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#### ABSTRACT

Nonprofit advocacy is crucial to the governance process for a myriad of reasons, including: (1) helping the nonprofit meet its mission; (2) helping the organization's clients and community solve or avoid problems; (3) giving rise to the marginalized; (4) fostering the democratic process; and (4) creating opportunities issue education. The purpose of this applied research project was to develop an advocacy plan for the Brian Jordan Foundation (BJF). To inform this project, qualitative data generated from a content analysis of best practices, a review of the literature, and board meeting observation were utilized. The project deliverable addresses short and long term goals and effective advocacy strategies for the organization.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop an advocacy plan for the Brian Jordan Foundation (BJF). Qualitative data were generated from a content analysis of best practices and board meeting observation. The project deliverable was an advocacy plan for the Brian Jordan Foundation that addressed short and long term goals and effective advocacy strategies. Research questions that guided this project included:

- What is the purpose of an Advocacy Plan and Policy?
- How can an Advocacy Plan and Policy strengthen nonprofit governance and leadership?
- What are the components of an Advocacy Plan?
- What type of Advocacy Policy would be best for this organization?
- How does our research relate to Advocacy Plan and Policy?
- Can social media be an effective tool for advocacy

#### LITERATURE

According to literature, having an advocacy plan is highly important for a nonprofit organization because it plays an important role in facilitating why an organization exists i.e., its mission. When a nonprofit organization has an advocacy plan and policy, then it can effectively engage in lobbying and legislation. Advocacy is simply "educating others about your program" (Dewitt, 2015). Through legislation and lobbying activities, an organization has the power to advocate for others and educate others in order to positively, potentially impact communities locally and abroad. If an organization follows an effective advocacy plan, then it has the potential create and "lead important improvements in social service funding, agency functioning, and ultimately client outcomes" (Mosely, 2013). The literature also suggests that the use of social media has allowed for an increase in knowledge about nonprofit organizations. It also has become an effective advocacy tool for nonprofits because it can educate the public on issues of importance to the organization (Hartley et al., 2015). The use of mass e-mail campaigns, online forms, online petition signings, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs have all become popular means of getting information out and increasing advocacy (Obar et al., 2012). The aforementioned tools are all forms of e-advocacy, electronic tools for public advocacy, which are all profitable alternatives for organizations to use in order to create social change (Goldkind, 2014). It is important to remember that creating, having, and utilizing an advocacy plan is not possible without relationship management. This type of management is key between the board members and staff, and between the staff and external stakeholders. The literature also states that relationship management is a key factor in the success of an advocacy plan and policy as results can change based on the strength of each of the domains (Ruggiano, 2015).

#### FINDINGS/RESULTS/ANALYSIS

The project deliverable (i.e., an advocacy plan) consists of several sections, including: basic guidelines; short term and long term goals and objectives; issue identification for the organization (i.e., childhood obesity in low-income populations and recess times at schools); recommendations on several effective advocacy strategies; roles and responsibilities for board members, staff, and volunteers to fulfill their expectations recommendations on hiring protocol; a budget for the advocacy plan, and IRS tax implications for different lobbying and advocacy methods for the organization.

The basic guidelines represent a summary of the advocacy plan as a whole. This provides information on how the BJF will go about eliminating childhood obesity through advocating for childhood obesity and recess in schools. The short term and long term goals and objectives simply provides a timeline for the BJF to follow. Issue identification identifies the issues that the BJF has identified to participate in advocacy and lobbying for (childhood obesity and recess times) and provides local (the state of Georgia) research on the issues. The advocacy strategies listed provide information on the key message, talking points, getting the message out through activities and communication, and how to deal with opposition. The different outlines for each member associated with the BJF provides guidelines and responsibilities for each current position and possible future positions. The budget is a 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Projects Budget for the BJF to follow for advocacy costs. Finally, IRS tax implications for each lobbying strategy outlines the legal policies organizations must follow in order to keep the 501c3 identification code.

#### IMPLICATIONS

Based on the research and the project deliverable, it is important for nonprofit organizations to understand the basic rules and regulations regarding advocacy and lobbying given the IRS regulations. Yet, lobbying for a certain cause not only helps influence legislation on the federal, state, and local level, but is a good way to promote the nonprofit's mission. The use of e-advocacy is a relatively new phenomena which requires additional research. Selection of strategies that really engage stakeholders and produces results requires constant mixing and matching. New tools to understand impact are needed. Lastly, for the BJF it will be important to hire a person (or have an intern) that can be responsible for advocacy activities. This person will have the ability to coordinate training/experiences to equip adult assistances and youth leaders to bring about positive empowerment, advocacy skills to ensure low income youth will be supported in healthy lifestyle choices, and will have the ability to partner with community agencies. Having a coordinating function/role of this nature is important for nonprofit organizations.

#### COMPETENCY APPLICATION

**Competency 1: Governance, Leadership and Advocacy**  
This project is aligned with the Governance, Leadership, and Advocacy Alliance Competency as it reflects advocacy roles, responsibilities, and leadership of those involved with the organization in order to follow the policies, procedures, and processes to fully and accountably operate under standards.

**Competency 2: Communication, Marketing and Public Relations**  
To display knowledge, attitudes and activities that nonprofit organizations use to inform and influence their various constituencies, activities and communication methods were assessed and strategies to get the advocacy method to the public were determined.

**Competency 3: Financial Resource Development and Management**  
The project also illustrates what a practical budget for this type of advocacy looks like.

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