

## IX. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Board Member Engagement – Discussion

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To provide background for this discussion, I consulted several sources:

- Compasspoint, a national nonprofit leadership and strategy practice that works to strengthen nonprofit leadership, including [boards](#).
- [BoardSource.org](#), a national organization focused on strengthening and supporting nonprofit board leadership.
- ALA's Library Advocate's Handbook, <http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/ola/2008lah.pdf>
- Our website pages for public library trustees, including <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/public-relations>.

All of these have helpful information, but none are specifically directed at state level public policy-making boards.

Following is a page from the Library Advocate's Handbook describing "Who Are Library Advocates?"

I found "Leading with Intent" from BoardSource to be most helpful in describing the advocacy role for Boards and board members. More than 800 nonprofit organizations responded to a 2014 survey to share quantitative and qualitative data about their boards' composition, policies, practices, and performance. "Leading with Intent" shows "what we found," the aggregated survey responses in a variety of categories, along with "why it matters." Below is that information under the heading "Ambassadorship."

Please note that the 2017 Idaho Library Association annual conference includes ALA's Advocacy Bootcamp as a pre-conference on October 4 in Boise. The content draws upon various approaches to community engagement, including The Aspen Institute's "Rising to the Challenge" initiated, David Lankes' "Participatory Librarianship," and ALA/Harwood Institute's "Public Innovation Lab for Libraries."



# Library Advocate's Handbook

Who Are Library Advocates?  
Building a Library Advocacy Network  
The Action Plan  
Speaking Out  
Dealing with the Media  
Dealing with Legislators  
Ways to Communicate  
Library Advocate's Checklist  
Resources

ALA American Library Association

# Who Are Library Advocates?

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Library advocates believe in the importance of free and equitable access to information in a democratic society. Library advocates believe libraries and librarians are vital to the future of an information literate nation. Library advocates speak out for libraries. Library advocates are everywhere although they don't always call themselves that. They are:

## **Library trustees**

Whether elected or appointed, trustees generally have political and community connections that can benefit the library. They also have clout as public officials charged with representing the best interest of the library and their community.

## **Friends of libraries**

As library "ambassadors" in the community, Friends play a valuable role as the eyes and ears of the library as well as its voice. They also help provide the numbers that make legislators sit up and take notice.

## **Library users (Stakeholders)**

Students, faculty, parents, seniors, business people and other library users are vital to any advocacy effort. Their testimonials about how the library has helped them and how much they need libraries provide powerful evidence that commands attention from decision makers.

## **Institutional and community leaders**

School principals, college presidents, union leaders, CEOs and foundation officials should be part of your advocacy network. Support from such leaders helps to ensure your message will be heard at the highest levels.

