Evaluating Public Policy Advocacy

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ADVOCACY: an effort to shape the perception and behavior of a particular audience to effect public policy changes that *may or may not* require changes in the law.

ADVOCACY IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH LOBBYING

While foundations and nonprofits have legal restrictions on lobbying, there is a wide range of non-lobbying work that organizations can do to influence perception and behavior related to public policy issues.
Advocacy happens at all stages of the policy cycle

- Problem Definition
- Policy Development
- Placement on the Policy Agenda
- Policy Adoption
- Policy Implementation
- Policy Monitoring & Evaluation
- Policy Maintenance
- Policy Blocking
Our Big Questions

How is advocacy evaluation different from program evaluation?

What outcomes are most relevant and realistic for advocacy and policy change efforts?

What manageable tools can we use to collect data?
Evaluation for what?

**Accountability or Impact**

Examining whether a case can be made that an advocacy effort produced its intended results.

**Learning**

Providing data that will inform and affect advocacy efforts while they are happening.
Unique Challenges for Advocacy & Policy Change Evaluation

Unlearning what you know about program evaluation
In some ways, evaluating advocacy & communication strategies is like evaluating anything else...

There are similarities in purpose.
- Systematic data-based inquiry
- High-quality information

The same approaches can apply.
- Same design options
- Same methods
- Same tools
Unique Characteristics of Advocacy

1) Complexity & attribution
2) Extended & often unending timeframe
3) Changing Milestones
4) Shifting context and strategies
5) Tight resources
Implications for Evaluation

1) Complexity & attribution
   Establish your contribution

2) Extended & often unending timeframe
   Focus on interim outcomes & progress

3) Changing Milestones
   Re-think how you interpret success

4) Shifting context and strategies
   Use an approach that is quickly adaptable

5) Tight resources
   Consider timing and keep burden low
The 5 Most Common Mistakes in Advocacy Evaluation

✓ Lack of specificity about *who* will change and *how* they will change

✓ Sticking to outputs—or even outcomes—that are no longer relevant

✓ Assuming that “more” is better

✓ Mismatch between the tactics used and the outcomes expected

✓ Unrealistic expectations for change within the measurement period
Knowing What To Measure

Set realistic interim outcomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework for Policy &amp; Advocacy Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW will they change as a result of your tactics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO will change as a result of your tactics?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELED OF ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>AUDIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTION</td>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILL</td>
<td>Influencers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARENESS</td>
<td>Decision Makers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Framework for Policy & Advocacy Outcomes

What is WILL?

[Diagram showing levels of engagement: Awareness, Action, Audience: Public, Influencers, Decision Makers, with a highlighted box for WILL]
Framework for Policy & Advocacy Outcomes

What is “will”?

Opinion

Intensity

Salience

Willingness to act

Capacity to act

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

AUDIENCES

PUBLIC

INFLUENCERS

DECISION MAKERS

[Diagram showing the relationship between awareness, will, and action levels in policy and advocacy.]
Framework for Policy & Advocacy Outcomes

Levels of Engagement

Awareness

Will

Action

Audiences

Public

Influencers

Decision Makers
TACTICS mapped onto the framework...

levels of engagement

Awareness
- Voter Outreach
- Public Awareness Campaigns
- Public Polling
- Public Education

Public

Influencers
- Demonstration Programs
- Policy Analysis/Research
- Influencer Education

Public Will
- Community Organizing
- Public Will Campaigns
- Advocacy Capacity Building
- Leadership Development

Will
- Community Mobilization
- Lobbying
- Model Legislation
- Regulatory Feedback
- Champion Development
- Political Will Campaigns
- Public Forums

Action
- Litigation
- Regulatory Feedback

Public
- Voting Outreach
- Public Education

Influencers
- Policy Analysis/Research
- Policymaker Education

Decision Makers

Will your tactics really produce the changes you’re looking for?
Do your tactics produce the changes you’re looking for?

- PUBLIC
  - Voter Outreach
  - Public Awareness Campaigns
  - Public Polling
  - Public Education

- INFLUENCERS
  - Influencer Education

- DECISION MAKERS
  - Policymaker Education

- LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT
  - Awareness
    - Community Mobilization
    - Coalition Building
  - Will
    - Community Organizing
    - Public Will Campaigns
    - Advocacy Capacity Building
    - Leadership Development
  - Action
    - Lobbying
    - Litigation
    - Model Legislation
    - Regulatory Feedback
    - Policy Analysis/Research
    - Demonstration Programs
    - Policy Analysis/Research
    - Policymaker Education

- AUDIENCES
  - PUBLIC
  - INFLUENCERS
  - DECISION MAKERS
Do your tactics produce the changes you’re looking for?
### Public Engagement Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>Voter Outreach, Public Awareness Campaigns, Public Polling, Public Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFLUENCERS</td>
<td>Champion Development, Leadership Development, Advocacy Capacity Building, Communications and Messaging, Media Advocacy, Public Will Campaigns, Demonstrations Programs, Influencer Education, Policy Analysis/Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECISION MAKERS</td>
<td>Model Legislation, Regulatory Feedback, Litigation, Political Will Campaigns, Public Forums, Legislative Action, Champion Development, Public Will Campaigns</td>
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Do your tactics produce the changes you’re looking for?

