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Improving your Advocacy

Nothing succeeds like success. Constant evaluation and adaptation of your advocacy effort is the best way to ensure success. The idea behind self-assessment is not to attach a numerical score to your effort, but to get useful feedback and alter your strategies and/or goals if necessary. Adaptability, creativity and persistence are characteristics of seasoned and successful advocates; if one strategy does not work, they try another, and another, until they reach their goal.

To revisit the big picture of your advocacy campaign, it might be useful to evaluate your advocacy effort each year or at the end of your prescribed decision-making cycle (e.g., end of parliamentary session or fiscal year). In addition, you might wish to have the entire advocacy effort evaluated by an outsider who is not so closely involved with your effort. An outsider would assess the work you and your organization are doing as well as examine the coalitions which are involved, the messages that have been created, the audiences that have been reached, the policy efforts that you have undertaken, and changes in the decision-making process that have occurred as a result of your advocacy.

Remember, change happens slowly and achieving any policy change through advocacy will most likely be a gradual process that will take time, energy, persistence and tenacity. In fact, the process is never really finished. Once you achieve your first advocacy goal, another one is waiting around the corner.

The self-assessment questionnaire is divided into six areas: advocacy objective, message delivery/communications, use of data and research, coalition building, impact on the decision-making process, and overall management/organizational issues. Use this questionnaire every 6-12 months to chart your progress and improve your activities.

Objectives

In this module, we will:

- A. learn how to **maintain motivation**;
- B. review the **Advocacy Assessment Questionnaire**, a self-evaluation to assess your advocacy effort after 6-12 months.

A. Maintaining Motivation

Celebrate Small (and Large) Victories!


Celebrating small victories will keep you, your staff, and partners energized and motivated to move forward. Publicizing your victories, however modest, will also build support for your efforts as people begin to recognize you and your advocacy campaign as a positive and effective agent of change.

There are many, many ways to celebrate:

- ◆ Have a party
- ◆ Take a day off
- ◆ Buy lunch for the group
- ◆ Announce your advocacy success

Whatever you do to celebrate, it is very important to take the time out to congratulate yourself for a job well done. Advocacy is a long process and seeing real results can take time, so celebrating each step forward will keep you moving in the right direction.

Sharing Experiences with the Group

 Describe some other strategies to keep people motivated

B. *Advocacy Assessment Questionnaire*

1. **Advocacy Objective**

- Is your advocacy objective moving smoothly through the process or have you encountered some obstacles? What are the obstacles and how can they be overcome?

- What else can you do to move your objective forward? Would building new alliances or increasing your media outreach help move your objective through the decision-making process?

- If your objective does not seem achievable, should you alter it? What would be achievable? Could you achieve part of your objective by negotiating or compromising?

1. Advocacy Objective (Continued)

- How much does the policy/program change reflect your objective? Did you win your objective entirely, partly, or not at all?

- Can you/should you try to achieve the rest of your objective during the next decision-making cycle? Or should you move on to an entirely new advocacy objective? What are the pros and cons for each decision?

- Did the policy/program change make a difference to the problem you were addressing? If you achieved your objective in whole or in part, has it had the impact you intended?

2. **Message Delivery/Communications**

- Did your message(s) reach the key audiences? If not, how can you better reach these audiences?

- Did your audiences respond positively to your message(s)? Which messages worked? Why? Which did not work and why? How can you alter the messages which were not effective?

- Which formats for delivery worked well? Which were not effective and why? How can these formats be changed or improved?

- Did you receive any media/press coverage? Was it helpful to your effort? How could your media relations be improved?

3. **Use of Research and Data**

How did using data and research enhance your effort?

Were data presented clearly and persuasively? How could your presentation be improved?

Did your advocacy effort raise new research questions? Are more data needed to support your advocacy objective? If so, are the data available elsewhere or do you need to conduct the research?

4. **Decision-Making Process**

- How is the decision-making process more open because of your efforts?

- Will it be easier to reach and persuade the decision makers next time? Why or why not?

- How many more people/organizations are involved in the decision-making process than before you began?
How has this helped or hindered your efforts?

- How could you improve the way you move the decision-making process forward?

5. **Coalition Building**

How was your coalition successful in gaining attention to the issue and building support for the advocacy objective?

Was information distributed to coalition members in a timely fashion? How could information dissemination be improved?

Are there any unresolved conflicts in the coalition? How can these be addressed and resolved?

5. **Coalition Building** (continued)

- Is there a high level of cooperation and information exchange among coalition members? How could internal coalition relations be enhanced?

- Did the coalition gain or lose any members? How can you enlist new members and/or prevent members from leaving?

- Does the coalition provide opportunities for leadership development among members?

- How was your network helpful to your advocacy? How can you expand your network?

6. Overall Management/Organizational Issues

- Is your advocacy effort financially viable? How could you raise additional resources?

- Is the accounting system adequate? Can you provide to funders an accurate accounting of how money was spent?

- How could your financial resources have been used more efficiently?

- Were all events produced successfully and meetings run smoothly? Which were not and why not? How could logistics be improved?

- Are you or your organization overwhelmed or discouraged? How could you get more assistance? Should you narrow your goal or extend your time frame to make your effort more manageable?

