended community meetings (60%). Fewer contacted politicians or newspaper editors to express their views.

Conversely almost half reported feeling well informed about pertinent issues but not to the extent of providing leadership on grassroots efforts. Only 20% reported comfort with that type of leadership. It is also important to note that some people may have responded to these questions giving consideration not only to their personal activities but their professional activities as well. Participants were not instructed to explicitly refer only to “non-employment” related activities. This delineation may prove difficult because many people who work for nonprofit organizations are very much invested in their jobs and do not make work/nonwork delineations. They view their activities as more than simply a job, but a calling (Delpeche, Jabbar-Bey, Sherif-Trask, Taliaferro, & Wilder (2003).

### *Organizational Activities*

Based on participants’ responses, organizational lobbying occurred relatively infrequently but advocacy and education activities, such as presenting information, were more prevalent. The organizations seemed to relegate themselves to advocacy on policy issues, explicitly avoiding activities with political groups. In contrast, they did engage in these activities for areas relevant to the interest of certain groups, as long as they were not political groups. It is important to note that the terms lobbying, advocacy, and education were not defined on the pretest and therefore it is unclear how participants interpreted these terms prior to the workshop presentation.

### *Level Of Knowledge Before And After*

When participants were queried about knowledge gained from the workshop, overall they felt that their knowledge had increased. Overall the percentage of participants who felt they had some or great knowledge in each of the areas increased by 135%. The increase in knowledge

from pre to post-test was statistically significant for all of the areas. The most marked increase was the participants' assessment of their knowledge of direct lobbying rules.

In addition to inquiring about general level of knowledge, participants were also queried on what activities are allowable under the IRS regulations governing nonprofits. Results indicated that, in general, participants' knowledge of allowable activities increased from pre to post-test, however, none of these differences were statistically significant, possibly due to the large proportion of correct responses on the pretest. Additionally, it must be noted that participants still expressed confusion about the legality of contributing money, time or facilities to a candidate and providing technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a written request.

### *Future Advocacy Activities*

The workshop was successful overall at motivating participants. All of the participants were at least somewhat motivated to participate in advocacy with 53% being motivated to a great extent. Overall, participants reported that they were motivated to action because of the presentation. All of the participants agreed they would do something as a result of the workshop. However, it seems that respondents would be more likely to engage in more preliminary or passive activities such as distributing information. Participants were less likely to agree that they would establish a Board public policy committee or develop/restructure a coalition. Participants were even somewhat unlikely (40% were neutral or felt they would not) to take the 501(h) election, despite having remarked during the workshop and in some survey comments that it was a surprisingly uncomplicated process.

### *About the Workshop*

Participants overwhelmingly (97%) felt like the workshop level was appropriate for their needs. All the participants agreed that the workshop found the right balance between delivery of information, group tasks, and individual task; was well presented; and a good investment. Participants felt that the workshop allowed them to, at least somewhat, draw on their knowledge and experiences (97%) as well as interact and participate (100%). Additionally, all participants rated the facilitators quite favorably with above average ratings. Participants overwhelmingly listed the clarification on the law, the encouragement to take the 501(h) election, and the resources and handouts as the most valuable aspect of the workshop. Others expressed their newfound appreciation for and the benefits of advocacy and lobbying.

When asked how the training could be improved, the participants commented on the need for additional information about nonprofit advocacy strategies. Participants wanted more "nuts & bolts" information on how to create advocacy plans, actual techniques for lobbying, as well as how to engage in advocacy methods that do not include lobbying. A few participants were particularly interested in obtaining North Carolina specific resources in the form of a "Guide to reaching out to NC legislators"

Participants provided suggestions on future presentation topics ranging from funding to unionizing nonprofit workers. However, overwhelmingly the participants suggested a workshop to provide strategies for nonprofit advocacy. Individuals wanted the "how to" now that they had a measure of understanding of the importance of, and the laws regulating, lobbying activities.

### **Discussion and Next Steps**

The participants reported being more knowledgeable overall about the rules of lobbying. They also reported being likely to discuss lobbying with their staff and board members.

However, many of the respondents came to the workshop with a somewhat high level of knowledge of the subject matter (per the pretest results about allowable activities for nonprofits).

### *Participant Representation*

While the workshop was well attended, it lacked diversity among participants. Additional efforts need to be made to recruit nonwhite participants. Advertising the workshop in additional venues such as the faith community and in collaboration with other organizations (i.e., El Pueblo, Triangle Urban League, North Carolina Institute for Minority Economic Development, Strengthening the Black Family, Pan-Hellenic Council) may provide access to additional populations.

While minority representation needs to be increased, the participation of nonprofit executives and managers should be maintained. Because of their critical positions in nonprofit organizations, particularly regarding strategic direction, it is critical that senior and management level staff as well as board members attend these types of workshops because many of the organizations self identified as having advocacy as part of their mission. Therefore, it is part of the Executive Director and board members respective roles to move forward public policy agendas.

Eventually it will be important to train direct line staff, senior staff and board members because they will need to be proficient in their understandings of advocacy and lobbying so that they can engage in these activities through their direct practice duties.

### *Workshop Content*

Participants were overwhelmingly pleased with the content and quality of the workshop and this level of excellence should be maintained. A workshop specifically detailing strategies for advocacy and lobbying is essential. The content of that workshop should include information regarding the use of the media, preparing testimony, voter registration, registering as a lobbyist, letter writing, using the Internet, coalition building, and community organizing. Including additional information about the policy and legislative process would enhance the information regarding laws and rules related to lobbying. Explicit information about laws specific to the state of North Carolina would be helpful.

Another consideration is the development of a regular workshop series for nonprofit executives and board members. Offering this type of activity would not only provide managers with information on issues relevant to nonprofit organizations, it would provide networking opportunities for participants.

### *Logistics*

Eliminating the pre-tests or incorporating the tool as the final, and optional, component of registration should be considered. The post test should be reconfigured by shortening it and explicitly linking the questions to the workshop content. Further, having the evaluations conducted online using survey monkey or another web-based design could be explored.

Conducting the workshop at various locations throughout North Carolina may address the intent and goal of the workshop. Collaborating with existing agencies that would be responsible for coordinating and attracting workshop participants would be essential. The content of these workshops would need to be tailored to the specific locale.

Consideration should also be given to extending the training's timeframe. Adding two hours to the training will allow participants to have more time to consume the information and determine how to incorporate it in their day-to-day work realities.

## Conclusion

Overall, the workshop was very well received. The individuals who attended gained additional understanding of the rules for nonprofit lobbying and advocacy. However, there is more work to be done. It is essential that the voice of the nonprofit sector be strengthened in public policy and legislative debates. Nonprofits must gain a better understanding of the laws that govern their participation in the policy process, so that they may increase their political capital thereby increasing their financial and organizational capacity.

