



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

OPERATIONALIZING ADVOCACY TO ADVANCE YOUR POLICY PRIORITIES

May 24, 2023

Strafford County Public Health Addiction Summit

YMCA ALLIANCE OF NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

AGENDA

- **Introductions**
- **Brief overview of YMCA structure**
- **Review how the NH YMCAs:**
 - **Organize their state advocacy work**
 - **Prioritize policy issues**
 - **Determine rules of engagement**
- **Discussion**
- **Wrap Up**

HELLO!



MEG HELMING
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
YMCA Alliance of Northern
New England



JOHN TILLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
YMCA Camp Coniston

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELVES:

**WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH
ADVOCACY?**

**WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO GET OUT OF
THIS WORKSHOP?**

QUICK REVIEW OF YMCA STRUCTURE

If you've seen one Y, you've seen one Y...

NATIONAL	NEW HAMPSHIRE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 772 independent nonprofits with 2,600 branches• National resource offices in Chicago and DC provide:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Brand oversight & fidelity– Management resources– Grants from national funders– Federal advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 independent nonprofits with 26 branches, 60 program locations<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 4 membership Ys; 4 overnight camps• YMCA Alliance serves ME, NH and VT YMCAs, provides:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Consulting services– Grants from state/regional funders– State advocacy

NH STATE CONTEXT & EVOLUTION OF YMCA COLLABORATION

- Establishing value to individual organizations
- Desire amongst the Ys to work together to develop a structure to support proactive engagement in advocacy at the state level
 - Shared commitment
 - Shared priorities
 - Shared investment
- State government structure: large legislature means high volume of bills introduced each Session
 - Ys were overwhelmed trying to react to legislation

YMCA ALLIANCE OF NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Mission: To support collaboration amongst the Ys and community partners in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont to increase our impact and advocate for positive change in our communities.

- Independent nonprofit (501c3)
 - Board: YMCA CEOs in ME, NH and VT
- Funding:
 - Dues from Ys
 - Grants & state contracts
- Three staff; three contract lobbyists
- Public Policy Committees in each state



YMCA ADVOCACY STRUCTURE

THE PLAYERS

- Public Policy Committee
 - Comprised of: NH YMCA leadership staff and volunteers
 - Sets policy priorities (approved by board), advises lobbyist and Alliance staff on potential implications of legislation
 - Meets bi-monthly during legislative session, as needed in off season
- Alliance staff support
 - Internal:
 - Organizes Ys on policy actions
 - Manages contract lobbyist
 - Facilitates Policy Committee meetings
 - External
 - Represents the Y with statewide partners/allies, legislators and government officials
- Contract lobbyist
 - Eyes and ears on the ground in Concord
 - Tracks specific state legislation
 - Discusses legislation with legislators and government officials on Y's behalf

THE STRATEGY: ISSUE SCREEN

Public Policy Issue Screen: provides criteria to determine the Alliance's level of engagement on specific pieces of legislation, rulemaking, or judicial cases. This document is for *internal* use by the NH YMCA Public Policy Committee.

TIER ONE: ALL HANDS ON DECK

TIER TWO: SUPPORT & COLLABORATE

TIER THREE: MONITOR

THE STRATEGY: PRIORITIES

Advocacy Priorities document: highlights the issues identified by the NH YMCAs as pressing needs in our communities on which the NH YMCAs *collectively* can or do make a positive impact. The Alliance is invested in policy decisions related to these issues. Strategies for advocating on these issues may vary depending on Alliance capacity, local Y capacity, community need, and other environmental factors. This document may be used to help evaluate coalition/partnership opportunities, guide pursuit of funding opportunities (including private or government funding), and/or determine engagement on specific pieces of legislation. This document is for external use to communicate and advance Alliance priorities with community and/or government partners.

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

- Align with three YMCA impact areas: Youth Development; Healthy Living; Social Responsibility
- For example:

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We believe that all kids deserve the opportunity to thrive, and that investing in our youngest citizens sets them up to become happy, healthy, and engaged adults.

PRIORITIES:

- Partnering with the State and the business community to increase the availability of childcare to support working families and our economy.
- Addressing the childcare workforce shortage by advocating for increased funding to support compensation and career pathways for those entering and advancing in the field.
- Expanding programs that address the achievement gap and set kids up to succeed, including pre-kindergarten, resident camping, school readiness, and summer learning initiatives.
- Addressing the leading cause of unintentional death for children in New Hampshire by providing water safety education programs for youth.

SO WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

- Early fall: Policy Committee updates advocacy priorities
- November:
 - Advocacy priorities approved by full Board
 - Policy Committee meets shortly after election to discuss makeup of legislature and anticipated dynamics
- January: Policy Committee starts meeting every two weeks while legislature is in session to review/act on legislation
- March/April: YMCA legislative luncheon in Concord
- Summer: Elected/public official visits to Ys



THIS WORK IS NOT DONE IN A VACUUM...

- Social, cultural, and political context may take priority
 - COVID
 - National movements and events
 - Makeup of state legislature and Governor's Council
- No one can do this alone: the importance of leveraging partnerships and coalitions to make resources go further and advance shared priorities
- Every organization, including the Y, has their own local community, staff, and board demographics to consider. This could mean:
 - Difference in top priorities
 - Difference in opinion on position a coalition should take
 - Difference in comfort levels engaging on certain issues

DISCUSSION:

HOW CAN THIS METHODOLOGY BE APPLIED TO YOUR WORK?

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NEED?

WRAP UP

- Questions?
- Contact us!
 - Meg: Meg.Helming@nneymcas.org
 - John: johntilley@coniston.org





THANK YOU