

# Nonprofit Repositioning Initiative Summary

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## Introduction

Despite of the tireless efforts of dedicated nonprofits over a long period of time, life has not improved for many Milwaukeeans. Most of the work of nonprofits stops at providing services to individuals in desperate need. These efforts are critical and must continue. At the same time, there has been a failure to address the deeper root causes of problems at the underlying systems level. While we continue to provide services to individuals in desperate need, we must now reposition the community based nonprofit sector as a powerful collective force for social change at the underlying systems level.

## The Approach

The Nonprofit Repositioning Initiative aims to provide resources and network building opportunities to increase capacity of nonprofits to deepen impact at the underlying systems level and provide more permanent solutions to community problems.

While nonprofits must provide services to individuals in desperate need, we must now reposition the community based nonprofit sector as a powerful force for social change at the underlying systems level.

Building on the community engagement efforts of a number of nonprofits, this Initiative seeks organizations and leaders who recognize that advocacy and repositioning work to focus at root causes are interconnected strategies that will help reposition the sector to actually create change, not treat symptoms. The Initiative will help broaden the kinds of organizations already working on root causes and will increase efforts toward advocacy and activism in the wider nonprofit sector.

For nonprofits that want to move in this direction, there are four key strategies that can help them increase their impact at the underlying systems level:

1. Uncover the root causes of community problems and use this new understanding to rethink the focus and impact of current programming, and develop/redesign programs and initiatives in order to address these deeper root causes.
2. Increase advocacy and public policy work by nonprofits.
3. Carry out ongoing nonpartisan voter registration and education efforts at the neighborhood level.
4. Connect community-based nonprofits to mission-aligned issue campaigns already underway — like expanding public transportation to link the unemployed to jobs; to living wage campaigns like the Fight for \$15; and to other initiatives tackling racism, income inequality and poverty at the root cause level.

The Repositioning Initiative aims to provide training, technical assistance, and other resources to enable nonprofits to embed these four strategies into their ongoing work. The Initiative will also offer strategies to overcome common internal and external barriers to systems change work by nonprofits. For more info, contact: Frank Martinelli, The Center for Public Skills Training [frank@createthefuture.com](mailto:frank@createthefuture.com)



**View the TED<sup>x</sup> Talk “When Good Is Not Good Enough”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JqUkGj4IFQ>. The presentation script is available at <http://tinyurl.com/jlvbgwp>

# Repositioning the Nonprofit Sector: A Resource Bibliography

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There are four key strategies that can help nonprofits move more of their impact to the root cause level.

1. Uncover the root causes of community problems, rethink the focus and impact of current programming, and develop/redesign programs/initiatives in order to address these root causes
2. Increase advocacy and public policy work by nonprofits
3. Carry out ongoing nonpartisan voter registration and education efforts at the neighborhood level
4. Connect community-based nonprofits to efforts already underway — like expanding public transportation to link the unemployed to jobs; to living wage campaigns like the Fight for \$15; and to other initiatives tackling racism, income inequality and poverty at the root cause level.

## 1. Increase the number of nonprofits that address roots causes of the problems that plague our community and work for change at a deeper systems level

Nonprofits can take a fresh look at the programs and services they currently offer. They can reexamine their theories of change, program logic models and business plans. Based on this, nonprofits can: Redesign programs and services they currently offer to have greater impact at a deeper systems level; Enter into new partnerships and alliances with organizations that are already tackling the problem at its root; Launch new initiatives that increase impact at the deeper root cause level; In some cases, nonprofits may decide to divest of some programs and services in order to free up resources for systems change work. Nonprofits can also get to root causes by linking a problem they are working on to other community systems.

### Resources:

- **Building Movement Project** <http://www.buildingmovement.org>
  - Service and Social Change Resources. [http://www.buildingmovement.org/focus\\_area/category/service\\_and\\_social\\_change](http://www.buildingmovement.org/focus_area/category/service_and_social_change)
  - Crafting Powerful Questions [http://www.buildingmovement.org/our\\_tools/detail/crafting\\_powerful\\_questions](http://www.buildingmovement.org/our_tools/detail/crafting_powerful_questions)
  - Root Cause Analysis [http://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Root\\_Cause\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Root_Cause_Analysis.pdf)
- **Systems Thinking For Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results** by David Peter Stroh <https://tinyurl.com/y845paq9>

## 2. Increase involvement of nonprofits in advocacy and public policy work.

Nonprofits can address community problems at the root cause level through advocacy, lobbying, and public policy work. Sometimes, in our efforts to uncover root causes, we learn that there are existing laws, regulations or public and corporate policies that hurt the people we serve. We can then take action through advocacy to change or eliminate such laws, regulations and policies. Nonprofits have a long history of success in such advocacy to advance civil rights, environmental protections, gender equity, and other issues.