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<tr>
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<td>Influencer Education</td>
<td>Policymaker Education</td>
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<td>Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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1. Model Legislation

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[Images and diagrams showing a matrix with different tactics and strategies for influencing public will and action.]
Outcomes Mapped onto the Framework

Levels of Engagement:
- **Awareness**
  - Voter Outreach
  - Public Awareness Campaigns
  - Public Polling
  - Public Education
  - Influencer Education
  - Policy Analysis/Research
  - Organizational Visibility and Recognition
  - Demonstration Programs
  - Attitudes & Beliefs
  - Awareness

- **WILL**
  - Community Mobilization
  - Collaboration & Alignment
  - Media Advocacy
  - Issue Reframing
  - Communications and Messaging
  - Media Coverage
  - Leadership Development
  - Advocacy Capacity Building
  - Public Will
  - Public Will Campaigns

- **ACTION**
  - New Advocates
  - Constituency Growth

Audiences:
- **Public**
- **Influencers**
- **Decision Makers**

Outcomes:
- More or Diversified Funding
- New Donors
- Litigation
- New Champions
- Model Legislation
- Regulatory Feedback
- Champion Development
- Political Will
- Public Forums
- Political Will Campaigns
What will they do for you & your issue?

What do they think about your organization?

How do they prioritize and frame the issue?

What do they know and feel about the issue?

- Policy Change
- More or Diversified Funding
- New Champions
- Political Will
- Salience
- Issue Reframing
- Organizational Visibility & Recognition
- Attitudes & Beliefs
- Awareness

DECISION MAKERS
What do we *really* mean by these stages of “engagement”? 

**AWARENESS:** What do they know & feel about you? 

- Stalwart, principled advocate 
- Collaborative deal-maker 
- Powerful influencer of others 
- Source of non-partisan, credible data and analysis 
- Representative of key voices 
- Pro-business, pro-children, pro-what? 
- “Deliverer” or quid pro quo partner 

**AWARENESS:** What do they know & feel about the issue? 

- Heard of it 
- Know key points about it 
- Know details about it 
- Know the *wrong* details about it 
- Have an opinion or belief about it
What do we *really* mean by these stages of “engagement”?

**WILL**: How do they prioritize and frame the issue?

- More important than other issues
- Linked to other issues, positive or negative
- Relevant to their work/constituencies
- Urgent
- What else?

**ACTION**: What will they *do* for you & your issue?

- Give you access to their constituency
- Give you access to their decision-making process
- Speak to their colleagues on behalf of you or your issue
- Speak publicly on behalf of you or your issue
- What else?
How to use the Framework for Evaluation

Policy Goal Example: Expand Medicaid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCES</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Influencers</th>
<th>Decision Makers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action</td>
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</table>
STEP 1: Identify where key target audiences are now on the spectrum of engagement

Target Audiences

AWARENESS
- Uninsured adults in key districts

WILL
- Hospitals & Provider Associations

ACTION
- Media

PUBLIC
- Legislators

INFLUENCERS

DECISION MAKERS

AUDIENCES
**STEP 2:** Identify how far you hope to move them on the spectrum

**Target Audiences**

- **Awareness:**
  - Uninsured adults in key districts
  - Media
- **WILL:**
  - Hospitals & Provider Associations
- **ACTION:**
  - Legislators

How far you need them to move on the spectrum of outcomes.

- **PUBLIC**
- **INFLUENCERS**
- **DECISION MAKERS**

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**STEP 3:** Verify that your tactics are designed to move your target audiences along the spectrum.
**STEP 4:** Check outcomes mapped onto the framework to decide what to measure

Remember to change what you are measuring as your tactics change and as your audience moves along the spectrum!
Ideas for outcomes to measure for policy goal example 1: Medicaid Expansion

Uninsured adults in key districts:
- Increased awareness and improved attitudes about the value of Medicaid expansion to their families and communities
- Higher prioritization of Medicaid expansion as a policy issue
- Increased willingness to recruit peers and contact decisionmakers

Media:
- Increased awareness of Medicaid expansion messaging as indicated by more frequent coverage or coverage in more outlets
- Higher prioritization of Medicaid expansion as indicated by placement and length of stories
- Improved framing of Medicaid expansion as an issue of fairness and economic security
Ideas for outcomes to measure for policy goal example 1: Medicaid Expansion