## References

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## *Giving Voice to Mission Report*

### **Introduction**

Advocacy is the mechanism by which causes are championed and change is initiated (Hardcastle & Powers, 2004). Lobbying can be a part of an advocacy process, and is one very important tool in the arsenal of activities used to promote change (Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, 2004). Lobbying can be defined as those activities that are used to influence legislation (Rubin & Rubin, 2001). It has significant potential for advancing the missions of nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. Most nonprofits, because of their relationships with funders (including the government), are regulated by external policies. These policies often leave nonprofits vulnerable to the vagaries of policy makers who may or may not be educated on the specific issues relevant to nonprofits. Therefore, it is tremendously important for 501(c)(3) nonprofits to engage in advocacy and lobbying as a means of educating and influencing funders, constituents, and policy makers. However, many nonprofit leaders believe it is “illegal” to lobby and engage in advocacy for their organization (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003). Additionally, many nonprofit managers assume advocacy and lobbying require lots of money, lots of time, and automatic access to policy makers (CLPI, 2004). However, these and other myths need to be debunked to increase the advocacy efforts of nonprofit organizations. Advocacy and lobbying are powerful tools for reaching organizational mission and vision.

According to the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (2006),

*Lobbying on legislation and engaging in public policy advocacy through voter and candidate education can also be great for your organization because it can:*

- *Raise awareness of your mission*
- *Mobilize members, volunteers, donors and board*
- *Attract favorable media attention*
- *Establish and expand government investment in important social programs*
- *Reform laws and regulations that govern the operation and evaluation of your programs*
- *Confer benefits far beyond that of any one direct service program.*

Understanding the important role that nonprofit advocacy and lobbying can play in advancing organizational mission, the Institute for Nonprofits at North Carolina State University commissioned a pilot study to examine the advocacy behavior of North Carolina nonprofit organizations in Wake, and surrounding counties. This was a pilot study for a larger exploratory research project scheduled for Fall 2006. This research is important because nonprofits are increasingly accountable for implementing government policy and have a responsibility to the well-being of their constituents. As such, it is incumbent upon leaders of these organizations to understand their rights and responsibilities in regard to lobbying and advocacy to further their respective missions.

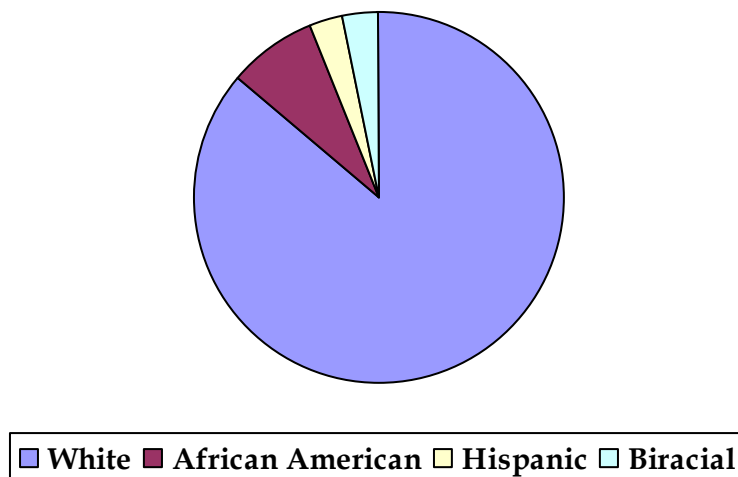
### Sample & Methods

Study participants were recruited via press release, flyer, email, and US mail announcements for the advocacy workshop. Individuals who attended the advocacy workshop/training sponsored by the Institute for Nonprofits were asked to complete the pre and post-tests. Because of the interactive nature of the workshop, attendance was limited to approximately 50 people.

The survey instrument was self-administered paper-based survey including both a pre-test and a post-test. A member of the research team supervised implementation of the surveys. Forty-one individuals attended the training. Thirty-seven participants completed the pre-test while only 32 individuals completed the post-test, providing a response rate of 90%.

The median age of the participants was 47 years. The sample was 66% female and 86% white. Figure 1 illustrates the racial breakdown of the participants. African Americans and Latinos were represented at 8% and 3% respectively. An additional 3% of participants classified themselves as bi-racial.

**Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity**



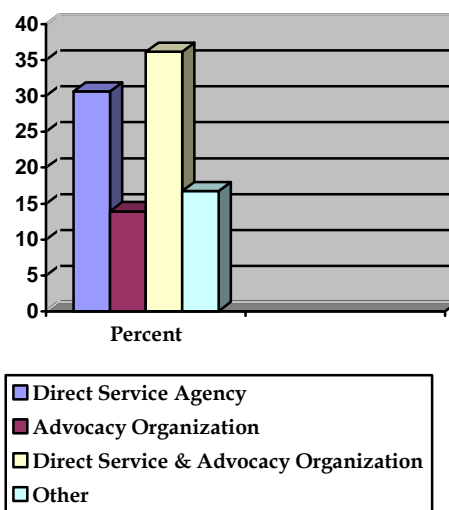
Additionally, most participants (86.1%) had post-secondary education with 52% possessing graduate degrees.

As detailed in Table 1 the majority of the participants (72.2%) were agency staff members. Although the marketing directly targeted board presidents, through a direct request as well as an incentive, the representation of board members was not equitable to that of management and professional staff.

Table 1: Agency Position

<b>Title</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Senior Management	44.4
Non-management Technical/Professional	16.7
Middle Management	11.1
Board Member	11.1
Other	11.1
Board Chairperson	5.6
Total	100.0

The organizations they represented tended to have less than 26 employees. Most organizations (47%) had less than 11 employees. The majority of organizations (64%) served North Carolina or a portion of the state however, 36 % of the organizations had a regional or national focus. As shown in Figure 1, the organizations largely classified themselves as direct service and advocacy organizations.

**Figure 2. Organization Description**

Additionally, as seen in Table 2, the organizations were diverse in that they described themselves as *primarily focused* on a myriad of issues including arts, culture, & humanities; education; health; human services, public societal benefit; and mutual/membership benefit. Participants were asked to self-identify their organization's primary focus based on the list of NTEE-CC classification system of major groups. Because so many participants represented their organization as "other," it is not clear if the participants understood they were to use the NTEE-CC classification or if it was an indication that participants were not aware of their organization's categorization. In spite of this vagueness in the question, 37% of the participant organizations were human services organizations.

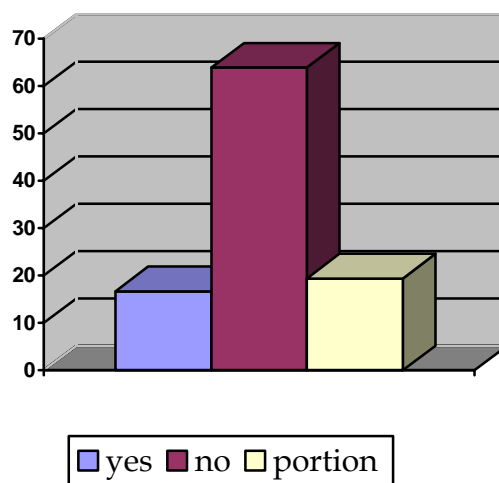
Table 2: Organization's Primary Focus

Type	Percent
Human services	37.1
Education	17.1
Health	14.3
Public societal benefit	11.4
Other	11.4
Arts, culture & humanities	5.7
Mutual/membership benefit	.9
Total	100.0

The organizations' budgets ranged from \$45,000 to \$20 Million (excluding NC State University from the responses). The median budget was \$600,000; however the mean budget was \$2,987,903, indicating relatively large organizations were in attendance.

In regard to responsibility for advocacy in the organization, only 17% of organizations had a paid staff person responsible for public policy related tasks. An additional 19% had a staff member who was assigned public policy responsibilities as a portion of their job duties. However, the majority of participant organizations (64%) *did not* have a paid staff member for these activities.