### Resources:

- **Board Source Stand for Your Mission Campaign** <http://standforyourmission.org/> The Stand for Your Mission campaign calls on all nonprofit decision-makers to stand for the organizations they believe in by actively representing their missions and values, and creating public will for important policy changes. The campaign seeks to unleash the full potential of

nonprofits to advance their missions by engaging board leaders more directly in the advocacy work of their organizations. The Campaign has assembled an excellent collection of resources to position your board for effective advocacy. Go to: <https://standforyourmission.org/resources/>

- **Bolder Advocacy.** Bolder Advocacy, a program of the Alliance for Justice (<http://www.afj.org>) provides nonprofits with the knowledge they need to become confident advocates. Staff conduct workshops and trainings around the country and offer one-on-one technical assistance by phone and email. Bolder Advocacy maintains a robust collection of how-to's, fact sheets, and reports that help nonprofits stay up-to-date on advocacy and connect with a coach for one-on-one technical assistance and trainings. The site provides examples of how nonprofits have used advocacy to advance their causes.. Bolder Advocacy also offers ACT!Quick, a short version of the Alliance for Justice's Advocacy Capacity Tool (ACT!) and is designed to provide a quick diagnosis of the strengths and gaps in organizations' advocacy skills, knowledge, and practices, and identify areas for strengthening. <https://www.bolderadvocacy.org>

### 3. Step up the role of nonprofits in nonpartisan voter registration, education and engagement education efforts at the neighborhood level

Milwaukee's community based nonprofits have regular ongoing contact with tens of thousands of people eligible to vote who are not yet registered. Nonprofits can help to turn these thousands into engaged voters by integrating nonpartisan voter engagement into their ongoing work at the neighborhood level. The result: sustained increases in voting, especially among young voters and those with a history of lower participation; Increased community power to influence decisions that affect Milwaukee neighborhoods.

#### Resources:

- **Wisconsin Voices** <http://www.wisconsinvoices.org> Wisconsin Voices is a network of over 60 nonpartisan civic engagement organizations that leverage their collective power to mobilize and empower people, particularly those who make up the emerging American majority. Wisconsin Voices plays a unique role in the progressive movement by creating the structure to empower organizations in the c3 community through: capacity building, ongoing year round civic engagement, convening & connecting, and long-term strategic planning for collective impact.
- **League of Women Voters of Dane County:** The League of Women Voters of Dane County is a non-profit, non-partisan organization whose purpose is to promote informed and active participation of citizens in government at all levels. Some of the League's voter services project that can be of help to nonprofits include: conducting voter registration drives, sponsoring live and cable-cast candidate forums, and speaking to school and community groups about voting procedures and ways to be informed as a voter. <https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/>
- **Promoting Voter Registration and Engagement: What Nonprofits Can Do.** This 35 minute recording, produced by the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County, provides an excellent introduction for nonprofit staff and board leadership on the role of nonprofit organizations in nonpartisan voter registration and engagement efforts. View the video at: <https://tinyurl.com/ybo8ghp2> Topics covered in the program include:
  - Why nonprofits need to be engaged in voter registration, education and engagement
  - Legal aspects of nonprofit involvement in voter registration and engagement
  - Voter registration and voting in Wisconsin
  - Case studies of nonprofits engaged in voter registration and engagement activities
  - Overview of available resources for nonprofits

#### 4. Link Community Based Nonprofits with Mission-Aligned Issue Campaigns

Another way we can reposition the nonprofit sector as a force for systems change is by connecting nonprofits working in low income communities to local and regional efforts already underway — like expanding public transportation to link the unemployed to jobs; to living wage campaigns like the Fight for \$15; and, to organizations like 9to5, Black Lives Matter and other initiatives more directly tackling racism, income inequality and poverty at the root cause level.

