Evaluating Public Policy Grantmaking: A Resource for Funders

Prepared for Northern California Grantmakers by

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Executive Summary

Evaluating public policy grantmaking requires an approach distinct from more traditional social service program evaluations. Because policymaking is a slow process influenced by a myriad of factors, it is difficult to determine what effect any particular funder or grantee may have had on the policy outcome. However, there are a number of ways that grantmakers can discern whether efforts are on the right track towards achieving policy objectives. By identifying the incremental steps that lead to policy change, funders can determine appropriate performance measures. Factors such as a growth in civic participation, changes in public perceptions, stronger community networks, increased policymaker support, and improved organizational capacity are all necessary to create policy change, and can be measured quantitatively and/or qualitatively. These factors are critical not only to a particular policy change, but also to ensuring that policy victories are maintained and expanded upon for lasting social change. Funders must bear in mind that while a particular policy objective may not have been achieved, grantmaker support may have laid the groundwork for future victories. Finally, evaluations which assess the means of achieving policy change reflect a more accurate picture of grantee and grantor performance than those which merely rely on policy outcomes.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In 1993, The California Wellness Foundation initiated its Violence Prevention Initiative, a 5-year, $35 million grantmaking program. The VPI combines policy advocacy, community action, leadership development, public education, and research to achieve its goal of reducing violence against youth. The policy goals included shifting society's definition of youth violence from a law-enforcement perspective to a public health perspective; advocating for policies that reduce access to alcohol and other drugs that contribute to youth violence, and; advocating for policies that reduce access to firearms. Several other foundations have contributed to the VPI and in 1998 it was extended another five years, for a total investment of $60 million by TCWF.[1]

For over thirty years the John M. Olin Foundation has attempted to move a conservative agenda by granting millions of dollars to think tanks and universities. By funding research projects, endowing chairs and fellowships, building research centers, and financing publications, the foundation aims to support the development of conservative ideas and values.[2]

In 2001, Common Counsel Foundation gave $400 to LIFEtime, an Oakland-based organization working on welfare reform. The grant helped the organization send several "welfare moms" to Washington D.C. to participate in a march and policy briefing with hundreds of other welfare recipients. The marchers met with the lead writer of the welfare reauthorization bill as he was getting a soda from a vending machine and convinced him to spend two days "walking in the shoes" of welfare recipients.[3]

The above examples reflect the broad array of resources and activities funders can use to shape public policy. While the funders' objectives vary greatly, the examples highlight assessment complexities shared by all public policy grantmakers: namely, how can funders know if their efforts are paying off when policy change is a long-term process with many moving parts? How can The California Wellness Foundation determine what impact its $60 million had on public perceptions and public policy changes? How can the Olin Foundation be sure that its efforts to strengthen conservative values are actually informing policy debates at the federal level? How can Common Counsel possibly know if its $400 grant made any impact on welfare legislation?

Evaluation of public policy is an emerging field, and even the most experienced grantmakers are struggling to figure out how it can most effectively be done. Hence, this resource does not attempt to present any "right answers," nor is it a "how to" guide. The purpose of this resource is to provide case studies of different approaches to evaluating public policy, analyze the potential strengths and weaknesses of these different approaches, and raise questions to be considered when designing an evaluation.[4] While it provides some lessons learned from funders supporting public policy, it recognizes that these are very context dependent. Funders must consider their own

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[1] Lawrence Wallack, "The California Violence Prevention Initiative: Advancing Policy to Ban Saturday Night Specials." Health Education and Behavior, 26.6 (December 1999) p. 843.
[2] James Allen Smith, "Foundations and Public Policymaking: A Historical Perspective." Research Report 11, The Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, University of Southern California (May 2002) p. 26.
[3] Elizabeth Wilcox, "How Small Family Foundation Investments Can Shape Policy Reform." Address at the Council on Foundations Family Foundations Conference, San Jose, California, 26 Feb. 2003.
[4] More than thirty grantmakers, grantseekers, professional evaluators, and other experts were interviewed for this report. Interviewees were selected to represent a range of organizational size and structure, issue areas, strategies for funding or engaging in policy advocacy, and evaluation approaches. A list of all participants can be found in Appendix A.

circumstances, objectives, and evaluation needs when determining the appropriate form of evaluation.

This resource is intended for funders currently engaged in policy work and those who are interested but not yet involved. It is for both staff and board members, and for those newer to grantmaking as well as seasoned veterans. It includes examples from foundations large and small, public and private, California and national. It assumes some understanding of philanthropic program evaluation, but is not designed for seasoned evaluators (though they may find it useful).

2. The Philanthropic Role in Shaping Policy Change

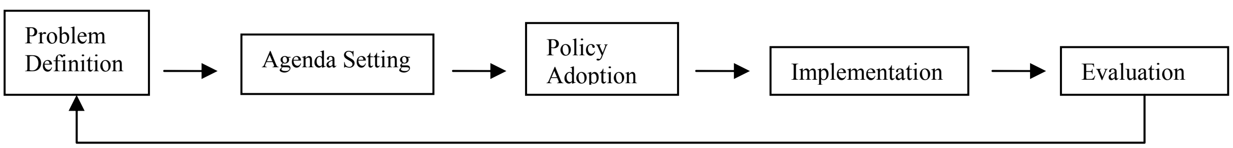
In order to understand how to evaluate public policy it is important to first understand how the policymaking process works, how advocates influence public policy, and what role funders can play in the process.

The Policy Process

Evaluation of public policy must be based on an understanding of how public policy is formed and how advocacy efforts can affect it. Typically, "public policy" brings to mind state or federal legislation—congressional hearings, lobbying, the initiative process. But public policy is far broader than bills and ballot initiatives. For the purposes of this report, public policy includes:

- Legislative actions: Decisions made by local, state, and federal elected officials, such as the passage of bills, executive orders and budget allocations.
- Initiative actions: Decisions made directly by voters, such as ballot initiatives and referendums.
- Administrative actions: Decisions made by local, state or federal agencies about how policies are implemented. Includes regulations, agency practices, and policy enforcement.
- Court rulings: Legal actions which set precedents and interpret existing laws.

Policy analysts often characterize policy development as a process involving five stages:[5]



- Problem definition: Examines the nature of a problem and explores possible solutions. The "problem" may be specific, such as an increase in teen pregnancy, or it may be broad, such as homelessness or discrimination. Efforts to shape this stage of the process usually involve research and analysis.
- Agenda setting: Once a problem has been defined and a feasible solution identified, it must get on public's agenda. Media, organizing, and other advocacy efforts are used to raise the profile of the issue and influence decision-makers.
- Policy adoption: This is the stage most often associated with policymaking, when policymakers consider policy options, discuss them, and adopt or amend policy.
- Implementation: Once a new policy has been adopted, it must be implemented by people on the ground, such as county agency administrators, police, and school board members. Though implementation is often ignored in discussions of policymaking, the transformation of policies into action is critical to the policy formation process.
- Evaluation: Once a new policy is adopted and implemented, it is important to know how well it is working. Evaluation of the policy can be used to assess how effectively it achieves intended

[5] James M. Ferris and Michael Mintrom, "Foundations and Public Policymaking: A Conceptual Framework." Research Report 10, The Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, University of Southern California (May 2002) p. 10.

outcomes, as well as any unintended outcomes it may have. The findings from evaluations often feed into new problem definition efforts, thus beginning the process over again.

The above model stresses that policy formation is not limited to policy adoption, but happens long before and after policy passage. Thus, for the purposes of this report, "policymaking" refers to the entire policy process; "policymakers" include not only legislators but also administrators, judicial decision-makers, and the voting public.

The limitation of this model is that it assumes an orderly, linear path to policy change. In reality, most policymaking happens in an uneven, disorderly fashion. Problems are redefined as they move up the public agenda. Policies are redesigned during implementation as new solutions emerge. External events far beyond any individual or organization's control can open—or close—a window of opportunity. Nonetheless, funders must consider where a policy is in its developmental lifecycle when evaluating public policy, and this model provides a helpful tool to do that.

Advocacy

Just as public policy is often understood as legislative action, advocacy is frequently understood as lobbying. For the purposes of this report, we define advocacy more broadly: "The process by which individuals and organizations attempt to influence public policy decisions."[6] Advocacy encompasses a range of activities, including:

- Community Organizing: Community organizing shapes public policy by encouraging civic participation and empowering community members to create change on issues impacting their lives.
- Directly Influencing Policymakers: Advocates influence policymakers through formal lobbying, mass mobilizations, citizen petitions, testimonies, reports, and conferences.[7] Advocates can also influence policymakers by providing valuable information about a policy or issue.
- Litigation: Advocates can engage in legal proceedings to change how law is interpreted and applied.
- Media: Advocates can influence public policy by increasing the quantity and quality of media coverage of an issue.
- Public/Private Partnerships: Advocates can partner with other public and private entities to increase their policy influence. The partnerships allow private entities to work in concert with public agencies to advance a common agenda.
- Research and analysis: Advocates use research and analysis to define problems and develop solutions, assess how well policies are working, and develop specific policy options.
- Coalition Building: Coalition building involves forming and maintaining networks of stakeholders around broad issues or specific policies. These collaborations can exert more influence in the policy arena than individual stakeholders could alone.

Advocacy activities can be pursued by a number of different players. For the purposes of this report, "advocates" are defined as people or organizations attempting to influence policy decisions and can include: professional/single-issue advocacy organizations, social service providers,

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[6] United States Agency for International Development, Office on Bureaucracy and Governance, Supporting Civic Advocacy: Strategic Approaches for Donor-Supported Civic Advocacy Programs, Draft Version (Dec. 2001) p. 21.
[7] See Alliance for Justice for more info on limitations to philanthropic lobbying and advocacy. http://www.afj.org.

professional associations, policymakers, legal organizations, foundations, and grassroots organizations. Each of these entities can participate in any of the above activities, though some are more likely to participate in some activities than others.

The above advocacy activities are rarely undertaken alone; most efforts combine multiple activities and multiple actors. It can be helpful to think of advocacy strategies as ranging on a spectrum from single-issue advocacy to advocacy writ large. **Single-issue advocacy** strategies seek to influence a specific issue and achieve a concrete result in a limited period of time. Examples include the adoption or repeal of a particular law, inclusion or exclusion of specific provisions in draft legislation, or a change to a specific regulatory policy. **Advocacy writ large** strategies focus on broader social change. By undertaking efforts to increase civic participation and empowerment, and promote greater government transparency and accountability, advocacy writ large aims to create long-term democratic reforms and strengthen society. Such strategies tend to have less clearly defined results or timelines than single issue advocacy.[8] Very often, single-issue advocacy campaigns occur within broader advocacy efforts; both strategies create and/or strengthen a pluralistic democratic environment, which is the basis of policy change.

