

Meeting Summary
Poverty Taskforce Post-Legislative Session Meeting
April 19, 2011
10am
Arkansas Studies Institute, Room 124

Participants:

Patty Barker, Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP); Shannon Butler, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF); Steve Copley, Arkansas Interfaith Alliance; Bernadette Devone, APPP; Rich Huddleston, AACF; Jajuan Johnson, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF); Brett Kincaid, AACF; Susanna O'Daniel, AACF; Tara Manthey, AACF; Regan Gruber Moffitt, WRF; Rhonda Sanders, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance.

Welcome/Purpose:

Ms. Moffitt welcomed the participants and briefly discussed the meeting agenda. She then encouraged participants to offer reflections on the 2011 Arkansas Legislative Session and any progress made on the Poverty Taskforce recommendations. Further, acknowledging that the "official" charge of the Poverty Taskforce was completed prior to the 2011 Legislative Session, she encouraged participants to talk about how the Poverty Taskforce will continue the work collectively and individually to tackle poverty issues in Arkansas.

Discussion:

The participants then discussed the 2011 Legislative Session and the future of the Poverty Taskforce.

2011 Legislative Session

In assessing the Legislative Session, participants agreed that the Session was characterized by compromise. Nonetheless, a number of Poverty Taskforce recommendations were addressed with bills during the Session and a number were adopted. At least ten laws were adopted that address the recommendations in the Poverty Taskforce report. Some examples include: Act 736 which fixes the low-income tax threshold problem and provides relief for single parents with two or more children; Act 1220 regarding public school categorical funds; Act 570 implementing prison reform; and Act 755 reducing the grocery tax.

Future of the Poverty Taskforce

Participants reflected on the increased need for coalition work and agreed that the Taskforce should continue on in some form to push forward on the goal of reducing poverty in the state. The consensus was that the Taskforce would need to narrow its focus to a few key areas in order to be effective. A poverty alliance may be too big, but participants noted that with fairly narrow key areas, it may be possible to bring partners to the table and direct energy in such a way that two to three key initiatives

could be accomplished. Ms. Devone urged the group to keep the focus on the broader goal of cutting poverty in half by 2025 and to select the key areas of work in such a way that the bigger goal will be accomplished.

Next Steps:

The participants determined that the following were next steps:

- Press Event/Celebration of Accomplishments
 - The participants agreed that a press event should be held to celebrate the accomplishments of the Taskforce and the progress made in adopting policies to reduce poverty in the state. The press event will be held in May and will be separate from the post-legislative events being held by AACF and APPP.

- Outreach with Outcomes
 - As the co-chair of the Poverty Taskforce, Mr. Huddleston will draft a letter in conjunction with Senator Elliot outlining the progress made with the Poverty Taskforce report during the legislative session. This letter can be adapted and sent to several audiences:
 - State legislators
 - Participants in Town Hall Meetings and Focus Groups
 - May consider bringing the Press Event/Celebration of Accomplishments to Cities where Town Hall meetings were held

- Future of Poverty Taskforce
 - A group (3-5 people) will meet to come up with recommendations/next steps which will be shared with the Taskforce. Ms. Moffitt will help organize.
 - A retreat will be planned for early summer to discuss the recommendations of the small group.