##### Resources:

###### Racial Justice

- Justified Anger, <http://nehemiah.org/justified-anger/>
- YWCA Madison, Racial Justice Programs, [http://www.ywcamadison.org/site/c.cuWLiO0JqI8E/b.7964763/k.F37E/Race\\_Gender\\_Equity.htm](http://www.ywcamadison.org/site/c.cuWLiO0JqI8E/b.7964763/k.F37E/Race_Gender_Equity.htm)
- Kids Forward/Race to Equity, <http://racetoequity.net/>
- WI Black Lives Matter Toolkit, <http://www.wnpj.org/book/export/html/9502>
- Groundwork Action, <https://groundworkmadison.com/take-action/>

###### Public Transit

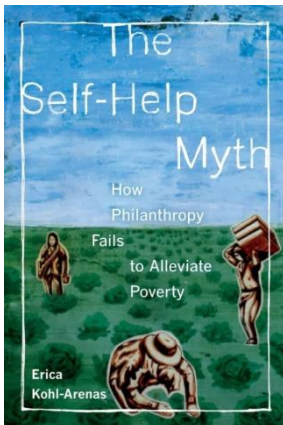
- Madison Area Bus Advocates <http://www.busadvocates.org/>

###### Living Wage

- 9 to 5 <http://9to5.org/local-chapters/9to5-wisconsin/>
- Fight for \$15 <http://fightfor15.org/>
- National Employment Law Project <http://www.nelp.org/>

###### Criminal Justice System Reform

- EXPO (Ex Incarcerated People Organizing) <http://www.rocwisconsin.org/our-work/expo/>
- Urban Underground/Youth Justice Coalition <https://www.youthjusticemke.org/>



##### Video of Professor Erica Kohl-Arenas, author of *The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty*

Through the lens of a provocative set of case studies, *The Self-Help Myth* reveals how philanthropy maintains systems of inequality by attracting attention to the “behavior” of poor people while shifting the focus away from structural inequities and relationships of power that produce poverty. Foundation professionals espouse well-intentioned, hopeful strategies to improve the lives of the poor. These strategies contain specific ideas that rely on traditional American ideals of individualism and hard work, such as self-help, civic participation, and mutual prosperity. But when used in partnership with well-defined limits around what foundations will and will not fund, these ideals become fuzzy concepts that promote professional and institutional behaviors that leave relationships of poverty and inequality untouched. **View the video at:** <https://youtu.be/Pbnc5KhYJmE>

For more information, contact Frank Martinelli, The Center for Public Skills Training  
[frank@createthefuture.com](mailto:frank@createthefuture.com)



Unleashing the Power of Boards  
to Create Positive Impact

## On-Demand Recording

### Beginning the Journey with Your Board of Directors: Practical Ways to Start the Board Conversation about Advocacy

**Access the On-Demand Recording at <http://tinyurl.com/y3fo8g69>**

Sometimes, in our efforts to uncover root causes of the problems our nonprofit seeks to address, we learn that there are existing laws, regulations or public and corporate policies that hurt the people we serve. We can then take action through advocacy to change or eliminate such laws, regulations and policies.

*But . . .* One of the biggest mistakes nonprofit board members make is deciding not to engage in advocacy because they believe they're prohibited by law from doing so.

This is simply not true. Advocacy is one of the most effective tools nonprofits and foundations can use to advance their mission and serve their communities. The term "advocacy" includes broader advocacy efforts, legislative lobbying and non-partisan, election-related activities. And the combination of advocacy and direct services can dramatically increase the mission impact of any nonprofit. Advocacy is all about your organization's work and what it will take to advance it.

This webinar session is for board members of nonprofits that are not currently engaged in issue advocacy and public policy work but are open to exploring the idea and seek credible information on this critical topic. The session is also for nonprofit executive staff leaders, foundation leaders, and others interested in exploring and engaging in advocacy.

The webinar addresses:

- What is advocacy?
- Why nonprofits need to engage in such advocacy efforts
- What the law allows tax exempt nonprofits to do
- Organizational entry points for making the decision to engage in advocacy
- Specific roles that board members can play
- Examples of service provider nonprofits that have made the decision to engage in advocacy
- Overview of organizations and proven resources that can help

The session features the BoardSource Stand for Your Mission Campaign and the process outlined in the campaign discussion guide for boards. The session also describes the internal board decision process to move forward on advocacy.

