

Empowering Grassroots Advocates in Aging Services

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This project aims to offer opportunities for more member engagement and participation in advocacy at the local, state, and federal level. It will also aim to solve a shrinking membership base and increase our legislative influence with knowledgeable experts in the field being the trusted person for their government delegates. The project will continue to grow and change over time based on the needs of the membership and is not a one-time solution, but something that will have to be continuously monitored, so engagement does not again become stagnant. The more engagement we have from members, the stronger our voice becomes fulfilling our vision of being “the recognized leader, trusted voice, and knowledgeable resource for aging services in Kansas.”

The relationships developed as part of my project helped to recognize there is no silver bullet to membership engagement in grassroots advocacy. It must be a multi-faceted approach with various opportunities that allows individuals across the membership to decide where they best fit. Some items include:

- combining efforts with other trade associations where possible;
- inviting targeted members to testify during legislative session;
- increasing access to resources and information for members through the LeadingAge Kansas website and social media;
- engaging members through more opportunities such as a policy advisory committee; and
- designing a grassroots advocacy bootcamp for interested members and outside individuals close to aging services to participate in.

The turning point for me throughout this process was realizing we do have a membership that is willing to engage and participate in legislative or government matters. They just need the tools or resources to understand what is expected and how to convey their story in a way that will resonate with government officials.