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## COMMUNIQUÉ No. 9

# Nonprofit America: A Force for Democracy?

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Advocacy and civic engagement have long been considered central functions of America's nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, there is limited current data on how recent challenges are affecting nonprofit engagement in policy advocacy, and how this varies by field, size of agency, or other factors. Moreover, we know very little about what factors affect the willingness of nonprofit organizations to engage in lobbying and advocacy, or what forms their involvement takes.

To help fill this gap in knowledge, the Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project conducted a survey, or Sounding, of its nationwide sample of 872 nonprofit organizations in four key fields (children and family services, elderly housing and services, community and economic development, and the arts) in 2007. Key findings from this Sounding include the following:

- **Extent.** Involvement in advocacy and lobbying is very much alive among the cross-section of nonprofit organizations that we surveyed. In fact, nearly three out of every four responding organizations (73 percent) reported engaging in some type of policy advocacy or lobbying during the year leading up to our survey.
- **Frequency.** Engagement in policy advocacy or lobbying is not a casual or infrequent pursuit for those orga-

nizations involved in it. Rather, three out of five of the organizations engaging in public policy efforts reported doing so at least once a month over the previous year, and another 31 percent reported doing so quarterly.

- **Resources devoted.** The vast majority (85 percent) of respondents devoted only scant resources (less than 2 percent of their budget) to either lobbying or advocacy activities.
- **Forms of involvement.** Perhaps reflecting this, while responding nonprofit organizations are engaged in a range of advocacy and lobbying activities, the bulk generally rely on the least demanding forms of engagement (e.g., signing a correspondence to a government official endorsing or opposing a particular piece of legislation or budget proposal).
- **Organizational players.** Policy involvement tends to be concentrated in a narrow band of organizational players--chiefly the executive director. Most organizations report that clients or patrons are "rarely" or "never" involved in their lobbying or advocacy.
- **Principal targets.** The principal target of organizational policy activity is at the state and local level, not the federal level.

\*This Sounding was developed in cooperation with the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI). The findings and interpretations reported here are those of the authors only, however, and may or may not represent the views of CLPI, the Johns Hopkins University, or any other organizations with which the authors are affiliated or that support their work.

- **Reasons for non-involvement.** Among the organizations that reported doing no lobbying or advocacy over the previous year, the most common reasons cited were lack of staff time, lack of staff skills, and reliance on coalitions. In contrast, significantly fewer proportions of organizations cited worries about violating laws or regulations, concerns about losing public funds, or board opposition.
- **Reasons for involvement.** Three factors clearly dominated the decision process of organizations engaged both in lobbying and advocacy—the relevance of legislation to the organization’s programs, the relevance of legislation to the people the organization serves, and the executive director’s interest. More generally, organizational size and age, receipt of public funds, board support, and knowledge of the law are positively correlated with involvement in policy and advocacy; while reliance on private philanthropy is negatively related.
- **Intermediaries and advocacy coalitions.** Associations and coalitions are now playing a considerable role in nonprofit lobbying and advocacy, both as a substitute for the involvement of some organizations and as a spur to involvement by others.
- **Recent changes.** Nonprofit policy involvement is on the rise, though the resources available to support it remain constrained.
- **Keys to expanding involvement.** The factor that most organizations feel would have the biggest impact on their ability to increase their policy advocacy is increased funding, either for a dedicated policy specialist or the general operations of the organization.

## Introduction

Advocacy and civic engagement have long been considered central functions of America's nonprofit organizations. A recent Aspen Institute working group put it well: "Active participation in the policy process is a fundamental function of the nonprofit sector in a democratic society."<sup>1</sup>

If anything, this function has grown more important in recent years, as concerns about a lack of civic engagement have prompted efforts to reinvigorate the civic spirit of the country.

While nonprofit organizations are widely expected to play a meaningful role in promoting democracy and civic action, however, a variety of pressures threaten to discourage them from doing so. For one thing, organizations are facing continuing financial concerns that can divert them from advocacy involvement. For another, they face competing cross-pressures from various stakeholders—board members, professional staff, funders—who may not share the policy perspectives of agency leadership or who may worry about too deep an immersion in activities perceived to be too "political." Finally, nonprofit organizations face a somewhat confusing and potentially intimidating set of legal restrictions on their policy-related activities. Some types of political activity—namely, supporting candidates for political office—are strictly forbidden for nonprofit charitable organizations, while others, such as communicating positions on particular pieces of legislation to lawmakers (i.e., lobbying), while permitted, are subject to certain limitations, though the limitations are far less confining in fact

than organizations often believe.<sup>2</sup>

How have these factors affected nonprofit engagement in policy advocacy? Has there been a noticeable decline in nonprofit involvement in the policy process? How extensive is this involvement? To what extent does it vary by field, by size of agency, or by other factors? What factors affect the willingness of organizations to engage in such activity? What forms does the involvement take and how do these vary?

Unfortunately, existing knowledge about the answers to these questions is far from conclusive.<sup>3</sup> For example, Kirsten Gronbjerg and Curtis Child's 2004 study of Indiana nonprofits found that only 27 percent of these groups had engaged in some form of advocacy, while a 2000 survey conducted by the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest in collaboration with OMB Watch and Dr. Jeffrey Berry of Tufts University found that three-quarters of the respondents had engaged in certain forms of policy advocacy activities.<sup>4</sup> Considerable disagreement also exists about the direction, let alone the scale, of recent trends. Thus, while some inquires indicate that the growing marketization of the sector is forcing nonprofits to limit their involvement in policy advocacy,<sup>5</sup> other observers expect nonprofits to get more involved in policy advocacy as a byproduct of their increased engagement with public programs and public funding.<sup>6</sup> Another perspective with some evidentiary support is that while advocacy may appear to be declining at the individual agency level, it may be expanding at the multi-agency level as organizations shift their advocacy to specialized advocacy coalitions.<sup>7</sup> In part, this apparent

<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit Sector Strategy Group, *The Nonprofit Contribution to Civic Participation and Advocacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2000), p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Nonprofits can engage in policy "advocacy" without limit, but they can be penalized if they devote more than an "insubstantial" part of their activities to "lobbying," which, under a 1976 law, is defined as communicating a position on a particular piece of legislation to a legislative official, and/or calling on others to contact a legislative official, in support or opposition to a particular piece of legislation. The definition of what constitutes an "insubstantial" part of an organization's lobbying activities has long been open to debate. However, in 1976, Congress gave nonprofits the choice of electing to come under an expenditure test that clarified and greatly simplified nonprofit lobbying. Under the expenditure test, nonprofits may spend up to 20 percent of their first \$500,000 of exempt-purpose expenditures each year on lobbying. The percentage declines up to a ceiling of \$1 million of spending on lobbying as income increases. Few organizations have elected to come under the expenditure test. By default, the rest of the nonprofits are governed by the "insubstantial part" test. For further details on the rules governing nonprofit involvement in the policy process, see: Bruce R. Hopkins, *The Law of Tax-Exempt Organizations*. Ninth Edition (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), pp. 637-718.

<sup>3</sup> For a recent review of the available evidence, see Stephanie Lessans Geller and Lester M. Salamon, *Nonprofit Advocacy: What Do We Know?*, available online at <http://www.jhu.edu/ccss/publications/ccsswork/>.

<sup>4</sup> Gronbjerg, K. & Child, C. (2004). *Indiana Nonprofits: Impact of Community and Policy Changes*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Retrieved April 5, 2007 from <http://www.indiana.edu/~nonprof/results/npsurvey/inscom.pdf>; OMB Watch, Tufts University, and CLPI. (2002). *Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP). Overview of Findings: Executive Summary*. Retrieved April 16, 2007 from <http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/769/1/101/>.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, J. Alexander, R. Nank, & C. Strivers, *Implications of Welfare Reform: Do Nonprofit Survival Strategies Threaten Civil Society? Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28 (4): 452-75, (1999).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, J. Saidel, "Nonprofit Organizations, Political Engagement, and Public Policy." In *Exploring Organizations and Advocacy*, Volume 2, Issue 2. Eds. Elizabeth J. Reid and Maria D. Montilla (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Alliance for Children and Families, *Creating a New Paradigm: Empowering Nonprofit Organizations to Effectively Engage in the Democratic Process* (Milwaukee, WI: The Alliance for Children and Families, 2003).

confusion may result from differences in sampling methods. But in part it may also reflect the different definitions of the key terms—lobbying and advocacy—that are used or, more commonly, the failure to define them at all; the failure to differentiate between advocating for one’s own organization and its funding and advocating for underrepresented populations or the public at large; and the reliance on loosely-phrased questions that fail, for example, to specify a particular time frame around which respondents should focus their answers.

To help clarify the current nature and extent of nonprofit involvement in policy advocacy, the Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project undertook a special “Sounding” of its participating organizations to assess the nature and extent of their policy advocacy and lobbying activities. As noted more fully in Appendix Table 1, the Listening Post Project maintains two panels of nonprofit organizations in four major fields of nonprofit activity that form an important part of the core of the nation’s charitable nonprofit sector—family and children’s services, elderly services and housing, community and economic development, and arts and culture.

The first panel is a sample of organizations self-selected from the membership of seven major nonprofit intermediary associations active in these fields.<sup>8</sup> The second is a random sample of organizations in the same fields selected from the Internal Revenue Service’s Exempt Organization Master File or from other lists of agencies provided by the partner organizations where these were more complete. Altogether, 872 organizations were surveyed for this Sounding and 311, or 36 percent, responded.<sup>9</sup> This return rate is quite respectable for surveys in this field, but readers are cautioned that we make no claim that the results reported here are fully

“representative” either of the components of the sector we have covered or of the nonprofit sector as a whole, though we do believe the results are indicative of realities in a substantial swath of the nation’s nonprofit human service, community development, and arts sectors. Special note should be taken of the fact that, since part of the sample was selected from among the members of national intermediary organizations, the median size of the organizations represented in this survey is higher than in the nonprofit sector as a whole. While the results may not be representative of the full range of organizations in these fields, therefore, they are far more representative of the bulk of the activity, which tends to be concentrated in the larger organizations. In addition, the inclusion of a random sample of organizations in the same fields makes it possible to test what difference size makes to the activity being examined. As Appendix Table 1 shows, while two-thirds of the directed sample had expenditures in excess of \$3 million, only one-fourth of the random sample did.

Unlike some previous surveys, great care was taken in this survey to define the key terms and to ask separately about advocacy and lobbying. This is important because these two forms of policy involvement differ both in content and in legal position, as outlined in the box below. Thus, policy advocacy involves a variety of forms of policy education and information-sharing and is permitted without limit for nonprofits. Lobbying is more narrow and involves communicating positions on particular pieces of legislation to legislators or legislative staff, either directly or indirectly. As noted above, this is also permitted, but only if it is not a substantial part of an organization’s activity. In addition, to avoid confusion, respondents were asked to focus their responses on a defined time period (the year prior to the

### *What are Policy Advocacy and Lobbying?*

> **Policy advocacy** involves identifying, embracing, and promoting an issue or cause. It aims to influence government policy at the federal, state, or local level and can encompass a range of activities, including conducting research on public problems, writing Op-Ed pieces on issues of public policy, building coalitions, or participating in a group working to formulate a position on a matter of policy.