**Figure 3. Public Policy Staff Member**



### Survey Results

Participants had a myriad of reasons for attending the workshop. Most participants simply wanted additional knowledge about nonprofit lobbying, one participant even referred to it as the “murky world of advocacy and 501(c)(3) organizations.” Several participants stated that they were specifically interested in learning the rules for advocacy and lobbying as well as exploring the policy process. Other responses to the question “What were your for attending the workshop?” included:

*“[To understand why you say we can "lobby" when all statutes & tax info I've read say we can educate but not lobby.”*

*“To learn more about advocacy efforts of nonprofits - specifically how we can increase our advocacy efforts while following the appropriate laws/rules.”*

*“[To] learn lobbying and public engagement strategies, learn about the legislative and political process.”*

Other participants stated that they were specifically interested in learning how to increase their organization’s profile in the community and with legislators.

*"To learn more about advocacy and lobbying laws, how to educate and disseminate information to members & politicians & citizens, how to get more involved in policy analysis & development & advocacy."*

*"To learn more about creating public policy and connecting to legislators and the process of changing public policy."*

*"To learn how to be effective in raising profile/money for our organization."*

Finally, other participants were motivated to attend in the workshop to advance their current or anticipated career.

*"I'm considering a career transition to nonprofit and am trying to learn as much as I can."*

*"I hope to learn more about advocacy & lobbying rules so I can help my organization become a stronger influence on policy. I also hope to gain networking relationships so I can procure a position in advocacy and policy"*

Others expected to learn strategies and skills for engaging in advocacy and lobbying.

*"I expect to learn more about changing and creating public policy, and furthering the mission of nonprofits through legislative advocacy. (and how you do this)."*

*"Leadership strategies for successful lobbying as a 501(c)(3)"*

*"Strategy and action plan that can be applied to our organization."*

Some of the reasons stated for attendance were somewhat outside the workshop's objectives as specified in program marketing materials. The marketing materials explicitly stated the goal of the workshop was to explore the role of advocacy and lobbying by nonprofits in advancing organizational mission. The workshop was described as providing information about the legal parameters as well as strategies to overcome barriers, like time and money, so that nonprofits could integrate advocacy into their operations. Further, nonprofit leaders would gain greater clarity about what they could and should be doing to be effective advocates. It was anticipated that they would be prepared to engage their respective board and staff in dialogue about how advocacy could advance the organization mission.

### **Personal Advocacy**

Beyond reasons for attending the workshop, part of the study focused on exploring participants perceptions about the power of ordinary citizens and their own power in the political process. Most participants were confident that citizens had some say in the public policy process. A full 94% of the participants believed that ordinary people did

have a say in or could understand politics and government. However, about half of the participants believed that ordinary people have influence on decisions made by public officials, but paid lobbyists *are more influential*. An additional 44% responded that ordinary people can overcome the power of paid lobbyists through grassroots campaigns on selected public issues. When asked about their own power in the political process, 89% felt at least confident that they knew where, and how to contact the right people if they wanted to make their views known on a policy decision or legislative issue. Overall, the participants were positive about the capacity for ordinary citizens to engage in social change or influence the policy process.

Table 3: Ability to Contact the Right People

<b>Confidence Level</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Confident	38.9
Somewhat Confident	33.3
Confident	16.7
Not Very Confident	8.3
Not Confident at All	2.8

Personal advocacy behaviors included attentiveness to news about politics, voting, attending community meetings, and expressing views on public or political issues, volunteering, and general involvement in community based advocacy.

Results indicated that an overwhelming majority of participants voted in at least most elections (97%). Almost 89% of the participants indicated that they pay attention to news about politics on the radio, television, newspaper and/or Internet at least weekly. The participants also attended community meetings or other political events with some regularity in that (60%) of participants attended events monthly, quarterly, or biannually. Of those, 20% attended events monthly. Fewer (17%) contacted an elected official or agency to express their personal views on more than monthly. Most participants did not write letters to the editor and very few contacted elected officials. Those who did only tended to do so 1 - 2 times per year. Figures 4 through 8 demonstrate the frequency of expressing opinion on public issues, volunteering, and attending public events. A small portion of the sample was not involved with any of the aforementioned community-based advocacy activities.

Figure 4. Contacting a Public Official

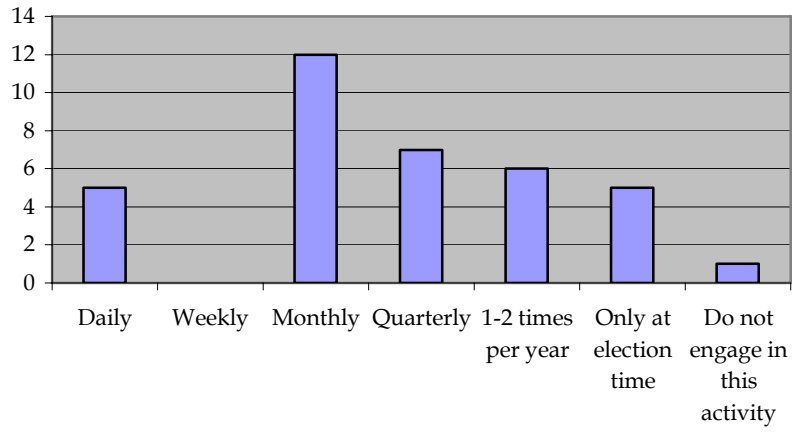
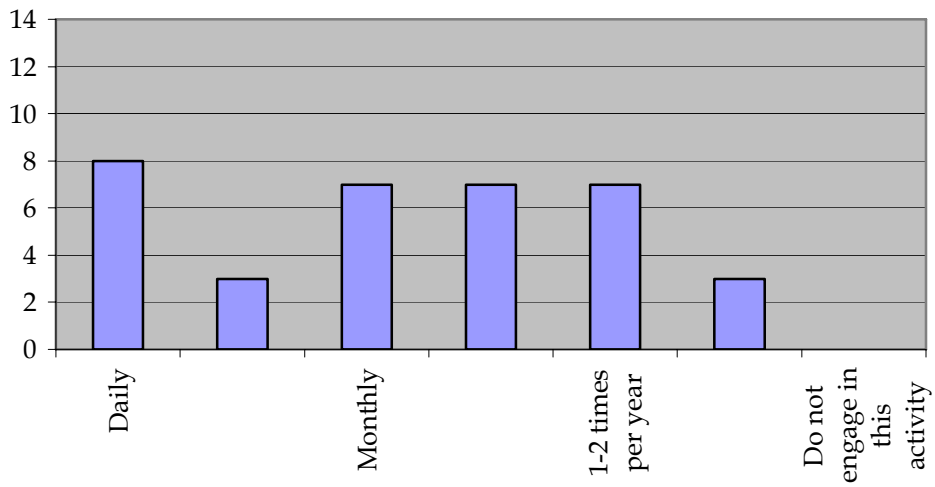
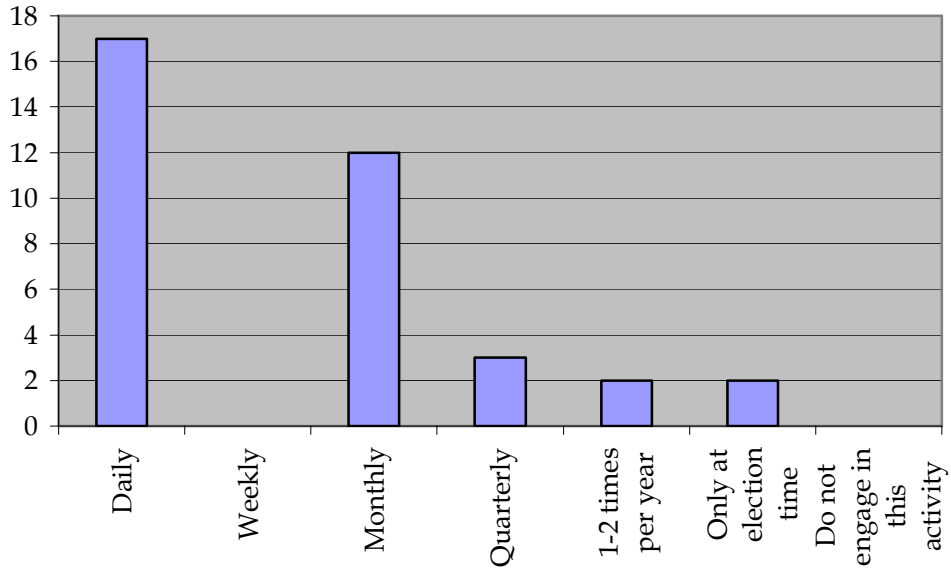