Philanthropic Support for Public Policy

The Council of Foundations defines public policy involvement as:

> *Any legally permissible philanthropic activity, including funding and convening, that ultimately seeks to affect or inform the actions of any level of government expressed in laws, administrative practices, regulations or executive or judicial orders.*[9]

Rick Williams of the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation defines public policy grantmaking as: "a combination of granting in any form that has an ultimate purpose of shaping public opinion and public policy."[10] Other activities funders undertake to shape policy include providing technical assistance, conducting research and analysis, and producing educational information based on their knowledge and expertise. They can also use their credibility and connections to convene stakeholders, educate policymakers, and leverage money from other donors. For many funders, policy engagement is a natural extension of their support for services or programs. To increase their influence in the areas in which they are supporting these activities, they add a policy component. For others, policy engagement is their primary grantmaking strategy.

[8] United States Agency for International Development, p. 21.
[9] Council on Foundations, "Report of the Public Policy Task Force for the Council on Foundations." (Dec. 1999) p. 9.
[10] Rick Williams, interview 27 Feb. 2004.

3. Evaluating Public Policy Grantmaking: Six Case Studies

In retrospect, it's easy to look back and see what happened, what worked and what didn't. But how do you know if you're on the right course? What are signs of progress along the way?[11]

The following six cases were selected to represent a range of foundation sizes, programmatic issues, grantmaking strategies, and most importantly, assessment approaches. Some cases focus on the evaluation of specific projects whereas others look at general ongoing evaluation of public policy grantmaking. The common thread linking these diverse examples is the evaluators' recognition that there are many different dimensions of success when it comes to public policy evaluation.

Often, assessments of public policy grantmaking are presented in a cost-benefit framework: a \$20,000 grant which contributed to a \$1 million government allocation for public housing, or \$250,000 spent on media supporting a \$10 million school bond. While these stories of policy victories are encouraging, this pay-off approach ignores the means for achieving such gains. Civic participation, changes in public perceptions, community building, policymaker support, and improved organizational capacity are all necessary to create policy change. Looking only at the policy outcomes and not considering these incremental steps ignores their significance in the policy process. Evaluation measures must recognize that policy change is incremental, with micro-level changes building over time to macro-level changes. As Ruth Holton of the California Wellness Foundation puts it:

> *Change is an incremental process. The first year a bill may not get to the floor, but you had people in to speak with policymakers, and they gained some skills, they got a little smarter. The second year they got it introduced. They moved the agenda, and you can see that. Legislators were talking about it, they're more aware of the issue. The third year it was voted on but failed. Again, there's movement. It may take five to six years, but in the interim there are things to evaluate.*[12]

More importantly, policy outcomes are only one part of a foundation's larger social change strategy; they are the means of achieving goals, not the ends themselves. The "incremental steps" responsible for policy change—increased civic participation, the development of strong leaders, improved policymaker relations—are also critical for achieving broader, long-term goals beyond a particular policy change. Regardless of the policy outcome, advocacy efforts can lay the foundation for future victories and broader systemic change. When evaluating both public policy change and advocacy it is important to recognize the significance of the small victories and how they lead to larger ones. "You need to celebrate the small victories and acknowledge them, because that's the way you get to the big one. You can't leap over these steps."[13]

Change resulting from and/or contributing to advocacy efforts occurs at three levels: institutional, community, and organizational.

- At the **institutional level**, evaluators can look at whether there are changes in policy enactment and implementation. At a broader level, they can assess whether there is been an increase in opportunities for citizen participation in policy decision-making.

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[11] Larry Parachini, interview, 12 Mar. 2004.
[12] Ruth Holton, interview, 10 Mar. 2004.
[13] Holton interview.

- At the **community level**, evaluators can assess how an issue is understood by the public and the public's interest and willingness to act. They can also look at the social capital within communities, such as the quality and quantity of relationships between organizations and individuals, the degree of civic participation, and community members' feelings of empowerment and efficacy.
- At the **organizational level**, evaluators can look at an organization's capacity to shape public policy. This includes their ability to organize and turn out members, collaborate with other organizations, influence policy makers, inform public opinion, and develop sophisticated analysis and campaign strategies. It also includes their ability to recruit and develop strong and committed leaders.

All the grantmakers in the following cases developed evaluation processes which measure these incremental steps towards policy change. But as the cases suggest, there are infinite indicators that can be used to track progress. The challenge for funders and grantees is to become clear on how they see change occurring and to select interim measures which best reflect their theory of change. As Tim Sweeney, Program Officer at the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, said: "The question is not so much about evaluation, it's about how do you seed a movement? In order to evaluate policy grantmaking, you really have to know the answer to that."[14]

It is important to note that throughout this report "evaluation" is used to refer to the assessment of public policy quite generally. It includes both ongoing monitoring and reporting as well as periodic reflective evaluation. Similarly, the term "evaluator" refers to not just professional evaluators but to any foundation staff or even grantee who is involved in the design and execution of the evaluation. The six cases include evaluations which go beyond simple process monitoring—did the grantee do what they said they were going to do? Yet in each case, funders recognize that public policy is far more easily measured by process than outcome. Thus, each case focuses on the different methods and strategies funders use to connect activities to outcomes. Most are not traditional post-hoc evaluations but are ongoing analyses of grantee and funder performance in a dynamic policy environment.

[14] Tim Sweeney, interview, 2 April 2004.

4. The Packard Foundation's Population Program: Using Indicators to Measure Progress

The right indicators can be great tools for evaluating [policy change]…. But it's really important to keep in mind that indicators only make sense in the context of a larger framework.[15]

The Packard Foundation's Population Program has developed an evaluation system which allows it to quantitatively monitor grantee and program progress. This case demonstrates the importance of balancing quantitative with qualitative information in monitoring and evaluating public policy, and the importance of having a strategic framework in place to guide that process.

Profile: The Packard Foundation[16]

Type of foundation: Private
Assets: $6 billion
Average grant size: $270,000
Funding areas: Conservation and Science; Population; Children, Families, and Communities; Arts; Organizational Effectiveness; Philanthropy; Local Communities
Geographic focus: International
Staff: 85

Background

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation has assets of approximately $5.2 billion and makes grants in several areas, including Conservation and Science; Children, Families, and Communities; and Population. The Population Program was developed in 1997 to "slow the rate of growth of the world's population and to expand reproductive health options among the world's poor." Since its inception, it has awarded over $450 million in grants to organizations in the U.S. and around the globe. Within the Population Program there are several program areas, including two--the Mobilization Program and Reproductive Health and Rights—which are focused on advocacy. The Program also has five country-specific programs in developing nations. In addition to supporting service provision and leadership, a significant amount of their grantmaking focuses on advocating for policies to increase funds and access for family planning and reproductive health and to protect reproductive rights.

The Population Program funds a wide assortment of projects across this range of issues. One example was the NARAL Pro-Choice America *Choice for America* media and mobilization Initiative. This ambitious public education initiative combined paid media and grassroots mobilization to position freedom of choice as a mainstream American value, increase the number of Americans who identify as pro-choice, and motivate pro-choice Americans to act on that belief. The evaluation of this initiative included opinion research (polling pre and post to the ads, and in control sites and compared to national data) to better understand the impact of the media campaign and the

[15] Kathy Toner, interview, 16 April 2004.
[16] Packard Foundation, 2003 Annual Report. http://www.packard.org

formation of attitudes on abortion; and quantifying on-the-ground efforts through output indicators, such as number of public events, numbers of people reached, etc.

Approach to Evaluation

The focus of evaluation in the Population Program is three-fold: 1) improve program effectiveness, 2) promote learning; and 3) foster accountability and to communicate results to stakeholders including the Board of Directors. Though they occasionally rely on external evaluators, program staff has the major responsibility for monitoring and evaluation, and one program officer is assigned to oversee evaluation activities within the Population Program.

The Population Program uses a combination of three methods to assess grantee performance. First, the staff conducts site visits to see how well projects are being implemented and whether they are achieving desired objectives. Second, it uses a Grantee Assessment Tool developed in 2003 and tested with grantees. The survey questionnaire contains ten criteria, each of which was rated on a scale of one to five. The ten criteria are: performance, planning, innovation, commitment, collaboration, management, staffing, continuity, administrative support and impact. The tool is designed to track how grantees perceive their own project, and compare it to how program staff and a third party evaluator view the work. Program staff looks for levels of agreement or convergence in the way that staff and grantees view their work, pointing to possible strengths or weaknesses.[17]

The third method of assessment is annual grantee reporting. Grantees are required in their original project proposals to identify their desired outcomes and the key indicators that they intend to use to measure progress towards these outcomes or success in attaining them. In addition to the quantitative information represented in these indicators, grantees also provide qualitative information. Thus, grantee reports have two components: the indicator progress report and the narrative report. The indicator progress report is designed to track progress across the quantitative indicators identified by the grantee in their proposal. In a select number of cases, the Population Program's database allows aggregation of data across grants and track progress at the grantee, initiative, and program level. Staff developed standard indicators from the list of indicators grantees have used to measure project achievements. In addition, grantees are encouraged to use "customized" indicators that are relevant to their desired outcomes and objectives. The list of "standard" indicators serves as a tool for grantee in identifying appropriate indicators.

Table 1 contains a list of the indicators from the Reproductive Rights Program. The indicators are grouped according to the different strategies and objectives of the Foundation's grant-making strategy, and include process, output and outcome measures. This "bottom-up" approach to developing the indicators mentioned above ensured that the list was reflective of what grantees found important to measure in their work, and that measurement was feasible. Grantees are encouraged—where applicable-- to select several indicators from the list that they find relevant to their work and report on these.

[17] Feyistan presentation

Table 1: Reproductive Rights Standardized/Common Indicators by Strategic Emphasis		
A. Increase the capacity of advocates to frame RH/R issues Output: • # of RH/R advocates/policymakers/ volunteers trained by content of training (RH/R issues, communication skills, grassroots organizing, etc.) • # of journalists briefed/trained on RH/R issues • # of communication/media activities undertaken by RH/R advocates, by type of activity • # of media articles produced by journalists who were trained/briefed • # of advocates who demonstrate relevant knowledge of RH/R issues after training • # of trainees who apply new skills to subsequent communication and outreach efforts Outcome: • % of target audience supportive of RH/R issues	B. Build broad-based support for RH/R Process: • # of joint activities conducted by RH/R groups and allies • Inclusion of RH/R in organizational/coalition agenda • # of RH/R community events Output: • Size of membership of RH/R organizations • # of people engaged in RH/R grassroots organizing • # of new alliances between RH/R and non-RH/R groups (defined by endorsements, partnerships, joint events, sharing of resources, etc.) • # of new RH/R leaders who are well connected to the target community • # of policymakers contacted on RH/R issues • # of published articles on RH/R which support pro-choice views	C. Develop effective policies to support RH/R, particularly at the state level Output: • # of policymakers who attend RH/R events • # of educational activities for policymakers and/or opinion leaders • # of communications materials produced, by type of material • # of policymakers who express support for RH/R • # of policymakers and/or staff who seek information and assistance from RH/R groups Outcome: • % of target population with improved access to RH/R services and/or legal abortion

Grantees are also asked to submit a five to ten page narrative report to provide more detailed information on processes, outcomes and changes during the preceding year. The narrative report form asks about changes in the social/political context, organizational changes, and a qualitative assessment of progress towards goals. It also asks about challenges and lessons learned over the course of the previous year.