> **Lobbying** is a specific form of advocacy, which involves either (1) stating an organization’s position on specific legislation to legislative officials and/or asking them to support this position (defined as direct lobbying); or (2) stating an organization’s position on specific legislation to the general public and asking them to communicate this position to legislative officials (defined as grassroots lobbying). The key difference between lobbying and other forms of advocacy is that lobbying involves taking and promoting a position on specific legislation.

To get a more comprehensive picture of nonprofit involvement in policy advocacy and lobbying, our Sounding asked respondents to differentiate between these two activities. Thus, it asked respondents about their involvement in lobbying, and then about their involvement in all other types of policy advocacy (excluding lobbying). This distinction is also important from a legal perspective since there are legal restrictions on nonprofit lobbying, whereas nonprofits are permitted to engage in other issue advocacy (apart from election-related activities) without these limits.

<sup>8</sup> The seven organizations are: Alliance for Children and Families, American Association of Museums, American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, Lutheran Services in America, National Congress for Community Economic Development, Theatre Communications Group, and United Neighborhood Centers of America. One of these organizations, the National Congress for Community Economic Development, has since gone out of existence.

<sup>9</sup> The return rate reached 44 percent among the directed sample organizations.

survey). Finally, an effort was made to differentiate the different forms of advocacy and lobbying and the different purposes being pursued.

### I. Nature and Extent of Nonprofit Policy Advocacy and Lobbying

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from this Sounding on lobbying and policy advocacy among nonprofit human service, community development, and arts organizations is how widespread it is, but also how limited the resources are that organizations are able to devote to it. The fact that our survey embraced many of the larger organizations in these fields makes this mismatch all the more notable. In the process, it raises important questions about how effective nonprofit advocacy and lobbying can be, especially in the face of the much more amply resourced advocacy and lobbying activities of the for-profit sector.<sup>10</sup>

In this section we examine the overall scale and forms of nonprofit advocacy and lobbying and then turn in a subsequent section to the factors that seem to be driving or restraining it. A third section then zeroes in on the important role that intermediaries and coalitions seem to be taking on in nonprofit advocacy and lobbying and the reasons for this.

**Extent.** Much concern has surfaced in recent years over whether America’s nonprofit organizations are continuing to fulfill their long-standing role as protectors of democratic participation. Among the factors that have been implicated in a possible decline of nonprofit policy engagement have been concerns about legal barriers to lobbying, fears that growing reliance on government funding would inhibit nonprofits from biting the hand that feeds them, the growth of professionalism and subsequent dilution of the grass-roots organizing thrust of the sector’s organizations, and the growth of a market culture that undercuts the broader public mission of the sector.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, however, our Sounding suggests that involvement in advocacy and lobbying is very much alive among the cross-

section of nonprofit organizations that we surveyed.<sup>12</sup> More specifically, as shown in Table 1:

- *Overall.* Nearly three out of every four responding organizations (73 percent) reported engaging in some type of policy advocacy or lobbying during the year leading up to our survey.
- *Lobbying vs. advocacy.* While most of these organizations took part in both forms of policy engagement, some took part in one but not the other. As Table 1 also shows, a slightly larger proportion of organizations engaged in policy advocacy than engaged in lobbying, which is understandable given that certain restrictions apply to lobbying.

**Table 1: Share of Organizations Reporting Engagement in Policy Advocacy or Lobbying Over Prior Year**

Response	% of all organizations (n=311)	
	Yes	No
Any policy advocacy or lobbying	73%	27%
Policy advocacy	62%	38%
Lobbying	59%	41%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

**Table 2: Frequency of Policy Advocacy or Lobbying Among Organizations Engaged in It**

Response	% of organizations (n=228)
Once a month or more	61%
3-4 times a year	31%
About once a year	8%
Total	100%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- *Frequency.* Engagement in policy advocacy or lobbying is not, moreover, a casual or infrequent pursuit for those or-

<sup>10</sup> Past research has documented the enormous extent of business representation in the policy arena. According to one detailed study, “the pressure community is heavily weighted in favor of business organizations: 70 percent of all organizations having a Washington presence and 52 percent of those having their own offices, represent business.” By contrast, of the groups representing unions, civil rights groups, minority organizations, social welfare groups, poor people’s organizations, and groups organizing the elderly, the handicapped, and women, less than 5 percent had a Washington presence. Kay Schlotzman and John Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), pp. 66-69.

<sup>11</sup> Among the recent studies or reports citing these various concerns are the following: Michael Lipsky and Stephen Rathgeb Smith, *Nonprofits for Hire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); John McKnight, *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterparts*. (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Gary D. Bass, David F. Arons, Kay Guinane, and Matthew F. Carter, *Seen but not Heard: Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2007); Alliance for Children and Families, 2003, see note 7 above.

<sup>12</sup> This is consistent with a central finding of the recent “Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project” (SNAP). Bass et.al (2007).

ganizations involved in it. Rather, as Table 2 notes, three out of five of the organizations engaging in public policy efforts reported doing so at least once a month over the previous year, and another 31 percent reported doing so quarterly.<sup>13</sup>

• *Variation among types of organizations.* While involvement in policy advocacy or lobbying was widespread among responding organizations, however, it was hardly universal. A little over a quarter of the organizations reported no such involvement during the preceding year. What is more, there were notable differences in the degree of involvement by field, organizational size, and affiliation. In particular, as shown in Table 3:

- The core nonprofit *human service organizations* in the fields of elderly and children’s services were most likely to be involved in policy advocacy and lobbying (89 percent and 80 percent of organizations, respectively).
- By comparison, organizations in the field of *arts and culture* less commonly reported involvement in policy advocacy and lobbying, with only 46 percent of responding museums and 59 percent of responding theaters reporting any such involvement over the previous year.
- Somewhat surprisingly, the *community development organizations*, which are closest to the grass-roots, reported a rate of policy advocacy and lobbying that fell between these extremes and, at 69 percent, was slightly below the average for all respondents.
- The *size* of an organization also seems to have played a role in determining whether it was actively involved in policy activity. Nearly all (92 percent) of the largest respondents (those with expenditures in excess of \$3 million) indicated that they engaged in some type of policy advocacy or lobbying activity over the previous year. By contrast, only 40 percent of the smallest organizations (those with annual expenditures of less than \$500,000) reported such engagement.
- *Membership or affiliation with an intermediary group at the state or national level* also seems to be associated with greater advocacy or lobbying involvement. Among the organizations reporting such an affiliation, nearly 80 percent reported involvement in some type of policy advocacy or lobbying. By contrast, among the unaffiliated organizations, only 31 percent reported

such involvement. The direction of causation here is not entirely clear, of course, since it may be the case that organizations inclined to engage in lobbying and advocacy will gravitate toward membership in intermediary organizations. As will become clear below, however, other evidence suggests that the intermediaries and coalitions play a meaningful role in helping to encourage and facilitate lobbying and advocacy.

**Table 3: Share of Organizations Reporting Engagement in Policy Advocacy or Lobbying Over Prior Year, by Field, Size, and Affiliation Status**

Category	% of organizations* n=311	
	Yes	No
<b>By Field</b>		
Community and Economic Development	69%	31%
Children and Family Services	80%	20%
Elderly Housing and Services	89%	11%
Museums	46%	55%
Theaters	59%	41%
All Fields	73%	27%
<b>By Size</b>		
Small (<\$500,000 in expenditures)	40%	60%
Medium (\$500,000-\$3 million in expenditures)	57%	43%
Large (>\$3 million in expenditures)	92%	9%
<b>By Affiliation Status</b>		
Affiliated	79%	21%
Unaffiliated	31%	69%

\*Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- The *frequency* of policy advocacy or lobbying also varied by field, size, and affiliation status, as shown in Appendix Table 2. Interestingly, although a below-average proportion of the community and economic development organizations reported engaging in advocacy or lobbying, those that did engage tended to do so more frequently than was the case for organizations in the other fields (71 percent reported involvement at least monthly compared to 61 percent for all respondents). Similarly, large organizations were generally more frequently engaged than smaller ones. Somewhat surprisingly, affiliation status had little apparent impact on the frequency of policy engagement, and what little impact it had was opposite what might have been expected, with the unaffiliated slightly more actively engaged than the affili-

<sup>13</sup> This finding differs markedly from that reported in the SNAP survey, which found that “the frequency of policy participation by nonprofits is inconsistent and generally low.” Bass et. al. (2007:17). This may reflect in part the higher proportion of small organizations in the SNAP survey.

Table 4: Most Frequent Forms of Lobbying and Advocacy				
Response	% of organizations			
	Orgs that Lobby or Advocate (n=182/191)		All Respondents (n=311)	
	Any Time	3+ Times	Any Time	3+ Times
<b>Forms of Lobbying</b>				
Signed a correspondence to a government official	97%	65%	57%	38%
Visited a government official	85%	52%	50%	31%
Called a government official	86%	51%	50%	30%
Stimulated public to communicate to officials	60%	36%	35%	21%
<b>Forms of Advocacy</b>				
Responded to requests for info from official	90%	50%	55%	31%
Distributed information materials	82%	49%	51%	30%
Testified at hearings	57%	22%	35%	13%
Wrote an Op-Ed piece or letter to the editor	53%	17%	33%	10%
Organized public event	46%	9%	29%	6%
Released research report	38%	15%	24%	9%
Filed or joined a lawsuit	4%	0%	3%	0%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

ated. Finally, organizations in the arts field engaged in advocacy and lobbying were the least actively involved among the groups of organizations considered here (see Appendix Table 2).

**Forms of involvement.** Lobbying and advocacy can take a variety of forms, however, and these forms can vary greatly in the degree of effort and commitment they involve. To say that an organization participates in advocacy or lobbying does not quite make clear what level of commitment it is bringing to this activity, therefore. At one extreme are limited-commitment activities such as sending or signing on to a correspondence to government officials or responding to a request for information. At the other extreme are more demanding forms of engagement such as organizing a public event or convincing members of the public to communicate to public officials (so-called “grass-roots lobbying”).

Not surprisingly, organizations varied widely in the forms of policy involvement they utilized. Typical of the responses were these:

- “We organized local arts organizations to express our concerns with a united voice”—from a theater in Eugene, Oregon.
- “Most of our activity takes the form of drafting, redrafting, and critiquing state or federal proposed policies via

letters, edits, group effort thru trade associations, and mobilizing others, especially clients and families and staff, to do likewise”—from a community and economic development group in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

- “I joined with others on an op ed and other community awareness activities”—from a children and family services agency in Chicago, Illinois.

