



Published on National Council of Nonprofits (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org>)

Original URL: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/articles/listen-speak-advocate-listening-sessions-provide-opportunities-be-heard>

Listen, Speak, Advocate: Listening Sessions Provide Opportunities to be Heard

Policymakers and officials listen to nonprofits because nonprofit professionals often are the closest to their communities. Nonprofits are on the frontlines of where the needs are, see what those needs are, and know the solutions to meet those community needs. Policy briefings and listening sessions, round tables, and advocacy meetings held by both nonprofits and government officials provide opportunities for in-depth conversations to hear about those needs. Importantly, these sessions can generate policy ideas and consensus that lead to lasting solutions.

The [North Carolina Center for Nonprofits](#) is holding nonprofit policy briefings in the coming weeks to “bring together nonprofit leaders (and sometimes elected officials) from around North Carolina for updates and discussions on the state of NC’s nonprofit sector and the key policy issues affecting nonprofits.” The briefing will provide updates on the state and federal policies affecting the sector and trends during the pandemic. The state association of nonprofits offers the information and a place for members and nonprofit leaders to “connect and collaborate with those in [their] own neighborhoods about the issues, as well as topically-focused ones so

[they] can dive deeper into specific issues that affect [them] the most.” The feedback gleaned from these conversations can then be transmitted back to the elected officials, whether present or not, to ensure the voice of the sector is heard.

Homing in on the communities most in need of being heard, [Maryland Nonprofits](#) is hosting a Baltimore City Nonprofit Listening Session on March 24 for its “4,577 unique nonprofit organizations.” The event is based on a recognition that “[c]ommunity-based nonprofits and nonprofits led by people of color, serving Maryland’s communities in most need of investment, are often denied access to resources essential to their growth.” The state association of nonprofits is inviting people to “inform [Maryland Nonprofits’] priorities for advocacy, collaboration and capacity building.” The session will provide valuable information from the communities with the most needs to help shape the role for the organization’s new Senior Program Manager for Baltimore, whose primary responsibilities will be to “liaise with the philanthropic and governmental funding community to strengthen partnerships and leverage resources into communities and nonprofits that have been left out of funding opportunities in the past, especially Black and Latino led, small community-based organizations.”

Not just nonprofits recognize the wisdom and need to listen to their communities. In [West Virginia](#), the state’s Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs is travelling to each of the 55 counties to discuss pandemic-related challenges, targeting greatest needs, making an impact, promoting sustainability, and pooling resources. The listening sessions give nonprofits, local leaders and community members the opportunity to share “areas of need that could potentially be addressed through the \$1.6 billion allocation of ARPA funding” for the state.

Each listening session proves why government officials need to hear from nonprofits – because when the nonprofit leaders speak, they speak for their communities.