## **Librarians and library staff**

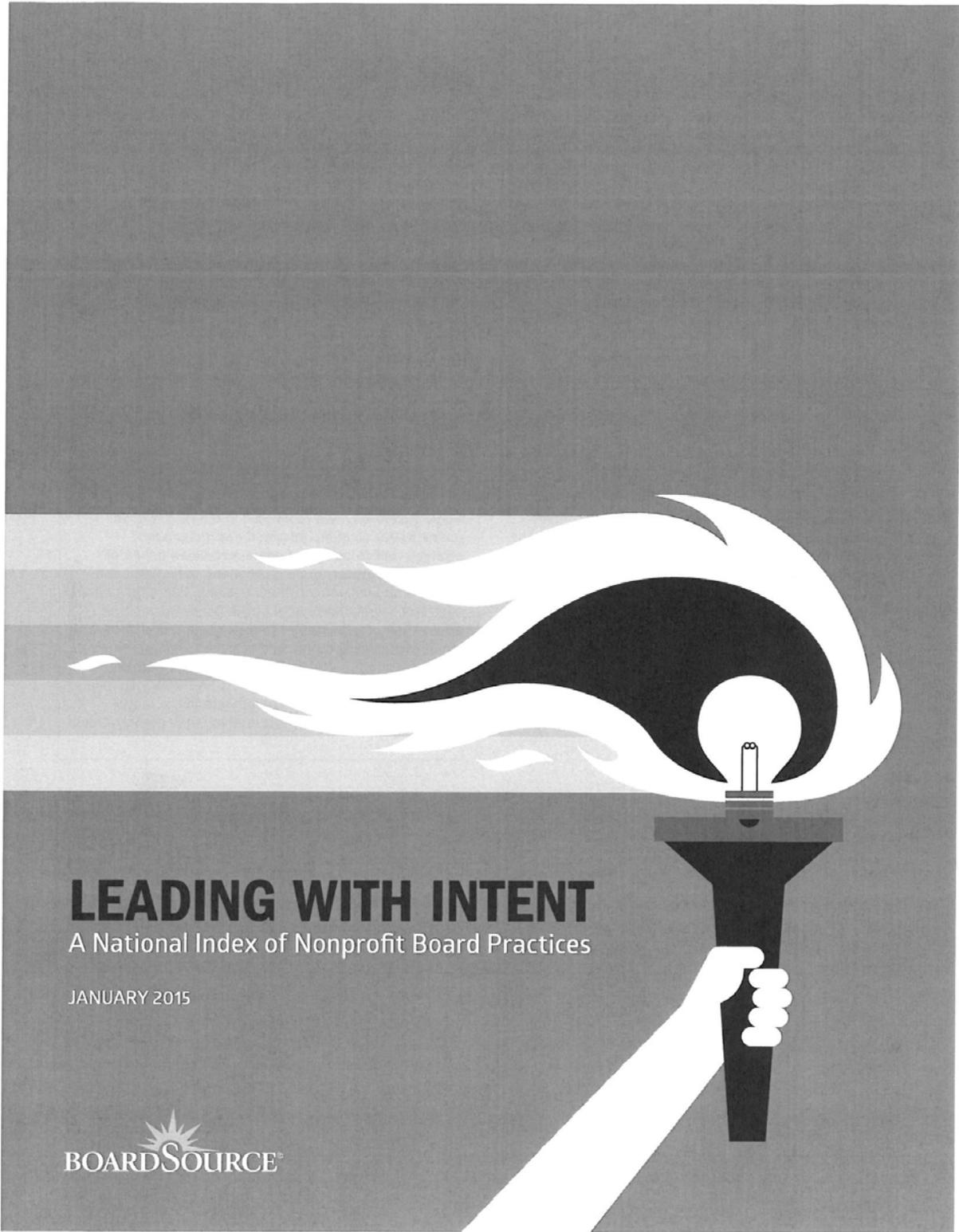
On the job or off, all library staff have countless opportunities to build both public understanding and support. Library administrators are responsible for developing and coordinating an ongoing advocacy effort, one with well define roles for staff, trustees and Friends.

## **Library and Information Science students**

Those pursuing a master's degree in Library and Information Science have obviously dedicated their careers to libraries. Often, this is an untapped group that could become effective advocates.

## **Potential advocates**

Every library has supporters who may not belong to a library support group or even use the library. But they may have fond memories of using the library as children have family members who benefit from library use or simply believe libraries are important. Some may be highly placed in their institutions or communities. These potential advocates are often glad to speak out if asked.



# LEADING WITH INTENT

A National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices

JANUARY 2015

 BOARDSOURCE<sup>®</sup>

## Ambassadorship

Board members are essential to successful community outreach, advocacy, and fundraising, and they have more work to do. 60 % of chief executives identify fundraising as the area most in need of board improvement, followed by ambassadorship at 41%. Board members need to raise their collective voices as committed and informed champions for their missions.

### ADVOCACY & PUBLIC POLICY: HOW CAN BOARD MEMBERS SPEAK OUT ON BEHALF OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONS AND MISSIONS?

Advocacy is gaining greater prominence as a strategy for success in the nonprofit sector. As revealed in *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High Impact Nonprofits*, organizations that made a positive difference in their field provided services *and* engaged actively in advocacy (see sidebar " Why Advocacy Matters"). We found that boards need to catch up to this emerging trend:

- Roughly one-third of boards stay abreast of public policy issues that affect their organizations and their field.
- Less than one-third of organizations have developed formal statements or policies to guide their advocacy and public policy work.
- Less than one-half of boards are apprised of or participate in their organization's advocacy activities.