Figure 5. Attending Community Meetings



**Figure 6. Writing a Letter to the Editor**



**Figure 7. Volunteered in Own Organization**

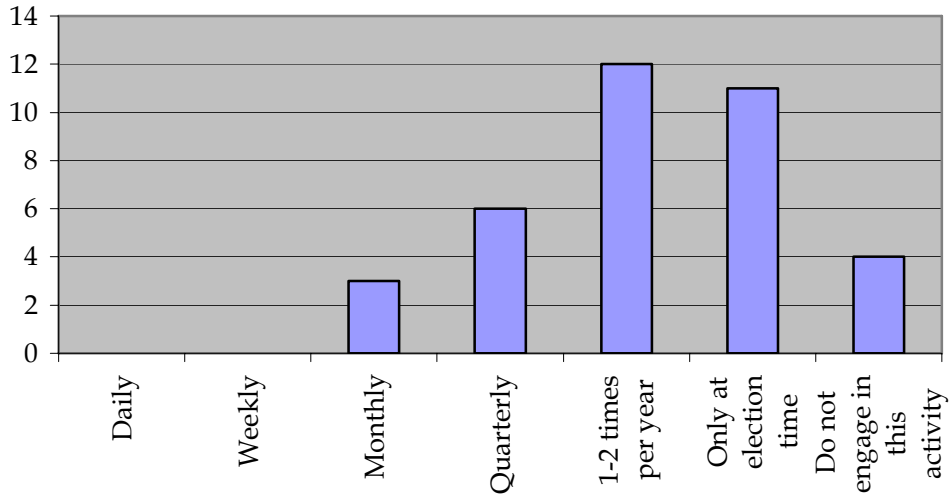
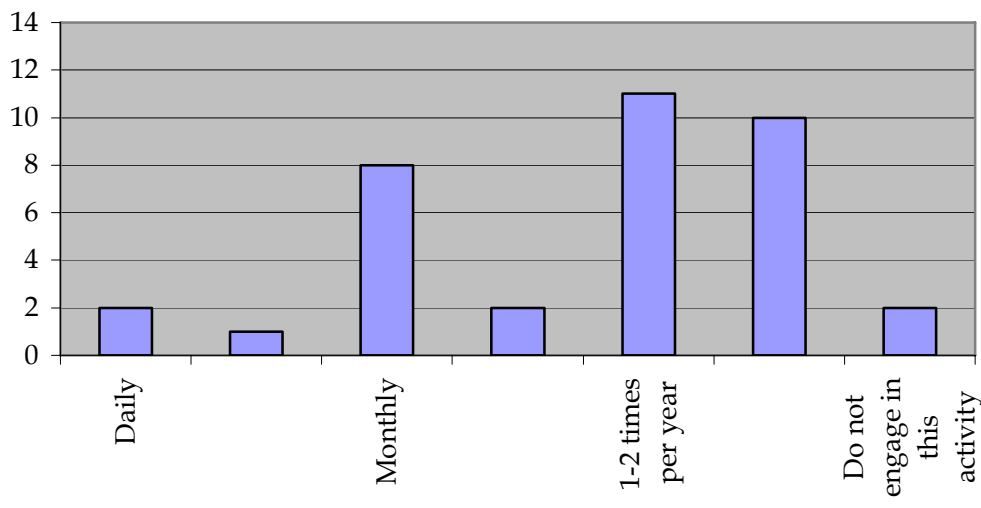
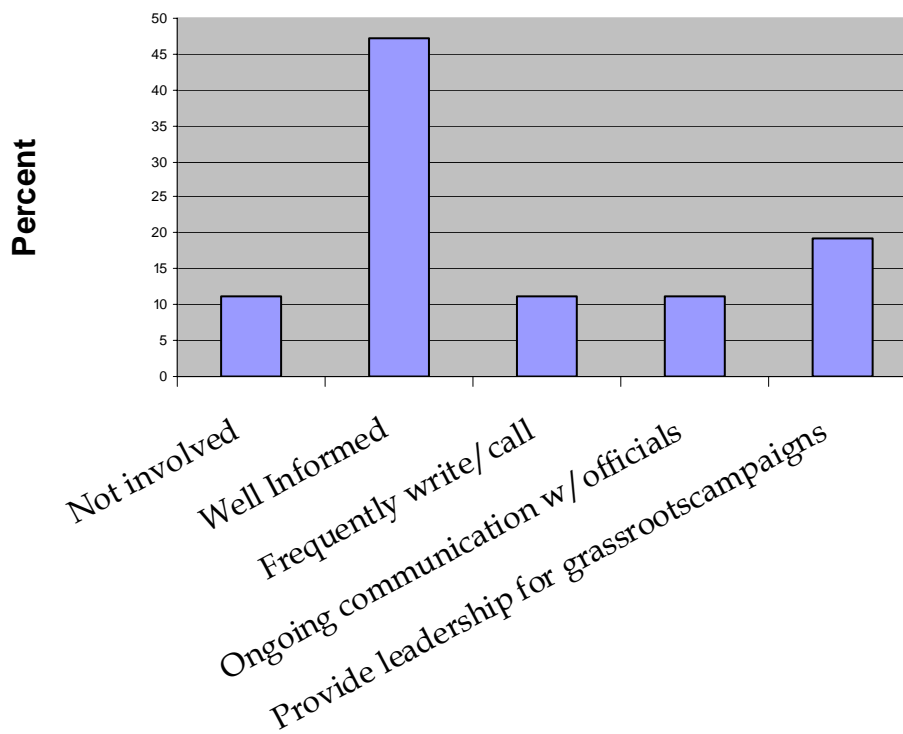


Figure 8. Volunteered at Organization Other than Own



Conversely almost half reported feeling well informed about pertinent issues but not to the extent of providing leadership on grassroots efforts. Only 20% reported comfort with that type of leadership. Figure 9 illustrates the reported levels of personal advocacy involvement. It is also important to note that some people may have responded to these questions giving consideration not only to their personal activities but their professional activities as well. Participants were not instructed to explicitly refer only to “non-employment” related activities. This delineation may prove difficult because many people who work for nonprofit organizations are very much invested in their jobs and do not make work/nonwork delineations. They view their activities as more than simply a job, but a calling (Delpeche, Jabbar-Bey, Sherif-Trask, Taliaferro, & Wilder (2003).

