

MEETING NEED, MAKING CHANGE

2013 SURVEY OF NONPROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS IN NEW MEXICO



ABOUT THIS SURVEY

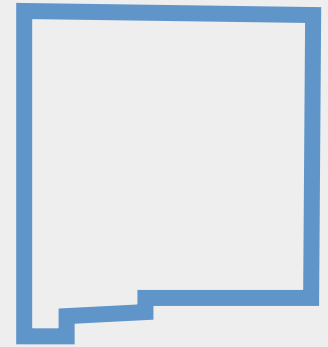
In the last quarter of 2013, nonprofit service organizations in New Mexico completed a short, confidential, online survey. Individuals in leadership positions at organizations providing direct health and/or human and social services to individuals and/or families were encouraged to share their views and opinions.



More than 500 people connected to the nonprofit sector received emails about the survey



62 people representing nonprofit service organizations in NM responded to the survey



The organizations surveyed provide services in each of the state's 33 counties

This was the first year conducting this survey of service providers in New Mexico. While these findings should not be viewed as representative of the entire nonprofit sector, they do provide an initial glimpse of how some service organizations are responding to changing organizational, political and financial dynamics in the state.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE FOR COMMUNITY VOICE AND COLLABORATION

For over a decade, the Building Movement Project has worked at a national level to support and advance the potential for nonprofit organizations to be sites for social change. In 2013, BMP partnered with two New Mexico nonprofits – Encuentro and the SouthWest Organizing Project – to develop an initiative to foster connection and collaboration between nonprofit service providers, advocates and organizers in the state.



Building Movement Project
Equipping Nonprofits to Advance Social Change

www.buildingmovement.org



www.encuentronm.org



www.swop.net

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has generously provided support for this initiative.

SURVEY PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

New Mexico is a state rich with resources – both natural and human – and a history of community engagement and collaboration to support the common good. The state's traditions are reflected in the diversity of the over 2,000 nonprofit organizations¹ that work in communities to help people face challenges and overcome obstacles.

This survey is a small snapshot of one segment of those nonprofits – service providers – and how they are faring in obtaining public funding and engaging in advocacy. With the growing numbers of New Mexicans who have been struggling in the wake of the 2008 to 2009 recession,² the survey was a first attempt to see if groups were receiving less (or more) public funding and more (or less) demand for their services.

In their book, *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High Impact Nonprofits*, Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant³ found that successful nonprofits work with and through other organizations and individuals to create more impact than they can alone. Inspired by the potential for nonprofits to have greater impact collectively, the Building Movement Project conducted this survey to also look at how nonprofit groups are working together in coalitions both to advance their work and advocate for policy change.

The data on hardship in New Mexico reflect national trends across the country. Nonprofit organizations are responding to increasing demand for services⁴ and reductions in the funding needed to address the struggles of clients, their families, and communities. New Mexico has also faced its share of funding cuts to programs and services needed by individuals and families. For instance, in the 2011 fiscal year, the state cut cash assistance payments for low-income disabled residents by one-third.⁵ Cuts in K-12 education spending led to reductions of 11.4% in per-student spending between fiscal years 2008 and 2014.⁶

In the midst of the many challenges to organizational health and barriers to the self-sufficiency of community members, countless nonprofit organizations across the state play an important role in providing services to help people maintain a measure of security and human dignity. These survey findings indicate how groups are working to ultimately overcome their circumstances through personal and social change.

¹ For more data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, go to <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/>