As Table 4 shows, among the organizations engaged in lobbying and advocacy, the level of involvement was fairly widespread, though it tended to focus more heavily on the less demanding forms. What is more, the picture of robustness changes markedly when we broaden the lens to include all respondents and not just those reporting some advocacy or lobbying activity. Thus:

- Among those reporting any lobbying, virtually all (97 percent) reported signing a correspondence (e.g., a letter, email, or fax) to a government official endorsing or opposing a particular piece of legislation or budget proposal. In fact, 35 percent of the respondents indicated that they signed such a correspondence 6 times or more over the previous 12 months, and an additional 30 percent indicated that they signed such a correspondence 3 to 5 times over the past year.
- Overwhelming majorities of lobbying organizations also

visited with or called a government official or his/her staff to endorse or oppose a particular piece of legislation or budget proposal (85 percent and 86 percent, respectively).

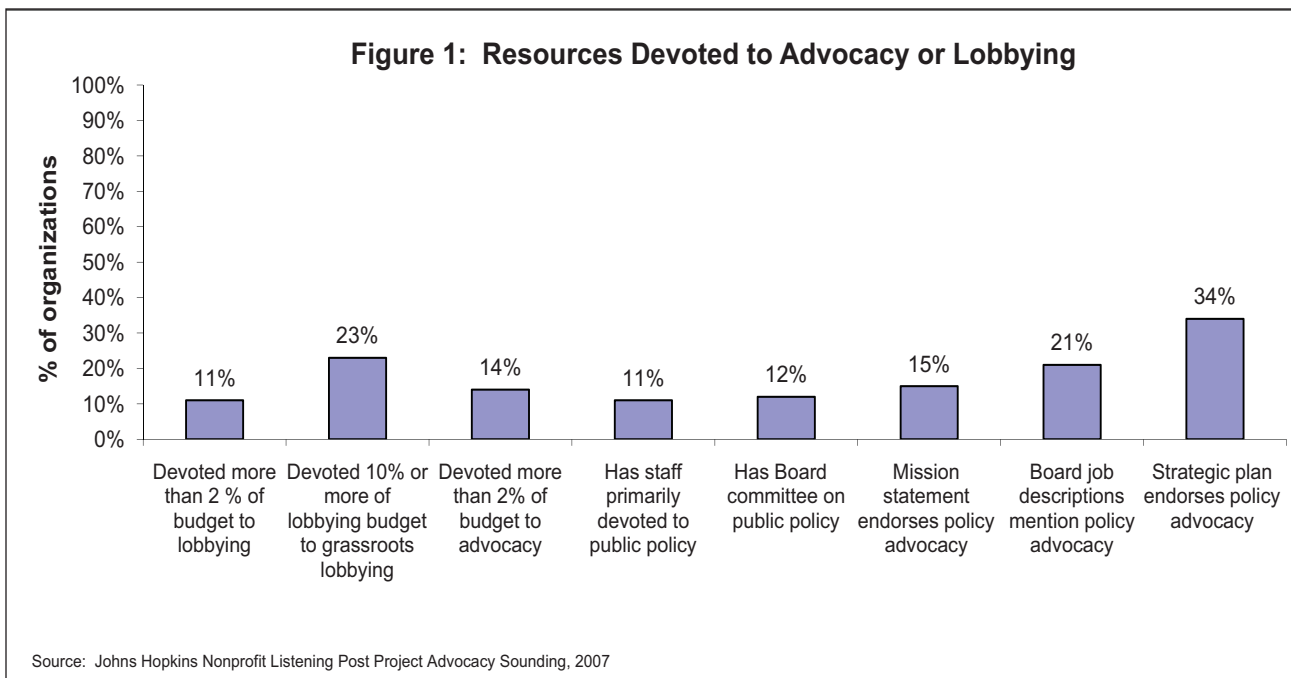
- By contrast, only 60 percent of those involved in lobbying reported engaging in grassroots lobbying, i.e., stating the organization’s position on a particular piece of legislation to the general public and asking them to communicate this to a government official. Of those who did this, moreover, most did so infrequently. Thus, just 18 percent of the respondents who reported lobbying over the past year relied on this technique 6 or more times, and just another 18 percent relied on this technique 3 to 5 times over the past year.
- Similarly, among those involved in policy advocacy, a full 90 percent responded to a request for information from a public official and over 80 percent distributed information materials. But the proportions testifying at hearings, organizing public events, releasing research reports, or participating in lawsuits were considerably smaller, and the proportions doing so three or more times smaller still.
- As shown in Appendix Table 3, moreover, these findings are fairly consistent across the different types of organizations and vary only marginally by organizational size.
- When account is taken of the sizable minority of organizations reporting no involvement in lobbying or advocacy, however, even this picture of nonprofit involvement

changes considerably. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes clear that only about half of the organizations are doing even the least demanding forms of lobbying or advocacy, and the proportions that are involved three or more times in the course of a year exceed one-third of the organizations for only the least demanding of all forms (signing a correspondence to a government official) (see Table 4).

Evidently, lobbying and advocacy, while widespread and varied, tend to involve relatively limited-commitment activities for most organizations most of the time. And for many organizations, even limited-commitment advocacy or lobbying activities are rare or non-existent.

**Resources devoted.** One reason for this apparent predominance of relatively limited-engagement forms of lobbying and advocacy may be the limited resources that this function seems to command among the organizations. While virtually all (94 percent) of the responding organizations agreed that “nonprofit organizations have a duty to advocate for policies important to their mission,” the resources and attention devoted to this function remain quite sparse. Thus, as shown in Figure 1:

- Only 11 percent of organizations that engage in any lobbying reported devoting as much as 2 percent of their overall budget to this function, and only 23 percent devote as much as 10 percent of this limited sum (i.e., 1/10th of 2 percent of their total budget) to grassroots lobbying. This means that few if any organizations report coming any-





where close to the limit on the share of their expenditures that they are permitted under prevailing federal restrictions to devote to lobbying in general and grass-roots lobbying in particular.<sup>14</sup>

- Only 14 percent of organizations that engage in any policy advocacy devote as much as 2 percent of their overall budget to this function.
- Only 11 percent of organizations have at least one staff member devoted primarily to public policy;
- Only 15 percent of the organizations include a mention of policy advocacy in their mission statements, though a third include some mention in their strategic plan;
- Only 21 percent of the organizations include a mention of policy advocacy in the job descriptions for their board members.

In short, while lobbying and policy advocacy are widespread among the surveyed organizations, they are far from the center of organizational focus and tend to attract relatively limited commitments of time, resources, and attention. Indeed, the respondents seemed to concede as much, with 90 percent agreeing that “Nonprofits like mine should be more active and involved in policy advocacy.”

**Principal Targets of Lobbying and Advocacy.** Given the limited resources committed to advocacy and lobbying by most organizations, it should come as no surprise that most of this activity is directed to officials close to home. Most organizations apparently leave the federal lobbying and advocacy to advocacy coalitions, as we will see more fully below. In particular, as shown in Table 5:

- Whether the focus is policy affecting the organization’s funding, those it serves, nonprofits generally, or a specific earmark, the principal target of organizational policy activity is at the state and local level rather than the federal level. What is more, this holds true for both lobbying and advocacy. Thus:
  - With regard to lobbying to increase organizations’ funding, 68 percent of the organizations reported targeting principally state and local officials, with state officials clearly in the lead.
  - When it comes to legislation affecting those they serve, 63 percent of the organizations still principally target

state and local officials;

- Fifty-eight percent also principally focus on state and local officials for legislation affecting nonprofits generally;
- Sixty-nine percent even focus principally on the state and local level for earmarks.
- By contrast, only about a third of the organizations principally focus on the federal level in either their lobbying or advocacy.

While the policy debate in Washington tends to get the preponderance of media attention, nonprofits have thus learned that a considerable part of the action that affects them takes place at the state and local level. What is more, given limited resources, this is the level that is most easily within their reach.

Type of Issue	% of organizations principally targeting:		
	Federal	State	Local
<b>Lobbying activity (n=182)</b>			
Legislation affecting our organization’s funding	32%	52%	16%
Legislation that could affect those we serve	36%	47%	16%
Legislation that could affect nonprofits generally	41%	45%	13%
A specific earmark	31%	45%	24%
<b>Advocacy activity (n=191)</b>			
Legislation affecting our organization’s funding	32%	50%	18%
Legislation that could affect those we serve	35%	49%	16%
Legislation that could affect nonprofits generally	37%	47%	16%
A specific earmark	31%	42%	27%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

## II. Reasons for Nonprofit Involvement or Non-Involvement in Policy Advocacy and Lobbying

What explains the pattern of nonprofit involvement and non-involvement in lobbying and policy advocacy revealed in our Sounding?

The literature on nonprofit advocacy has suggested a variety of factors thought to influence nonprofit policy engagement, ranging from concerns about loss of government or foundation funding through the restrictiveness or complexity of

<sup>14</sup>As noted earlier, prior to 1976, existing law was imprecise about what level of lobbying expenditure would violate the “insubstantial part” rule. The so-called 501(h) “election” is more precise, but the amount varies by the size of the organization. In no case, however, do the organizations we surveyed report expenditures that come close to the amounts permitted under the 501(h) election. Similarly, the 1976 tax law permits organizations to devote 25 percent of their allowable lobbying expenditures to grassroots lobbying. Here again, our data suggest that organizations are nowhere near this limit.

existing laws or regulations to a loss of focus on the advocacy and civic engagement function of the nonprofit sector as a result of the rise of professionalism within the sector.<sup>15</sup>

To assess these and other possible explanations of the existing pattern of nonprofit lobbying and advocacy, we asked both those respondents who reported various forms of policy engagement and those who did not to rank a variety of possible influences on this behavior. Here is what we learned:

**Reasons for non-involvement.** Among the organizations that reported doing no lobbying or advocacy over the previous year, the most common reason cited was lack of staff time. This may help explain why a higher proportion of smaller than larger organizations reported not being involved in lobbying and advocacy: they have their hands full just keeping their organizations functioning. “We are a small nonprofit of four employees and thus we simply do not have the person-power to engage in this type of service on behalf of those we serve or our own interests as an organization,” noted one respondent. “We do not have time, money, or staff for lobbying,” noted another. Other reasons cited included a lack of staff skills, reliance on coalitions, and lack of relevance of policy to the organization, which often meant that there was not a strong “business” reason for the organization to get involved. “We have no public funding, so our direct operation does not depend greatly on public policy,” noted one respondent. “The present culture of our organization is that since we get no money from government sources we don’t get involved,” explained another.

