



Guidance for a More Manageable Human Rights-Based Advocacy Evaluation



New Tactics
in Human Rights

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Human rights-based advocacy initiatives work to make social change in order to improve the lives of people. Evaluation can support and help advance advocacy work. A challenge activists face, however, is that evaluation plans can quickly become too cumbersome to manage, implement, and use. Advocacy evaluation requires focused evaluation plans that are realistic to implement and highly actionable. In order to do this, we recommend the following strategies to guide activists in creating their evaluation plans.

Develop Focused Evaluation Questions

By developing a few focused evaluation questions, efforts can remain streamlined and support an achievable evaluation plan. Here are a few tips for developing evaluation questions:

A limited number of evaluation questions will help contain the evaluation plan. Evaluation plans should be guided by one to three key evaluation questions. If a plan includes something beyond the scope of the evaluation question, consider removing those components from the plan.

Evaluation questions should be focused. To do this, when developing evaluation questions, focus the question on what can realistically be measured and attributed to an advocacy initiative. Also, evaluation questions can be designed to be vague and difficult to answer, or they can be designed to address clear outcomes and be answered more efficiently. Activists should strive to develop evaluation questions that are realistic, attributable, and more efficiently answered.

Evaluation questions should address specific outcomes. Evaluation questions help clarify the intended outcome(s), the actions required to reach that outcome, and the target (who or what one intends to impact). The more tightly the evaluation question is fit to specific outcomes, the simpler and more manageable the evaluation will be.

Example:
Evaluation Questions

Unfocused
How effective is the advocacy initiative?

Focused
To what extent does the one week educational program impact parents' knowledge about girls' right to education?

Example:
Outcome Statement

As a result of our action, we hope that parents in our community will know more about girls' right to education.

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Select Strategic and Meaningful Outcomes

We have developed a [Choosing Outcomes and Success Markers worksheet](#) to support activists in determining what outcomes may be most applicable to their work. We encourage activists to use this tool to select a limited number of outcomes that align with their evaluation questions. By identifying outcomes, activists can measure their progress towards achieving their advocacy goals. It allows activists to better understand the impact they are having and where they could strengthen their initiative, or need to change course. While there are many outcomes to choose from, keeping the number of selected outcomes limited will help keep the evaluation realistic to implement. Also, activists should remember to use evaluation questions to guide outcome selection; this will help assure that outcomes are targeted, meaningful, and useful for the advocacy initiative.

Example : A Clear Success Marker

At the end of the one week training, %80 of parents will have a higher score on a verbal test of their knowledge of girls' right to education than they did before the course.

Select Clear Success Markers for Outcomes

Once an outcome has been selected, it is important to establish a way that your campaign will measure its success for that outcome. As a part of our [Choosing Outcomes and Success Markers worksheet](#) we developed a strategy for selecting flexible success markers for this purpose. Setting success markers in this way not only helps demonstrate success and assure accountability, success markers also help focus how evaluation data is used and analyzed. If there are clear and agreed upon success markers, your campaign can decide exactly what data needs to be collected and how to assess that information. Success Markers need to be established before a campaign takes a particular action in order to be useful for advocacy evaluation.

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Identify Intended Users & Uses of Evaluation Information

Evaluation data is only as valuable as how it is used in practice. Too often, lots of time, energy, and money is spent collecting data that will never be used. To avoid this, as a part of evaluation planning, activists should identify who will use their evaluation findings and how that information will be used. Some evaluation data could have multiple uses and users. This information may reshape the evaluation questions and the evaluation plan. The intended users and uses of data will influence the types of questions asked, what sorts of data is collected, how data will be collected, and how the results will be reported. Once the work of identifying intended users and uses is done, it is time to streamline the evaluation plan by removing any components that don't have a specified intended user or use. This is a powerful way to assure an evaluation is useful to the advocacy work and to keep the evaluation plan contained.

Examples:

Users and Uses of Evaluation Information

Users and Uses #1

Internal staff and volunteers want to know if their outreach plan is reaching parents of young girls. They will use this information to inform their initiative and modify their outreach strategy.

Users and Uses #2

Funders of the organization are concerned about whether the initiative is a good use of their funding and want to learn more about the scope of the initiative's outreach.

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Identify the Evaluation Report Format

Activists should select the most appropriate and efficient medium for sharing evaluation findings. Evaluations can be far more manageable and impactful if the reporting medium is tailored to the audience and in the most efficient format. Spending the time and resources to write a long, formal report is wasteful if no one will read it (and if it is not required). Consider more resource-efficient alternatives such as newsletters, memos, infographics, highlights, briefings, and e-mail updates.

Examples: Report Formats

Since internal program staff and volunteers are very busy, the advocacy organization holds brief quarterly meetings to debrief evaluation results, focusing on the findings most relevant for informing the advocacy initiative.

A formal report is required by the funder; so, the team creates a formal report in the required format.

An infographic is developed to share with parents and community members. This conveys information in a concise, simple, and understandable way.

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Work Within Available Resources

Activists often need to digest knowledge and act quickly, usually with limited material resources or access to trained evaluators. Accordingly, while planning an evaluation, activists should continuously keep in mind the resources available (and not available) for evaluation. An ambitious evaluation plan cannot serve advocacy work if there isn't the capacity to carry it out.

Time, skills, available resources, and desire to complete evaluation tasks should all be considered at each point in evaluation planning. It is helpful to plan who will complete tasks and when they will complete them, in order to assure adequate staffing.

To help identify organizational strengths and gaps in evaluation capacity, we have developed a Human Rights Advocacy Evaluation Capacity Assessment. Assessing and working within available resources is a powerful way to keep an evaluation realistic and contained.

Example: Resource Gap

#1 After gathering outreach data for the one week educational program with parents, a volunteer creates an infographic for community sharing but program staff realize they do not have sufficient funding to print it.

#2 The campaign decided on a success marker that requires data about girls' attendance at school in their community. The campaign cannot access government data about school attendance, and no one on the campaign team has the specialized skills to design and conduct an appropriate community survey.