² To learn more about Kids Count, go to www.datacenter.kidscount.org

³ To learn more about, or buy, the book, go to www.forcesforgood.net

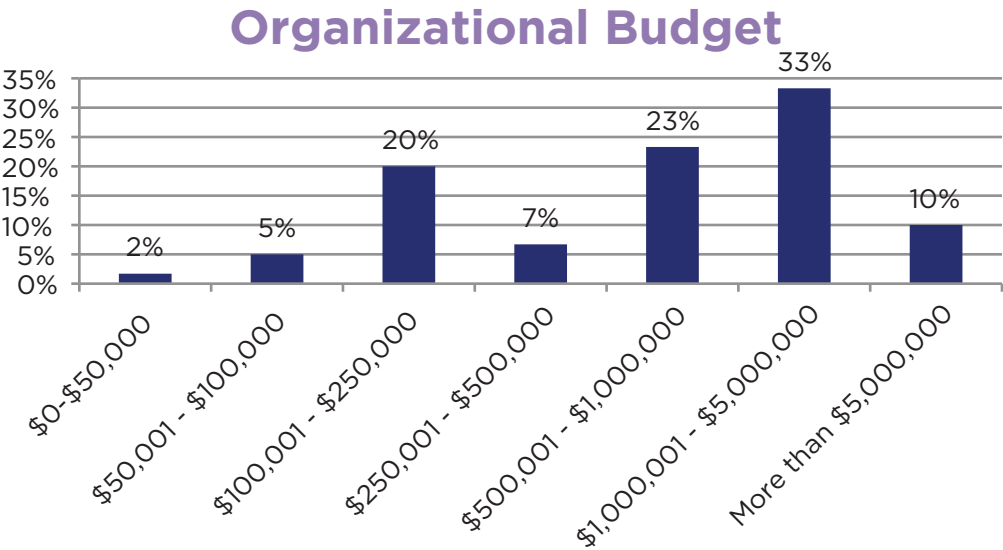
⁴ According to the Nonprofit Finance Fund 2013 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey, available for download at <http://nonprofitfinancefund.org/files/docs/2013/2013survey-results.pdf>

⁵ According to a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities titled “An Update on State Budget Cuts,” available for download at www.cbpp.org/files/3-13-08sfp.pdf

⁶ According to a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities titled “Most States Funding Schools Less Than Before the Recession,” available for download at www.cbpp.org/files/9-12-13sfp.pdf

DECREASING FUNDING BUT INCREASING DEMAND

Since many service providers receive support through governmental/public funding, the survey explored changes in funding and caseloads.

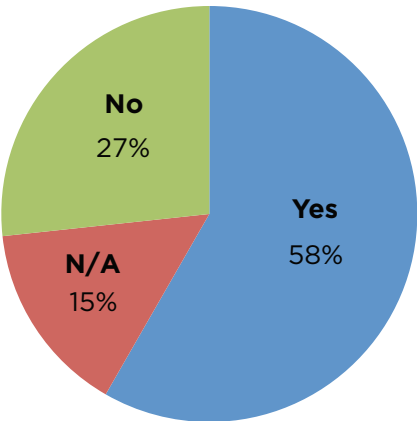


The nonprofit leaders who completed the survey represent organizations with a wide range of budgets. They also represent a range of services, with respondents identifying more than 20 different focus areas ranging from “health” and “education” (both 22%) to “reentry services” (2%) and “housing” (8%).

When asked about the “biggest issue” facing their organizations, 61% of the service providers identified “funding” as their top concern. The majority of survey respondents indicated that their organizations had experienced changes in public funding – federal, state and municipal – in the past few years. Some groups saw both increases and decreases; but overall, a larger share of respondents reported that they had experienced reductions in their government funding.

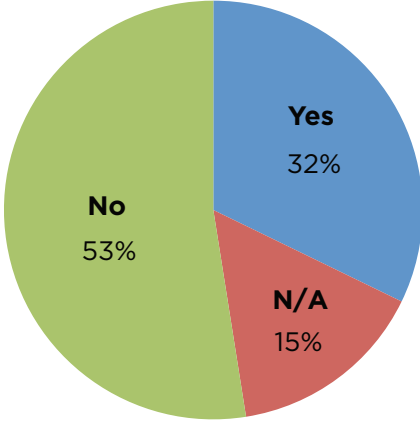
“Every month is a dance to ensure we can provide high quality services to as many of those who are in need”

Reduced Gov’t Funding



N/A = Do not receive gov’t funding

Increased Gov’t Funding



N/A = Do not receive gov’t funding

Cuts in public dollars sometimes resulted in the elimination or reduction of services and programs. Half of the survey respondents wrote in notes identifying specific programs that were affected by reduced government funding, sometimes due to federal policy (such as sequestration⁷) and other times due to state budget cuts.

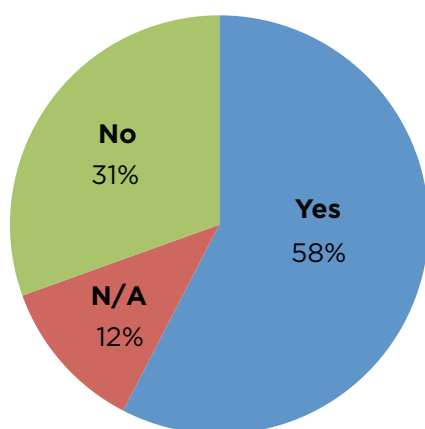
“No programs have been eliminated, but the number of individuals that can be served is reduced as a result [of decreasing funding]”

“We had to cut two full-time staff members as a result of losing a government contract we had for over ten years.”