More specifically, as reported in Figure 2, among organizations reporting no involvement in advocacy or lobbying over the previous year:

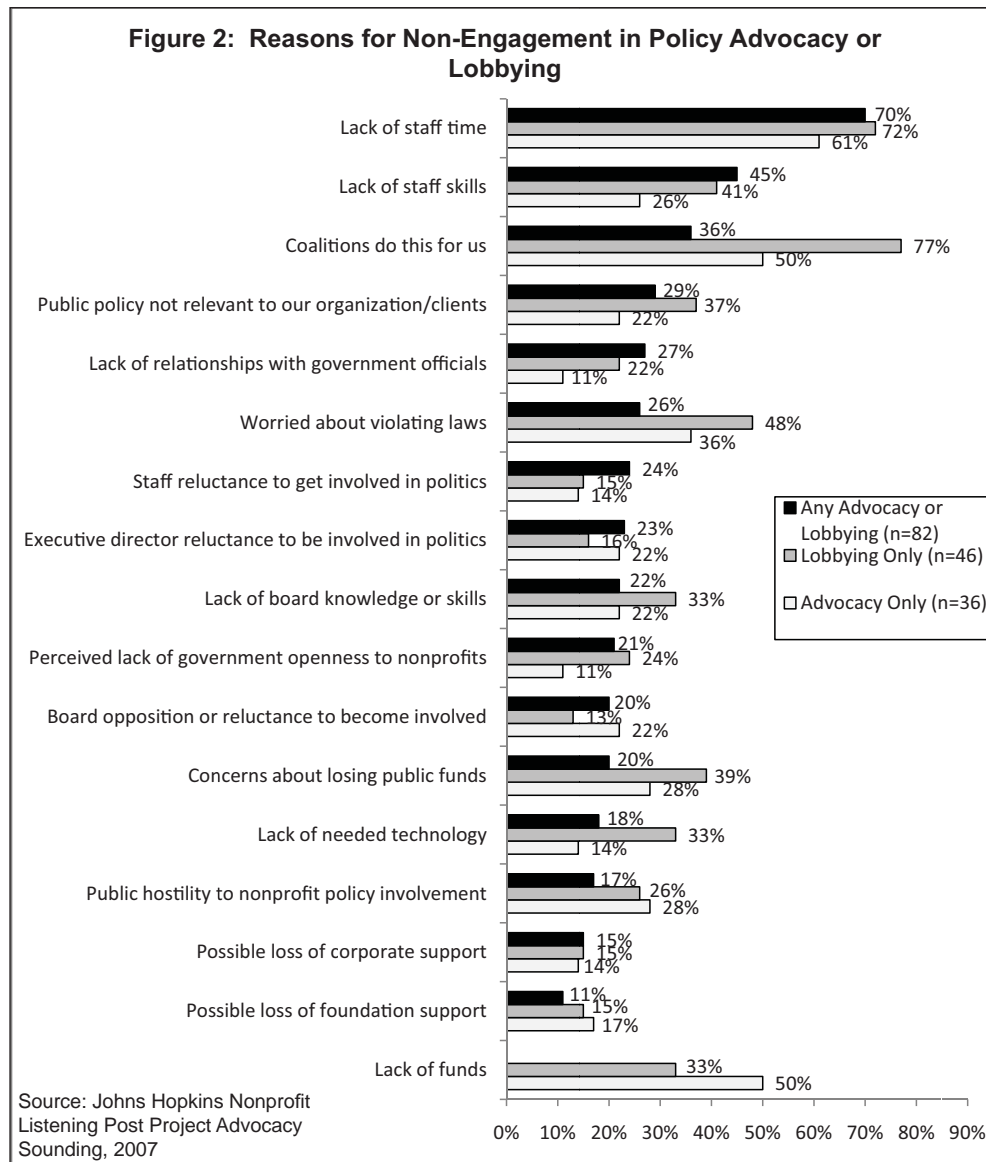
- Seventy percent cited lack of staff time as having a major influence.
  - Forty-five percent cited lack of staff skills as a major influence.
  - A little over a third of the organizations (36 percent) indicated that coalitions handle this function for them.
  - Almost 30 percent indicated that a major reason for non-involvement was that public policy was not relevant to their organizations or clients/patrons.
- Interestingly, only about a quarter of the organizations indicated that worries about violating laws or regulations had a major influence on their decisions not to take part in lobbying or advocacy, and only about one-fifth (20 percent) cited concerns about losing public funds, about the same proportion as cited board opposition or reluctance to be involved.

These findings thus reinforce the earlier finding about the limited resources organizations have available to devote to advocacy and lobbying. What they add is evidence that these resource constraints really do affect the ability of organizations to pursue their goals through policy-related activity and that they may do so more than perceived legal constraints or concerns about losing public funds.

Although the number of respondents is too small to make too much of the differences, some interesting variations surfaced in the factors cited by organizations of different sizes and fields as being mostly responsible for their decisions not to engage in lobbying or advocacy. In particular, as shown in Appendix Table 4:

- Community development organizations, theaters, and larger organizations were most likely to cite “lack of staff time” as the most important barrier to advocacy and lobbying. The latter is especially significant since these organizations have the most ample resources to throw into advocacy work, yet resource constraints still impede them.
- Interestingly, large organizations were also more likely than small or medium-sized organizations to cite lack of staff skills as a major reason for not lobbying or advocating.
- Also notable was the substantial proportion of both family and children and elderly service organizations that cited reliance on advocacy coalitions as a reason for not engaging in advocacy or lobbying themselves, an important development in the field that we examine more closely below.
- Finally, concerns about potential loss of both public and corporate funds, as well as board opposition, were factors cited by a little over a quarter of community development organizations, but only 20 percent of organizations overall.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed appraisal of some of these factors, see M. Chaves, J. Galaskiewicz, & L. Stephens, “Does Government Funding Suppress Nonprofits’ Political Activity?” (*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 69, 292-316, 2004); L. M. Salamon, *Explaining Nonprofit Advocacy: An Exploratory Analysis* (Delivered at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum, Alexandria, VA, March 24, 1995); G. Bass, D. Arons, K. Guinane, & M. Carter, *Seen But Not Heard: Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2007).



As Figure 2 also shows, the factors cited by organizations that refrained from only one form of policy engagement—either lobbying or advocacy—but not both, differed somewhat from those cited by organizations that refrained from both. In particular:

- *Lack of time.* For all the groups—those doing no lobbying or advocacy as well as those doing one but not the other—a leading factor affecting their behavior was lack of time. “We are a smaller organization,” noted one, “and few legislative efforts are geared to our work, or are at our scale.”
- *Coalitions and intermediaries.* Another major factor in explaining why some organizations engaged in one form

of policy influence but not both was participation in coalitions or intermediary organizations. This was particularly marked among organizations that reported advocacy activity but no lobbying. Lobbying is understandably perceived to be a more demanding activity requiring connections and skills that many organizations feel they lack. The increased prominence of coalitions or intermediaries that take on some of the lobbying work of individual agencies may, in fact, be one of the more striking trends of recent years—a topic to which we return below.

- *Lack of funds.* Also quite important, particularly to the groups that only engage in advocacy, is a lack of funds. Thus, half of the organizations that reported some ad-

vocacy but no lobbying indicated that lack of funds had a moderate or strong influence on their decision not to lobby. This suggests that many nonprofits may perceive that lobbying is more resource intensive than policy advocacy.

- *Worries about violating laws or losing public funds* turn out to be important factors in inhibiting lobbying, though less so advocacy, among these organizations. Close to half of the organizations that reported some advocacy but no lobbying cited worries about violating laws as an influential reason for not lobbying. This may reflect a misunderstanding of prevailing law, however. One respondent noted, for example, that “As a non-profit organization we are not allowed to engage in lobbying.” In addition, fully 31 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that “Nonprofits that don’t elect to come under the 1976 lobby law [the 501h election] are prohibited from lobbying.” But neither of these happens to be true.

**Reasons for involvement.** To gain a full understanding of the factors responsible for the pattern of policy involvement we uncovered, of course, it is necessary to examine not only why some organizations chose not to participate but also why most chose to participate.

Table 6 provides a first cut at the answer to this question by reporting the factors identified by responding organizations as being “moderate” or “strong” influences on their decisions to lobby or advocate, respectively. As this table shows:

- Three factors clearly dominated the decision process of organizations engaged both in lobbying and advocacy—the relevance of legislation to the organization’s programs, the relevance of legislation to the people the organization serves, and the executive director’s interest. Over 90 percent of the organizations that either lobby or advocate cited these three factors as being “strong” or “moderate” influences, and the overwhelming majority cited them as being a “strong” influence.<sup>16</sup>
- This suggests that a combination of “business” reasons (supporting programs that deliver funding to the organization) and “mission” reasons (supporting programs that not only help the organization but also help the organization’s clients or patrons) were at work in prompting organizations to engage in policy activity. In fact, these two impulses may be fused in the minds of most organizations, a function of the increased reliance on public funding by organizations in order to carry out their missions. This funding has added an important “business” dimension to the pressures encouraging nonprofit organizations to engage in policy advocacy and lobbying. The fact that the executive director is the key participant reinforces this view, since this is the person who has principal responsibility for balancing the business and mission sides of the organization, for ensuring that the organization has the resources to pursue its mission. And this has increasingly required the pursuit of governmental support and encouragement for the programs that supply it. As one respondent put it: “It is my job to seek government fund-

Factor	% of organizations	
	Lobbying (n=182)	Advocacy (n=191)
Relevance of legislation to our organization’s programs	95%	94%
Relevance of legislation to the people we serve	92%	95%
Executive director interest	92%	93%
The political and financial climate of our state or locality	81%	81%
Encouragement from groups or coalitions of which we are part	75%	82%
Moral obligation	75%	74%
Staff interest	69%	68%
Client/customer interest	50%	45%
Board interest	33%	37%
Funder/donor support	20%	18%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

<sup>16</sup> As shown in Appendix Table 5, these factors do not vary much by field or size of organization.

ing each year.” But another pointed out that “advocacy for the poor and forgotten is a major part of our mission.” And still another noted that “We have been doing policy advocacy for many years, it is integral to our mission.”

