

USING THE COMPOSITE LOGIC MODEL To Articulate an Advocacy Strategy or Theory of Change

The composite logic model can be used to help advocates, funders, and evaluators articulate an advocacy or policy change strategy or theory of change. The eight questions below guide users on how to use the model for that purpose. [Refer also to the accompanying PowerPoint that shows visually how to use the composite model to respond to these questions within the context of a hypothetical advocacy strategy.]

❶ What is the advocacy or policy change goal?

Start by defining what, in the end, the advocacy strategy is trying to achieve. For many strategies, the goal(s) will be found in the model's last two columns—*policy goals* and *impacts* (pick boxes in each column if relevant). However, some strategies might aim for goals in the *interim outcomes* column, (e.g., the end goal is increasing the awareness or salience of a policy issue or developing a network of new advocates that can be called on to advocate when a policy window opens).

When considering this question, think about where the issue currently stands in the policy process. If it is early on, the goal may be raising awareness of the problem that needs to be addressed (an interim outcome on the model). Alternatively, the problem may already be known and the goal is developing a solution and getting that solution adopted as policy. Or, the policy may already exist and the goal is making sure it is implemented correctly and is having its intended impact.

❷ Who is the audience?

The model's bottom right corner offers potential *audiences*. Select the audience(s) that the strategy needs to reach to achieve its goal(s). Think both about who needs to be part of the advocacy effort and which decision makers need to be convinced in order to achieve the strategy's goal. Most strategies will target multiple audiences.

❸ What will it take to convince or move the audience?

Consider the *inputs*, *activities*, and *interim outcomes* in the composite logic model. What do those involved in the advocacy or policy change effort need to do to move the strategy's audience and achieve its goal? Select components in each column to illustrate how the strategy will achieve change. In the *inputs* column, select the steps or components that are necessary to prepare for the strategy's implementation. In the *activities* column, select the components involved in the strategy's implementation. In the *interim outcomes* category, select the outcomes that are necessary to achieve before the end goal can be accomplished. Note that

there may be an order or sequence to the interim outcomes (e.g., it may be necessary to get new advocates involved in the effort and acting as spokespersons before sufficient media coverage can be achieved).

4 What contextual factors might affect the strategy's success?

Think about the factors that are not controllable but that may impact the strategy's success and therefore are important to keep in mind. The model's bottom left corner offers potential contextual factors.

5 Where doesn't the strategy need to focus?

Consider whether there are *inputs*, *activities*, or *outcomes* on the model that are already in place and either don't have to be built (but can be leveraged), or are not relevant to the strategy. Keep in mind that some model components that are not selected may still be relevant (e.g., the strategy may result in some unanticipated outcomes). Identify components that are known to exist already or that definitely will not be a strategy focus. For example, among the interim outcomes, awareness about an issue or problem may already be high and therefore not a focus; the challenge instead will be increasing the audience's perception of its salience.

6 What will strategy collaborators do?

One advantage of the composite logic model is that it identifies a full range of possible advocacy activities and outcomes. As a result, it can be used to identify where other organizations or collaborators are positioned and how they complement the strategy. Identifying collaborators' positioning puts the strategy in context and shows where and how it will add value. It also illustrates potential points of synergy and collaboration that might not already exist.

7 What will the opposition or competition do?

Think about how the opposition is positioned. Consider whether counteractions are necessary, particularly where there is activity or outcome overlap. For example, if the opposition has a media strategy, consider potential audience reactions to competing messages and how to frame messages accordingly.

8 Is there a contingency plan?

If relevant, identify alternative paths to the end goal if the current strategy is not successful. Consider which components in the model will signal if the strategy is not working. For example, if the strategy is not successful in generating policymaker champions using one-on-one briefings with those policymakers, it may be necessary to build a larger cadre of advocates at the local level who will demonstrate demand and make a grassroots case for change.

USING THE COMPOSITE LOGIC MODEL To Guide Evaluation Decisions

The composite logic model can be used to guide decisions about the design of an advocacy and policy change evaluation. The five questions that follow facilitate strategic choices about the evaluation's focus. [*Refer also to the accompanying PowerPoint that shows visually how to use the composite logic model to respond to these questions within the context of a hypothetical advocacy strategy.*]

❶ Which components are relevant to the advocacy strategy?

Begin by selecting the components in the composite logic model that are relevant to the advocacy and policy change strategy being evaluated. Literally trace “a pathway” through the logic model, selecting relevant *inputs*, *activities*, *interim outcomes*, *policy goals*, and *impacts*. Select also the strategy's *audiences* and *contextual factors* that might impact the strategy.

While the evaluation could focus on all of the components in the composite logic model that are connected to the advocacy and policy change strategy, various factors—including the evaluation's users and how they intend to use it, evaluation timeframe, and available evaluation resources—may call for a strategic narrowing of the evaluation's focus. The remaining questions concentrate on how to use the composite logic model to help make those decisions.

❷ Given the evaluation's intended users and use, which outcomes are priorities?

Consider the evaluation's primary users, what they want or need to know about the strategy's progress or success, and how they will use that information. Given these decisions, are some logic model components more important to assess than others? For example, if the primary evaluation user is the organization leading the advocacy effort, and that organization wants to use the evaluation to get real-time data that will suggest opportunities for continuous strategy improvement, then the evaluation may want to focus on assessing the activities and interim outcomes that come earlier in the policy change process. A funder, on the other hand, may be more interested in learning about the strategy's ultimate success in achieving its policy outcome(s) (e.g., moving the issue higher on the policy agenda or ensuring that a policy is properly implemented).

③ **Are there outcomes the strategy should not be directly accountable for?**
For some advocacy and policy change efforts, certain outcomes or impacts related to the advocacy or policy change strategy may be so long-term or hinge on so many external or contextual factors that it may be appropriate to focus the evaluation less on them and more on the shorter-term or interim outcomes that are connected directly to the advocacy effort. Capturing the organization's unique contribution to the outcomes it is linked closest to may be more meaningful than capturing outcomes that many organizations or other factors will affect (and will help to show how the advocacy effort may have contributed to those other outcomes). Outcomes or impacts that are not prioritized will still be relevant as they will remain part of the strategy; they simply will not be the evaluation's main focus.

④ **Given the evaluation timeframe, which outcomes are achievable?**
Often, advocacy or policy change strategies are long-term endeavors with evaluations that run on shorter timeframes than the strategies themselves. For example, an organization with a ten-year advocacy strategy might have a three-year evaluation because the strategy's funder would like to make decisions about whether to continue funding after several years, or because the organization conducting the advocacy wants to understand early on whether it is gaining traction and momentum on the way to its policy goal. Consider what outcomes among those selected in the composite logic model are realistic to expect within the evaluation's timeframe.

⑤ **Given the evaluation resources available, which outcomes are best pursued?**
Rarely are enough evaluation resources available to collect data on every relevant component in the composite logic model. Think about available evaluation resources in terms of both staffing and dollars. If limited resources are available, where might they be most strategically focused? Where are learning needs or accountability demands the greatest?

Consider also whether the evaluation will be internal or external. Some outcomes may be well-suited for internal monitoring and tracking rather than external evaluation. Other outcomes may be better suited to the expertise or objective perspective that an external evaluator can bring (e.g., assessing advocates' influence on key audiences in the policy process (such as policymakers, the media, the business community, or voters)).