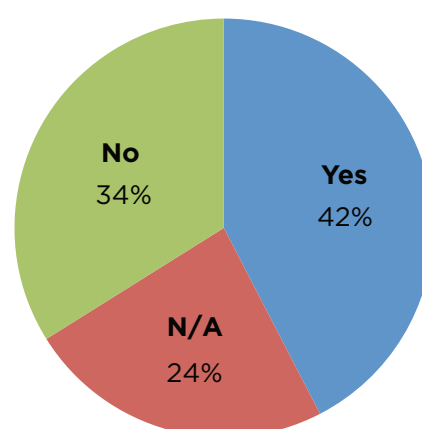
“With the continuous decreases in federal funds, our program has had to face significant competition for municipal and private grant funding.”

The various cuts in funding, services and benefits appeared to contribute to growing need in communities. Many survey respondents reported having to turn people away and seeing increases in their waiting lists.

Had to Turn People Away



Increase in Waiting List



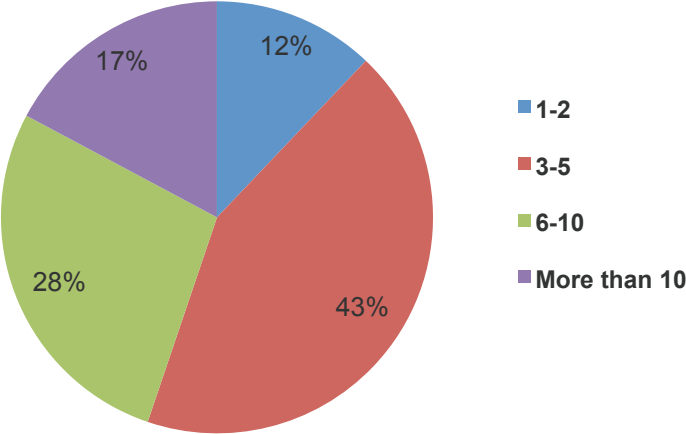
“We have not been able to consistently maintain a wait list as other program cuts have impacted our ability to retain staff to track these critical numbers.”

⁷ To learn more about sequestration – across-the-board federal spending cuts that went into effect in March 2013, go to the Coalition on Human Needs website www.chn.org or read the issue brief by the Economic Policy Institute that can be downloaded at www.epi.org/publication/ib363-sequestration-and-state-budgets/

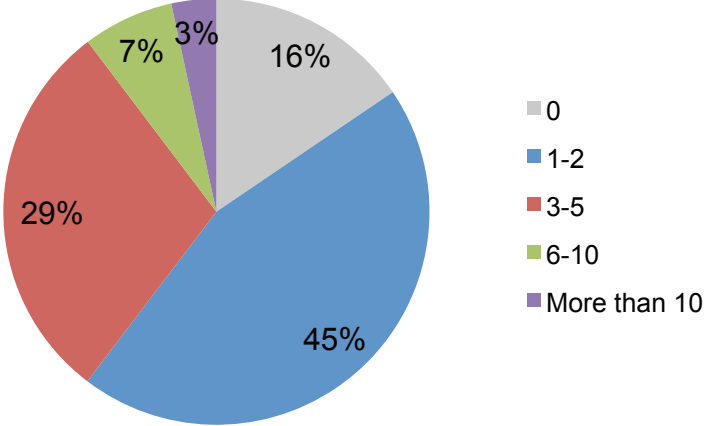
PARTICIPATION IN COALITIONS BUT FRAGMENTATION OF ISSUES

All of the survey respondents reported being involved in some kind of coalition, with a large portion involved in more than five different ones.