Hospitals and Provider Associations
- Increased coalitional activity, such as alignment of advocacy strategies and shared messaging
- Increased investment of time and money in advocacy for Medicaid expansion
- Increased recruitment of peers, media appearances, and direct contact with decisionmakers

Legislators:
- Increased awareness of Medicaid expansion messaging and policy research
- Improved attitudes about the value of Medicaid expansion for the state’s economic stability
- Increased awareness of voter attitudes and prioritization of Medicaid expansion
- Higher prioritization of Medicaid expansion relative to competing issues
- More “championing” of expansion among colleagues and with constituencies
Methods & Tools
Evaluation Methods Mapped Onto the Framework

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC
- Public Polling, Focus Groups, Interviews, Surveys
- Event Observation

INFLUENCERS
- Power Mapping/Analysis
- Media Tracking, Scorecards
- Research Panels, Bellwether interviews
- Public Polling, Focus Groups, Interviews, Surveys
- Capacity Assessment

DECISION MAKERS
- System Mapping
- Policy Tracking
- Donor Tracking
- Partnership Analysis
- Network Mapping
- Intense-Period Debriefs
- Champion Tracking

AUDIENCES

- Member/Constituent Action Tracking
- Action Tracking
- Power Mapping/Analysis
- Media & Blog Tracking
- Public Polling, Focus Groups, Interviews, Surveys
- System Mapping
- Policy Tracking
- Donor Tracking
- Partnership Analysis
- Network Mapping
- Intense-Period Debriefs
- Champion Tracking
- Policymaker Ratings

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Communications & Advocacy Evaluation Methods

**Traditional**
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Polling
- Case Studies

**Unique**
- Bellwether Methodology
- Intense Period Debriefs
- Critical Incident Timelines
- Network Mapping
- Policymaker Ratings
- Intercept Interviews
- Champion Tracking
- Media Scorecards
- 360-Degree Critical Incident Reviews
- Research Panels
- Social Media Tracking
- Rapid Response Research
Policymaker Ratings

1 = not at all supportive
2 = interested
3 = somewhat supportive
4 = supportive
5 = extremely supportive

1 = not very influential
2 = somewhat influential
3 = Influential
4 = extremely influential

1 = not very confident
2 = somewhat confident
3 = extremely confident

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project
Policymaker Ratings

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Maker</th>
<th>Level of Support</th>
<th>Level of Influence</th>
<th>Level of Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senator Carpelli</td>
<td>1 = Not at all supportive</td>
<td>4 = Very influential</td>
<td>2 = Somewhat confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Garza</td>
<td>4 = Supportive</td>
<td>1 = Not influential</td>
<td>1 = Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Hanson</td>
<td>3 = Somewhat supportive</td>
<td>3 = Influential</td>
<td>3 = Extremely confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Jackson</td>
<td>5 = Extremely supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Kowalczyk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Nguyen</td>
<td>1 = Not at all supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Paul</td>
<td>2 = Interested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Phalen</td>
<td>3 = Somewhat supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Tullis</td>
<td>4 = Supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policymaker Ratings

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project
Policymaker Ratings

* Hypothetical Data

- Low Support
- Medium Support
- High Support

= Increase in Support

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project
Policymaker Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Influence</th>
<th>High Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68 legislators</td>
<td>22 legislators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57% of the legislature</td>
<td>18% of the legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confidence Rating</strong></td>
<td><strong>Confidence Rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Low Support**
- 68 legislators
- 49% Democrat
- 51% Republican
- 67% Assembly
- 33% Senate

**High Support**
- 22 legislators
- 85% Democrats
- 15% Republican
- 80% Democrat
- 20% Republican
- 100% Assembly
- 75% Assembly
- 25% Senate

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project
Tailor Your Policymaker Ratings

Support + Influence + Confidence

Your Relationship to Policymaker + Your Influence with Policymaker’s Constituency

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Bellwether Methodology

Bellwethers are:
“Influentials” in the public and private sectors whose positions require that they are politically informed and that they track a broad range of policy issues

- Policymakers
- Administrators
- Media
- Other Advocates
- Funders
- Business
- Associations

Developed by Harvard Family Research Project
What three issues do you think are at the top of the agenda related to governance in Colorado? (n=34)

1. Ballot/initiative/proposition reform (n=17)
2. Redistricting (n=10)
   Proposition 13 (n=8)
3. Term limits (n=8)
4. TABOR (n=7)
5. Tax reform (general) (n=6)
   Partisan Ideological divide (n=6)
6. Budgeting process reform (n=3)

2 mentions
- Need to balance budget
- State/local restructuring
- Public will
- Reduction of regulation
- Lack of political leadership and consensus
- Policy evaluation and accountability

1 mention
- Federal-State rule match up
- Non-competitive elections
- Proposition 15
- Proposition 7
- Cut back on regulatory boards
- Legislature-governor division of power
- Budget as the primary instrument of policy
- Lack of policymaker ability to postpone
What are the top 3 governance-related issues on the Colorado policy agenda?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009 (n=40)</th>
<th>2011 (n=44)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ballot process</td>
<td>1. Ballot process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Redistricting</td>
<td>2. TABOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Term limits</td>
<td>3. Tax reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TABOR</td>
<td>4. Proposition 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of its visibility as a policy issue in Colorado, would you say the issue of how states and local governments relate to one another has increased, decreased, or remained the same compared to last year?