#### WHAT WE FOUND

**Board members are not well informed about public policy issues.** Overall, only 37% of boards monitor the of public policy on their organizations. The boards of larger organizations and associations are more likely to pay attention to the implications of public policy.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

**Board members need to be well informed of public policy issues to make informed decisions about impact strategy and to be better ambassadors on behalf of their organizations.** To be passionate, articulate, and effective champions for their missions, board members need to be well informed of public policy issues that affect their organizations. To make sound decisions about strategic direction and organizational priorities and to respond to changes that might dramatically improve or threaten their organizations' ability to fulfill their missions, they need to understand the larger environment and ecosystems in which their organizations operate.

## Why Advocacy Matters

High-impact organizations may start out providing great programs, but they eventually realize that they cannot achieve large-scale social change through service delivery alone. So they add policy advocacy to acquire government resources and to change legislation. Other nonprofits start out by doing advocacy and later add grassroots programs to super charge their strategy.

"Ultimately, all high-impact organizations bridge the divide between service and advocacy. They become good at both. And the more they serve and advocate, the more they achieve impact. A nonprofit's grassroots work helps inform its policy advocacy, making legislation more relevant. And advocacy at the national level can help a nonprofit replicate its model, gain credibility, and acquire funding for expansion.

- Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod, authors of *Forces for Good*

\* · creating High-Impact Nonprofits, "Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2007.

WHAT WE FOUND	WHY IT MATTERS
<p><b>Less than one-third of nonprofits have established clear policies related to public policy and advocacy.</b> Roughly 1 in 3 organizations have a formal policy about public policy and advocacy. Fewer, 1 in 5, have a formal public policy or advocacy agenda. Not surprisingly, formal public policy agendas are more common in large organizations (27%), national organizations (27%), and associations (32%).</p>	<p><b>Advocacy can be an important tool for achieving mission impact.</b> Formal organizational policies about public policy and advocacy provide guidance to professional staff and board members about organizational strategy and priorities. While nonprofits operate along a continuum, from doing no advocacy to doing a lot of advocacy, the absence of a formal policy allows for ambiguity as to the role of advocacy as a strategic tool for fulfilling mission. Clarity around strategy is critical to organizational effectiveness.</p>
<p><b>Less than one-half of nonprofit boards are well informed or active in advocacy activities.</b> Overall, only 45% of boards receive information and resources about appropriate advocacy activities, and only 33% work with the CEO and leadership team to educate policy makers. The boards of larger organizations tend to be more informed and active in advocacy (see Figure 20).</p>	<p><b>Board members are the citizen leaders from whom government decision-makers need to hear.</b> As citizen leaders, board members can speak to and connect with a broad cross-section of constituents. However, to be effective advocates, board members need to be well informed about public policies issues and their organization's advocacy agenda and positions. They also need to be educated about the board's role in advocacy and provided appropriate support and resources to become powerful champions for their missions and ambassadors for their organizations. (visit <a href="http://standforyourmission.org">standforyourmission.org</a>.)</p>

Figure 20. Statements and Board Activities Related to Public Policy and Advocacy (011. 74 CEO)

Does your organization have the following?		All	Small	Medium	Large
<b>Formal, written public policy or advocacy policy – Yes</b>		35%	34%	33%	45%
To what extent did the board engage in the following activities?		All	Small	Medium	Large
Monitored the impact of local, state, and federal policy on the organization's mission delivery and resources.	Not at all + Small extent	63%	75%	58%	48%
	Some + Great extent	37%	25%	42%	53%
Board members worked in concert with the chief executive and leadership team to educate policymakers on behalf of the organization, its mission, and/or the nonprofit sector.	Not at all + Small extent	66%	74%	65%	50%
	Some + Great extent	33%	26%	35%	51%



Our board lobbies hard to keep our funding from our city and county government. We have been able to maintain our funding and increase programming during a poor economy."

-Board chair of an arts organization