All the data collected from site visits, grantee reports and grantee assessment are entered in the Strategic Monitoring System (SMS). SMS is a database which allows the Population Program to systemically review information on all grants. They can track indicators over time and compare projects and programs. The SMS is also a grants management tool that allows program officers to gather all data—quantitative and qualitative—on a particular grant or organization in one, central place.

Evaluation Lessons

Combining quantitative and qualitative data strengthens evaluation efforts

Because the size of public policy efforts are important indicators of their political power and are relatively easy to measure, public policy evaluations tend to rely on measures of quantity: the numbers of leaders trained, members at a direct action, reports published, policymakers contacted, coalition members. But while the size of the organization's efforts is important, information about the quantity of activities does not tell the complete story. Evaluators also need to get at the *quality* of the efforts to get a complete sense of grantee performance. For example, the Reproductive Health and Rights Program indicators include measures of both the *quantity* of training—e.g. number of advocates trained—and the *quality* of that training—e.g. number of advocates who demonstrate relevant knowledge of reproductive health and rights issues after training. These measures of quality are more subjective but critical to understanding progress.

Furthermore, while quantifiable indicators certainly have benefits, it is important to remember that there is life beyond the numbers. Counting can miss the point: The most easily measured indicators of progress may not be informative on the central questions about which the funder and grantee want to learn.[18] Quantitative data can get at the "what" but not at the "why" or the "how." According to Population Program Officer Kathy Toner, "You can ask grantees how often they met with policymakers, but the more useful information may come from asking what happened when they got there, and how receptive the policymakers were to their message."[19] The narrative reports and site visits are intended to help the Population Program get at the deeper issues of how and why change happens. When designing evaluations, funders need to bear in mind that many of the most important components of policy change—the strength of networks, the reputation of advocacy organizations, the relevance of research—are not easily quantifiable, if meaningfully quantifiable at all. "Extremely important issues of power, knowledge and capacity are easily neglected when evaluation concentrates solely on what can be predicted and then counted. At best, this shortchanges many of the group's major accomplishments; at worst, it can encourage a group to redirect its energies away from its most significant work to activities which are easy to count and report."[20]

Indicators must be based in a strong strategic framework

Indicators effectively measure progress only if they are based in a clear logic of how change happens—which actions lead to which outcomes, and how those outcomes combine to form policy change and broader social change. According to Toner, "The basic idea is that if these inter-related activities and strategies are pursued, it will add up to the desired outcome. For example, a theory of change may state that if I build enough capacity in the base, and a moment comes up in the public agenda, then I can take advantage of that. But without the theory of change articulated, the use of indicators will lead to activity-driven monitoring." Making sure that activities are linked to objectives in the context of a larger framework is critical for indicators to become meaningful measures of progress. Without a larger framework, indicators remain focused on process evaluation; they are useful in telling whether grantees accomplished the activities they planned to accomplish, but not whether these potentially added up to anything larger.

The Population Program has tried to ensure theory or model-based approaches by training grantees on the use of logic models and requiring grantees to link indicators with short and longer-term outcomes. But still, staff has found that by placing a heavy emphasis on indicators it runs the risk of getting reports focused more on processes than outcomes. "If you're not careful, it can all be focused on process. The thing with indicators in advocacy is that it's easier to quantify activities, so the 'so what' gets lost. People can start to write and think to the indicators. It can be a box…. It

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[18] Andrew Mott, "Evaluation: The Good News for Funders." Washington DC: The Neighborhood Funders Group (July 2003) p. 13.
[19] Toner interview
[20] Mott 2003, p. 13.

can limit how much people think about other ways to measure success."[21] Recognizing this danger, staff tries to encourage grantees to select some "higher-level," outcome-focused indicators.

Appendix B provides sample indicators that may be helpful when planning an evaluation. But as the above example demonstrates, indicators are only effective at measuring progress when they are linked to a theory of action specific to a particular advocacy effort. The examples are useful for generating ideas but can not replace the important work of funders and grantees carefully thinking through their action plans and appropriate outcome measures.

[21] Kathy Toner, interview, 20 April 2004.

5. The Woods Fund of Chicago: A Learning Approach to Evaluation

As an 'engaged funder,' the Woods Fund is very interested in learning what works and doesn't work in the interest areas it funds. It's our feeling that the issues we all care about can be moved forward by sharing the lessons learned in the work of the organizations we fund.[22]

The Woods Fund of Chicago provides an example of how foundations can use evaluation to increase knowledge of successful practices for both themselves and grantees. This learning-focused approach to evaluation differs from more traditional summative evaluations. While evaluation is typically used in philanthropy to look back on grants made to determine the impact of these efforts, this case demonstrates how evaluation can be used to inform funder and grantee practice on an ongoing basis. Additionally, this example illustrates key considerations for evaluating collaborations, which are critical to all public policy efforts.

Profile: The Woods Fund of Chicago[23]

Type of foundation: Private
Assets: $52 million
Average grant size: $70,000
Funding areas: Community Organizing; Public Policy; Arts and Culture
Geographic focus: Chicago
Staff: 6

Background

The Woods Fund of Chicago is a $52 million foundation dedicated to increasing opportunities for less advantaged people and communities in the Chicago area. It funds community organizing and policy advocacy. It has a particular focus on efforts combining organizing and issue advocacy and involving the participation of the least advantaged. It also focuses on supporting and encouraging coalition building to "bring groups together in a coordinated strategy to win effective solutions to policy barriers."[24]

One example of a coalition supported by the Woods Fund is the FamilyCare Initiative, which expanded health care coverage for 30,000 low-income people in 2002 and continues to work for further expansion. Recognizing that both organizing and issue advocacy are critical to policy change, the Woods Fund supports both the lead advocacy organization and key community organizations. While the policy advocates and community organizing groups have objectives and strategies which at times differ, their ability to work together and combine their strengths has led to significant victories.[25]

Another example of Woods Fund support is the Grassroots Collaborative of Chicago. In 1995, the Woods Fund conducted an evaluation of its community organizing efforts.[26] One of the primary

[22] The Woods Fund, End-of-Grant Year Report Form. Available at http://www.woodsfund.org/apply
[23] The Woods Fund 2002 Annual Report. http://www.woodsfund.org
[24] The Woods Fund, 2001 Annual Report. http://www.woodsfund.org
[25] 2001 Annual Report
[26] For a copy of the report, see http://www.nfg.org/cotb/39resourcesindex.htm

findings was about the value of collaboration between diverse organizations. It convened a range of community groups to discuss common interests, and how they might work together to address these issues. The result was the formation of the Grassroots Collaborative, a coalition of eleven community and labor organizations which work on a wide array of issues effecting low-income constituents. Says Program Officer Jeff Pinzino:

> *It's truly amazing. You get ACORN together with the locals to talk to legislators about one another's issues…. You have homeless advocates joining with the SEIU in Springfield to push for prescription drug coverage for the elderly, or immigrant's rights. These are all groups that know how to do this. They all have their own constituencies and can pull out thousands for an event. They're pooling their resources to have more power with policymakers.*[27]

Approach to Evaluation

For the Woods Fund, evaluation is less about assessing what was accomplished than it is about learning what works and applying this information to future efforts. A "learning foundation," the Woods Fund places a high priority on learning how their grantees achieve success and incorporating these findings into their operations. It primarily utilizes end-of-year grant reports to monitor grantee progress. While the reporting form asks about activities and outcomes, the majority of questions are focused on drawing out what grantees learned during their advocacy efforts. It asks how assumptions about "what works" changed during the project, why they have changed, and how they plan to incorporate this new knowledge in future work. It also asks how the implementation plan and benchmarks changed and what internal and external factors caused these changes.[28]

The Woods Fund values learning from both "victories" and "defeats," and stresses this to grantees. As it says in its grant report form, "There is much to be learned both from success and from assumptions, methods, and initiatives that turn out to be not fully correct or successful." It encourages grantees to discuss situations in which "progress fell significantly short of expectations," and the "obstacles, misgivings, and uncertainties" they faced during their work. It defines success more in terms of ability to learn from past experience than winning a particular campaign.

A critical component of the Woods Fund's approach is the dissemination of findings to grantees and the broader community. It holds trainings and convenings for its grantees and other community organizations. Grantees are also expected to engage in a "learning partnership" with the Woods Fund and fellow grantees in which they meet regularly to share lessons they have learned during their work.

Another unique aspect of the Woods Fund's approach to evaluation is its emphasis on storytelling. A significant piece of the grantee's end-of-year report is telling the "story" of their campaign. The form provides a list of guiding questions and encourages grantees to include setbacks and barriers to success. Most importantly, it asks that they discuss what they learned through their efforts: "How is the way you understand organizing and policy change different from when you started the campaign? If you were to do it over again, what would you do differently?"

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[27] Jeff Pinzino, interview, 12 March 2004.
[28] End-of-Grant Year Report Form

A specific example of this approach is the FamilyCare Campaign narrative included in the 2002 annual report.[29] The narrative was written jointly by members of the NCPL and United Power and tells the story of how the organizations came to work together, the strengths and challenges faced by the coalition, and how policy change was realized through their collaborative efforts. It draws lessons about "productive relationships between issue advocates and community organizations," which participants learned over the course of the campaign.

Finally, while the Woods Fund is less focused on process and output measures, it is very clear about its own longer-term outcomes and measure progress towards these goals. Its 2002 strategic plan emphasized the significance of increasing the participation of the least advantaged. It identified strategies to achieve this objective and progress indicators. Under the strategy of "develop[ing] strong three-way partnerships with participation by the less advantaged, policy advocates/researchers, and community organizers," possible "barometers" include: observable changes in agenda setting, issue ripening, and incremental issue victories as a result of joint efforts.[30] Having clear longer-term objectives ensures that the Woods Fund is not "learning for the sake of learning," but instead can identify the information most useful in achieving its goals.[31]

Evaluation Lessons

Public policy evaluations should focus more on improving practice than on proving impact

Evaluations of public policy grantmaking are most useful when they focus less on proving what their grants accomplished and more on improving grantor and grantee practice. Methodology limitations and the difficulty of cleanly measuring outcomes mean that attempts to look back and evaluate what happened and attribute those outcomes to a particular organization are difficult, if not impossible. Furthermore, because of the complexity of public policy work, campaigns are not often directly replicable. Determining whether or not a grant was ultimately "successful" is of limited use for directing future efforts because the same approach may not have the same outcome when applied in a different environment. This does not mean that learning is impossible, but that reflection to make tacit knowledge explicit is even *more* important if lessons learned from one public policy initiative are to be passed on to the next.[32]

The Woods Fund's approach of learning as it goes emphasizes the ongoing nature of policy work. Policy change is never "finished;" thus, an evaluation which looks back to measure the success of a campaign or initiative can never have the complete picture. What may have seemed a great victory could have grievous consequences when implemented; the passage of an unfavorable policy might be nullified by the courts or weak enforcement efforts. Evaluation which gathers, analyzes, and disseminates lessons allows funders to be responsive to the constant flux of the environment and target resources accordingly. It also enables them to identify challenges early on and help grantees swiftly implement solutions.