Glossary

Advocacy	An action directed at changing the policies, positions or programs of any type of institution.
Alternative process	A decision-making process to change policies that exists wholly outside the official procedures stated by law or documented organizational policy.
Auction	A fundraising technique in which objects or services are donated to be sold and people bid against each other for a particular sale item. The person who bids the highest amount purchases that item. The money raised, less expenses for the event, is the sponsoring group's profit.
Audience	A person or people to whom information is conveyed or messages are directed.
Briefing	A short and clear summary of a situation or an event. A briefing can be a meeting or a set of written materials.
Coalition	A group of organizations working together in a coordinated fashion toward a common goal.
Conceptual framework	A descriptive structure that presents an idea or concept as a process.
Consensus	Agreement among a diverse group of individuals or organizations.
Contingency	A percentage of a budget that is unassigned and can be used for unexpected expenses or increases in costs that were not considered in the original budget.

Glossary

Criteria	Questions or standards used to measure progress toward a goal or compare different objectives.
Decision maker	A person who has the authority to create or change communal, organizational, or governmental policies, programs or laws.
Formal process	The official decision-making procedure that must be followed to change a policy, as set out by law or documented organizational policy.
Goal	The subject of your advocacy effort. What you hope to achieve over the next 10-20 years.
In-kind contribution	A donation of time, expertise, space or goods. These might include office space or lunch for a meeting, office supplies, technical assistance, or occasional secretarial support.
Influentials	People who have the opportunity to give their input, ideas and opinions to a decision maker, because they have a relationship with that decision maker.
Informal Process	Activities and procedures to influence the decision-making process that occur simultaneously with the formal process, but are not required by law or organizational policy.
Issue	A subject of interest for advocates or decision makers.
Jargon	The specialized language of a particular profession, trade or industry.
Leverage	To use personal or institutional influence or position to gain support and/or financial backing of other people and/or institutions in a mutual endeavor.

Glossary

Media	An organized system to deliver information to people such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, etc.
Message	A statement that aims to inform, persuade or motivate an audience.
Network	Individuals or organizations willing to assist one another or collaborate around a common topic or goal.
News release	A short description of an event, project or research study that is given to the media for broadcast or publication.
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
Objective	A defined, incremental step toward a goal. An advocacy objective aims to change the policies, programs or positions of governments, institutions or organizations relative to that goal or toward achieving that goal.
Open meeting	A meeting that any individual or organization can attend.
Overhead	The fixed operating expenses of an organization that are added to a budget to enable that organization to do business. Overhead costs may include rent, utilities, equipment, supplies, communication.
Policy	A plan, course of action, or set of regulations adopted by a government, business, or and institution, designed to influence and determine decisions or procedures.
Policy action	The steps taken to address a problem by changing or reinforcing a policy.
Policy mapping	A tool used to identify and learn about key audiences.

Glossary

Point of entry	The way to gain access to the audience you wish to reach. It might be a specific time, a particular place, or a person that can help you get the attention of your audience.
Press conference	A meeting with the media to discuss a position, decision or action and to answer questions from journalists about that position, decision, or action.
Primary audience	The decision makers with the authority to affect directly the change necessary for your objective to succeed.
Qualitative research	Research methodology that collects experiences and opinions from a subset of people to draw conclusions about the larger population. Qualitative research techniques include observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups (organized, facilitated discussion on a research topic with groups of people with similar backgrounds, age, gender, geographic location, etc.).
Quantitative research	Research methodology that takes or collects measurements and statistics from a small population to draw conclusions about the larger population. Surveys and polls like questionnaires are quantitative research techniques.
Secondary audience	Individuals and groups that can influence the decision makers (or primary audience). The opinions and actions of these “influentials” are important in achieving the advocacy objective <i>in so far as</i> they affect the opinions and actions of the decision makers.
Self-assessment	Reviewing the status or process of your own particular project or event, such as an advocacy effort, without outside assistance.

Glossary

Sit-in	A form of protest in which people gather at a particular place (such as an office, court of law, etc.) and refuse to leave until their demands are heard and/or met.
Social marketing	The systematic communication of ideas and information to people with the aim of altering individual human behavior for a social good.
Sound-bite	A short, concise summary statement that journalists can use to characterize an issue or an event when they do not have enough time or space to use a longer description.
Stakeholders	Individuals or groups that have a shared interest in or concern about the outcome of an issue.
Target	A specific goal or group that should be reached. A target audience is a particular set of people with similar characteristics that should be reached. A target message presents information in a special manner to get the attention of a specific group of people.
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development.
World Bank	The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, frequently called the "World Bank" is a United Nations agency. The Bank promotes sustainable growth and investments in people to reduce poverty and improve living standards by providing loans, technical assistance and policy guidance to help its developing-country members.

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Case Studies Needed

Describe the advocacy experience in the space provided below. Use extra pages if necessary.

The SARA Project is looking for good case studies from different sectors to use in its advocacy work. If you have or know of an advocacy experience that would make a good case study and would like to share it with us, please fill out the information below, describe the advocacy effort and return this form to the SARA Project.

Your name:

Organization:

Address

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Return to:

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