Number of Coalitions

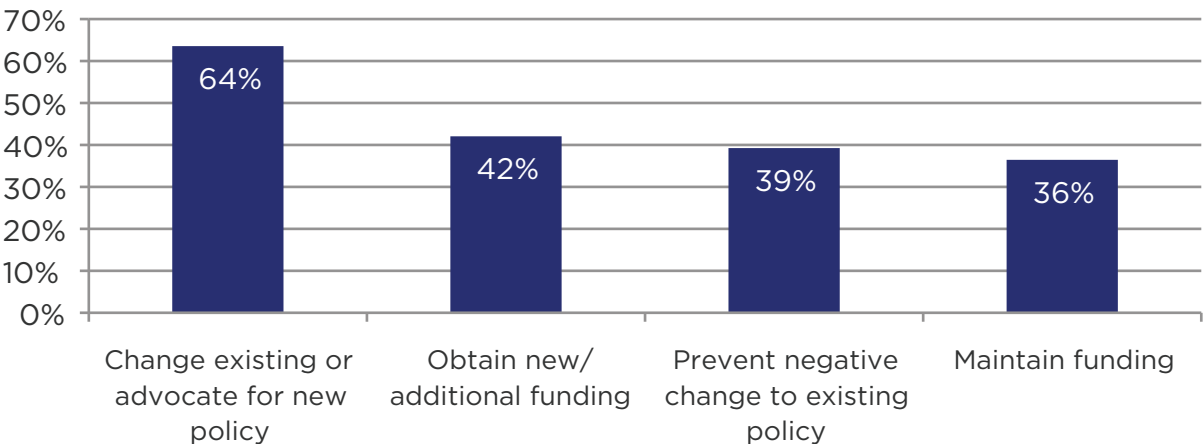


Coalitions Focused on Advocacy/Organizing



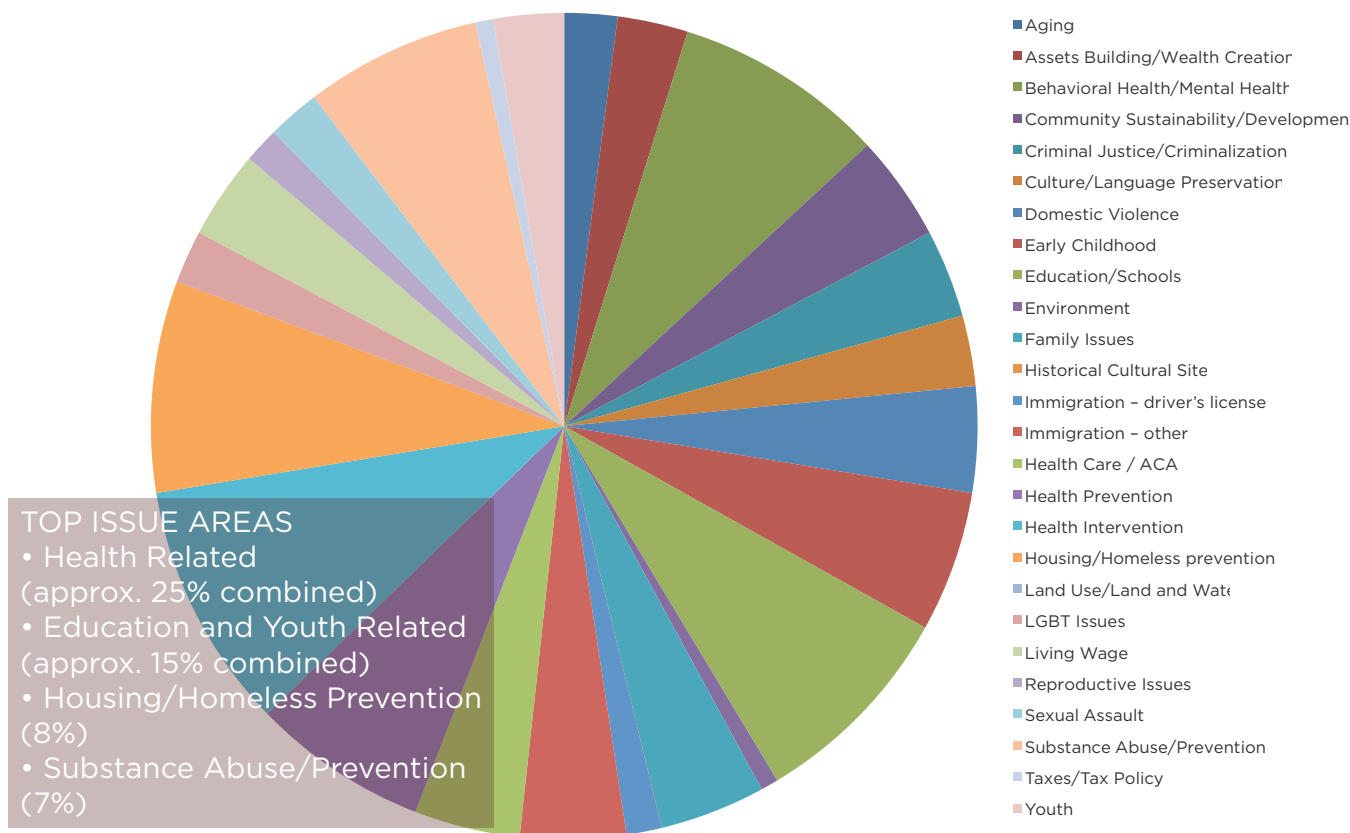
The reasons for joining coalitions can vary from sharing best practices to advocating for changes in funding and public policy.

