



Arkansas Community Action Agencies Association, Inc. (ACAAA)

Conference Committee Meeting

February 17, 2016

Minutes

In Attendance: Toby Atkinson, OOI, Committee Chair • Terry Bearden, ACAAA; Casey Beaver, EOAWC; Beverly Buchanan, OCS; Tim Ensley, OHC; Jim Jansen, BRAD; Susan Moore, OHC; John Moran, ACAAA; Charlie Morris, NADC; Rebecca Reynolds, ACAAA; Jennifer Welter, CAPCA; Lorie Williams, OCS; and Tim Wooldridge, CRDC.

I. Welcome and Introductions

The Conference Committee of the ACAAA Board of Directors met on February 17, 2016, at the CAPCA Administrative Office in Conway. Committee chair Toby Atkinson called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. and welcomed those present.

II. Content

A. Pre-Conference • Terry Bearden described for those in attendance ACAAA's plans for the "pre-conference" activities being planned for Tuesday, May 24. There will be two "audiences": board members; and family development staffers—those working with CSBG, housing, and Head Start, and other direct service program staff. For board members, the planned guest speaker will be Eleanor Evans, Executive Director and General Counsel for CAPLAW. Committee members were asked to consider—from among a quartet of proposed tentative topics—what might be some desired subjects for her to address (with an eye towards one session in the morning and one in the afternoon, or possibly two in the afternoon).

Discussion ensued. Jennifer Welter wondered if any of the topics would address strategic planning or fundraising? Rebecca said she believed that "Governance: Nuts & Bolts of Tripartite Boards" included strategic planning, but that she would have to check; she thought that fundraising could be included within this same topic upon request. Susan Moore noted the importance of conveying to agency boards the degree of commitment required for participation as a board members.

For the family development/case manager/direct service program staff, Dr. Barbara Mooney, Project Director for the Association of Nationally Certified ROMA trainers, is the slated speaker; her presentation will include self-examination exercises that will help attendees analyze how their own preconceptions figure into the process of helping others move towards stability and self-sufficiency.

Also, Paige Teegarden, VP of Strategic Initiatives for Garrett County Community Action, will be the Tuesday luncheon speaker to both groups, to talk about a two-generational approach to providing assistance.

B. Conference • Rebecca presented ACAA's current plans for the primary conference workshop tracks, each tailored to a specific subsection of expected attendees. There was discussion on particular workshop topics that were still in search of presenters: Rebecca noted that her hope for the "What's New in Community Action" panel might involve a variety of representatives from different agencies who could tout exciting new ventures. She also inquired of Tim Enlsey if he might have any suggestions for the "Substance Abuse 101" workshop, while Terry Bearden noted that the "Transportation for Rural Communities" class was in need of suggestions, what with the original plans for enlisting someone from the Arkansas Transit Association having fallen through. Tim Wooldridge suggested Joel Gardner and Jeff Hatley from Ozark Region Transit and said he would contact them on Terry's behalf and report back.

Susan Moore wondered if some of the proposed workshop speakers—such as Mae Frances Rowlett and Dr. Keith Vire—might not be overly familiar from repeated appearances in recent conferences. Terry noted that, in the case of Dr. Vire, his proposed subject for the 2016 conference was his own specific area of expertise, which marked a difference from years past.

There was discussion as to a desirable presenter or panel of presenters for the "Community Action & Head Start" workshop. Jacqueline Govan, Collaboration Director for Arkansas Head Start, was suggested, although some concern was expressed that such a program might be too familiar to Head Start staffers who had already heard numerous such presentations. Toby noted that, considering that Head Start could be a competitive area, one had to be particularly diplomatic when making such a selection; he wondered if perhaps there needed to be a network survey to determine what people's chief interests would be, in terms of needed training. Consideration was given to possibly expanding the topic to include, more generally, early childhood; or creating a panel on which Ms. Govan would be just one member.

Rebecca requested that committee attendees inquire with their respective staffs and provide feedback. A general consensus was reached that one common problem was the "silo" mentality that separates Head Start and Community Action—and the too-frequent perception that the former was an entity unto itself, completely independent of the latter. It was agreed to table the issue of the workshop until Rebecca had a chance to compare notes with all agency directors with Head Start programs.

