



Montana Nonprofit Association

Public Policy Program and Council Overview and Position Description

MNA Public Policy Program Overview

The formation of the Montana Nonprofit Association was predicated, in part, on the idea that advocacy and public policy work on behalf of the nonprofit sector is one of the most important areas of focus for the association. The purpose of the program is to build the capacity of the nonprofit sector in Montana to monitor and take action on public policy issues which affect the sector as a whole and the missions of individual organizations.

Goals of MNA Public Policy Program:

1. To create a voice for MNA members on public policy issues.
2. To educate nonprofit organizations and legislators regarding the public policy issues which affect the nonprofit sector as a whole, their rights and responsibilities as advocates, and the skills needed to engage effectively in advocacy.
3. To build a representative body of nonprofit organizations in which diverse points of view are represented and engaged in public policy debates on issues that affect the sector as a whole.
4. To enable the MNA membership to weigh in on significant national policy issues through federal lobbying and participation with the policy activities of the National Council of Nonprofits.

Public Policy Council

MNA's public policy program is led by a Public Policy Council comprised of 12-18 diverse leaders from across the state and broadly representing MNA membership and the nonprofit sector in Montana. The Council is chaired by a member of the MNA Board of Directors.

Main functions of the council:

1. To advise the Board of Directors in setting the public policy goals and objectives of the organization.
2. To advise and assist staff in selecting appropriate policy issues and positions; in lobbying and advocating MNA positions; and in planning and implementing other activities related to the public policy program and objectives of MNA.

Appointment and terms of council service:

1. Council members are appointed by the Council Chair, with the approval of the MNA Board Chair.
2. Terms of service are for 3 years, with the option of renewing for a second term with the approval of the Council Chair and MNA Board Chair.*
3. At the end of the second term, members are required to step down for a 3 year term before considering re-appointment.*

**The MNA Policy Council has recommended (2) and (3) be modified to state “Council members shall serve for a term of 1 year with the option of renewing for subsequent terms with the approval of the Council Chair and MNA Board Chair.” This recommendation will be considered at the February 1, 2012 MNA Board Meeting.*

Specific responsibilities of council

1. The Council meets regularly, as designated by its Chair, with two** meetings annually as a minimum. Subject to the discretion of the Chair, it may consider any matter or question proposed by a member of the Council, by a member of MNA, or by staff, including policy positions on specific issues or legislation.
2. The Council prepares and recommends to the Board of Directors a Statement of Policy Goals and Legislative Priorities for each legislative biennium. Policy goals and legislative priorities may also extend to national policy issues, where appropriate.
3. The Council works with MNA staff to investigate public policy issues of concern to MNA membership, to plan and execute lobbying or other appropriate action to promote the public policy program of MNA, and to plan and execute appropriate activities to promote involvement in public policy and policy advocacy by all members of MNA and members of Montana’s nonprofit community.
4. The Council, or as represented by MNA staff, solicits input annually from general membership regarding public policy at the MNA annual meeting.
5. The Council may advise and make recommendations to staff regarding specific public policy positions, consistent with the policies of MNA. The Council may also review and make recommendations to the Board regarding the existing policies of MNA, or to the staff regarding positions previously taken on public policy issues.

*** The MNA Policy Council has recommended (1) be modified to one meeting annually as a minimum. This recommendation will be considered at the February 1, 2012 MNA Board Meeting.*

Desired council member attributes:

1. Understanding of and/or experience with the federal or state legislative process
2. Understanding of the challenges and issues facing nonprofits in Montana
3. Ability to think strategically and long-term about nonprofit policy issues
4. Commitment to the health of the sector as a whole
5. Demonstrated leadership capabilities
6. Broad connections in the public policy arena and nonprofit sector

Application process:

To be considered, please submit a cover letter highlighting why you are interested in the Council, your response to the supplemental questions, and a resume. Email submissions are strongly encouraged and should be forward to lmoore@mtnonprofit.org. Mail submissions may be sent to P.O. Box 1744, Helena, MT 59624.