- While the relevance of legislation to an organization’s programs and clients and the interest of the executive director are the major factors influencing decisions to lobby or advocate, they are not the only important factors. Rather, as Table 6 shows, the political and financial climate of a state or locality, encouragement from coalitions or intermediary groups, a sense of moral obligation, and staff interest are also quite important to at least two-thirds of the organizations.
- Considerably farther down the list of influences, however, are client interest, board interest, and donor support. Thus only a third of the organizations cited board interest as a “moderate” or “strong” influence on their decisions to advocate or lobby and only 20 percent cited funder or donor support. This lack of strong board or funder interest may reflect a lack of resources or effort on the part of agency management to engage boards or funders in this function. Also at work, however, may be a reluctance of boards to be involved in political activity or even different board political views on public policy. At the same time, this finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that the growth of government support has, in the words of one analyst, “remade nonprofit management,” undermining board influence by turning the attention of agency leadership much more toward government program managers and the political process and leaving the board on the sidelines.<sup>17</sup>
- Further insight into the impulses for lobbying and advocating is apparent in data on the substantive focus of lobbying and advocacy.
- Thus, as shown in Table 7, the major focus of lobbying is “legislation that could affect our funding,” followed by “legislation that could affect those we serve.” These two also receive top billing as the foci for advocacy, though here the order is reversed. This underlines again the interplay of business and mission impulses prompting nonprofit lobbying and advocacy.
- Also notable is the somewhat surprising 40 percent of lobbying and advocating organizations that focused their efforts on a specific “earmark” in the previous year. Earmarks are grants to particular organizations for high prior-

ity programs or facilities. That so sizable a share of organizations reported working on earmarks in the previous year underlines the growing importance of these legislative grants to the operation of these organizations.

**Table 7: Substantive Focus of Lobbying and Advocacy (% of organizations citing item as “significant” or “very significant” focus)**

Focus	% of organizations	
	Lobbying n=182	Advocacy n=192
Legislation that could affect our funding	83%	77%
Legislation that could affect those we serve	81%	84%
Legislation that could affect nonprofits generally	42%	42%
A specific earmark	41%	40%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- Interestingly, only about 40 percent of the organizations cited legislation affecting nonprofits generally as a focus for their lobbying and advocacy. Most organizations apparently have their hands full pursuing public sector support for their clients and the programs that keep their organizations operating and leave the general sector support work to others.
- One further piece of evidence about the factors influencing nonprofit involvement in lobbying and policy advocacy comes from data on the relationship between organizational funding sources and policy engagement. As shown in Table 8, contrary to widespread assumptions, organizations with above-average shares of government funding turn out to be more likely to engage in lobbying than those with below average shares, and this relationship is statistically significant. While fear of losing public funding can be a deterrent to policy engagement, the desire to secure or increase it appears to be a stronger factor promoting such engagement.

**Table 8: Relationship between Government Funding and Lobbying Activity**

Share of Funding from Government	% of organizations lobbying		
	Yes	No	Total
Above average	67%	33%	100%
Below average	54%	46%	100%
Total	61%	39%	100%

Chi-square: 4.822  
P<.05

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

<sup>17</sup> Steven R. Smith, “Managing the Challenges of Government Contracts,” in R.D. Herman, ed., *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Management*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), p. 340.

- Additional insight into the factors influencing policy advocacy and lobbying by nonprofit organizations is evident in organizational responses to a question about the roles of various organizational actors. As Table 9 reveals, policy involvement tends to be concentrated in a narrow band of organizational players. In particular:
  - Over 70 percent of the organizations identified the executive director as being “somewhat” or “significantly” involved in policy activity. No other actor came close to sharing this level of involvement in the policy advocacy or lobbying activity of the organizations.
  - Thus, only 40 percent of the organizations reported that other staff share this level of involvement in policy work. By contrast, 60 percent indicated that other staff are “never or rarely involved” or that the question was not applicable.
  - Similarly, only a third of the organizations reported that their boards were “somewhat or significantly” involved in the organization’s policy advocacy and two-thirds reported that such involvement was rare or non-existent.

involvement in policy advocacy, nearly 90 percent report that clients or patrons are “rarely” or “never” involved in their lobbying or advocacy. This is especially striking since involvement of clients can often significantly improve the effectiveness of lobbying and advocacy. Whatever the reason, this finding certainly suggests that the extensive advocacy involvement by organizations is not being translated very extensively into the promotion of civic engagement on the part of organizations’ clients or patrons.

Taken together, these findings suggest the pressures that increased public funding and the increased relevance of public policy are placing on the nation’s nonprofit organizations. On the one side, this increased funding and policy relevance have added important business reasons to the long-standing mission and moral reasons for nonprofit organizations to engage in policy advocacy and lobbying. This seems to have broadened the array of organizations involved in policy activity. At the same time, the resources organizations have available to devote to this increasingly important function remain highly limited. Even among large organizations, policy advocacy and lobbying remain largely solo operations of already over-worked agency executives. Few organizations have other staff significantly involved in this function, almost none have an advocacy or policy director, and only a handful have been able to mobilize significant involvement on the part of their boards. Nonprofit organizations are thus entering the policy realm with one hand tied behind their backs.

**Putting it all together.** In an effort to sort through the various impulses to engage or not engage in policy advocacy and lobbying, Table 10 examines the impact on advocacy and lobbying involvement of a number of different factors using a somewhat more rigorous test of significance.<sup>18</sup> For ease of comprehension, these factors are sorted into three types of explanations that can be found in the literature.<sup>19</sup> The first of these sees organizations as vulnerable to bureaucratization as they grow and mature and as their early commitment to mission gives way to a preoccupation with organizational survival.<sup>20</sup> In this view, as organizations grow and take on professional modes of task accomplishment, their commit-

Actor(s)	% of organizations n=309	
	Somewhat or Significantly Involved	Not applicable or Never or Rarely Involved
Executive Director	71%	29%
Other staff	40%	60%
Board members	33%	67%
Board policy committee	17%	84%
Advocacy/Policy Director	16%	84%
Lobbyist or other paid professional	16%	84%
Clients/customers/patrons	12%	88%
Volunteers	9%	91%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- Interestingly, although organizations indicate that concern for clients is a principal motivation for their in-

<sup>18</sup> The analysis here uses contingency tables and computes the chi-square test, which measures the likelihood that the given relationship could have occurred by chance. By common usage, relationships are considered statistically significant if the probability that they occurred by chance is less than 5 percent (.05 level). Relationships significant at the .01 (1 percent) level are even stronger.

<sup>19</sup> For a fuller explication of these “theories,” see: L. M. Salamon, *Explaining Nonprofit Advocacy: An Exploratory Analysis* (Delivered at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum, Alexandria, VA, March 24, 1995). Available on-line at <http://www.jhu.edu/ccss/publications/ccsswork/workingpaper21.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> For a classic statement of this view, see: Roy Lubove. *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Profession* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); see also: Richard A. Cloward and I. Epstein, “Private Social Welfare’s Disengagement from the Poor: The Case of Family Adjustment Agencies,” in M.N. Zald, ed., *Social Welfare Institutions: A Sociological Reader* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), pp. 623-43.

ment to advocacy and grassroots organizing declines, except perhaps for advocacy related directly to organizational survival.

The second explanation points to the revenue base of organizations as the key determinant shaping advocacy involvement. One line of argument within this “resource dependency” framework suggests that receipt of government funding inhibits nonprofit policy advocacy, and that this inhibition is further reinforced by worrisome legal restrictions. Another stresses the diverting influence of reliance on fees and sales, which pull organizations into the market and away from their advocacy responsibilities. And yet a third points to the conservative influence that wealthy donors, including those that sit on the boards of foundations, exert over agency involvement in public policy, at least in public policy supportive of expanded social welfare protections.

Finally, the third explanation points to a variety of external encouragement—from intermediary organizations, board members, or progressive funders—as a key to advocacy engagement.

Table 10 reports on our effort to test these different theories using data drawn from our survey. While these tests are far from perfect given the limitations of available data, they do shed some additional useful light on the dynamics of nonprofit advocacy involvement. In particular:

- The data seem to offer little support to the bureaucratization argument about nonprofit advocacy involvement. At the very least, far from declining as organizations grow, age, and acquire professional employees, as this line of argument suggests, nonprofit policy advocacy seems to increase. Thus, for example, 78 percent of the organizations with expenditures above the median for our sample reported involvement in lobbying but only 38 percent of the organizations below the median size were so involved. A similar pattern held for advocacy involvement, moreover. And similar relationships held for agency size measured in terms of employment and for agency age, the proportion of staff members with professional degrees, and the ratio of paid staff to volunteers. In each case, the proportion of organizations that were involved in both lobbying and advocacy was higher among the organizations that scored above the median on these various mea-

EXPLANATION Factor	% of organizations involved in:					
	Lobbying			Advocacy		
	Factor Value		Chi-Square	Factor Value		Chi-Square
	Low	High		Low	High	
<b>BUREAUCRATIZATION</b>						
Size (expenditures)	38%	78%	49.076**	44%	78%	36.404**
Size (employment)	38%	78%	49.673**	44%	79%	39.932**
Professionalization of staff	53%	63%	2.845	56%	66%	3.295
Age of organization	47%	71%	15.918**	51%	71%	12.731**
Ratio of paid staff to volunteers	28%	68%	7.563**	55%	68%	5.189*
<b>RESOURCE DEPENDENCY</b>						
Government share of revenue	54%	67%	4.822*	52%	76%	17.770**
Private giving as share of revenue	67%	52%	6.314**	69%	55%	5.593*
Fees as share of revenue	59%	64%	0.807	64%	65%	0.017
Know the law	46%	64%	8.544**	46%	69%	14.051**
<b>OUTSIDE ENCOURAGEMENT</b>						
Board support for lobbying/advocacy	49%	79%	21.393**	44%	85%	41.607**
Belong to a coalition/intermediary	20%	63%	24.109**	26%	66%	21.664**

\* Significant at the .05 level

\*\*Significant at the .01 level

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

tures of organizational growth and bureaucratization than among the organizations that scored below the median. What is more, most of these relationships are “significant,” and at the .01 level.

- Two plausible explanations are available for this finding. In the first place, lobbying and advocacy require resources. While few organizations truly have enough resources to devote to this function, the larger organizations are clearly in better position to support a meaningful advocacy and lobbying role. In the second place, as suggested in some of the previous findings, the growth of government support for nonprofit organizations has added an important “business” reason to the mission-related reasons for engaging in advocacy and lobbying. This development may have turned the conflict between advocacy involvement and organizational survival posited by the bureaucratization theory on its head: instead of decreasing, the motivation to lobby and advocate may have increased with organizational growth and professionalization because such advocacy has acquired an important organizational survival rationale. And the fact that large organizations are most commonly the recipients of government support adds credence to this interpretation. Far from refuting the bureaucratization thesis, therefore, these findings may support it.
- The resource dependency argument also finds considerable support in the data, though also for somewhat surprising reasons:
  - First, far from discouraging advocacy and lobbying, as some advocates of this theory suggest, the presence of government support seems to encourage it, as was suggested earlier. Organizations with above average shares of government support are more likely to engage in advocacy and lobbying than those with below average shares, and this relationship is significant at the .05 level for lobbying and at the .01 level for advocacy.<sup>21</sup> This provides added support to the suggestion above that the growth of government funding of nonprofits has added an important business rationale to supplement the mission rationales for nonprofit advocacy involvement. In addition, the data suggest that whatever negative influence results from existing government regulation of advocacy and lobbying can be offset by education. At the very least, organizations whose principals understand

the existing laws are significantly more likely to lobby and advocate than those whose principals are not so well informed.

