



Published on National Council of Nonprofits (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org>)

Original URL: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/everyday-advocacy/evaluating-advocacy>

Evaluating Advocacy

In [*The Elusive Craft of Evaluating Advocacy*](#), the authors reinforce how challenging it can be to evaluate advocacy - unless you take a long term view.

Being aware of incremental progress is key to measuring progress in the advocacy arena.

It's helpful when evaluating advocacy to identify what's working - or not - so that a nonprofit can make strategic course corrections. Learning from the experiences of other nonprofits that have engaged in advocacy campaigns can give your nonprofit ideas to try and suggest effective ways of demonstrating that progress is being made.

Evaluation of advocacy efforts requires flexible benchmarks because successful advocacy activities can be "measured" in a range of ways, from changed lives to improved public policies; from enhanced communication between nonprofits and lawmakers to helpful legislation passed or unhelpful laws averted. Whatever "success" looks like for your nonprofit's advocacy activities, don't be discouraged, because progress is generally incremental.

Some suggest that as a starting point before diving into an advocacy campaign, it's helpful to assess the nonprofit's advocacy capacity so that, if needed, capacity issues can be addressed in advance. Being ready is half the battle. Among the

reports and free tools linked below are resources to help charitable nonprofits (and grantmakers that fund advocacy) evaluate the current capacity of a nonprofit for advocacy, as well as those that suggest ways to measure progress. Other resources identify benchmarks and suggest what to monitor, ways to collect data, and how to communicate the results to funders and others.

Board members as advocates

Another way to look at progress and measure outcomes in advocacy activities is to monitor, “Who are our nonprofit’s advocates?” Is your nonprofit’s board serving as an advocate for the nonprofit’s mission? There is growing awareness that board members are among a nonprofit’s most important – and potentially most influential – advocates.

- Help your nonprofit’s board members [Stand for Your Mission](#).

Additional Resources

- [Bolder Advocacy - Benchmarks for Advocacy evaluation](#) (Alliance for Justice).
- [Advocacy Progress Planner](#) - An online tool for advocacy planning and evaluation (Aspen Institute)
- [Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts](#) (ORS Impact)
- [User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning](#) (Packard Foundation)