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[29] 2002 Annual Report
[30] 2002 Annual Report
[31] Pinzino interview.
[32] Jennifer Chapman and Amboka Wameyo, Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A Scoping Study. Actionaid (Jan. 2001) p. 8.

The Woods Fund's learning-focused approach also increases grantee capacity by providing an opportunity for them to "reflect on the activities carried out by your organization during the past year."[33] According to Pinzino, "Organizers and advocates are so busy they never have time to sit back and say what's working and what's not, and how should we rethink our work based on what we know about that?"[34] While the Fund acknowledges that its reporting process can be time-intensive, it believes that the benefits to grantees and the broader field outweigh the costs.

Value narratives and storytelling in evaluation

Narratives and storytelling can get at the complexities of the policy change process that other sorts of evaluation cannot—not only what happened, but why and how change occurred. "In a true positivist sense, attribution is not possible in this work. But through narratives you can get at why things happened the way they did, and whether a grant made a difference."[35] The Woods Fund has found that in telling the story of their campaigns, grantees can come to see connections and causalities they may not have previously recognized.

Another approach to narrative reporting is that of the Marguerite Casey Foundation. According to Tom David, Director of Organizational Learning and Evaluation, "We've placed a lot of emphasis on the role of narrative storytelling. You can get at causality by asking people why they do what they do…. You can learn a lot about the change process that way, and how change happens."[36] The Foundation has hired anthropologists and journalists to write ethnographies of their grantees, as well as asking for self-reported narratives.

Measuring collaboration is critical to public policy assessment

Because collaborations between organizations are vital to changing policy, measuring the size and strength of these networks is an important part of public policy evaluation. The Woods Fund evaluation includes several questions about how grantees formed, joined, and worked within coalitions, and asks for narratives describing the most useful collaborations.

There are many different approaches to evaluating coalitions and collaborations.[37] Dimensions along which coalitions can be measured include:

- **Size**: The larger the network, the more power it tends to have. Evaluations can include measures of number of coalition partners, total membership, number of people who attend actions or rallies, and number of different organizations in leadership positions.

- **Composition**: The strength of coalitions lies in their ability to bring together divergent groups around similar interests. Funders often measure grantees' abilities to engage new groups who are not the "usual suspects." The Grassroots Collaborative's inclusion of groups as diverse as labor and immigrant's rights organizations has been integral to their success. "The more people

[33] End-of-Grant Year Report Form.
[34] Pinzino interview.
[35] David Scheie, interview, 19 March 2004.
[36] Tom David, interview, 25 March 2004.
[37] Additional information on evaluating coalition building is included in the Resources section of this report.

you have together working on an issue, the more power you have behind it. And the more diverse the group, the more it appears like you have a lot of people behind you."[38]

Another crucial composition measure is the degree to which coalitions bring together organizations with complementary strengths. Many funders look at whether coalitions combine community organizing and single-issue advocacy groups. Evaluators may also want to consider the verticality of alliances and whether coalitions include organizations working at the local, state, and federal levels.

- **Process**: A coalition's "health" is important to it is effectiveness but difficult to measure, since it requires evaluating interpersonal relationships--things like trust and respect for differences. But it is these subtle relationships that determine the sustainability of collaborations. "When supporting coalitions, we need to assess their health, their infrastructure…. If you don't have a healthy infrastructure, the coalition won't last, and policy change won't happen."[39] The Woods Fund monitored the development of the FamilyCare Initiative to assess what organizations were taking lead roles and the degree of participation of those most affected by a lack of coverage.

  Another example of measuring coalition strength is the Haas Jr. Fund's assessment of their Freedom to Marry campaign coalition. Foundation staff reviews minutes from coalition meetings to determine not only who participates, but how invested they are. "It's not just about whether they're attending, but are they taking work away, doing it on their own or in committees, and coming back? Are they fighting over stuff? If they aren't, they are probably not taking it that seriously. And if they agree on everything, they are not getting enough groups in with different opinions."[40]

When evaluating coalitions it is important to note the difference between ad hoc and long-term collaborations. Some, like the Grassroots Collaborative, aim to address broad social change agendas and are meant to be sustained over time. Others, like the FamilyCare coalition, are more tactical—they bring together a broad base of members in support of an issue, but are not likely to stay together once they achieve their primary policy objective.

In the public policy arena there is a time and place for both. But the measures used to evaluate them vary depending on the coalition's objectives. A relevant measure for a long-term coalition might be its ability to create an inclusive leadership structure with diverse membership. For a tactical coalition, a more meaningful measure might be its ability to generate media coverage. According to Diane Feeney, Executive Director of the French American Charitable Trust: "Coalitions ebb and flow. They'll be strong for a while, but can often fall apart after a major push. Assuming that your goal was to pass a piece of legislation, that's okay. But you need to make sure there will be some members who are around to deal with the implementation and monitor what's going on."[41] Evaluators need to be clear about the nature of the collaborative effort and develop indicators accordingly.

[38] Jim Keddy, interview, 18 March 2004.
[39] Margaret Hempel, interview, 12 March 2004.
[40] Sweeney interview.
[41] Diane Feeney, interview, 15 March 2004.

Network mapping has recently emerged as tool to measure the strength of networks of individuals and institutions. Originally developed to examine business networks, it is now being employed in evaluations of community-based initiatives. By asking key individuals about their relationships with others, evaluators can develop a visual map detailing the strength and direction of the connections. The benefit of network mapping is that it clarifies the nature of the network relationships so that funds can be targeted to the most central organizations. In their paper on Building Sustainable Communities through Building Networks, Valdis Krebs and June Holley write, "Influencing a small number of well-connected nodes often results in better outcomes than trying to access the top person or calling on random players in the policy network. If you know the network you can focus your influence."[42] A number of philanthropic evaluation firms are now utilizing network mapping.[43]

[42] Valdis Krebs and June Holley, "Building Sustainable Communities through Network Building."
[43] Scheie interview.

6. The Rosenberg Foundation: Monitoring Progress in Long-Term Initiatives

Our strategy is focused on long-term public policy change. Funding a group of advocates for a significant period of time allows them to work together more as a team. It also helps to put each project's accomplishments and challenges into a bigger and fuller context for evaluation.[44]

The Rosenberg Foundation's support for garment workers' rights illustrates how a smaller foundation evaluates a long-term, ongoing public policy effort. Having supported the issue for more than ten years, it has developed an understanding for how policy change happens and what measures are most relevant to track. This case highlights the methods the Foundation uses to assess the effects of its prolonged support.

Profile: The Rosenberg Foundation[45]

Type of foundation: Private
Assets: $55 million
Average grant size: $50,000 - $75,000
Funding areas: The Changing Population of California; Economic Security of Working Families
Geographic focus: California
Staff: 4

Background

The Rosenberg Foundation is a $54 million San Francisco-based foundation which funds projects throughout California and, in some cases, nationally. The Foundation exclusively funds public policy efforts and has two primary programs: the Changing Population of California and Economic Security of Working Families. Since 1986, the Foundation has allocated more than $17 million for projects protecting immigrants' rights. One issue it has been particularly active in supporting is the rights of low-wage immigrant garment workers. Through a combination of grants for litigation, worker organizing, and regulatory and policy advocacy, Rosenberg has assisted in the creation of a series of important protections for this exploited population in Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

The Foundation began supporting public policy efforts around garment workers' rights in the mid-nineties. It supported litigation of the El Monte sweatshop case, which set the important legal precedent of holding garment retailers and manufacturers jointly liable for sweatshop abuses. This case garnered more than $4 million in back wages and damages for the workers, increased industry compliance with labor laws, and raised the issue of garment worker abuses on the national agenda. To build on this victory, Rosenberg supported organizations working on landmark legislation to hold all parts of the garment industry accountable for compliance with labor laws. The law, AB 633 (the Sweatshop Accountability Bill), passed in 1999 after a decade of public policy engagement by several collaborating organizations.

[44] Ellen Widess, email to the author, 2 April 2004.
[45] Rosenberg Foundation website. http://www.rosenbergfdn.org

Just like policy must be well implemented to be effective, the success of legal victories depends on their interpretation and enforcement. Rosenberg continues to support efforts to strengthen the El Monte ruling and ensure enforcement of AB633. It funded other class action suits against retailers and state-level regulatory advocacy to increase penalties for violations. The Foundation also funded organizations providing legal training for advocates to help workers understand their rights and file their own wage claims.

One key strategy of the Foundation's garment worker support has been the connection of litigation with other public policy efforts, including public education and outreach to strengthen worker and community organizing. It supports the notion of "social justice community lawyering:" legal advocates working closely with garment workers to change laws and corporate behavior. Workers' groups provide legal advocates with testimony about unpaid wages, access to mobilized workers, and insights into the issues faced by workers, such as job loss, immigration concerns, and the need for training. According to Senior Program Officer Ellen Widess, "Involving workers in the development of the legal strategy from the beginning is critical to broaden the impact."[46]

Another tenet of Rosenberg's garment worker program is long-term support for several advocacy organizations with different, complementary strengths in policy and regulatory advocacy, worker organizing, litigation, and public education. It has funded several organizations for nearly a decade. "These issues are so deep they require long-term advocacy and monitoring and structural change…. We're in for the long-haul…. We need to have these organizations poised to take an opportunity and run with it."[47] The Foundation sees its role as building and sustaining the infrastructure in the field that will allow for policy change.

Approach to Evaluation

Though evaluation of long-term, broad-based efforts is not easy, the Rosenberg Foundation has little doubt that its grants have contributed to an increase in protections for garment workers in California. It can point to concrete victories that its grantees have been involved with, such as new legal precedent being set, recovery of substantial wage claims for many workers, changes in corporate practices in the garment industry, and increased labor law enforcement. Because it is one of the few funders in this arena and one of the earliest to provide support, it is confident that its support has played an important role in attracting other funders, who have also contributed significantly.