**Figure 9. Personal Level of Involvement in Advocacy**

The least likely reported activities of personal advocacy were ongoing communication with public officials and frequently writing or calling public officials on pertinent issues. Participants seemed to avoid interaction with public officials.

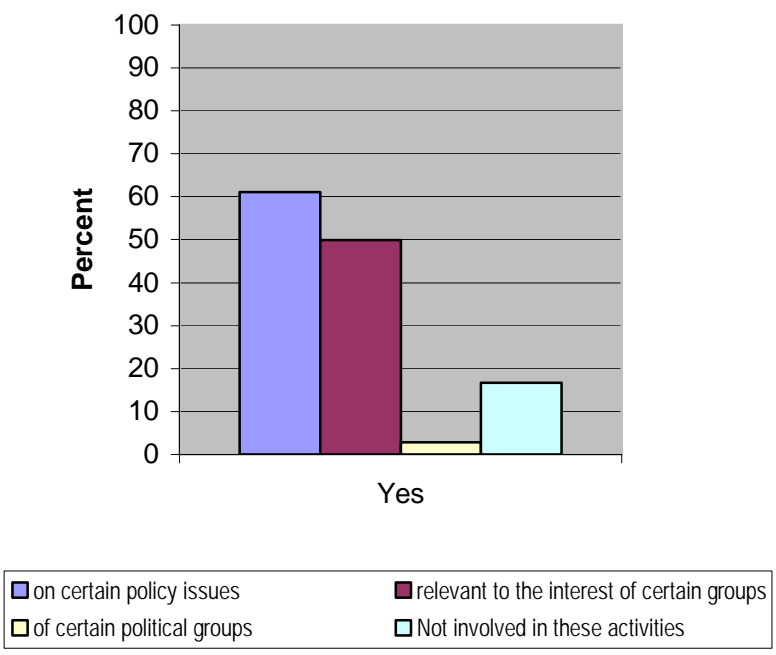
The majority of the participants (61%) held at least two to four memberships in or donated money to organizations (other than their own) whose purpose was to solve problems in the nation or local community through influencing public policy. For 19% of the participants the number of these types of memberships or donations exceeded five organizations. Eighty-five percent reported supporting their own organization with dues or donations. For most participants (80%) support was given on a yearly basis. Only 8% of participants chose not to donate money to these types of organizations.

### **Organizational Activities**

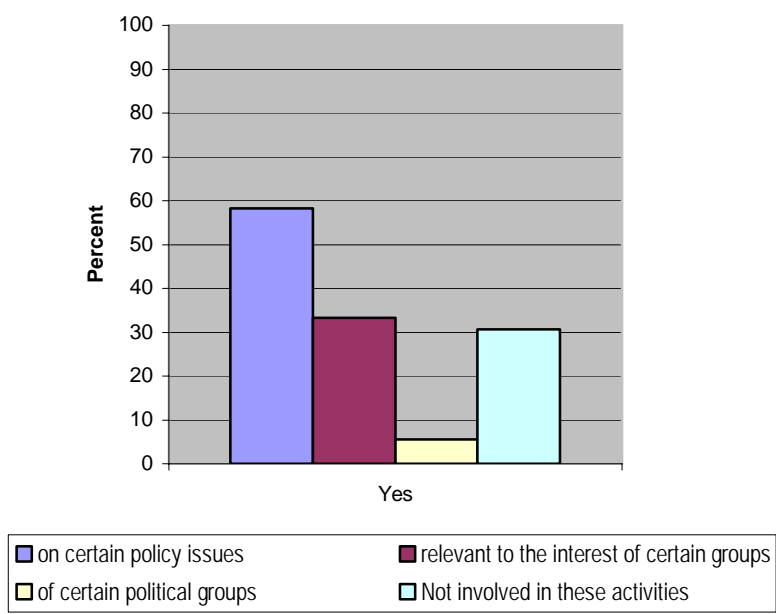
Based on participants' responses, organizational lobbying occurred relatively infrequently but advocacy and education activities, such as presenting information, were more prevalent. The organizations seemed to relegate themselves to advocacy on policy issues, explicitly avoiding activities with political groups. The participants reported that they did not engage in advocacy, lobbying, or even educating certain political groups. In contrast, they did engage in these activities for areas relevant to the interest of certain groups, as long as they were not political groups. It is important to

note that the terms lobbying, advocacy, and education were not defined on the pretest and therefore it is unclear how participants interpreted these terms prior to the workshop presentation. Figures 10 - 13 detail participants reported organizational activities.

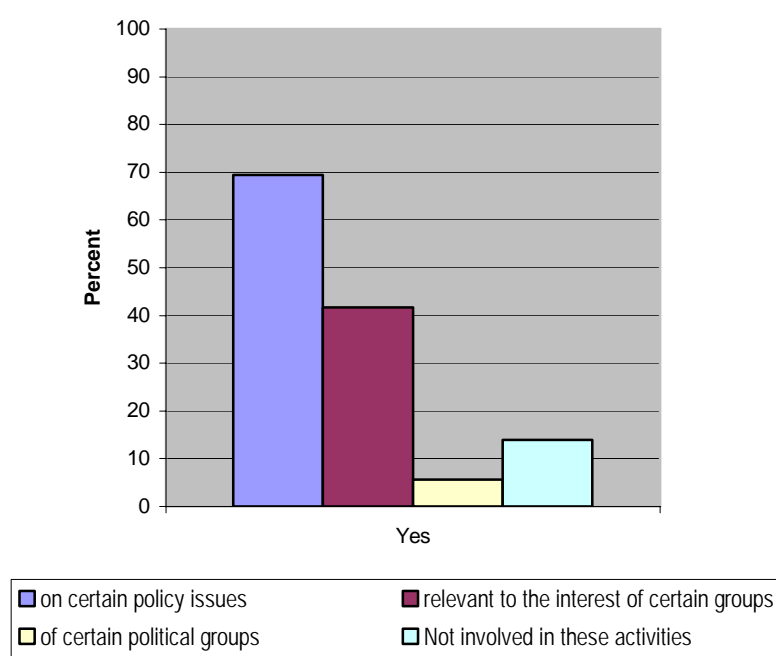
**Figure 10. Advocacy Activities of Organizations**



