

# So, You Say You Want a Statewide Presence

*Here are the questions you need to ask yourself.*

BY BEN TANZER

**W**ould you like to establish a statewide presence for your organization? If so, how do you get started? To begin, ask yourself the following questions:

## What kind of presence do you want?

First, picture what you want your statewide presence to look like. The answer may be that having any kind of presence is enough. If so, you may simply want to hold a state conference, run a public awareness campaign, give training throughout the state, or develop satellite offices in a variety of locations.

But perhaps you want something more. Maybe you want to develop affiliate organizations to serve as the voice for a certain philosophy or type of programming. An example is Prevent Child Abuse America's (PCA America's) national network of 38 statewide chapters (two in Alaska) and one in the District of Columbia. About half these chapters seek out affiliates (pre-existing nonprofit organizations) or establish local councils (collaboratives made up of separate nonprofit organizations, volunteer citizens, or professionals). All these affiliates and local councils are focused on child abuse prevention at the community level and have a demonstrated relationship with the state chapter.

## How formal a relationship do you want?

If you decide to set up affiliates or local councils (hereafter referred to as affiliates unless otherwise specified), you can do so in an informal or formal way. The relationship you choose will dictate

the types of services you will provide to your affiliates.

If you want an **informal relationship** with your affiliates, here's what you need to do:

- **Create** a written agreement. Spell out what the affiliates will do (adopt a mission consistent with the chapter, implement various programs, identify themselves as affiliates on written materials, and so on) and how the chapter will support the affiliates (offer reduced conference fees, training opportunities, technical assistance, and the like).

- **Meet regularly** with affiliates and gain their input. Bring affiliates together to discuss common issues, either by conference call, at regular meetings, or at statewide conferences.

- **Ask affiliates to pay dues** to the chapter. You may charge a standard fee or base the amount on the affiliate's budget size. Annual dues for affiliates of PCA America's state chapters range from \$50 to \$350.

- **Offer** technical assistance—such as funding opportunities, fundraising efforts, advocacy information, educational materials, and media assistance—to your affiliates.

- **Furnish pass-through funds** to affiliates. Your chapter office can serve as a conduit for state or federal funds.

PCA Alabama is one of four PCA America chapters that has an informal relationship with its affiliates. PCA Alabama has a written agreement with its five affiliates, who in turn pay dues, meet quarterly, and receive \$10,000 per year in pass-through funding from the chapter. The chapter also provides technical assistance, including educational, fund-

raising, and communications assistance, to its affiliates.

If you want a **formal relationship** with your affiliates, you need to follow the suggestions above and, in addition:

- **Provide** dedicated staff—chapter staff whose responsibilities include the nurturing of affiliates.

- **Develop** how-to manuals explaining how organizations become affiliates and fulfill their responsibilities. These manuals might explain, for example, how to organize volunteers, support groups, or public awareness efforts.

- **Help affiliates** evaluate their strengths. For example, you might provide a credentialing process or a self-assessment tool for affiliates. Follow up with regular site visits to affiliates, and help them develop action plans to support their growth.

PCA Georgia is an example of a chapter that has a formal relationship with its affiliates. PCA Georgia has an annual meeting, a manual, annual dues, a credentialing process, regional offices, and dedicated staff at three levels: (1) regional program specialists, (2) administrative assistants, who support the regional program specialists as needed, and (3) a council development director.

## How much do you want to nurture your affiliates?

This is an important question because it goes to the heart of how you plan to support your affiliates' growth. It also forces you to decide whether you need dedicated staff to work with your affiliates. The answer to this question will go a long way in determining how formal you want your relationship with your affiliates to be.

## How much will you direct your affiliates' growth?

What role do you want to play in controlling the appearance and development of your affiliates? It may be that a written agreement or "how-to" manual will suffice. Or you may want to go a step further and implement a credentialing process. Again, your answer to this question will help you decide whether you want a formal or informal relationship with your affiliates.

## Are you ready to get started?

Before you set up an affiliate system, prepare for the challenges ahead. Here is advice gleaned from PCA America's experience:

- **Gather** your resources. You will need time, staff, and money to create a

statewide presence. It is better to delay implementation than to begin before you have all your resources in place.

- **Be prepared** for a long process. It takes a great deal of time to build trust between the chapter and the affiliates—and such trust is crucial to success.

- **Identify criteria** for affiliate membership on the front end. Provide technical assistance to help affiliates meet these criteria.

- **Aim for a presence** in every county in your state.

- **Develop** some kind of direct service or community event. Such hands-on activities are essential for affiliates to stay connected to your organization.

- **Assume** that affiliates are "owned" by the community.

- **Place special effort** on obtaining funding and freeing up staff to support affiliate growth.

- **Foster opportunities** for peer support, monitoring, networking, and sharing good ideas.

- **Do all you can** to maintain enthusiasm and morale.

- **Celebrate** your network's success with annual awards and recognition. ■

### Resources

Conroy, Charles P., "Staying Healthy after Expansion," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 15, No. 3.

Gibelman, Margaret, "Seven Steps to Forming New Chapters," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 14, No. 6.

Muehrcke, Jill, ed., *Management and Planning, Leadership Series*.

These publications are available from the Society's Resource Center, [www.snpo.org](http://www.snpo.org)

*Ben Tanzer (21 W. Goethe, #4G, Chicago, Illinois 60610, [bendebyles@rcn.com](mailto:bendebyles@rcn.com)) is a social worker and writer who works at Prevent Child Abuse America as a senior chapter associate.*

## THE CONSERVATION COMPANY

is now



**new name, new web site address  
same outstanding quality, innovative thinking**

The Conservation Company – a management consulting firm serving nonprofit organizations, philanthropies and corporate citizenship programs – has changed its name to **TCC Group**.

Founded 25 years ago, we have grown tremendously and now offer a full range of management consulting, organizational and program planning, and evaluation services that benefit our clients. Our new name, **TCC Group**, reflects our legacy and our commitment to first-rate, results-oriented service. Our growing and diverse team of professionals has in-depth, hands-on experience, and is backed by a network of affiliates in the U.S. and abroad.

To learn how TCC Group can help you develop strategies to achieve social impact, visit our new web site address, [www.tccgrp.com](http://www.tccgrp.com), or give us a call at 888-222-2283.

management consulting ■ organizational and program planning ■ evaluation  
nonprofit organizations ■ philanthropies ■ corporate citizenship programs