While tangible policy outcomes are important, the Foundation recognizes that they take time and can easily be undone. In grant renewal applications, the Foundation asks about policy outcomes as well as organizational capacity, worker leadership, and the growth of the field generally. It looks at such outcome measures as more workers getting fair wages and decent working conditions; more companies complying with labor laws; more labor law enforcement; more workers organized; and stronger worker leadership.

The Foundation pays close attention to collaboration among its grantees working on litigation, regulatory and policy advocacy, outreach and education, and worker organizing. Widess cites the example of one grantee approaching the foundation to encourage funding for a partner

[46] Ellen Widess, interview, 30 March 2004.
[47] Widess interview.

organization: "They recognized that while they had the legal expertise, they needed the workers informed and organized on the ground to put teeth into the enforcement of the law. They needed advocates to tell the workers' stories to judges, government officials, the press and the public, and to advocate for policy changes." It also looks at the success of organizing across racial lines, uniting Asian and Latina garment workers.

The most critical element the Foundation looks for is strategic thinking and development and whether strategies have shifted to accommodate changes in the economic and political climate. For example, as a result of successful litigation and increased enforcement, many Bay Area garment factories have moved overseas, leaving behind unemployed, mostly monolingual garment workers. The advocates' campaign has adapted, with a new focus on securing social services and job training and placement support for the displaced workers. Advocates are also analyzing the impact of globalization and changes in U.S. trade policy on California's garment industry over the next few years.

Assessing strategic development is admittedly difficult. It requires a firm understanding of the field and a clear sense of how policy change occurs. The Foundation relies heavily on frequent conversations with grantees, academics, labor and policy experts, and foundation colleagues to learn about new developments and how grantees' strategies are changing to accommodate external realities. Said Widess, "I've developed a network of folks to discuss these strategies… whether the right opportunities are being seized…." This on-going assessment allows the foundation to respond to changes in the policy environment and make grants to seize new opportunities. It is also relatively inexpensive for both the foundation and grantees.

Evaluation Lessons

Evaluations must take into account the dynamic policy environment

Given the impact of political, economic, and social changes on the formation of public policies, public policy evaluations must reflect these realities. Including the external environment in evaluations ensures that grantee and funder objectives are appropriate and realistic. For example, a goal of increased spending on social services is not likely to be achieved in a period of economic deficit. Evaluations need to account for these shifts and ensure that objectives are adjusted accordingly. In the case of the Rosenberg Foundation, this means recognizing when it is appropriate to expect significant change and when change is less likely to occur. The Foundation places a strong premium on "feeding the troops:" supporting organizations even when the issue is not on top of the policy agenda, so that they are ready to act when the time is right for action. Rosenberg recognizes that it might not see significant movement during these lulls and focuses its evaluation during these periods on more on internal capacity building.

Funders must recognize and be comfortable with the fact that constantly changing external factors lead to some subjectivity in evaluation. What might be a loss in one political climate could be considered a win in another. Some indicators may change or become irrelevant. By including measures which are meaningful regardless of external changes, such as organizational capacity, funders can continue to measure progress towards broader policy goals.

In addition to ensuring that objectives are appropriate, including the external environment in evaluation enables funders to respond to new challenges or opportunities that may be looming on the horizon, and how they can quickly respond to shifting circumstances. "Staying close to what's going on enables us to be nimble and respond quickly if we need to."[48]

Measure the depth and sophistication of public policy strategy

Though it is difficult to "measure" strategy, tracking changes in strategic development is critical to understanding how grantees are progressing. Funders could consider whether organizations are taking on more complex projects, moving from community improvements to policy changes, expanding coalitions, or moving from working at the local to the state level. Like Rosenberg, they could also look at whether grantees are planning for implementation and enforcement after policy victories, and anticipating possible changes in the field.

Evaluations should also consider how strategies are adapting to changes in the political or economic environment. For example, Rosenberg asks grantees to document how their strategies, objectives, and plans have changed and why. "If grantees *did not* change their strategies and objectives over time, it would concern me," said Widess. "It shows that they're resilient, which you need to be to do this kind of policy work." Evaluations must recognize that strategies and objectives are likely to change, and that adaptability is critical to success.

[48] Widess interview.

7. The Liberty Hill Foundation: Using Evaluation to Build Grantee Capacity

It's tough to apply standard evaluation models to social change. We developed a system to take into account more than outputs and outcomes…. It's really focused on the notion of a movement, and networks of people moving together for common issues.[49]

Like many funders, the Liberty Hill Foundation struggled with measuring their public policy grantmaking using evaluation methods developed for social service programs. To address the challenge, it brought together a group of grantees to develop a model which better fit their social change work. The following case offers an example of how Liberty Hill used this process to build grantee capacity. It also demonstrates the strengths and challenges inherent when involving grantees in evaluation efforts.

Profile: The Liberty Hill Foundation[50]

Type of foundation: Public Charity
Grants budget: $3.6 million
Average grant size: $10,000
Funding areas: Social and racial equality, environmental sustainability, and economic justice
Geographic focus: Los Angeles County
Staff: 20

Background

The Liberty Hill Foundation is a Los Angeles-based public charity which promotes social and racial equality, environmental sustainability, economic justice, and a shared social responsibility. It supports bottom-up community organizing to reform public institutions and social policy. Typical grants are relatively small, ranging from $500 to $35,000, and they make about $3.6 million in total grants annually. All of their grants are distributed by community funding boards comprised of local leaders and activists who have intimate experience in the fields in which they fund.

Liberty Hill views media and communications as critical to social change. Its Director of Media Relations is responsible for media outreach and trainings for grantees as well as public policy briefings and publications to increase the profile of social justice work. It provides "on-call" media assistance to grantees, most of whom are too small to have dedicated communications staff. It also provides up-to-date press lists and ongoing media trainings.

Another key strategy of the Foundation is the provision of technical assistance and training. Based on grantee input, the foundation developed a training program that includes the history of social movements, donor development and communications systems training, peer learning roundtables, and economic and tax policy. Liberty Hill sees the value of these efforts extending beyond building the skills of individual grantees to helping build cohesion and collaboration between community organizations throughout the region.

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[49] Michele Prichard, interview, 13 April 2004.
[50] Liberty Hill Foundation website: http://www.libertyhill.org

Approach to Evaluation

In 2001 Liberty Hill initiated the Evaluation Pilot Project in response to grantee requests for training and technical assistance on evaluation. The Foundation itself had struggled with applying existing social service-based evaluation models to its social change work, and felt this would be a useful opportunity to create a model specific to the dynamic nature of social change.

The Foundation hired a professional evaluator to work with ten of its grantees to develop an evaluation model. The model was designed to measure success towards social change goals, improve organizational effectiveness, and provide accountability to stakeholders. Another goal of the process was to provide an opportunity for peer learning among Liberty Hill staff and grantees on the topic of evaluation. The standardized model would also help the Foundation's evaluation processes by providing uniformity to grantee reporting and a relevant framework which could be applied to all of its social change efforts.

The group started off with a traditional logic model used for social service programs and revised it to better fit their social change work.[51] Whereas in social service delivery assumptions about causality and the connections between actions and outcomes are relatively clear—e.g. administering health services improves health status--this is less true in the messy world of public policy. The participants included space in the model for influential internal and external factors and assumptions about what works; while these are typically footnotes in other evaluation models, participants felt that they were critical to account for when evaluating social change efforts. They also separated the model into two components: organizing/capacity building and concrete external changes in social justice issue. And instead of being divided into process and outcome sections, grantees changed the model so that it was less dependent on a linear progression from action to long-term outcomes.

In addition to the development of the tool itself, the process yielded positive benefits in terms of grantee capacity. A number of participants were initially resistant to the idea of evaluation and daunted by the logic model framework. As they better understood the usefulness of causal models for conceptualizing and articulating their work, they came to see the role evaluation could play in improving their organizational effectiveness. They reported that they were evaluating their efforts at a deeper level and writing stronger grant proposals as a result of the process.[52]

On the other hand, both the tool and process were more cumbersome than originally planned. What started as a series of four training sessions over an eight-month period grew to nine sessions over the course of a year. The tool itself was quite complex, even for project participants who designed it. It was time and labor-intensive to use and difficult to explain to other staff. Few fully integrated it into their program planning or evaluation, and many asked for additional training. Liberty Hill recognized that to encourage these and other grantees to use the tool, it would have to provide technical assistance. Due to lack of resources and shifting grantee needs since the project's completion, no additional assistance has been provided and the project is on hold.

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[51] The project used the United Way Logic Model, which can be found at: http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/model.cfm

[52] Liberty Hill Foundation, "Developing an Evaluation Model for Social Change: Reflections on a Process of Designing a Planning and Evaluation Model for Social Change." Internal document provided to author, 10 April 2004.

However, findings from the project have informed Liberty Hill's evaluation procedures and internal operations. It has modified grant reporting procedures to make it easier on grantees: instead of mid-year and annual grant reports, it asks for one report after ten months. It is also focused less on process evaluation and more on outcomes. One example of its outcomes-focused approach is the evaluation of media campaigns. While getting media coverage is important, the Foundation is wary of focusing more on media outputs than on the outcomes. "Media alone doesn't matter…. I don't think the number of stories is that important. Without organizing behind it, nothing is going to happen."[53] It evaluates media work on two key criteria: the ability to change public perceptions and mobilize constituents, and the ability to influence policymakers. It distinguishes between "elite" media coverage likely to reach policymakers, such as newspapers and cable news, and media which is more likely to reach and mobilize constituents, such as local news and radio. "Both are important, but they can serve very different purposes. It's critical that you have the mobilization piece."[54]

Evaluation Lessons

Involve grantees in the evaluation design

Liberty Hill's decision to work collaboratively with grantees on the evaluation model design follows on a larger tradition of participatory approaches to evaluation.[55] "Participatory evaluation" comes in many forms; most funders utilize some form of "participatory evaluation" when they rely on grantees for self-reported data. But the Liberty Hill approach is relatively unique in the degree of collaboration between staff and grantees. There are obvious benefits to involving grantees in the design phase of evaluations: grantees are more invested and engaged in the process, and are thus more likely to utilize the findings to inform their activities.

The complex nature of public policy evaluation particularly lends itself to grantee participation. Outright victory, in the sense of achieving all of the objectives of an effort or campaign, is rare. Often compromise is necessary, with some objectives being modified or abandoned. This introduces an element of subjectivity in determining whether gains were significant, whether small gains were consistent with larger objectives, and whether the project was a "success" or "failure" overall. Thus, there is likely to be a variety of opinions among different partners and stakeholders in the campaign. What a grantee sees as significant may be unimportant to a funder and vice versa. Involving grantees in the design of the evaluation provides an opportunity for grantors and grantees to come to agreement about their objectives and the appropriate questions, indicators, and outcome measures for the project. And involving grantees increases the likelihood that the evaluation measures will be relevant to the unique context of the public policy effort.