**Access the On-Demand Recording at <http://tinyurl.com/y3fo8g69>**



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

## Promoting Voter Registration and Engagement: What Nonprofits Can Do

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This 30 minute recording provides an excellent introduction for nonprofit staff and board leadership on the role of nonprofit organizations in nonpartisan voter registration and engagement efforts. The presentation team includes:

- Jacqueline Boynton, an attorney with deep knowledge about the legal aspects of nonprofit involvement in voter registration and education.
- Neil Albrecht, Executive Director of the City of Milwaukee Election Commission
- Mayhoua Moua, Executive Director of Southeast Asian Educational Development of Wisconsin.
- Paula Penebaker President/CEO of YWCA Southeast Wisconsin
- Michele Goldstein, Member of the Nonprofit Outreach Team, League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County.
- Frank Martinelli, President, The Center for Public Skills Training, Program Moderator

Topics covered in the program include:

- Why nonprofits need to be engaged in voter registration, education and engagement
- Legal aspects of nonprofit involvement in voter registration and engagement
- Voter registration and voting in Wisconsin
- Making the decision in your nonprofit to carry out voter registration
- Case studies to describe the experience of two Milwaukee nonprofits engaged in successful voter registration and engagement activities
- Overview of available resources for nonprofits

You can view the video at: <https://tinyurl.com/ybo8qhp2>

You can download the file from: <https://tinyurl.com/y9x9d7na>

⇒ Contact the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County, Nonprofit Outreach Team for more information about how your nonprofit can promote civic engagement and voter registration with the communities you serve: [lwwmc.voterservices@gmail.com](mailto:lwwmc.voterservices@gmail.com)

# When Good Is Not Good Enough

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## *A Contemporary Fable: Upstream/Downstream*

It's been many years since the first body was spotted in the river. Some old-timers remember how spartan were the facilities and procedures for managing that sort of thing. Sometimes, they say, it would take hours to pull ten people from the river, and even then only a few would survive. Though the number of victims in the river has increased greatly in recent years, the good folks of Downstream have responded admirably to the challenge. Their rescue system is clearly second to none: most people discovered in the swirling waters are reached within 20 minutes, many in less than ten. Only a small number drown each day before help arrives; a big improvement from the way it used to be.

Talk to the people of Downstream and they'll speak with pride about the new hospital by the edge of the waters, the flotilla of rescue boats ready for service at a moment's notice, the comprehensive health plans for coordinating all the personnel involved, and the large number of highly trained and dedicated swimmers always ready to risk their lives to save victims from the raging currents.

Furthermore, state of the art information systems capture data demonstrating that measurable outcomes are being achieved - even exceeded- in line with detailed program logic models and theories of change that clearly explain the service delivery approach. Extensive cross sector collaborations serve to increase the collective impact. Finally, solid financial plans assure long term sustainability of the rescue effort.

Sure it costs a lot, but, say the Downstreamers, what else can decent people do except to provide whatever it takes when human lives are at stake.

Oh, a few people in Downstream have raised the question now and again, but most folks show little interest about what's happening Upstream. It seems there's so much to do to help those in the river, that nobody's got time to check how all those bodies are getting there in the first place. That's the way things are, sometimes. . .

*"A Contemporary Fable" has been around for a long time and reflects one of the major challenges to our work as the nonprofit sector: Are we getting to root causes or are we inadvertently making it easier for unjust and mal-functioning systems to remain unchallenged and unchanged? As a sector, are we about social change or social control?*

# What is advocacy?

Advocacy is often used as an umbrella term for many different types of policy and political engagement. That can make things a little confusing. So here's a quick cheat sheet about the types of advocacy that are a part of the Stand for Your Mission campaign.

## Broad Advocacy

All types of nonprofits are allowed to educate policymakers, the media, and the public about issues that are important to their mission, as long as it doesn't include information about specific candidates or pieces of legislation.

**It's this type of advocacy that is the primary focus of the Stand for Your Mission Campaign.**

## Legislative Lobbying

Lobbying means working for or against a specific piece of legislation or ballot measure. Most nonprofits are allowed to engage in a limited amount of legislative lobbying, which can be a very important way to advance - or protect - your organization's mission and impact.

**When there's a big decision being made that will affect your mission, you have a right and responsibility to weigh in. Don't waste it!**

## Election-Related Activities

Nonprofit organizations may engage in nonpartisan voter registration, education and turnout activities.

However, supporting or opposing a specific candidate (or set of candidates or a political party) is never allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations,\* and is **not what we're describing as advocacy in the Stand for Your Mission campaign.**

\* 501(c)(4), (c)(5) or (c)(6) organizations are allowed to participate in electioneering activities, but only as a secondary activity.



