

IPA Legislative Roundtables

2020 REPORT



Overview

Advocacy helps the philanthropic sector advance its mission, increase its funding sources, and solve both community and societal problems. That is why advocacy is a key component of Indiana Philanthropy Alliance's (IPA) mission. We believe developing relationships and effective collaborations with policymakers will help all sectors work together to build a better quality of life for individuals and families across Indiana and beyond.

To that end, in 2020, IPA hosted six legislative roundtables across the state. Our goals were simple:



Further our members' relationships with their elected officials



Identify key issues in our communities, and begin talking about ways to move them forward



Educate our elected officials about what foundations do and how we can work together to create long-lasting change in our communities

Over two weeks in late July and early August, IPA's six Legislative Roundtables convened:

136

community leaders

57

IPA member organizations

36

state legislators

14

congressional staff

1

member of U.S. House of Representatives

Shared Priorities

While all communities in Indiana are unique, with COVID-19 dominating conversations in 2020, it came as no surprise that all regions shared consistent and repeated concerns around:

Access to Broadband Internet

With many rural areas across Indiana struggling to keep up with the demand for broadband internet access for education, telehealth, and workforce purposes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to expand access and infrastructure was echoed in every legislative roundtable meeting IPA convened. As schools look to convene virtually in the fall, reliable access to broadband, or lack thereof, will be a major determining factor in a child's ability to learn remotely, gain access to medical care, or continue to work while maintaining social distancing. IPA members and legislators were looking for ways to come together to share limited resources and to think outside the box to quickly increase access.

Workforce Development

With many local businesses temporarily shut down or closed altogether, IPA members had workforce development on their minds, particularly mentoring, training, and retraining people to go back to work. Members were interested in connecting classrooms with careers that do not necessarily require college, increases in STEM education, and reaching students early about career planning. IPA members would like to see more tools, like post-graduation scholarships, to help attract and retain talent.

Childcare

Many areas of the state continue to be a childcare deserts, which could be a major hurdle to overcome as individuals look to return to work post-COVID-19. IPA members identified an administrative fix, lowering the age of childcare professionals from 21 to 18, as a possible solution. State officials agreed that many issues, but especially child care, were necessities for a community's efforts to get back to work.

Health of the Nonprofit Sector

Additional burdens associated with providing COVID-19 relief on already encumbered nonprofits were another major concern expressed by IPA members. With grant requests up and added costs to secure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies, nonprofits are struggling to keep up with demand. These issues are exacerbated by a decrease in volunteers, many of whom belong to vulnerable populations and are put in additional risk by continuing to serve nonprofits. Additionally, many IPA members mentioned the nonprofits they support were struggling to raise revenue due to social distancing and job losses.

Congressional staff urged IPA members to contact their elected officials to help educate them about the need to continue to support nonprofits in the midst of the pandemic. They also updated IPA members about ongoing legislative efforts on Capitol Hill to continue providing economic relief to many sectors, including the philanthropic community and nonprofits.

Human Services

With the COVID-19 pandemic bringing concerns around food insecurity, housing, poverty, and evictions to the forefront, IPA members spent a lot of time sharing local stories with legislators highlighting the need for intervention. The moratorium on evictions was discussed by both IPA members and elected officials, and both agreed that an increase in homelessness and individuals in poverty would complicate COVID-19 recovery efforts. IPA members expressed concerns around the relationship between schools and meals for children. If schools remain closed, many children could lose access to a reliable source of nutrition.

While legislators were united in their concerns over budget constraints and cuts as they head into the 2021 legislative session, they offered no consensus around any particular legislative priorities beyond a COVID response.

Additional Issues Raised Around the State

Need for Government Assistance

Members spoke about the unexpected longevity of the pandemic crisis to-date, and the likelihood that it would continue for the foreseeable future. Long-term support programs are a priority for many members, and several expressed the need for assistance from both the state and federal governments in order to continue adequately supporting their communities.

Arts, Culture, and Placemaking

The plight of arts and cultural institutions was discussed in every legislative roundtable meeting. As many IPA members are engaged in placemaking efforts in their communities, they are particularly concerned about the artists, performers, and entertainers involved in creating the cultural experiences that define Indiana. These sectors are farther behind others in their recovery, and members noted this delay means that there could be additional strains on safety-net services, such as foodbanks, and fewer individuals with access to healthcare.

In addition, members noted the continuing struggle of the arts and cultural institutions due to social distancing restrictions. Nonprofits across the board are struggling to raise revenue without traditional fundraising campaigns and events, but arts and cultural institutions have been hit especially hard with little relief in sight.



“Evidence and data in policy making will be more important than ever. There will be pressure to make emotional decisions. There is going to be an even greater role for philanthropy. Most important thing philanthropy can do is to provide continuity that we do not lose focus.”

— State Representative Ed Clere

Health

Infant and maternal mortality rates continue to be an issue in Indiana, especially for women of color. Again, COVID-19 seems to be exacerbating existing health problems across the state as people lose healthcare, have limited access, or decline medical care due to concerns around the pandemic.

Mental health, particularly with vulnerable populations, was a topic of discussion given the worsening situation in that sector as a result of COVID-19. The certification process for mental health providers was also identified as overly cumbersome and a disincentive for qualified individuals to enter that space.

Early Childhood Education

Members also expressed a desire to see early childhood education programs expanded in the state. However, given uncertainty about remote education and available funds in the coming budget cycle, IPA members were realistic about the expansion of such programs.

"I don't know of a single legislator serving that has been through anything like this. It is complicated. We need more information, more input, more facts, more data. Whatever we can put our hands on to make good decisions."

— State Senator Ron Grooms



Overall Observations & Feedback

There must be **regular interaction between philanthropists (neutral experts) and legislators** to create innovative ideas and approaches to problems.

IPA must educate legislators and IPA members by playing a leadership role in understanding key issues and passing on that knowledge.

Philanthropy must determine how it can **work strategically to close the funding gap** on critical issues.

Philanthropy plays a role as a convener for all points of view, especially on contentious issues.

Philanthropy plays a role in providing **continuity for a community.**

Philanthropy should engage in research and share data. IPA is in a unique position to aggregate information, convene around issues, and provide best practices and data.

Philanthropy can help build bridges between government, education, and the private sector.

Philanthropy must not let legislators solve critical societal problems alone.

Philanthropy must **convene and discuss needs assessments** in regions around the state.

Philanthropy must work on **developing the next generation of effective leaders** and encouraging civic engagement.

IPA will consider the observations and feedback provided by Legislative Roundtable participants as it develops and grows its advocacy program and public policy agenda. IPA will continue to offer these engagement opportunities to connect members with policymakers. The organization will also support its members by focusing on how philanthropy can meet specific community challenges. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about IPA's advocacy and policy work, please contact Holly M. Davis, Vice President of External Relations, at hdavis@inphilanthropy.org or 317.630.5200, Ext. 117.