Another benefit of involving grantees in evaluation design is the increased likelihood that the evaluation will be culturally competent. Since much advocacy is undertaken by and for marginalized populations, there is a danger that evaluation which does not consider the specific cultural context

[53] Barbara Osborn, interview, 20 April 2004.
[54] Osborn interview.
[55] For more information on participatory evaluation, see Hasenfeld, Hill and Weaver (2002), Patton (1997), Mott (2003), and Torres (2000).

of these constituencies will focus on inappropriate outcomes and collect inauthentic data.[56] In particular, if public policy work is being carried out on behalf of others it is important that the beneficiaries are involved in setting evaluation objectives, not just professional advocates.

While there are many benefits to including grantees in evaluation design, it can create unique challenges. As this case demonstrates, the process of developing a model to evaluate public policy work is time and labor-intensive. Grantees may not have the capacity to participate to the degree the funder may want. Nor may they have capacity to apply the evaluation model/protocol to their work. While including grantees in objective-setting is critical for all public policy evaluation, funders need to be realistic about the amount of work they can expect grantees to do in the evaluation process.

Use evaluation to build grantee capacity

Like participatory evaluation, using evaluation to build grantee capacity has become popular in recent years, and there are many different ways to do it. Many funders use evaluation as a way to provide grantees feedback to improve operations. Another strategy is to use evaluation to build capacity for self-assessment. Public policy organizations often struggle with how to communicate their progress in the absence of substantial policy victories and how to fit their complex policy work into linear, service-based evaluation models. Helping grantees learn how to meaningfully evaluate their own work increases the quality of information the individual funder receives. It also increases grantees' ability to use evaluation data to improve operations and leverage additional resources.[57]

To help build grantee evaluation capacity, funders can offer technical assistance to grantees that do not have the capacity or experience to conduct more sophisticated assessments of their work. This is particularly important if funders have a specific format or model they'd like grantees to use. In the case of Liberty Hill, many grantees were initially concerned about the use of logic models and having to put their visions and goals into "little boxes." But with training, they came to see the value of the models and how they could be used for program planning, organizational development, and evaluation.

[56] Ricardo Millet, "Missing Voices: A Personal Perspective on Diversity in Program Evaluation." The Woods Fund (2003).
[57] The French American Charitable Trust and Women's Funding Network are also supporting projects working with grantees to develop evaluation models for social change work. For more information see http://www.factservices.org and http://www.wfnet.org.

8. The San Francisco Foundation: The Question of Causation

Process evaluation is really easy. It's about 'did you do these things you said you were going to.' Evaluating policy requires more digging. You have to try to dig deeper to understand how change happens, and what causes it.[58]

The following case looks at the San Francisco Foundation's (TSFF) efforts to defeat Proposition 54 and increase voter turnout for the October 7th, 2003 special election. It demonstrates how TSFF measured the effects of its relatively small grant on a very dynamic policy environment. It also looks at the Foundation's efforts beyond grantmaking and considers how the Foundation assessed its own role in the process.

Profile: The San Francisco Foundation[59]

Type of foundation: Public Community Foundation
Grants budget: $65 million
Average grant size: $15,000
Funding areas: Arts and Culture; Environment; Neighborhood and Community Development; Community Health; Education; Social Justice; Philanthropy and Nonprofits
Geographic focus: San Francisco Region
Staff: 52

Background[60]

The San Francisco Foundation is one of the Bay Area's largest funders, making grants of $65 million annually. As the community foundation for San Francisco, it strives to make grants reflecting the values of the community it serves.

TSFF became involved in efforts around Proposition 54 in spring of 2003, when it was added to the October 7th ballot. Proposition 54, the Racial Privacy Initiative, proposed banning the collection of racial/ethnic data by the State of California, local governments, schools districts and other quasi-governmental agencies. TSFF was concerned about the effects of Proposition 54 on the ability of its grantees to address social and economic disparities and on its own ability to target resources.

Beginning in June of 2003 and continuing until the October election, TSFF held a series of educational events for funders, policymakers, and other stakeholders in which they brought together key players from both sides of the debate. The Foundation also took a formal stand against the measure. It commissioned research to examine California foundations' awareness of Proposition 54 and their understanding of its potential impact on philanthropy. The report found that foundations make extensive use of publicly collected race data and that their work would be affected if such data collection were banned.

At the grantee level, TSFF also played the role of convener. It brought together grassroots organizations to discuss how to improve voter participation in the election and challenged the

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[58] Ron Rowell, interview, 21 April 2004.
[59] The San Francisco Foundation website: http://www.sff.org
[60] Ron Rowell, "Activities and Lessons Learned: Proposition 54 and the October 7th Get Out the Vote Campaign." The San Francisco Foundation. Internal document provided to author, 15 April 2004.

organizations to come up with a plan of action that the Foundation could support with a relatively small grant, since their budget for the project was limited. The consortium recommended that TSFF make a $50,000 grant to ACLU-Northern California to redistribute to organizations working on voter registration and turnout, specifically among low-income people, people of color, and new citizens. The organizations engaged in door-to-door canvassing, phone-banking, volunteer recruitment and voter education.

Many other organizations were involved in No on 54 efforts statewide and locally. In addition to grassroots efforts to increase voter registration and turnout, there was a large media campaign which included a $4 million TV effort. Policy research was conducted by a number of public policy organizations and research institutions. Many public health organizations opposed the measure, as did Governor-Elect Schwarzenegger.

On October 7th, Proposition 54 was defeated by a vote of 64% to 36%. This represented a significant shift from earlier in the summer, when the No on 54 campaign was 21 points behind in the polling.

Approach to Evaluation

The Social Justice Program at TSFF, which led the foundation's No on 54 efforts, typically evaluates their work on two levels. It monitors progress through grantee reporting, focusing mostly on processes. It also asks grantees to report back on lessons learned during their work. According to Program Officer Ron Rowell, "This is particularly important when there isn't a 'win,' since those experiences can be the most enlightening."[61]

In the case of the No on 54 Campaign, TSFF staff wanted to quickly synthesize and disseminate its findings to build on existing momentum. It was interested in what lessons could be learned by the social justice field to inform future efforts. It also wanted to understand how TSFF's efforts contributed to the election outcome to inform future foundation grantmaking and donor organizing practices. Because its grant was relatively small, it did not want to undertake a costly evaluation. By using a combination of quantitative data and qualitative interviews, TSFF attempted to get a sense of how their support influenced the election outcomes and voter participation.

Staff examined public data on voter registration, turn-out, and support for Proposition 54 to see if it supported the hypothesis that TSFF efforts influenced the election outcome. It found that gains in voter registration were greatest in the two counties where TSFF grantees were most active. The largest gains in support came from Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander and African-American voters—the target of TSFF grantees' efforts. It also found that significant increases in voter opposition to the measure occurred before TV and other mass media campaigns were launched, indicating that grassroots organizing played a significant role in changing perceptions.

Of course, this data is merely suggestive and does not "prove" much about the role of TSFF or its grantees in informing the election outcome. In his report on the initiative, Program Officer Ron Rowell wrote: "Obviously, the efforts of TSFF's grantee consortium were but one variable in an unusual election that brought out new voters attracted to the star power of Arnold Schwarzenegger or who simply wanted change." To get a more complete sense of its contribution, TSFF staff spoke

[61] Rowell interview

with key informants from the campaign. It asked interviewees what had been important for achieving the victory and what role TSFF and its grantees may have played. "With advocacy campaigns, we tend to be a little more hands-on with the evaluation, and have more face-to-face time. In this case, I just got on the phone and called people. I asked them what their take was on what happened, what made it a success…. That's the only way you'll understand what your contribution was with this kind of work."[62]

TSFF learned that grassroots organizing was critical to the victory and that its grantees were perceived as being integral to the campaign's success. TSFF staff got reports of numbers of volunteers recruited, phone calls made, doors knocked on, and other measures of grantee effort. More importantly, it learned broader lessons about what proved successful in engaging minority voters and what challenges the get-out-the-vote effort faced. TSFF provided space for the Social Equity Caucus to hold a debriefing for organizations active in the campaign to share what they learned and how they might incorporate these lessons going forward. The Foundation also used lessons from this campaign to inform future grantmaking. In particular, TSFF is looking at ways to increase registration and voting of eligible voters through grassroots, collaborative efforts.

In addition to looking at the effects of its grant on the election, TSFF examined the role it played in organizing other funders. By speaking with other foundations, staff concluded that its donor organizing efforts helped mobilize the philanthropic community. Leaders at other community foundations reported that TSFF's initiative encouraged them to take public stands, send letters to their donors urging support for the No on 54 Campaign, and write op-eds. Other foundations built on TSFF research. The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund conducted research to determine the impact of Proposition 54 on their grantmaking, while the California Health Care Foundation funded research on its impact on public health. Other foundations made grants to the No on 54 Ballot Measure Committee. While it is, once again, difficult to determine the degree to which other funders would have mobilized in the absence of TSFF's leadership, the fact that representatives from these foundations attended TSFF briefings and read the research is an indicator that the Foundation played some role in leveraging these resources. "We can't quantify causality, but we can say with some certainty that we influenced other funders."[63]

Evaluation Lessons

Discerning attribution is difficult--but not impossible

The above case demonstrates the difficulty of determining attribution in public policy efforts. With the multitude of actors and external factors influencing policy change, it is nearly impossible to know the cause and effect between activities and policy outcomes. You cannot develop a control group unaffected by changes in the political environment or "hold constant" factors like the economy or public opinion. Getting at causality is hard enough when undertaking targeted lobbying for a specific policy change, but even harder when trying to influence broader institutional change.

In this case, polling data indicated that there was progress towards TSFF's objectives, but this could not prove what, if any, effect the Foundation may have had on creating this movement. Yet it is

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[62] Rowell interview
[63] Rowell interview

important for funders to understand how their resources influenced the policymaking process, for the sake of both accountability and future improvements.

While conclusive evidence of the effects of any one funder or grantee's efforts is difficult to ascertain, funders can get a sense of their role in the process through conversations with active players. "Completely writing off attribution and saying, 'We'll never know what our impact was' buys into the whole positivist notion of evaluation, which really doesn't apply to policy change. It's true, you can't 'prove' causality. But you can get pretty close if you just ask people why they did what they did."[64] In the case of TSFF, staff simply got on the phone and asked organizers what impact the grant may have made and what it enabled them to do that they might not have done otherwise. While this approach may not hold to high standards of evaluation rigor, it enabled the Foundation to compile a report in a timely, low-cost manner and disseminate findings while there was still momentum in the movement.

Include an assessment of the funder's role

TSFF's effort to engage other funders was arguably as important as its $50,000 grant. Given its stature in the philanthropic field and broader San Francisco community, its public opposition to the measure and other efforts may have had a significant effect on the outcome. By speaking with other funders, TSFF determined that its research, education, organizing and convening influenced them to take action. Additional qualitative evidence, such as the number of calls from other funders requesting information on the campaign, supported the findings that TSFF's funder organizing was effective.