- While government support seems to encourage nonprofit advocacy involvement, private charitable support (which includes support from both individuals and private foundations), seems to discourage it. Organizations with above average shares of private charitable funding are significantly less likely to engage in both lobbying and advocacy than are organizations with below average shares. Comments from a number of respondents may help make sense of this finding:
  - “[Foundation] grants say their money can’t be used for lobbying.”
  - “Simply discouraged by a number of local and regional private foundations from being heavily involved in lobbying—not usually strictly forbidden.”
  - “Funds are to be used for educational purposes only.”
  - “United Way does not allow lobbying—local community foundation restricts.”
  - “Some foundations expressly prohibit their funds from being used for lobbying or advocacy.”
  - “A small number of foundations have said that none of their funds should go for influencing public policy.”
- Finally, there is no evidence in these data that increased reliance on fees and charges is associated with diminished advocacy or lobbying activity. No statistically significant relationship is apparent between reliance on fees and involvement in policy advocacy.

In short, it seems that if the funding environment is discouraging advocacy involvement by nonprofits, the source of the discouragement is private charitable funding, not public funding or increased reliance on the market.
- Finally, the data strongly suggest a positive relationship between two sources of external encouragement and nonprofit advocacy involvement.
  - One of these sources is the organization’s *board*. Although our earlier findings made clear that board en-

<sup>21</sup> This finding is consistent with most existing empirical analyses of the relationship between government funding and nonprofit advocacy. See, for example: M. Chaves, J. Galaskiewicz, & L. Stephens, “Does Government Funding Suppress Nonprofits’ Political Activity?” (*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 69, 292-316, 2004); L. M. Salamon, *Explaining Nonprofit Advocacy: An Exploratory Analysis* (Delivered at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum, Alexandria, VA, March 24, 1995); Salamon (1995); and Gary D. Bass, David F. Arons Kay Guinane, and Matthew F. Carter, *Seen but not Heard: Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2007).



couragement is far less common than might be assumed, the data here make clear that where such encouragement exists, lobbying and advocacy involvement are much more common.

- Similarly, organizations that are members of an *intermediary organization* are much more involved in advocacy and lobbying than those that are not members: 63 percent of the organizations that report such membership are involved in lobbying vs. 20 percent of those reporting no such membership. Organizational membership brings with it information, skills, and regular reminders, decreasing the transaction costs of policy engagement to the individual organization.

### III. Intermediaries and Advocacy Coalitions

Given the significant role that our data suggest intermediary associations and coalitions are now playing in nonprofit lobbying and advocacy, both as a substitute for the involvement of some organizations and as a spur to involvement by others, a closer look at the function of these organizations in the advocacy life of the sector seems in order.<sup>22</sup>

**Extent of participation.** As a first step, Table 11 reports on the pattern of participation in such associations on the part of the organizations we surveyed. As the table suggests, participation is quite widespread. In particular:

- Almost all (89%) of the responding organizations belong to some type of coalition or membership organization. As Appendix Table 6 shows, only theaters and museums deviated somewhat from this pattern, but about 80% even of these two types of organizations reported such memberships compared to well over 90% for the other types of organizations. Interestingly, even 76 percent of our random sample of organizations reported some type of affiliation. The one notable variable that seemed to affect participation in such intermediary organizations was organizational size. Not surprisingly, the larger the group, the more likely it was to be involved in such associations or coalitions. Thus 95 percent of large organizations and 92 percent of mid-sized organizations reported such memberships, but only 62 percent of small groups. This is important because the small groups are more numerous and organizational affiliation, as noted above, seems to encourage engagement in lobbying and advocacy.
- Not only do most organizations belong to at least one association or coalition, but also for the overwhelming ma-

jority (87 percent) of the organizations at least one of the associations or coalitions they belong to is involved in advocacy or lobbying.

- Among the various types of membership associations and coalitions the most common, engaging 72 percent of the respondents, were field or issue-specific associations, and particularly those at the state or regional level. This is consistent with earlier findings that the principal focus for lobbying and advocacy for organizations is at the state or local level. Field or issue-specific associations at the national level were also quite common, however.

Type of Association or Coalition	% of organizations n=311		
	Yes	No	Total
ANY	89%	11%	100%
Field or issue specific association, national	70%	30%	100%
Field or issue specific association, state/regional	72%	28%	100%
General, national level	29%	71%	100%
General, state or regional	40%	60%	100%
Association involved in advocacy or lobbying	87%	13%	100%

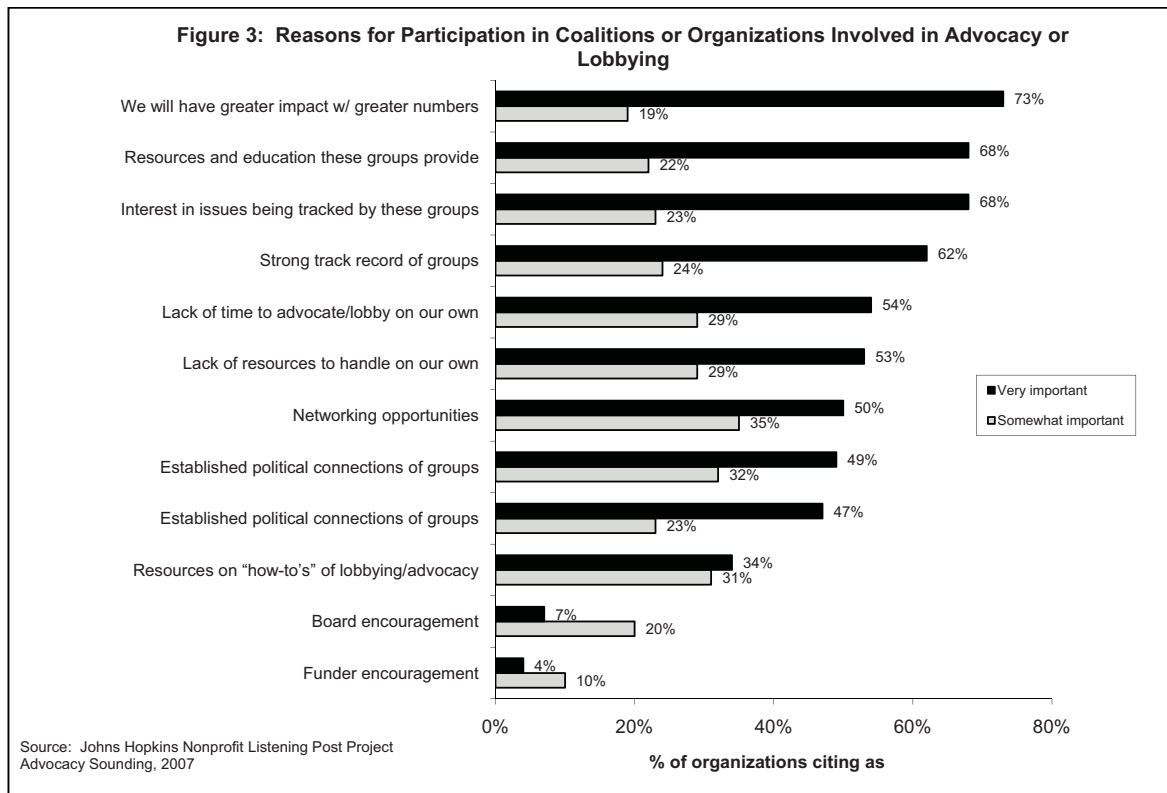
Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- Only slightly over a quarter of these operating nonprofits reported membership in a general association at the national level, however. This may point to a weakness in the ability of the sector to represent itself effectively at the national level, at least on broad sector-wide issues.

**Motivations for involvement in advocacy coalitions.** Responding organizations identified a range of motivations for their membership in coalitions or other associations involved in advocacy or lobbying. As shown in Figure 3:

- Heading the list of reasons is the “strength in numbers” argument. Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents cited the opportunity to have “greater impact with greater numbers” as “very important” in their decision to join a coalition or other intermediary group that helps with advocacy and lobbying, and another 19 percent identified this reason as “somewhat important.”
- Other important factors cited by large majorities of organizations as being “very important” or “somewhat important” in their decisions to belong to associations or coalitions involved in advocacy or lobbying were the information and materials that the intermediary groups sup-

<sup>22</sup> On the general growth of nonprofit infrastructure organizations, see: Alan J. Abramson and Rachel McCarthy, “Infrastructure Organizations,” in Lester M. Salamon, ed., *The State of Nonprofit America*. (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), pp. 331-354.



ply, interest in the issues the groups deal with, the groups' track records, and the lack of time and resources that the responding organizations have available to engage in advocacy work themselves;

- On the other hand, only a relative handful of respondents identified board or funder encouragement as a significant factor in their decision to join such coalitions. This is consistent with earlier findings about the lack of involvement of funders and board members in advocacy activity.

**The impact of intermediary groups and coalitions.** From the evidence at hand, it appears that responding organizations are getting what they need from these coalitions. Thus, as reported in Table 12:

- Over 95 percent of the respondents that belong to such intermediaries reported that the association or coalition provided education and materials about key issues through email/fax alerts, newsletters, fact sheets, template letters to government officials, and/or other correspondence. In fact, over 70 percent noted that they received education from these associations/coalitions six or more times over the past year;
- Respondents that were involved in such associations/coalitions also identified a range of other major functions that these associations/coalitions performed, such as prompt-

ing their member organizations to contact a government official (cited by 93 percent of respondents), contacting a government official on behalf of the member organizations (cited by 88 percent of respondents), inviting members to a conference or other sessions on policy issues (cited by 88 percent of respondents), testifying at hearings on policy issues on behalf of their membership (cited by 79 percent of respondents), and contacting the general public (cited by 60 percent of the respondents).

- As one convincing sign of the effectiveness of such coalitions and associations, 60 percent of respondents reported that they got a request from the coalition or association to take some action on a policy issue at least once a month and another 32 percent reported getting such a request about once a quarter. Altogether, 80 percent of these respondents reported acting on the coalition or association's request at least once a quarter, and 40 percent reported doing so at least once a month.

In short, like other aspects of nonprofit operations, nonprofit advocacy and lobbying seem to have become increasingly specialized and institutionalized. 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 for help, gaining in the process expertise and focused attention that

they cannot easily provide internally.

**Table 12: Functions Performed by Associations/Coalitions over Previous Year**

Function/Activity	% of organizations n=270		
	Any time	6+ times	Not Done/ Don't Know
Provided education on key issues	98%	71%	2%
Provided materials (e.g., fact sheets, model letters)	95%	56%	6%
Asked us to contact a government official	93%	46%	7%
Contacted government official on behalf of org.	88%	53%	12%
Invited us to a conference or seminar on policy	88%	27%	12%
Testified at hearing	79%	39%	21%
Contacted the general public	60%	17%	40%
Organized a public rally	54%	6%	46%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

#### IV. Recent Changes

Despite a concern in some quarters about a decline in nonprofit civic engagement and policy advocacy, nonprofit policy involvement thus seems quite extensive, even though it remains quite starved for resources. What is more, there is some evidence that this involvement may be expanding, at least in part as a byproduct of the growing relevance of government policy to the well-being of organization clients and organizational budgets.