Purpose for Participating in Coalitions



Coalitions on policy issues may represent a significant opportunity for the nonprofit sector in New Mexico to build alliances between service, advocacy and organizing groups in the state. However, the sheer multiplicity of issues that coalitions focus on can be overwhelming. The survey asked respondents to select the “top three” issue areas that their organization has focused on through coalitions, and respondents selected 23 top issues out of a list of 25.

Issue Areas Focused on Through Coalitions



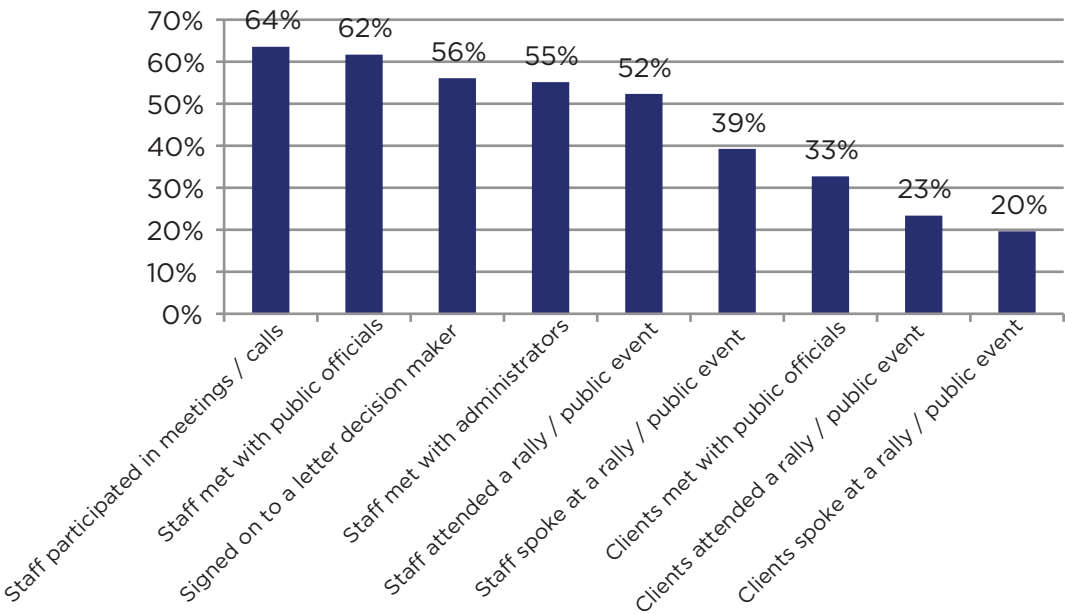
NOTE: Historical Cultural Sites and Land Use/Land and Water were the only two issues not selected (out of 25). "Health Care / ACA" issue created based on write-in responses.

This wide range of issues reflects the complex, intersecting and overlapping issues faced by many people seeking services. However, it can also create competing demands within and among organizations.