## Barriers to Board Involvement in Issue Advocacy

### Board Barrier:

Belief that the law doesn't allow them to engage in issue advocacy; that their exempt status would be imperiled.

**Response:** Provide information to demonstrate that issue advocacy is allowable and that their exempt status will not be at risk

### Next Steps:

Address other barriers  
Organizational leadership decides to engage in issue advocacy  
Training and TA to help them develop internal systems and infrastructure for issue advocacy  
Identify mission-aligned issues on which to advocate  
Engage in issue advocacy alone and in collective efforts with other nonprofits

### Board Barrier:

Fear donor/funder/board member backlash because of their belief that issue advocacy is not allowable and/or donor/funder interests conflict with a nonprofit's advocacy issue positions.

**Response:** Meet with donors, funders & board members to provide information that advocacy is allowable activity and that such advocacy will advance the mission that donors funders and board members support. Determine if donor/funder/ board member has a conflict of interest

### Next Steps:

Address other barriers  
Update agreements with donors and funders if possible  
Devise and commit to expected mission aligned outcomes attributable to issue advocacy  
Work to develop a pressure resistance revenue base that supports issue advocacy

### Board Barrier:

Belief that issue advocacy is "mission drift" and that such advocacy doesn't fit with their mission.

**Response:** Demonstrate that issue advocacy is not mission drift if it advances the nonprofit's mission. Clarify that such advocacy would be on issues that align with their mission.

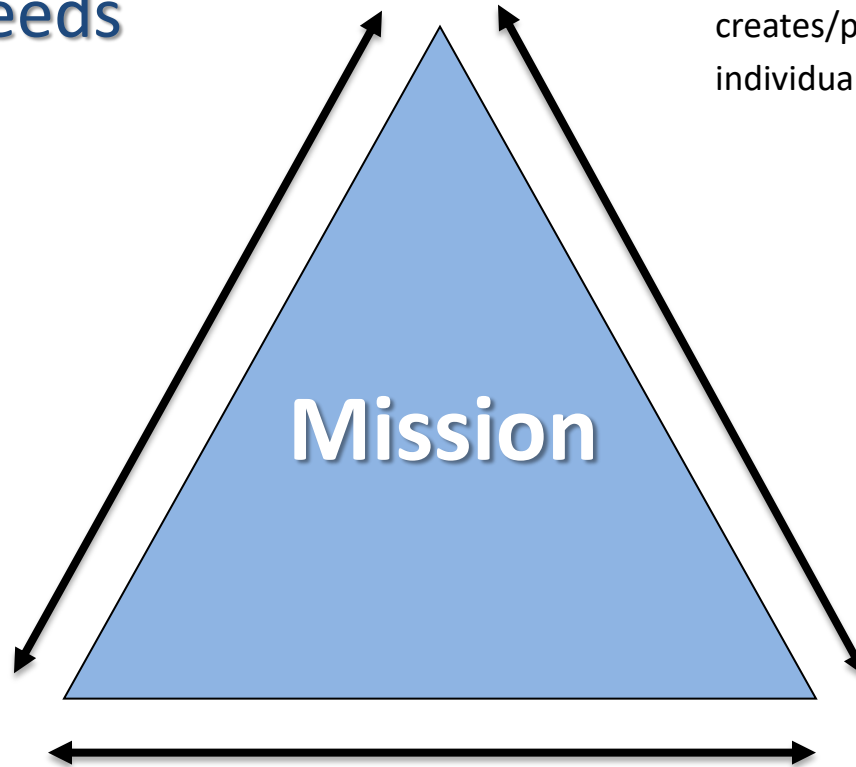
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# Three Ways to Address Community Needs

## Direct Service

**Long term result:** Unmet needs of individuals are met.  
**Method:** An individual or agency creates/provides a direct service to individuals in need.



## Advocacy

**Long term result:** Decision-makers/people with power respond to the needs of groups and individuals regarding a specific problem, issue or need.  
**Method:** An individual or group speaks on behalf of other individuals or groups; asserts the rights and unmet needs of others with them and/or for them.

## Community Organizing

**Long term result:** Empowerment; Creation of new participatory mechanisms; Increased influence on decisions.  
**Method:** People and organizations act on common needs as a group (A community-based organization or other group facilitates the process. A community asserts itself through collective action and builds community power.)