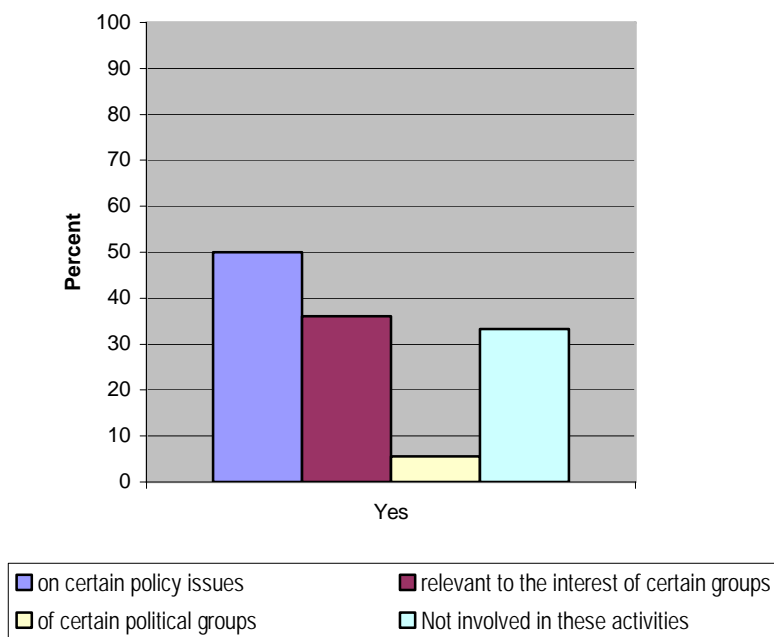
**Figure 11. Organizations' Activities Concerning Education of the Public**



**Figure 12. Organizations' Activities Concerning Education of Public Officials**



**Figure 13. Organizations' Lobbying Activities**



While it is important to note that participants overall refrained from lobbying, it is important to note that for each activity (education, lobbying, & advocacy) there were substantive portions of the sample that simply did not engage in these activities at all.

### **Level Of Knowledge Before And After**

When participants were queried about knowledge gained from the workshop, overall they felt that their knowledge had increased. Overall the percentage of participants who felt they had some or great knowledge in each of the areas increased by 135%. The increase in knowledge from pre to post-test was statistically significant for all of the areas. The most marked increase was the participants' assessment of their knowledge of direct lobbying rules. Table 4 illustrates the percent increase in participants who reported having some or great knowledge from pre test to post test.

Table 4: Knowledge of Nonprofit Lobbying &amp; Advocacy

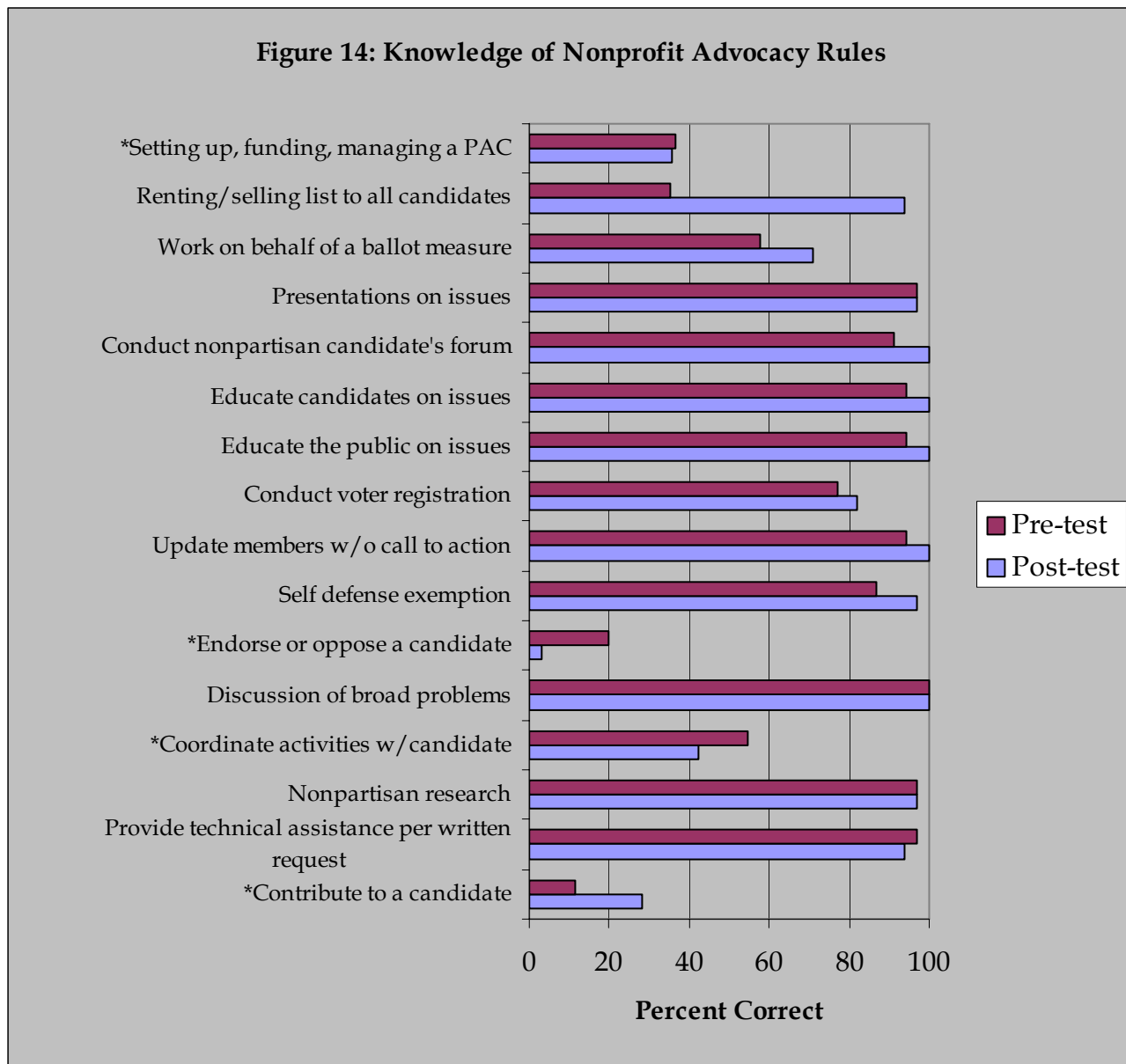
	Frequency reporting some or great knowledge (Pre)	Frequency reporting some or great knowledge (Post)	Percent Change in Number of People with Some or Great Knowledge
National Context for Nonprofit Advocacy	7	19	171% Increase
Nonprofit Lobbying Laws	8	22	175% Increase
Direct Lobbying Rules	6	23	283% Increase
Importance of Nonprofit Participation in the Public Policy Process	16	23	44% Increase
Overall Change	37	87	Overall Increase of 135%

### Activities Allowable for Nonprofits

In addition to inquiring about general level of knowledge, participants were also queried on what activities are allowable under the IRS regulations governing nonprofits. Results indicated that, in general, participants' knowledge of allowable activities increased from pre to post-test, however, none of these differences were statistically significant. Additionally, it must be noted that participants still expressed confusion about the legality of contributing money, time or facilities to a candidate and providing technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a written request.