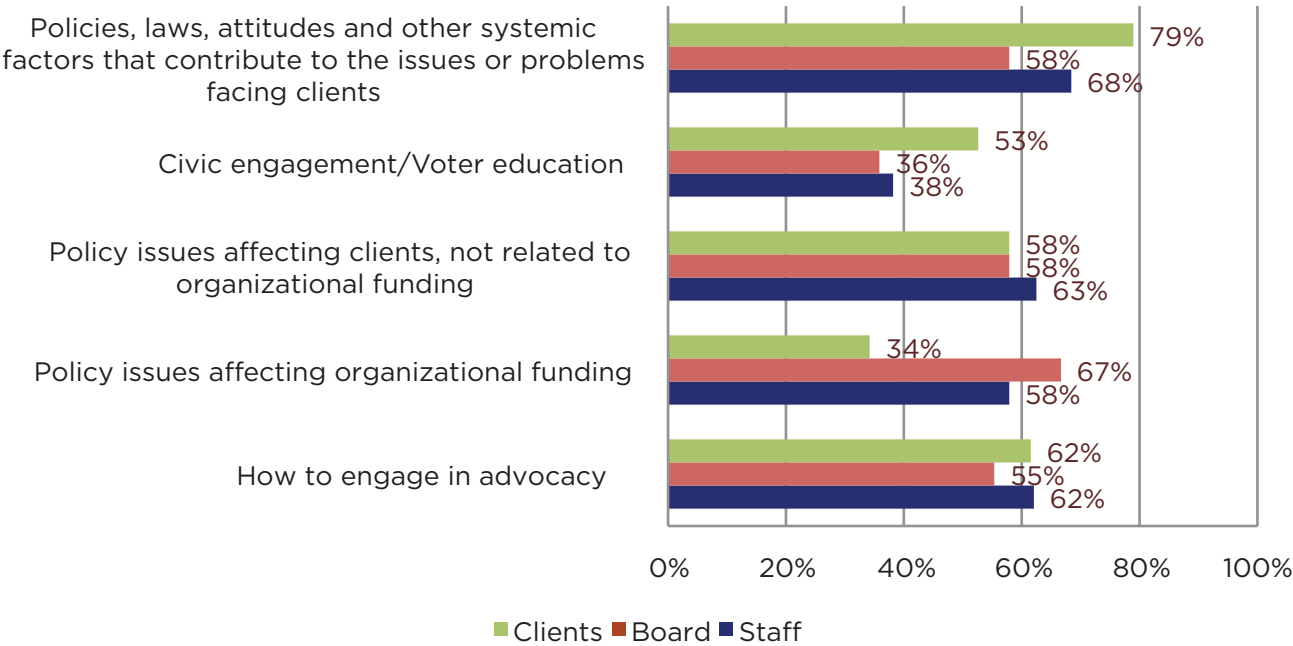
GROUPS INVOLVE CONSTITUENTS BUT NEED DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Coalitions can use a wide range of activities and tactics to advance their goals and achieve collective impact. The survey asked respondents about their organization’s advocacy activities. About one-third of the groups (33%) reported that clients had met with public officials, while the rate of organization staff meeting with public officials was almost double (62%). The lower rate of advocacy by clients compared to staff parallels responses on the extent that organizations train staff, board and clients to participate in a range of advocacy activities.

Advocacy Activities, as Coalition Partner



Currently Provide Training



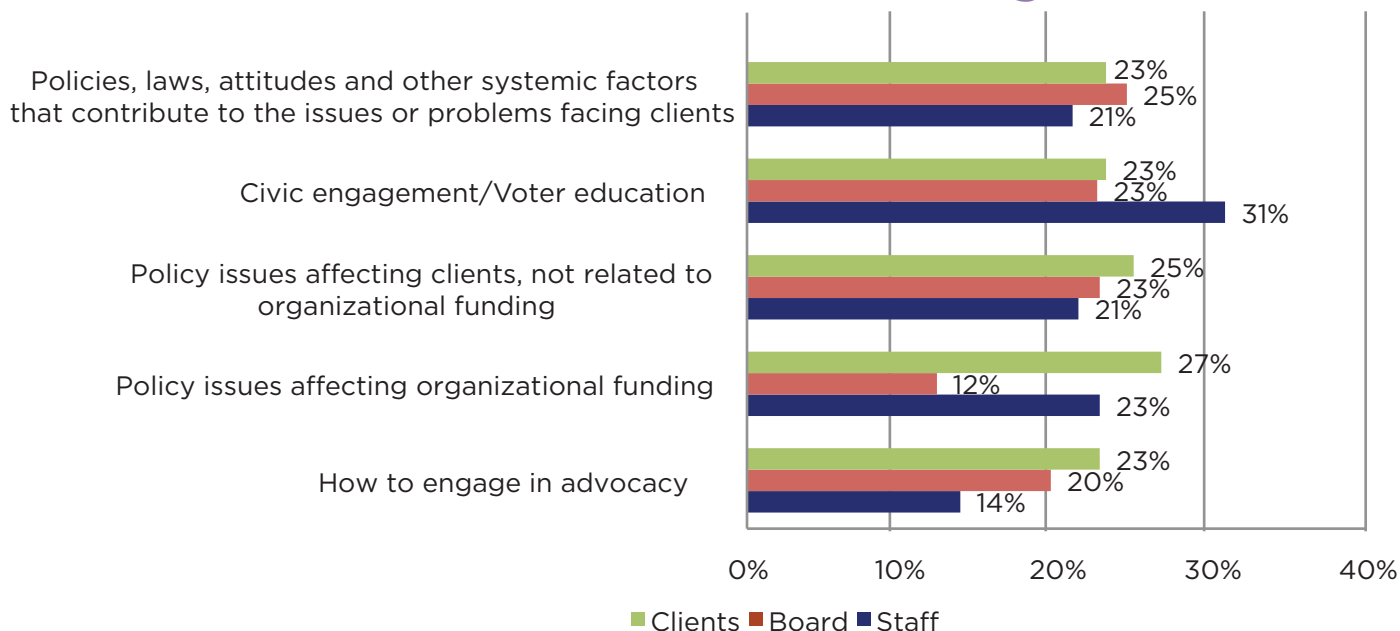
“We walk a thin line if we encourage clients to advocate. When we are supporting them in advocating for themselves and their needs, that’s great. If we encourage clients to engage in the political process, we’re accused of using people to further our financial agendas, and accused of violating rules around nonprofit political activity.”

