

Sample Questions for Gauging Progress in Advocacy

Moving public opinion and policy may take decades. This handout offers some thinking points and sample questions for measuring progress over a shorter timeframe—the short-term and intermediate outcomes that may take place within a grant period, a legislative session, or an election cycle.

I. Progress in Infrastructure

Organizations¹ involved in advocacy work often need to revise their infrastructures to be more adaptable and nimble than traditional direct service organizations.

- Does your organization’s infrastructure support the core components of your advocacy strategies? For example, have you been able to be effective in:
 - Civic education and outreach activities,
 - Building and maintaining alliances with targeted groups,
 - Community organizing and mobilization activities, and/or
 - Lobbying activities?

II. Progress in Coalition/Network Building

Advocacy work is often more effective when performed in the context of a coalition or network.

- Have you brought new partners into your coalition/network?
- Has communication and collaboration between groups in the coalition been effective?
- Is the structure of the coalition/network flexible enough to allow individual members to influence target groups?

III. Progress in Communications and Public Education

For advocacy organizations, a deliberate and savvy communications and education strategy is an important component of success.

- Does your organization track and evaluate your communications systems and strategies?
- Have the numbers of sympathizers, supporters, and champions of your issue increased among target groups?

¹ The term “organization” is used in a general sense here to refer to an individual organization or group that conducts advocacy work, or a coalition or network of advocacy groups working collaboratively on an issue or policy.

- Is there decreased support for competing views on your issue among target groups? Have your activities contributed to “a sense of urgency” about your issue among target groups?
- Has your organization tried to broaden or reframe your issue to reach new audiences beyond your traditional support base?
- Have you facilitated increased coverage and promotion of your issue in the media?

IV. Progress in Research

A direct service organization might periodically consult or rely on research to assess economic, social, or political trends. In contrast, most advocacy organizations need to have a proactive research agenda in order to support their positions.

- Does your organization disseminate credible, relevant, and timely information to target groups? How has this strengthened your position?
- Does your organization have a research agenda?
- Has your organization maintained and strengthened relationships with research partners? Alternatively, does your organization have the internal capacity to conduct credible research?

V. Progress in Mobilizing and Organizing

Advocacy organizations may engage in mobilizing and organizing in pursuit of policy change and/or other advocacy goals.

- Are your organization’s target populations taking actions that move your organization closer to realizing its objective(s)?
- Has your organization registered more voters and expanded participation in the decision making process?
- Has your organization increased support for a proposed ballot initiative?

VI. Lobbying/Legislative, Judicial, and Administrative Activities

By “policy advocacy” we mean not only legislative advocacy but also judicial and administrative-related advocacy.

- Does your organization follow a strategic plan to engage key decision makers in the legislative/judicial/administrative arena?
- Do key decision makers recognize your organization as a reputable and legitimate source of information on your issue?
- Does your organization have at least one person who is knowledgeable about the legislative/judicial/administrative process?
- Does your organization track and monitor the policy advocacy process as it pertains to your issue, and organize its activities accordingly?