In many ways, assessing the impact of funders' own roles on the policy process is not very different from grantee evaluation. Process indicators such as attendance at meetings, number of research reports distributed, and number of convenings held can be useful. TSFF also surveyed attendees at briefings to determine what was most useful and what to change in the future.

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[64] Scheie interview

9. The PICO California Project: Learning from a Grantee

What we try to get a sense of through evaluation is how much we're helping our leadership--our volunteers across the state—understand policy, engage with policymakers… so that they can make change in the long-term.[65]

The example of the PICO California Project is included in an evaluation report for grantmakers for three reasons. First, it is an exemplary evaluation, marrying rigorous quantitative assessment with narrative reporting. Second, it highlights some of the tensions that exist between community organizing and policy advocacy strategies, and their implications for evaluation. Third, it underscores the significance of learning from grantees. Funders can learn a great deal about *what* to evaluate and *how* to evaluate by looking at how grantees measure their own efforts.

Background

The PICO California Project was launched in 1993 as an effort to unify the work of the local congregation-based community organizations affiliated with PICO, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization, a national network of community organizations. The purpose of the California Project is to bring the voices and concerns of ordinary Californians to the statewide policy arena on issues related to the well-being of families. Through its member organizations in each community, PICO unites people of diverse racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds to identify and act upon common concerns. Collectively, it represents 354 congregations with over 400,000 families statewide. The California Project is led by representatives from each of the nineteen local PICO affiliates and a small Sacramento-based staff.

Since its founding, the California Project has worked to address issues of education reform, access to healthcare, and affordable housing. It has been involved in a number of policy victories, including: the allocation of over $70 million for expanding primary care clinics' capacity to serve the uninsured; the creation of a $15 million program to support parent/teacher home visits, and; the allocation of $50 million for the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhood Program.[66]

Through community organizing, direct advocacy, research, and media campaigns, the PICO California Project gives a voice to PICO's membership in Sacramento. Its broad network structure and the size and diversity of its membership provide the organization significant power in state-level politics. For instance, in 2002 it was able to turn out 4000 people for a statewide townhall meeting in Sacramento to address the protection of vital healthcare, education, and housing services. But while numbers are important to its strength, the organization sees the development of strong leaders as the key to creating sustainable change.

Approach to Evaluation[67]

In 2000, the PICO California Project hired a team led by Paul Speer, a professional evaluator and university professor, to assess its efforts. The evaluation cost approximately $35,000, which the

[65] Keddy interview
[66] PICO California Project. http://www.picocalifornia.org
[67] Paul Speer, "People Making Public Policy in California: The PICO California Project." Human and Organizational Development, Vanderbilt University (May 2002).

California Project paid for using grants from The California Wellness Foundation and California Endowment.[68] It was particularly interested in two questions:

1. In what ways does the PICO California Project affect leaders?
2. How has the PICO California Project altered policies and resource distributions?

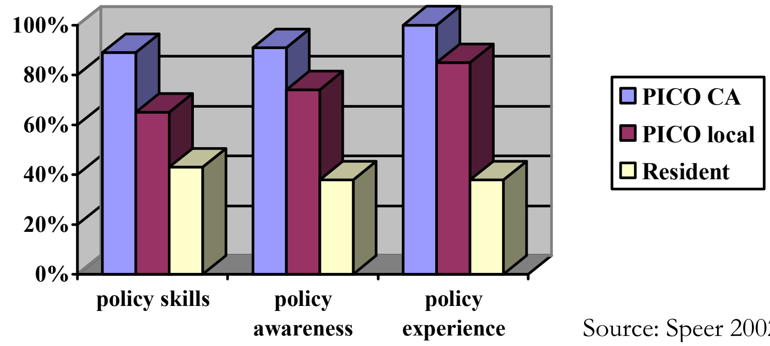
To address the first question, the evaluators examined differences between leaders in the PICO California Project and PICO leaders who were only involved at the local level. They wanted to see if California Project leaders had stronger leadership skills and increased capacity to effect policy change. The assumption was that differences between these groups could be attributed to the experience California Project leaders developed working at the state-level policymaking arena. They also wanted to understand differences between these two groups and the residents of communities where PICO was organizing, but who were not involved with PICO. "It was important to us that we look at our leadership development work in a larger context, to see not only what the capacity of our leaders was, but how that compared to other groups," said PICO California Project Director Jim Keddy.[69]

They developed a survey instrument which they administered to each population. They used mail surveys to collect data from 65 California Project leaders and 89 local PICO leaders, who were selected randomly from lists of active members in each organization. For non-PICO residents, they selected four communities out of the sixteen where PICO was actively organizing. Within those four communities, they used random-digit telephone dialing to contact 100 residents and administered the same survey via phone.[70]

The survey asked about a range of skills and attitudes, including understanding of the policymaking process, policy participation, leadership competence, and sense of empowerment and efficacy. It identified significant differences between the groups. In each area surveyed, PICO California leaders had significantly higher scores than local PICO leaders, who had significantly higher scores than non-PICO community members. For example, PICO California Project leaders scored 15% to 25% higher than local PICO leaders on policymaking skills, awareness, and experience, as demonstrated in Table 2. Because of the large sample size, evaluators were able to use statistical analyses to discern the significance of different variables. But even with this level of rigor, causality still can not be determined conclusively; it could be that California Project leaders self-select into the project because their policy skills are more developed.

[68] Paul Speer, email to author, 26 April 2004.
[69] Jim Keddy, email to author, 22 April 2004.
[70] Speer email.

Table 2: PICO California Leaders More Advanced Than Local PICO and Non-PICO Residents



Source: Speer 2002

To address the question of how the PICO California Project altered policies and resource distributions, evaluators conducted interviews with officials knowledgeable about state-wide issues in Sacramento, including lobbyists, staff from the Governor's office, State Senators, the California Attorney General, legislative staff, and staff from key departments. They spoke to fourteen informants and asked about their awareness of PICO, perceived strengths and weaknesses, unique characteristics, efficacy, and recommendations. The interviews indicated that the California Project had been effective at including the voices and concerns of "average citizens" in the state-level policy arena and that they'd played an important role in healthcare and education policymaking. They also pointed to some factors limiting the California Project's impact on policymaking, such as its slow and diffuse decision-making structure.

One element that the evaluation did not tackle was membership size. Though the California Project recognized the need to build a large base, it was more interested in the development of individual leaders and their ability to create change. According to Keddy, "We know we can turn people out. We wanted to better understand the quality of our work and the effects we were having…. It made us realize that we need to think about going deeper at the local level, so that people there can be learning more. Maybe not trying to do everything in Sacramento, but having some more actions in local communities." While this emphasis on local vs. state level efforts might reduce PICO's impact in Sacramento, Keddy feels it may be a necessary step to develop more leaders. "We need to develop the capacity of our leaders to think critically and make changes in their communities…. What really changes things is when people in a local community can make change."

The California Project is currently building on the findings of the initial evaluation to assess the continuity of their leadership. Dr. Speer and his team of evaluators are conducting research to determine how long it takes the California Project to develop leaders, how long these leaders stay with the organization, and how this compares to other leadership development efforts.

Evaluation Lessons

Measure policymaker perceptions

Perhaps the closest evaluators can come to determining how much a particular advocacy effort influenced the policy process is by looking at its influence on policymakers themselves. The

California Project provides an example of one method for evaluating policymaker influence: direct surveys. But getting in front of policymakers can be difficult for many organizations; surveying them on their attitudes towards a particular organization may not be feasible. And while self-reported surveys have their merits, it can be difficult for a policymaker to objectively answer questions about the degree which an individual organization or effort influenced their decision given the noise in the policy arena.

Aside from directly surveying policymakers, there are other strategies evaluators can use to assess whether advocacy efforts have influenced policymakers. For example, they can review policymakers' press releases and comments in legislative hearings to see if they reflect campaign messages. They can look at how often policymakers attend briefings related to the issue. They can also track the number of visits made to policymakers and whether the length of those visits increases, how often phone calls are returned, and whether policymakers are calling organizations for information.

Evaluations must recognize the relationship between producing policy results and building participation

The PICO California Project highlights a key challenge of assessing public policy: the strain between producing policy "wins" and developing a strong base and leadership. As in the case of the California Project, organizations which place a high priority on democratic decision-making and developing strong individual leaders may not be able to respond as nimbly as desired to policy opportunities. On the other hand, increasing the participation of those affected by policy is necessary for achieving broader social change goals; this requires providing members a real voice in the decision-making process. In essence, it is a tension between building democracy and building power. Both are critical to policy change and are inherently related, but different organizations have different theories of how they interact and which is most important for creating change.

For evaluators, this raises tricky questions about measuring success. Is a project successful if the policy outcome was achieved but not all voices were heard in the process? What about if citizens are mobilized around an issue but the policy objectives aren't achieved? There is no clear answer to these questions. The extent to which funders value civic participation outcomes versus policy outcomes in evaluation is entirely dependent on their own values and theory of change. But funders should be aware of the close relationship between the two and include both constituency-building and policy change in their public policy evaluations.

Evaluations should distinguish between growing membership and developing leadership

Evaluators must be clear about the distinction between membership and leadership development. Membership refers to the number of people affiliated with an organization and is typically assessed through measures like number of members, growth in membership, number of members who participate in actions, number of dues-paying members, etc. A large and active membership is critical for an organization to wield power.

Closely related, leadership development refers to how members are being trained to create change in their communities. Assessing leadership requires moving beyond the number of members who participate in actions to examining the skills acquired by individuals which enable them to influence the policy process. All too often, advocacy and organizing evaluations assess membership development but ignore leadership development. Admittedly, leadership is more difficult to evaluate than membership, since it relies on more qualitative than quantitative measures. But leadership is important to measure because it is often one or two key leaders who make change happen. And the development of strong and visible leaders is necessary for expanding membership.

Many funders emphasize the importance of talking with leaders first-hand to really get a sense of how well organizations are developing leaders. "The key to policy victory is to have strong leadership which is grounded in the community. When evaluating this work, you need to look at individual leaders. It's really sort of intuitive, you can't quantify it. But you need to see if they can inspire people, can be change agents. You have to know it when you see it."[71] Others rely on surveys of skill and knowledge development such as those used by the California Project.

Include the broader community in the evaluation

Increased civic participation is an inherent goal in almost all public policy efforts. In theory, public policy efforts will have a ripple effect: as community members see others mobilizing and creating change they'll be more inclined to participate in civic life as well. But most public policy evaluations look only at the engagement of those directly involved in the public policy effort and not at the broader community.