But what truly are the prevailing dynamics of nonprofit advocacy and lobbying activity? Is this activity really on a rise? And is it now taking significantly different forms?

Unfortunately, systematic time-series data on this facet of nonprofit operations are not available. However, our Sounding did attempt to identify recent changes between the survey year and the year prior to it.

What we found was that, overall, respondents indicated no change in their level of lobbying and advocacy. A substantial minority, however, indicated that their activity increased while only a handful reported declines. In particular, as reported in Table 13:

- Roughly three out of every five of our respondents (59-63 percent) reported no change in their level of lobbying or advocacy between the year prior to our survey and the survey year;

- At the same time, about a third of the respondents reported an actual increase. Elderly service and children and family service organizations were most likely to report such increases and theaters the least likely (See Appendix Table 7);
- While a third of the organizations reported increasing their lobbying or advocacy activity, however, fewer than 20 percent reported an increase in the budget allocated to this function. This may help explain the considerable reliance on advocacy coalitions and associations to help with this function.
- Among the reasons cited by the organizations that reported increases in either their lobbying or advocacy activity over the previous year, the most common were the greater relevance of pending legislation either to the organization's programs (cited by 92 percent of both groups of respondents) or its clients (cited by 89 percent and 94 percent of respondents reporting increased lobbying or advocacy, respectively). Other factors cited as "strong" or "moderate" causes of increased lobbying or advocacy by substantial portions of the respondents were: the political and financial climate of the state or community, greater executive-director interest, and encouragement from membership groups or coalitions. Less common among the factors cited were increased board interest, funder or donor encouragement, or pressures from clients (see Table 14).

**Table 13: Changes in Lobbying and Advocacy Activity and Spending over Prior Year**

Response	% of organizations		
	Increased	Stayed the Same	De-creased
<b>Lobbying (n=182)</b>			
Change in activity over prior year	35%	59%	6%
Change in spending over prior year	17%	77%	6%
<b>Advocacy (n=192)</b>			
Change in activity over prior year	32%	63%	5%
Change in spending over prior year	19%	78%	3%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- Among the organizations reporting decreases in their lobbying and advocacy activity over the prior year, the factors most frequently cited as having a strong or moderate influence were lack of staff time, lack of funds, and, among 45 percent of those that decreased their lobbying activity, concerns about the potential loss of public funds that might result.

**Table 14: Reasons for Increased Lobbying and Advocacy Involvement over Prior Year (% reporting “strong” or “moderate” influence)**

Factor	% of organizations	
	Lobbying	Advocacy
	(n=63)	(n=62)
Relevance of legislation to our organization's programs	92%	92%
Relevance of legislation to the people we serve	89%	94%
Political and financial climate of our state/community	81%	77%
Greater executive director interest	76%	82%
Encouragement from membership groups/coalitions	65%	79%
Greater staff interest	62%	69%
Increased staff skills and knowledge	57%	56%
Staff availability	45%	45%
Greater client/customer/patron interest	27%	42%
Greater board member interest	38%	39%
Better understanding of the legal issues	33%	24%
Increased board member skills	29%	27%
Availability of needed technological resources	11%	16%
Increased funder/donor support	8%	15%
Availability of other funds	12%	13%
Change in organizational leadership	8%	10%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

**V. Keys to Expanding Nonprofit Advocacy and Lobbying**

Advocacy and lobbying have thus emerged as important components of the work of nonprofit executives, if not yet as fully of other nonprofit staff or board members. The vast majority of organizations we surveyed (84 percent) had little doubt that legislative decisions have important implications for their work, though theaters and museums were somewhat less convinced of this than other organizations. Perhaps reflecting this, well over 90 percent of the organizations felt that nonprofit organizations have “a duty to advocate for policies important to their missions.” Yet, as noted earlier, 90 percent of the organizations conceded that nonprofits like theirs should be “more active and involved in policy advocacy.”

What, then, is keeping organizations from greater involvement? And what can be done about it?

Based on the results of our Sounding, the factor that most organizations feel would have the biggest impact on their

ability to increase their policy advocacy is increased funding, either for a dedicated policy specialist or the general operations of the organization. In particular, as reported in Table 15:

- Two-thirds of the respondents noted that funding a dedicated public policy specialist or a significant increase in their general funding would have a “somewhat” or “very” significant impact on increasing their policy involvement.
- Sizeable proportions of respondents (47 percent and 40 percent, respectively) also indicated that the availability of a local support network or on-going advocacy mentoring could boost their involvement in policy advocacy.
- Only about a third of the respondents felt that other possible actions could have a “significant” or “very significant” impact on boosting their policy work. Included here were access to staff training in this area (36 percent of respondents), access to board training in this area (35 percent), or additional technology (32 percent). One reason for this may be that organizations are already availing themselves of these aids. For example, 45 percent of the organizations indicated that their staff members participated in advocacy training over the previous year.

**Table 15: Factors that Would Increase Involvement in Policy Advocacy (% of organizations citing factor as having a “very significant” or “somewhat significant” impact)**

Factor	% of organizations n=310
Funding a dedicated policy or advocacy specialist	68%
Significant increase in general funding	65%
Local support network	47%
On-going advocacy mentoring	40%
Access to staff training in this area	36%
Access to board training in this area	35%
Less restrictive government regulations	35%
Additional/enhanced technology	32%

Source: Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Listening Post Project Advocacy Sounding, 2007

- Especially interesting in the light of previous studies, only a third of the organizations felt that “less restrictive government regulations” would have a significant impact in boosting their policy activity. This was so despite the fact that just over half of the organizations indicated that they thought government regulations concerning nonprofit lobbying are too restrictive and too complicated and an-

other quarter of the respondents reported that they did not know if the restrictions were too restrictive and cumbersome. In short, while acknowledging that the existing laws are a problem, these organizations do not see them as the major barrier to expanded advocacy and lobbying. This is consistent with our finding that organizations that invest the time to understand the law are likely to engage in both lobbying and advocacy. More important by far is the availability of funding and the perceived relevance of policy to the organization's operations and mission. At the same time, lack of knowledge about existing government regulations was far more common among the small and mid-sized organizations than the large ones (46 percent and 37 percent of the small and mid-sized organizations, respectively, could not register an opinion on whether the existing laws are too cumbersome, for example, compared to 14 percent of the large organizations). Since these small and mid-sized organizations are far more numerous than their large counterparts, this suggests a continuing need for active education and mentoring at least for this sizable component of the sector.

## Conclusion

The nonprofit organizations we surveyed, which are key components of the core of the nonprofit human service, arts, and community development sector, are thus more extensively involved in advocacy and lobbying than is widely believed. Nearly three-quarters of the surveyed organizations in the four key fields of nonprofit activity covered in our survey reported involvement in some form of advocacy or lobbying during the past year. What is more, the majority of them were involved repeatedly.

At the same time, the scope and depth of this advocacy and lobbying activity raises a number of questions. For one thing, the activity does not penetrate very deeply into the organizations. Typically, the executive director is the main person involved. The resources devoted to the function are highly limited. And the forms of advocacy are relatively limited, rarely engaging the public at large or even the organizations' clients. What seems to be drawing organizations into policy advocacy, moreover, is less an abstract commitment to civic engagement than concrete concerns about the impact of public policy on the fiscal health of the organizations and their ability to serve their clientele. Even for organizations with a significant business and mission interest in public policy, however, limited resources and staff time seriously restrict the depth of involvement in policy work that is possible.

To help compensate for some of these limitations, nonprofit organizations have followed the lead of the business sector in vesting important advocacy functions in specialized advocacy coalitions or field-specific intermediary associations. These coalitions and associations now perform important functions in mobilizing, informing, and channeling nonprofit advocacy and lobbying.

While these developments are positive from the perspective of getting the nonprofit voice to the policy table, they also point up a number of potential challenges. For one thing, there is a danger that the emerging structure of nonprofit advocacy may be distancing organizations too sharply from the public and the clientele whose well-being their advocacy is promoting. The evidence reviewed here certainly suggests relatively limited engagement of these broader audiences in the advocacy activity. In addition, the data reported here suggest particular challenges for smaller organizations, which exhibit a pattern of engagement in lobbying and advocacy that is considerably less robust than that of their better-heeled compatriots. This reality has turned on its head the picture painted by some organization theories, which would lead us to expect advocacy to be most pronounced among smaller organizations closely tied to local communities. In fact, however, the data reported here suggest that it is precisely these small organizations that face some of the major advocacy promotion challenges.

While encouraging, therefore, these findings hardly provide a justification for complacency on the part of those who look to the nation's nonprofit organizations as important promoters of civic engagement. To the contrary, a range of actions are still needed to equip the nation's nonprofit organizations to operate effectively in a policy process heavily populated with far better-resourced players from the world of business. Among the steps that deserve serious attention are these:

- ***Strengthen the policy advocacy and lobbying capacity of field-specific nonprofit intermediary organizations.*** These organizations have assumed a crucial role in back-stopping the policy involvement of local service organizations but often lack the resources to support this function as effectively as is needed.
- ***Expand foundation support for nonprofit involvement in policy advocacy and civic engagement.*** Many foundations take at best a "hands-off" posture, and at times an actively negative one, toward nonprofit policy involvement and civic engagement. This puts an unnecessary damper on what should be a major function of the na-

tion’s nonprofit institutions—giving voice to the voiceless and raising unaddressed issues to national policy attention. More than that, since the major impediment to more thoroughgoing nonprofit engagement in the policy process is the lack of resources, and therefore the lack of time, that even the large organizations have available for this function, foundations need to re-think their hands-off position toward nonprofit advocacy and increase their financial support for this important function. To be sure, the constraints under which foundations operate put limits on such support, but those limits are often far less severe than many overly cautious foundations may assume.<sup>23</sup> As government policy has become increasingly central to the fiscal health of the sector and to the well-being of the people the sector is serving, foundations need to recognize the important role they must play in helping organizations participate in the shaping of this policy.

- **Encourage and equip nonprofit organizations to engage their boards and the publics they serve in their advocacy and lobbying activities.** Nonprofit executives need help in performing the advocacy and lobbying responsibilities of their organizations. These responsibilities therefore need to become a bigger part of the responsibilities of nonprofit boards, integrated into board mission statements and board training. In addition, organizations need to be encouraged, and trained, to engage the citizen base of their operations in their advocacy activities. This will require training and support for staff to perform this function.
- **Strengthen the sector’s capacity to equip small and mid-sized organizations to operate in the policy arena.** Smaller organizations clearly have special challenges in operating in the policy arena. From the data presented here, these organizations tend to be less well-informed about the existing laws and regulations in this field. What is more, they are less likely to be members of advocacy coalitions and have fewer staff resources to devote to this function. Since these organizations are far more numerous than the large organizations, ensuring a voice for them in the advocacy arena is thus especially important. Expanded programs specially targeted at this segment of the sector thus seem needed.