(n=33)

- Increased 58%
- Remained the Same 33%
- Decreased 9%

Decreased
- 1 Business
- 1 Local Government
- 1 Social Justice
What individuals or organizations have you heard talking about governance issues in Colorado like the ones we’ve been talking about today?

1. **Colorado Ahead!** (n=17)

2. Colorado League of Cities (n=5)

3. Chamber of Commerce (n=4)
   - Colorado State Association of Counties (n=4)
   - Governor (n=4)

4. Public Policy Institute of Colorado (n=3)
   - Colorado League of Women Voters (n=3)
   - Mountain States Council (n=3)

5. Colorado Cause (n=2)
   - Progressive Institute (n=2)
   - Colorado School Board Association (n=2)

6. 1 Mention
   - American Leadership Forum
   - Colorado Farm Bureau Federation
   - Colorado Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
   - Colorado Women Lead
   - Colorado Police Chiefs Association
   - Campaign for College Opportunity
   - Chief Probation Officers of Colorado
   - Children NOW
   - County Federation of Labor
   - Colorado Foundation
   - Denver Chamber of Commerce
   - Denver County Federation of Labor
   - Legislative Analyst's Office
   - SEIU 7011
   - Front Range Leadership Group
   - State Sheriffs' Association
What organizations do you turn to for the most credible, non-biased data and analysis on governance issues in Colorado?

1. Colorado League of Cities (n=11)
2. Public Policy Institute of CO (n=9)
3. Mountain States Council (n=6)
4. Colorado Foundation (n=5)
5. **Colorado Ahead!** (n=2)
   - Chamber of Commerce (n=2)

Could you describe the reputation that “Colorado Ahead!” has among your constituency?

1. They are unknown (n=12)
2. They are right-leaning (n=11)
3. They represent Denver interests (n=6)
4. They are non-partisan (n=4)
5. They are left-leaning (n=3)
6. They are a front for Labor interests (n=1)
How likely do you think it is that Colorado would enact the kinds of reforms we have just been discussing during the next year? Do you think it is very likely, somewhat likely, or not at all likely?

- **Somewhat Likely**
  - 2 Business
  - 2 Local Government
  - 1 Education
  - 1 Social Justice
  - 1 Labor/Other

- **Very Likely**
  - 2 Social Justice
Tool: Surveys or polls

If you are looking for results beyond “awareness,” design surveys, polls and focus groups to capture information about the 5 elements of public will:

1. Opinion
2. Intensity
3. Salience
4. Willingness to act
5. Capacity to act

These elements go together. Measuring only one or two doesn’t capture “will”
Public Will

Opinion

▪ What do people think and feel about the issue?

Intensity

▪ How strongly do people hold this opinion?

Salience

▪ How important and relevant is this issue to people? Does it connect to their values?
▪ How much do people think this issue should affect decision-makers’ behavior now or in the near future?
Public Will

Willingness to act

- Do people know what action needs to happen?
- Do people think their actions can actually make a difference?
- Do people believe the benefits outweigh the risks of taking action?

Capacity to act

- Do people know how to do what you’re asking of them?
- Do people believe that they have the ability or competency to take action in different circumstances? [self-efficacy]
- Do environmental conditions allow people to take action?
Sample Intense Period Debrief Questions

1. What events triggered this intense period?
2. How was the organization’s response determined? Who was responsible for that decision? How was that decision communicated to other partners and allies?
3. Which elements of the organization’s response worked well? Which elements could have been improved?
4. What was the outcome of the intense period? Was the result positive or negative?
5. What challenges did we face (anticipated and unanticipated)? How did we address them?
6. What do we wish we had known going in? How can we get that information before the next time?
7. What insights will we take away from this and apply next time?
Wrap Up

✓ Try to be focused and realistic about measuring what your tactics are specifically designed to change.

✓ Start with one or two data collection tools focused on your most important audiences and tactics. Grow to a more comprehensive evaluation approach from there.

✓ Use evaluation for learning. It’s an opportunity to inform the advocacy and policy change strategy.

✓ Consider joining forces on evaluation with key partners who are also working on your issue

✓ If you find that your strategies and tactics need to change, change them--- and change your M&E strategy accordingly!
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