Figure 14 shows the pre and post-test responses for what participants deemed allowable activities. Overall the participants learned that nonprofits could engage in more activities than they originally expressed in the pretest. However, during the workshop there was information describing allowable activities, that participants still did not identify correctly. All of the participants knew that they could conduct nonpartisan candidates' forums, educate candidates on issues, update the organizations members without a call to action, and engage in a discussion of broad problems. On two survey items about nonprofit advocacy rules, unexpectedly more participants answered incorrectly on the post test than on the pretest. When asked on the post test

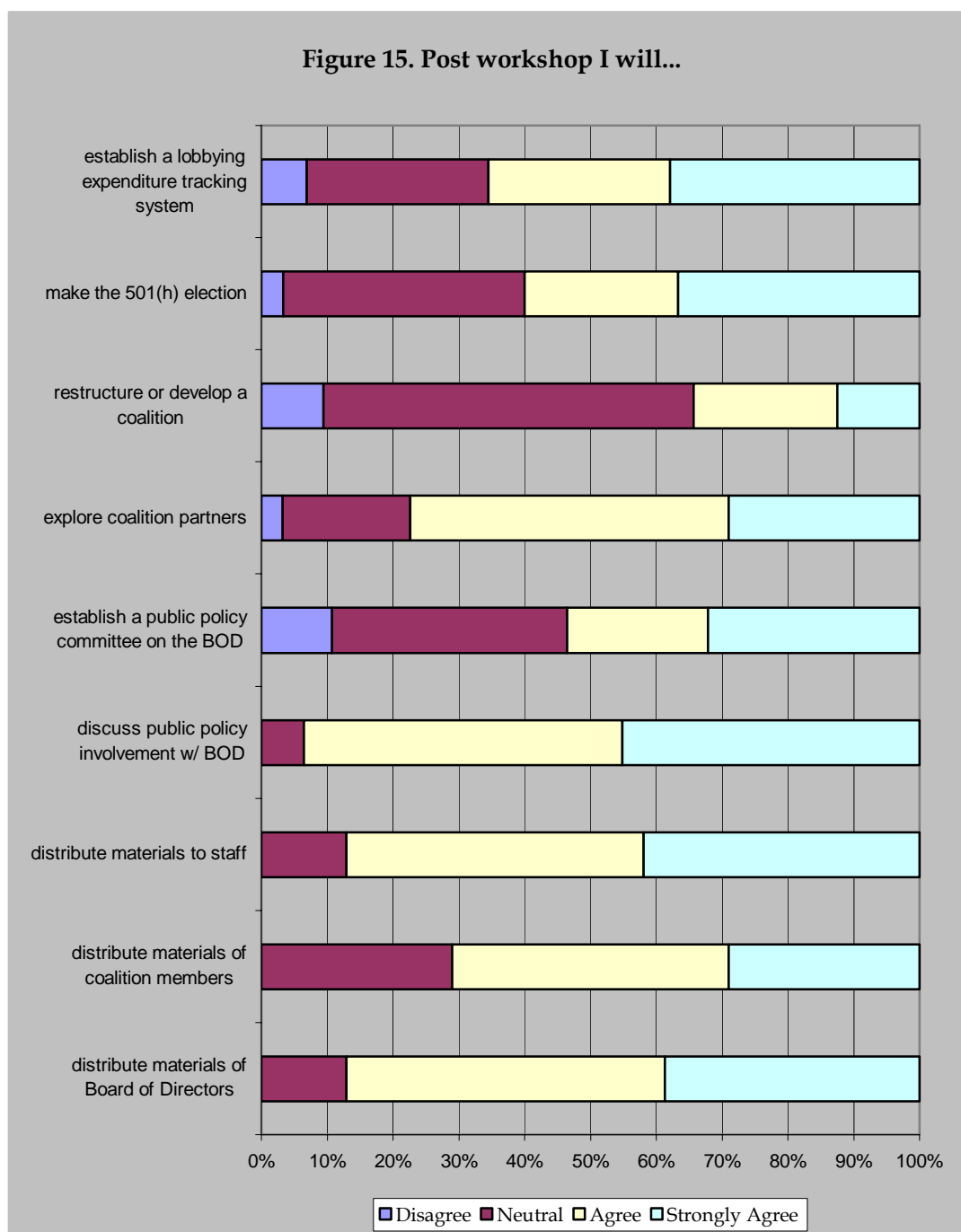
about coordinating activities with or contributing to a candidate, many participants reported it was allowed



\* Activity is not allowable for nonprofit organizations.

### Future Advocacy Activities

The workshop was successful overall at motivating participants. All of the participants were at least somewhat motivated to participate in advocacy with 53% being motivated to a great extent. Figure 15 illustrates the activities participants expressed they would be likely to conduct.



Overall, participants reported that they were motivated to action because of the presentation. All of the participants agreed they would do something as a result of the workshop. However, it seems that respondents would be more likely to engage in more preliminary or passive activities such as distributing information. Participants were less likely to agree that they would establish a Board public policy committee or develop/restructure a coalition. Participants were even somewhat unlikely (40% were neutral or felt they would not) to take the 501(h) election, despite having remarked

during the workshop and in some survey comments that it was a surprisingly uncomplicated process.

In regard to how the knowledge and skills they gained would impact their personal and organizational advocacy, approximately 88% and 82% of participants reported that the *knowledge* gained would have a direct impact on their personal and nonprofit's advocacy activities respectively. Slightly fewer, 82% and 79% respectively, said the *skills* they learned would have a direct impact on their personal and nonprofit advocacy activities. This decrease in skills impact was expected because the workshop did not concentrate heavily on skills development.

### **About the Workshop**

Participants overwhelmingly (97%) felt like the workshop level was appropriate for their needs. All the participants agreed that the workshop found the right balance between delivery of information, group tasks, and individual task; was well presented; and a good investment. Participants felt that the workshop allowed them to, at least somewhat, draw on their knowledge and experiences (97%) as well as interact and participate (100%). Additionally, all participants rated the facilitators quite favorably with above average ratings. However, some responses acknowledged that it was difficult to assess performance for one facilitator based on the brevity of the assigned presentation component.

When asked about the most valuable aspects of the workshop, participants overwhelmingly listed the clarification on the law, the encouragement to take the 501(h) election, and the resources and handouts.

*"Our organization qualifying for 501(h) -- ease of application."*

*"Presentation of IRS rules, Do's & Don'ts, and 501(h) election."*

*"Learning about the laws of lobbying; defining the difference between advocacy & lobbying."*

Others expressed their newfound appreciation for and the benefits of advocacy and lobbying.

*"Lobbying rules, discussion of value of advocacy to my organization."*

*"Awareness- I now know what advocacy is and why it is so important to our success"*

Most of the participants were overwhelmingly positive in their reaction to the workshop in general.

*"It was excellent"*

*"Would not change anything"*

*"Good Job!"*

*"Great workshop!"*

*"Thank you! It was great to be here, and learn about advocating for CHANGE!"*

*"I really enjoyed this training and feel very motivated and confident in my knowledge"*

*"Wonderful training. Should be extended to other areas. Please also involve the government as after the end of the day the government stands to benefit"*

*"[I] would like to see this kind of training offered by and to counties (individually)."*

When asked how the training could be improved, the participants commented on the need for additional information about nonprofit advocacy strategies. Participants wanted more "nuts & bolts" information on how to create advocacy plans, actual techniques for lobbying, as well as how to engage in advocacy methods that do not include lobbying. A few participants were particularly interested in obtaining North Carolina specific resources in the form of a "Guide to reaching out to NC legislators"

The logistics of the workshop also received very favorable responses. Table 5 delineates the responses. While all of the ratings were very high, the breakfast offerings received the lowest rating with the majority of the participants (84%) rating it good or excellent.