Active participation in the policy process has long been a central function of the nonprofit sector. Such participation is crucial to the democratic process—to surface issues that

may have been overlooked and to ensure a voice for under-represented or disadvantaged communities and perspectives. To the long-standing democracy-promoting rationales for nonprofit policy engagement, moreover, recent years have added additional rationales related to the very sustenance and survival of the nonprofit sector itself and to the sector’s ability to carry out its service functions.

From the evidence presented here, it appears that nonprofits are making concerted efforts to sustain and expand this policy role. At the same time, the evidence suggests significant limitations on their ability to do so. If this Communiqué, and the Sounding on which it is based, have helped to document the status of this important nonprofit function, the challenges that confront it, and some of the steps that could be taken to surmount these challenges, they will have served their purpose well.

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<sup>23</sup> For example, private foundations can provide general support to grantees, so long as they do not earmark that support for lobbying. Funders also can support different forms of advocacy that do not constitute lobbying or partisan electioneering, including executive branch and administrative advocacy, and can support a wide range of nonpartisan voter activities by nonprofits. Lloyd H. Mayer, Esq., “The Legal Rules for Public Policy and Civic Impact by Foundations,” Chapter 9 in *Power in Policy: A Funder’s Guide to Advocacy and Civic Participation* (David F. Arons Ed., 2007).

## Appendix

**Appendix Table 1**  
**Respondents by Field and Size of Organization**

Field	Directed		Random		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Community and Economic Development	23	10%	12	14%	35	11%
Children and Family Services	77	34%	29	34%	106	34%
Elderly Housing and Services	72	32%	10	12%	82	26%
Museums	25	11%	19	22%	44	14%
Theaters	28	12%	16	19%	44	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>100%</b>
Size*	Directed		Random		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Small (<\$500,000)	17	8%	35	43%	52	17%
Medium (\$500,000 - \$3 million)	56	26%	27	33%	83	28%
Large (>\$3,000,000)	144	66%	20	24%	164	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Note: Revenue figures not available for all respondents.

**Appendix Table 2**  
**Frequency of Policy Advocacy or Lobbying Among Organizations Engaged in It**

Survey Response	% of Organizations										
	All orgs. (n=228)	Field					Size			Affiliation	
		Community & Economic Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Affiliated	Unaffiliated
Once a month or more	61%	71%	60%	66%	50%	50%	43%	40%	70%	61%	64%
About once a quarter	31%	29%	34%	27%	20%	38%	29%	47%	27%	31%	18%
About once a year	8%	0%	6%	7%	30%	12%	29%	13%	3%	8%	18%

**Appendix Table 3**  
**Involvement in Various Forms of Lobbying and Advocacy, by Field, Size, and Affiliation Status**

		% of Organizations Reporting ANY Involvement									
		Field					Size			Affiliation	
Survey Response	All Orgs. N*=191	Community & Econ. Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Affiliated	Unaffiliated
<b>Forms of Lobbying</b>											
Signed a correspondence to a gov't official	97%	94%	98%	98%	81%	100%	100%	86%	99%	97%	86%
Visited a government official	85%	94%	84%	88%	75%	81%	77%	75%	90%	86%	71%
Called a government official	86%	94%	90%	88%	69%	71%	62%	83%	90%	86%	71%
Stimulated public to communicate to officials	60%	65%	60%	65%	56%	48%	38%	47%	66%	61%	43%
<b>Forms of Advocacy</b>											
Responded to requests for info from official	90%	96%	92%	89%	72%	90%	76%	93%	91%	90%	78%
Distributed information materials	82%	92%	85%	81%	67%	76%	71%	75%	86%	82%	78%
Testified at hearings	57%	71%	61%	44%	72%	57%	53%	53%	62%	57%	56%
Wrote an op-ed piece or letter to the editor	53%	63%	64%	49%	44%	29%	29%	53%	56%	54%	44%
Organized public event	46%	63%	44%	54%	28%	29%	29%	43%	48%	48%	22%
Released research report	38%	58%	38%	44%	22%	15%	29%	31%	45%	38%	44%
Filed or joined a lawsuit	4%	4%	6%	3%	6%	0%	0%	5%	4%	4%	11%

\*The median N of the items



**Appendix Table 4**  
**Influences on Decision Not to Engage in Policy Advocacy or Lobbying (Share of Organizations Citing Factor as a “Moderate” or “Strong” Influence)**

		% of Organizations									
Factor	All Orgs. N*=82	Field					Size			Affiliation	
		Community & Economic Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Affiliated	Unaffiliated
Lack of staff time	70%	73%	70%	56%	58%	89%	65%	72%	85%	76%	54%
Lack of staff skills	44%	55%	40%	44%	43%	44%	40%	44%	62%	44%	46%
Coalitions do this for us	36%	27%	42%	75%	25%	33%	23%	33%	75%	40%	27%
Public policy not relevant to our organization/clients	29%	36%	15%	44%	38%	22%	35%	25%	31%	26%	38%
Worried about violating laws	26%	45%	30%	33%	13%	22%	19%	31%	23%	26%	25%
Perceived lack of gov't openness to nonprofits	21%	9%	15%	0%	25%	39%	26%	11%	38%	19%	25%
Board opposition towards involvement	20%	27%	10%	22%	25%	17%	19%	19%	15%	22%	13%
Concerns about losing public funds	20%	27%	25%	11%	17%	17%	23%	19%	8%	17%	25%
Possible loss of corporate support	15%	27%	10%	11%	13%	17%	16%	14%	8%	14%	17%
Possible loss of foundation support	11%	18%	11%	0%	9%	17%	19%	6%	8%	7%	22%

\*The median N of the items

**Appendix Table 5**  
**Factors Prompting Organizations to Engage in Lobbying and Advocacy**  
**(Share of Organizations Citing Factor as a “Moderate” or “Strong” Influence)**

Survey Response	% of Organizations										
	All Orgs. N*=185	Field					Size			Affiliation	
		Community & Economic Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Affiliated	Unaffiliated
<b>Lobbying</b>											
Relevance of legislation to our org's programs	94%	100%	92%	98%	87%	90%	100%	92%	95%	95%	86%
Relevance of legislation to the people we serve	92%	100%	95%	98%	75%	71%	85%	86%	95%	93%	71%
Executive director interest	92%	88%	92%	94%	88%	90%	92%	94%	92%	92%	86%
Political and financial climate of our state/locality	81%	76%	87%	76%	81%	86%	85%	92%	78%	81%	86%
Encouragement from groups or coalitions	75%	65%	77%	83%	63%	62%	62%	69%	78%	77%	43%
Moral obligation	75%	71%	82%	82%	56%	52%	62%	69%	78%	75%	71%
Staff interest	69%	65%	77%	71%	50%	57%	31%	64%	76%	71%	29%
Client/customer interest	50%	75%	51%	56%	33%	19%	33%	50%	52%	50%	43%
Board interest	33%	29%	32%	30%	56%	30%	31%	42%	31%	34%	14%
Funder/donor support	20%	41%	24%	6%	19%	33%	31%	31%	15%	19%	29%
<b>Advocacy</b>											
Relevance of issue/policy to the people we serve	95%	100%	98%	100%	89%	67%	82%	93%	98%	95%	100%
Relevance of issue/policy to our org's programs	94%	96%	95%	98%	89%	81%	82%	100%	94%	94%	100%
Executive director interest	93%	96%	95%	94%	89%	86%	88%	90%	95%	94%	75%
Encouragement from groups or coalitions	82%	78%	83%	89%	78%	62%	71%	79%	84%	82%	75%
Political and financial climate of our state/locality	81%	88%	86%	75%	72%	76%	94%	80%	78%	81%	75%
Moral obligation	74%	65%	85%	79%	56%	48%	56%	70%	77%	74%	63%
Staff interest	68%	70%	80%	66%	56%	48%	35%	62%	74%	70%	38%
Client/customer interest	45%	63%	47%	48%	44%	5%	18%	47%	47%	46%	25%
Board interest	37%	42%	36%	38%	56%	19%	59%	25%	37%	37%	38%
Funder/donor support	18%	29%	23%	6%	24%	19%	24%	21%	17%	18%	13%

\*The median N of the items

**Appendix Table 6**  
**Membership in Coalitions, by Field, Size, and Sample Status (% of Organizations Reporting at Least One Membership in an Intermediary Organization or Coalition)**

Survey Response	% of Organizations										
	All Orgs. N*=311	Fields					Size			Sample	
		Community & Economic Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Directed	Random
Organizations with at least one membership in any of the below types of assoc/ coalitions	89%	97%	92%	91%	77%	80%	62%	92%	95%	94%	76%
Field or issue-specific at state or regional level	72%	66%	86%	80%	48%	55%	42%	65%	85%	77%	60%
Field or issue-specific at national level	70%	69%	73%	82%	55%	61%	33%	65%	85%	79%	48%
General associations at state/ regional level	40%	51%	48%	37%	32%	27%	25%	43%	43%	44%	31%
General associations at national level	29%	31%	33%	24%	32%	23%	15%	27%	35%	33%	19%
Other associations or coalitions	21%	31%	25%	15%	9%	25%	15%	18%	23%	21%	19%

\*The median N of the items

**Appendix Table 7**  
**Increases in Lobbying and Advocacy Activity and Spending Over Prior Year**

Survey Response	% of Organizations										
	All Orgs. N*=185	Field					Size			Affiliation	
		Community & Economic Development	Children & Family Services	Elderly Housing & Services	Museums	Theaters	Small	Medium	Large	Affiliated	Unaffiliated
<b>Lobbying</b>											
Increase in Activity	35%	24%	35%	42%	38%	14%	31%	33%	36%	35%	14%
Increase in Spending	17%	12%	19%	14%	25%	19%	23%	14%	18%	17%	29%
Decrease in Activity	6%	12%	8%	5%	0%	5%	8%	6%	6%	6%	14%
Decrease in Spending	6%	12%	5%	5%	0%	10%	15%	3%	4%	6%	0%
<b>Advocacy</b>											
Increase in Activity	32%	25%	39%	37%	28%	10%	29%	28%	34%	33%	22%
Increase in Spending	19%	21%	19%	21%	17%	14%	24%	8%	23%	18%	33%
Decrease in Activity	5%	4%	6%	3%	0%	10%	6%	3%	5%	4%	11%
Decrease in Spending	3%	4%	3%	2%	0%	5%	0%	5%	2%	3%	0%

\*The median N of the items