

Nebraska Palliative Care & Quality of Life Advisory Council

STRATEGIC PLAN

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PREPARED BY:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nebraska Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council (the Council), signed into law by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts in 2017, was established to provide best practices and recommendations to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The nine-member council includes practitioners and experienced palliative care professionals from multiple disciplines, including nurses, social workers, and physicians.

In the fall of 2023, in an effort to meet the increasing demands for best practices and education regarding quality of life treatment and palliative care across the state of Nebraska, the Council partnered with the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Public Administration to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. Elements of the plan include a new mission statement, stakeholder analysis, environmental scan, strategic issues analysis, and strategy formulation. Graduate students from the Planning & Evaluation class, under the supervision and guidance of experienced faculty member Dr. Tara Kolar Bryan, were responsible for conducting the research, developing data collection methods, and developing the final analysis.

MISSION STATEMENT

Students first met with a representative of the Council, 2023 chairperson Stacie Sinclair, to learn about the background and purpose of the Council, and to discuss the Council's goals for the strategic planning project. One of the first elements the student's worked on was the development of a mission statement; this was something the Council did not have prior to the beginning of the project. After a brainstorming session which took into consideration the Council's legislative mandate and their stated goals, the following mission statement emerged:

To improve the quality of life for Nebraskans living with serious illness through education and advocacy.

METHODS

A comprehensive strategic plan contains four critical elements, completed in succession; stakeholder analysis, environmental scan, strategic issues analysis, and strategy formulation. To facilitate efficient and effective work, the class was divided into four teams; each team would work collaboratively to address their planning segment while consulting and working closely with the other groups to ensure timely progress and detailed analysis. Students met as a class on a weekly basis to learn about the theory and application of the strategic planning process, and also met within groups to discuss, plan, and execute their research and analysis. Upon completion of the strategy formulation phase, the students gave a presentation to members and friends of the Council to share their findings.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

For strategic planning to be successful, organizations must first have a thorough and complete understanding of the key stakeholders that impact their current and future work. The purpose of a stakeholder analysis is to help the Council decide whose support or information will be necessary

to insure successful implementation of the strategic plan (Bryson, p. 102). Stakeholders, whether individuals or groups, may have direct or indirect impacts on the organization; they may be found within, including board members, employees, or governing officers, or externally to the group, such as in sister organizations, public officials, or other interested parties.

Using an existing list of stakeholders provided by the Council, the Stakeholder Analysis group researched additional stakeholders among community and state organizations adjacent to or with an interest in palliative care; the group identified multiple stakeholders that could be useful to the Council, and used a Power vs. Interest grid to help the Council determine where their resources will be most useful in leveraging stakeholders to further the Council's mission.

The resulting analysis indicates that the Council has a strong stakeholder group with high power and high interest, and a substantial pool of highly interested organizations that could be leveraged into helpful partners and advocates to help the Council in achieving their strategic goals.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Using the information and recommendations from the stakeholder analysis, the Environmental Scan team moved forward with the next crucial element of the strategic plan by conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This process looks at the organization to determine existing strengths and weaknesses internally, and to consider what external opportunities and threats exist in the organization's environment. The Environmental Scan group utilized in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key individuals and also developed and administered a multi-question survey to a wide range of stakeholders to gather data and stakeholder perspectives on critical issues.

After analyzing the data, the team determined that the Council's strengths lie in its high levels of expertise and diversity within council members, and an overwhelming passion for advancing palliative care issues. Weaknesses were identified as resource limitations, staffing/volunteer shortages, and lack of strategic direction, among others. Looking outside of Council operations, the team discovered that opportunities to strengthen strategic relationships, leverage ongoing community-based care expansion efforts, and develop policy are abundant. Finally, external threats to the Council include practitioner shortages, legislative challenges, and a general misunderstanding of what palliative care means.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Building upon the results of the SWOT and environmental scan, the Strategic Issues group began their analysis. Strategic issues are the foundations of an organization's long term success or failure. Bryson states that the purpose of identifying strategic issues is to "identify the

fundamental policy questions - *the strategic issue agenda* - facing the organization.” (Bryson, 2011. pg. 184) The Strategic Issues team worked collaboratively to gain an understanding of what those fundamental policy questions are facing the Council. Using a direct approach, the team reviewed the Council’s legislative mandate and information from Chairperson Sinclair’s presentation, along with data gathered from the stakeholder analysis and environmental scan stages in order to identify the strategic issues and understand what questions need to be asked in support of the growth of palliative care. Based on their analysis, the group synthesized three primary questions:

1. What resources does the Council need to be effective and sustainable?
2. How can the Council strengthen its relationships with stakeholders to increase awareness and advance palliative care?
3. How can the Council build the capacity of the network of community advocates for palliative care?

These questions guided the next, and final, step in the strategic plan involving strategy formulation.

STRATEGY FORMULATION

The final step in the strategic planning process is to formulate a strategy for future improvement based on the identified strategic issues. The Strategy Formulation group brainstormed together and as a class to devise a series of goals and objectives addressing the three critical issues outlined above. These strategies are presented according to a five-year implementation timeline, starting with near-term goals that are ideally undertaken within one year of this plan’s implementation, and ending with long-term goals that look at strategies focused on years three to five.

The near-term strategies focus on the organization of resources to be sustainable and effective, while also touching on the issue of strengthening relationships with stakeholders and increasing their awareness of palliative care, the Council, and its mission.

- Improve visibility and relationships within the legislature and government agencies through the appointment of a government-affair focused representative.
- Improve resource organization and division of labor through the establishment of working groups related to relevant Council activities and action areas.
- Increase the Council’s digital engagement and outreach capacity through the creation and management of tools such as social media and e-mailed newsletters.
- Increase the Council’s outreach with stakeholders by conducting in-person events such as site visits, a “Day at the Capitol”, and a publicity tour.

- Improve existing relationships and develop new relationships that would allow for increased advocacy for the Council as well as opportunities for funding through partner organizations.

The following mid-term strategy recommendations are primarily focused on building independence for the Council while continuing the foundational work of building relationships with stakeholders.

- Establish a role for a government affairs focused volunteer or intern who would supplement the work and capacity of the previously determined government affairs focused Councilmember.
- Leverage working groups, volunteers, and partnerships to establish a flow of funds through grants and fundraising opportunities to support Council activities.
- Utilize strengthened stakeholder relationships to amend legislation with the goal of expanding Council eligibility and to allow for paid Council positions.

Lastly, the long-term strategies the group recommends will address the issue of building capacity for advocacy and sustaining a statewide network. These strategies depend largely on the success of earlier strategies and aim to shape the Council and its programs into a more institutionalized entity capable of building a network of informed and qualified palliative care providers, patients, and advocates.

- Create a Nebraska State Palliative Care Certification Program which includes indications of quality standards and forms a network of similar organizations with common goals.
- Establish a paid staff position for the Council that can serve a supporting role for the certification program, grant writing and fundraising, and other applicable Council action areas.

CONCLUSION

Advancing palliative care and quality of life issues is a critical mission, and the Nebraska Palliative Care & Quality of Life Advisory Council is poised to impact the lives of countless Nebraskans in need of service. Moving forward with a solid, comprehensive strategic plan will give the Council the opportunity to plan for future growth, advocate for palliative care initiatives, and share best practices with communities throughout the state.