On another subject, Tim Wooldridge noted—following up on a previous discussion—that any plans to invite a state legislative committee to meet during the conference would need to be such that the meeting corresponded to a lunch. 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Thursday was proposed. Tim wondered what specific committee was being considered for invitation; Joint Performance Review and City, County, & Local Affairs were two suggestions. Lorie noted that the Peer and Rules & Regulations groups were the ones that OCS most often appeared in front of, but Tim observed that these were subcommittees of Legislative Council.

Toby suggested that perhaps any luncheon to which legislators were invited could correspond to an awards presentation; those present agreed that the “Action” awards would be the ideal choice. Terry noted that it would be particularly gratifying, under these circumstances, if each agency could make a nomination in each of the two categories.

Tim inquired if there were plans for a Thursday luncheon speaker; David Bradley and Denise Harlow were suggested as two possibilities. He proposed that perhaps Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin might be a promising candidate; he said that he could pursue that possibility.

III. Subcommittee Updates

- A. Fundraising • Rebecca inquired how everyone was doing with their previously assigned fundraising goals working towards a target of \$500 collected for NCAF per agency leading up to the conference; she also asked what were the most common obstacles that people were encountering in their fundraising efforts. Toby noted that a long-standing problem was the sometimes-unclear distinction between NCAF and CAP-PAC and all of the attendant rules and prohibitions having to do with donating to them. Another issue, he said, was that there was no “culture of giving” in his agency.

Beverly Buchanan inquired how Arkansas’s fundraising compared with the rest of the nation. Rebecca replied that, whereas Arkansas used to regularly exceed its goals, there had been, within the past five years, a significant downward turn. Toby speculated that this might be in part due to turnover; whereas once it was commonplace for new employees to be told that a portion of their check was being automatically donated to CAP-PAC, that is no longer the case. Terry noted also that the live auction ACAA used to hold during its conferences was a major fundraiser, but that the age of directors engaging in humorously excessive competitive bidding seemed to have passed.

Susan Moore observed that her own staff was already engaged in regular charitable giving and that she would be disinclined to ask them to make any additional contributions to NCAF. Brooke Thomas noted that a problem was that most agency staff members—largely ignorant to the significance of NCAF’s role—had no sense that there was any self-interest involved in a donation to NCAF or CAP-PAC. Susan also mentioned the longstanding issue of frustration with NCAF’s bookkeeping, and the perception that their records were frequently inaccurate in terms of who had and had not already donated. Rebecca noted that, in an attempt to address this issue to some small degree, that all donations made to NCAF through ACAA had been recorded so far.

Rebecca indicated that she would follow up with each director as to where they stood in the area of fundraising and would provide that report to the committee at its next meeting. Regarding the dinner/dance being planned as part of the conference, she noted that tickets and envelopes would be given to each director for sale as the conference approached. Toby observed—returning to the subject of how best to encourage donations—that providing something in exchange is always an effective method, and wondered if T-shirts might not be a possibility.

- B. Sponsorship • Rebecca mentioned that each director had been asked to approach three potential conference sponsors in the hopes of acquiring at least one per agency. She noted also that a “tote bag sponsor” had recently been secured and that an adjusted sponsor packet—no longer offering this option—would be sent out. She mentioned also that ACAAA had sent out solicitations to approximately 40 organizations and that a list of these organizations would be distributed to committee members so as to avoid overlap.

IV. Communications with Network • V. Open Forum/Announcements or Comments

Rebecca indicated that network communications had been addressed during the fundraising discussion. There were no additional announcements.

VI. Schedule of Upcoming Meetings—Dates

It was agreed that the next committee meeting would be via conference call on March 10 at 1:00 p.m. Topics will included conference content, amended according to the discussions had at today’s meeting, and a tentative agenda. The next in-person meeting will be on April 20, after the main ACAAA board meeting.

VII. Adjourn

† Tim Ensley moved that the meeting be adjourned; Charlie Morris seconded; the motion passed unanimously.