Depending on the size and scope of the project, evaluators should consider assessing the civic engagement of the broader community. Though they may not join the particular community organization, they may vote more often, go to church more often, talk to their neighbors more, or generally feel more a part of their communities. Some indicators of civic participation are relatively easy to determine with available data, such as voting patterns. Other measures, such as participation in community life, are more difficult. One tool which is designed to address this difficulty is the Success Measures Guidebook. The Guidebook is being developed by the Development Leadership Network, a group of community-based development organizations. It suggests ways to measure issues like sense of community, neighborhood satisfaction, evidence of community power, and personal and social networks.[72]

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[71] Sweeney interview
[72] Development Leadership Network 2000.

10. Conclusion

Effecting policy change doesn't happen independently. You can only do it in collaboration with other organizations, and only when the stars are smiling on you. You can't make the same kind of one-to-one evaluation that you can with service organizations, with one organization having a certain impact. And if organizations say they do, it's a problem.[73]

The six cases included in this report raise some critical considerations for funders to bear in mind as they think about evaluating their public policy grantmaking. The first is that different types of public policy engagement require different methods of evaluation. Or more precisely, different grantmaking and evaluation objectives dictate different measures of success and evaluation approaches. For funders focused on a single-issue advocacy campaign, indicators measuring institutional change may be more important; for funders more concerned with movement building, organizational and community-level indicators may be more appropriate. Funders need to recognize that while they must prioritize their goals, they cannot ignore the connection between constituency building and policy change. If funders are very clear about their own objectives and theories of change, developing appropriate progress measurements is far easier.

Second, funders must identify their particular evaluation needs and develop methods appropriate to their public policy grantmaking. For the Rosenberg Foundation, the emphasis is on remaining nimble and responsive to changes in the policy environment. For the Packard Foundation, the emphasis is on demonstrating results and using this to improve future grantmaking. Both are valid but necessitate different evaluation procedures. Funders need to be clear about how they plan to use evaluation findings in the design process, since collecting data in advocacy efforts can be challenging.

The third and most important consideration is that policy change itself is only an incremental step towards larger social change goals. Evaluators must identify indicators which are important to both the more immediate policy outcomes as well as longer-term impacts. As Tim Sweeney at Haas Jr. said, "We have to remember that we don't want policy change for the sake of policy change. While it's great that a policy may change, the broader systems are so entrenched, so stacked against change, that you really have to stay focused and keep pushing for the bigger goals." Evaluations of public policy grantmaking cannot rely on policy change alone to determine success; they will miss a lot of important information and get an inaccurate read on progress towards larger goals. When considering their measures of success funders must remember that it is the ability to participate fully in the democratic process that ultimately creates and maintains improvements in public policy.

[73] Robert Bothwell, interview, 16 March 2004.

Appendix A: Interviews

- Judith Bell, Executive Vice President, PolicyLink*
- Robert Bothwell, consultant and former Executive Director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
- Karen Byrne, consultant and former Senior Program Officer of the McKay Foundation
- Lindsey Callahan, Program Manager, The Foundation Consortium
- Judy Chynoweth, Executive Director, The Foundation Consortium for California's Youth and Children*
- Tom David, Director of Organizational Learning and Evaluation, The Marguerite Casey Foundation
- Diane Feeney, President, French American Charitable Trust
- Marjorie Fujiki, Senior Program Officer, Peninsula Community Foundation*
- Pegine Grayson, Executive Director, The Western Center for Law and Poverty
- Margaret Hempel, Director of Programs, The Ms. Foundation
- Susan Hoechstetter, Foundation Advocacy Director, Alliance for Justice
- Ruth Holton, Director of Public Policy, The California Wellness Foundation*
- Jim Keddy, Executive Director, the PICO California Project
- Tom Layton, Executive Director, The Gerbode Foundation
- Spence Limbocker, Executive Director, Neighborhood Funder's Group
- Ted Lobman, consultant and former Executive Director of the Stuart Foundation
- Sara Marcus, Grantmaking Associate, Jewish Fund for Justice
- Craig McGarvey, consultant and former Program Officer, Civic Culture, the Irvine Foundation
- Barbara Osborn, Director of Media Relations, the Liberty Hill Foundation
- Lyn Paleo, Evaluator and Ph.D Candidate, UC Berkeley School of Public Health
- Larry Parachini, consultant
- Jeff Pinzino, Program Officer, The Woods Fund of Chicago
- Michele Prichard, Director of Special Projects, The Liberty Hill Foundation
- Deborah Puntenney, Faculty, Asset-Based Community Development Initiative, Northwestern University
- Ron Rowell, Program Officer, The San Francisco Foundation
- David Scheie, Senior Project Associate, Rainbow Research Inc.
- Tim Sweeney, Program Officer, The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund
- Martha Toll, Executive Director, Butler Family Fund
- Kathy Toner, Program Officer, The Packard Foundation
- Ellen Widess, Senior Program Officer, The Rosenberg Foundation*
- Elizabeth Wilcox, Executive Director, The Abelard Foundation*
- Rick R. Williams, National Programs Director, The Helen and Charles Schwab Foundation*

* indicates a member of Northern California Grantmakers Public Policy Committee

Appendix B: Example Indicators

Institutional level:

- Policy passage
- Changes in administrative or regulatory policy
- Changes in private industry or company policy
- Inclusion of new voices in policymaking process, evidenced by testimony provided, townhall meetings held, attendance of policymakers at community events, etc.
- Increased policymaker support on the issue, evidenced by press releases, testimony, declared support, etc.
- Tangible community improvements

Community level:

- Increased civic engagement, measured by:
    - Voter registration and turn-out
    - Attendance at church, community meetings, civic hearings, and other community events
    - % of community members who feel empowered to improve the community

- Increased public support of the issue, measured by:
    - Attendance at actions and rallies
    - % of votes in support of an issue
    - How the issue is framed in local papers and community newsletters
    - Declared support from other organizations
    - % of constituents who claim to support the issue

- Increased participation in coalitions between organizations, measured by:
    - Number of organizations and individuals in a coalition
    - Number of members <u>active</u> in the coalition: attending meetings, serving on committees, holding leadership positions, etc.
    - Increased participation of "unusual partners," e.g. a broad base of diverse organizations involved
    - Increased collaboration between organizations working on regulatory and legislative advocacy, community organizing, media campaigns, and policy research and analysis
    - Equitable representation in coalition leadership and decision-making between member organizations
    - How many member organizations' resources are committed to joint projects
    - Increased understanding of other organizations' views

Organizational level:

- Mobilization capacity, measured by:
    - Number of members
    - Number of events held
    - Membership growth
    - Number of members serving on committees
    - Number of members regularly attending events

- Ability to influence policy, measured by:
  - Organizational reputation, measured by:
    - % of policymakers and other authorities who are aware of the organization
    - % who believe organization is an authority on the issue
    - Policymaker perceptions of the size and composition of the organization's membership
    - Policymaker perceptions of organization's contribution to previous campaigns
  - Relationships built with policymakers, measured by:
    - Number of visits to policymakers
    - Length of meetings with policymakers
    - % of phone calls to policymakers returned
    - Number of times policymakers ask organization for information
  - Advocacy development, measured by:
    - Number of trainings attended by staff and leadership on policy-related topics
    - Quality of relationships with key media sources

- Ability to develop strong and sophisticated policy strategy, measured by:
  - Whether focus is moving from local to state level, or state to national level
  - Whether focus is moving from community improvements to policy changes
  - Whether focus is moving from policy passage to policy implementation
  - Whether strategy is reflective of changes in political, social, and economic climate
  - Whether there is a clear implementation plan

- Ability to develop strong leaders, measured by:
  - Number of leaders
  - Number of trainings held
  - Leadership continuity: number of years leaders have been with the organization
  - Number of new leaders recruited and trained
  - Changes in leaders' knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, and perceptions
    - Beliefs about their abilities to effect change (empowerment)
    - Knowledge of policy process
    - Deeper levels of understanding of policy dynamics
  - Changes in leaders' behavior
    - Using voice more
    - Attending more activities and community events
    - Leading more activities

- Strong governance and infrastructure, measured by:
  - Ability to attract additional funding from diverse sources
  - Diversity of members and leadership
  - Diversity of staff
  - Number and diversity of members included in decision-making on key issues
  - Number and diversity of members in leadership positions

- Ability to build and maintain coalitions (see above under community-level: Increased participation in coalitions between organizations)

- Relationships built with institutions, e.g. school boards, social service agencies, churches, universities, etc.
  - Members active in these institutions
  - Number of institutions supporting the issue
- Relationship between the organization and larger community
  - Community perceptions of the organization
  - Receptivity to non-member needs
  - Number of non-members attending events

<u>**Example Media Indicators**</u>

Process

- Distribution:
  - Types and number of reports disseminated
  - Types and number of rallies held
  - Number of op-eds submitted
  - Number of postcards mailed to a representative
- Placement:
  - Amount of donated media
  - Number of articles covering the issue
  - How many op-eds run
  - Strength of relationships with press
- Exposure
  - Degree to which the intended audience encountered the media efforts
  - How frequently the intended audience was exposed to the media efforts
  - Degree to which they paid attention to the media efforts (recall and recognition)

Outcome

- Knowledge, awareness, and attitudes
  - What percentage of the population is aware of the issue?
  - What is their understanding of the issue, e.g. its cause and effects?
  - How do people feel about a particular policy or practice?
  - How important is the issue to people?
  - How important is it compared to other issues?
  - How relevant is it to their daily lives?
- Behavior and behavioral intentions:
  - How likely is it that someone will do a particular act?
  - Did/does the person do a particular activity or not (e.g. vote, contact representative, etc.)?
- Media Frames
  - Did the language of the campaign appear in policy proposals, legislative testimony, or the public debate about the issue?
  - Are other people or organizations adopting ideas or language from the campaign?
  - Did the message of the campaign appear in press coverage?
  - Is there an increase in the presence of a human voice or perspective on the issue?
  - Were members' voices present in the media coverage?
  - Are policymakers adopting ideas or language from the campaign?

Appendix C: Evaluation Lessons

1. Combining quantitative and qualitative data strengthens evaluation efforts (The Packard Foundation's Population Program)
2. Indicators must be based in a strong strategic framework (The Packard Foundation's Population Program)
3. Public policy evaluations should focus more on improving practice than on proving impact (The Woods Fund of Chicago)
4. Value narratives and storytelling in evaluation (The Woods Fund of Chicago)
5. Measuring collaboration is critical to public policy assessment (The Woods Fund of Chicago)
6. Evaluations must take into account the dynamic policy environment (The Rosenberg Foundation)
7. Measure the depth and sophistication of public policy strategy (The Rosenberg Foundation)
8. Involve grantees in the evaluation design (The Liberty Hill Foundation)
9. Use evaluation to build grantee capacity (The Liberty Hill Foundation)
10. Discerning attribution is difficult--but not impossible (The San Francisco Foundation)
11. Include an assessment of the funder's role (The San Francisco Foundation)

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