Table 5: Workshop Logistics

	Average	Good	Excellent
Location	6.9	6.9	86.2
Time of Day	3.2	25.8	71.0
Duration of Training	6.3	21.9	71.9
Facility	3.1	9.4	87.5
Breakfast	15.6	12.5	71.9

The workshop met (56.3%) or exceeded (37.5%) the expectations of participants. While most of the participants had very positive reactions to the program, they thought there was room for improvement. Table 6 details the comments, which included both content and logistical suggestions.

Table 6: Suggestions for Improvements

Responses
Give housekeeping rules at the start of the training
When people speak, have them say their name facilitator repeat question so everyone can hear and understand
Provide books (incentives) for all participants
Allow more time for questions
Provide a citation for the law for easy access and follow up
Evaluation was too long
Make this a full day training
Include pictorial clips, video clips, and audio
Provide advocacy related forms for North Carolina (e.g., to register as lobbyist)
Introductions (name & organization) would have been most helpful in order to partner with a person of similar interest during and after class activities.

Participants provided suggestions on future presentation topics ranging from funding to unionizing nonprofit workers. However, overwhelmingly the participants suggested a workshop to provide strategies for nonprofit advocacy. Individuals wanted the “how to” now that they had a measure of understanding of the importance of, and the laws regulating, lobbying activities.

*“Many non-profits don't even have the \$ with which to "lobby". So make it less about what is allowed w/in a lobby budget... and more @ techniques - things to avoid while lobbying - case study - success stories, etc.”*

Table 7 is a listing of suggested workshop topics.

Table 7: Workshop Topics

Responses
Advocacy Strategies
Board Training
Grants & funding sources
Coalition Partnerships
Health care of nonprofits
Membership recruitment
Civics 101 (state & federal levels)
Leadership & professional development
Unionizing Nonprofit workers

### **Discussion and Next Steps**

It is encouraging that individuals in nonprofit organizations are thinking about and interested in lobbying and advocacy. Nonprofit staff and volunteers attended the “Giving Voice to Mission” workshop seeking education, clarification, and strategies for lobbying and advocacy. While they were somewhat active in advocacy many steered clear of political activities. Participants more readily agreed to educate themselves personally, and provide education to others in their professional roll. However, this lack of activity is logical in that this particular workshop was designed for individuals who were not particularly savvy or well informed about lobbying and advocacy. Therefore, based on the structure, design, and marketing of the workshop, it makes sense that the individuals would not be extensively involved in advocacy and lobbying.

#### *Achievement of the Workshop’s Objectives*

As stated previously, the goal of the workshop was to explore the role of advocacy and lobbying by nonprofits in advancing organizational mission. The workshop was described as providing information about the legal parameters as well as strategies to overcome barriers, like time and money, so that nonprofits could integrate advocacy into their operations. Further, it was anticipated that nonprofit leaders would gain greater clarity about what they could and should be doing to be effective advocates, with the hopes that they would be prepared to engage their boards and staff and dialogue about how advocacy could advance their missions.

Based on the outcomes of the survey, this goal was partially accomplished. The participants reported being more knowledgeable overall about the rules of lobbying. They also reported being likely to discuss lobbying with their staff and board members. However, many of the respondents came to the workshop with a somewhat high level of knowledge of the subject matter (per the pretest results about allowable activities for nonprofits). This relatively advanced knowledge may be due to the fact that 36% of participants had a staff person whose job it was (at least part of the time) to conduct advocacy activities or that 50% of the organizations represented described their agency as at least partially an advocacy organization. These individuals may have come to the workshop with more information and exposure to advocacy and lobbying than the general population of nonprofit organizations. The sample bias may be that based on the subject matter, a slightly more informed group will self select into the workshop.

#### *Participant Representation*

While the workshop was well attended, it lacked diversity among participants. Additional efforts need to be made to recruit nonwhite participants. Many of the social issues addressed by nonprofit organizations directly impact African-Americans and other people of color, hence they have a stake in ensuring not only the organizations stability and visibility but also that policy issues are adequately addressed and that political leaders recognize the magnitude and seriousness of their issues. Individuals within minority communities have a long and rich history of advocacy. It is imperative

that individuals within the minority community continue that legacy and gain additional political capital so that the policy issues of interest and importance can be effectively addressed. Advertising the workshop in additional venues such as the faith community and in collaboration with other organizations (i.e., El Pueblo, Triangle Urban League, North Carolina Institute for Minority Economic Development, Strengthening the Black Family, Pan-Hellenic Council) may provide access to additional populations.

While minority representation needs to be increased, the participation of nonprofit executives and managers should be maintained. Because of their critical positions in nonprofit organizations, particularly regarding strategic direction, it is critical that senior and management level staff as well as board members attend these types of workshops. Individuals in these positions must understand public policy processes as well as the benefit and importance of advocacy and lobbying. This knowledge is particularly important because many of the organizations self identified as having advocacy as part of their mission. Therefore, it is part of the Executive Director and board members respective roles to move forward public policy agendas.

Eventually it will be important to train direct line staff, senior staff and board members because they will need to be proficient in their understandings of advocacy and lobbying so that they can engage in these activities through their direct practice duties.

#### *Workshop Content*

Participants were overwhelmingly pleased with the content and quality of the workshop. This level of excellence should be maintained as additional workshops are planned. A workshop specifically detailing strategies for advocacy and lobbying is essential. The content of that workshop should include information regarding the use of the media, preparing testimony, voter registration, registering as a lobbyist, letter writing, using the Internet, coalition building, and community organizing. In addition, content on how to develop an expenditure tracking mechanism would be helpful. Including additional information about the policy and legislative process would enhance the information regarding laws and rules related to lobbying. Explicit information about laws specific to the state of North Carolina would be helpful.

Having more detailed information about legislators would be helpful. Providing participants with the directory of all North Carolina and federal legislators would also be an asset to the workshop. This information could include party affiliation, a short biography, community assignments and a photograph.

Another consideration is the development of a regular workshop series for nonprofit executives and board members. Offering this type of activity would not only provide managers with information on issues relevant to nonprofit organizations, it would provide networking opportunities for participants.

### *Logistics*

Several logistical aspects of the workshop could be enhanced. The evaluation should be reconfigured by shortening it and explicitly linking the questions to the workshop content. Eliminating the pre-tests or incorporating the tool as the final, and optional, component of registration should be considered. Further, having the evaluations conducted online using survey monkey or another web-based design could be explored. While this methodology has its own issues around voluntary participation and response rates, it should be considered.

Conducting the workshop at various locations throughout North Carolina may address the intent and goal of the workshop. Collaborating with existing agencies that would be responsible for coordinating and attracting workshop participants would be essential. The content of these workshops would need to be tailored to the specific locale. Modification of the workshop may be needed based on the geographic distance between the individual counties and Raleigh North Carolina (i.e., focusing on the importance of lobbying outside of the capital city).

Consideration should also be given to extending the training's timeframe. Adding two hours to the training will allow participants to have more time to consume the information and determine how to incorporate it in their day-to-day work realities.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the workshop was very well received. The individuals who attended gained additional understanding of the rules for nonprofit lobbying and advocacy. However, there is more work to be done. It is essential that the voice of the nonprofit sector be strengthened in public policy and legislative debates. Nonprofits must gain a better understanding of the laws that govern their participation in the policy process, so that they may increase their political capital thereby increasing their financial and organizational capacity.

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