As the quote above demonstrates, service providers may feel limited in supporting program participants to engage in advocacy. These limitations are often a result of confusion about the specific rules on lobbying by nonprofits that lead some groups to be overly cautious or to avoid advocacy altogether.

However, there is an appetite among service providers to provide their clients with training on advocacy skills, policy issues and civic engagement. Organizations may just need some support and guidance to start working with clients in new ways.

“We are very interested in advocating, but are unsure about what we can do legally without jeopardizing our 501c3 status.”

Want to Provide Training



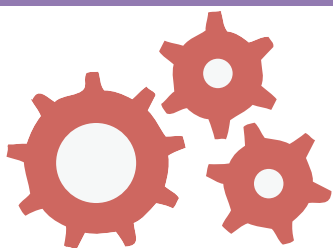
The following recommendations – based on the survey data, follow-up interviews, and insights from partner organizations – highlight some immediate opportunities for supporting the social change goals of service providers and fostering conversations between service, advocacy and organizing groups.



TAP INTO COMMUNITY VOICE AND POWER

Service providers in New Mexico are uniquely positioned to foster constituent voice and community engagement because of their reputations as trusted organizations working to support the common good. Through small shifts in how groups engage and encourage their clients, service organizations can be central partners in larger efforts to develop the leadership of people most affected by issues.

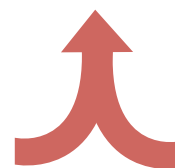
SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDERS TO INTEGRATE ADVOCACY



“We do educate on policy issues and advocacy, but it is limited in scope and could be much broader and more effective with training and support.”

Survey respondents are interested in continuing the advocacy they already do, and learning how to do more. However, of the respondents who reported that they did not engage in advocacy, 30% reported that they were not permitted to advocate because of their 501c3 status. This lack of information about what advocacy activities are permissible reflects a need for increased training on how service providers can include advocacy in their range of activities.

FOSTER ALIGNMENT AND DEVELOP SHARED NARRATIVES



Close to half (45%) of the survey respondents reported being in more than five coalitions. The demands of participating in so many coalitions – frequent meetings, calls and action items – can quickly become overwhelming. Fostering alignment between organizations about core values and long-term goals may create opportunities to craft a bigger strategy for addressing the diversity of issues and challenges facing the state’s most vulnerable communities. One initial step may involve developing shared narratives that knit together multiple issues and concerns, so that staff and clients across diverse organizations can emphasize the interrelatedness of issues in their advocacy.



Building Movement Project
Equipping Nonprofits to Advance Social Change

Join us!
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The Building Movement Project is coordinating an effort by service, organizing and advocacy organizations to invest in the capacity of the nonprofit sector to collaborate, tap the voice and power of their constituents and communities, and advocate for the common good. Through continued data collection, a fuller picture of the nonprofit service sector will emerge and point towards new opportunities to support service groups in their efforts to help individuals, families and communities not just survive but thrive.