Theory, models, and instruments to conduct effective advocacy and policy change evaluation

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June 14, 2017
‘TURBULENT POLICY LANDSCAPE’
OUR PROJECT

• Curate the field of advocacy and policy change (APC) evaluation:
  ✓ 2014 Aspen/UCSF APC Evaluation Survey (N = AEA 106 evaluators, 7% AEA response rate, 9% APC TIG)
  ✓ Six evaluation case studies
  ✓ Review of tool-kits, models, instruments

• Strengthen the link between the scholarship on advocacy, public policy, nonprofit management, and evaluation practice
DESIRED OUTCOMES

• Advance individual evaluation practice, particularly
  ✓ Substantive knowledge of ‘advocacy’ and ‘policy’
  ✓ Appropriate and rigorous designs
  ✓ Partnerships with advocacy, funders, decision-makers

• Advance the **field** of advocacy and policy change evaluation

  “Bringing to bear scholarship, models, resources, and examples of useful evaluation designs and tools so that advocacy can fulfill its vision more effectively.”
THEORY: POLICY AND POLICYMAKING

• Achieving systems-level change to improve social and environmental conditions

• Complex, uncertain policymaking process and political context.

• Evaluators have robust foundation—theories of change, body of APC evaluation practice—on which they can draw
THEORY: ADVOCACY

“Championing or supporting a cause or a policy goal.”
(Obar, Zube, and Lampe 2012)

• A broad swath of society—individuals, organizations, policymakers, groups, social movement. But not all voices are equal.

• A vast cachet of advocacy tactics with which to mobilize a community, advance a policy.
CURRENT EVALUATION PRACTICE: ASPEN/UCSF APC EVALUATION SURVEY

• Early adopters of new instruments, emerging models
• Low use of experimental designs—6 percent
• Gaps in content expertise—policy areas, political context
• Practice dominated by health policy but APC evaluators work in multiple policy arenas
• Funding—a perennial concern
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy Activities</th>
<th>Percent of Aspen/UCSF Survey Respondents that Focus on Tactic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobilizing Citizens and Organizing Advocacy Allies</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition building</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community organizing (also referred to as community mobilization)</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protests or demonstration</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expanding Public and Policymaker Awareness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public awareness campaigns</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public will campaigns</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media advocacy</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voter outreach</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing Policymaker Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencer/influential education</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policymaker education</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion development</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political will campaigns</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobbying</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Researching and Monitoring Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy analysis and research</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulatory feedback</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget monitoring</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model legislation</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Litigation</td>
<td>2%</td>
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CURRENT EVALUATION PRACTICE: SIX EVALUATION CASES

- The *Initiative to Promote Equitable and Sustainable Transportation* (2008 – 2013) Adoption of policies for equitable and sustainable *transportation options* in the U.S.
- The *GROW Campaign* (2012 – present). A multi-national campaign to tackle *food injustice* and build a better food system that sustainably feeds a growing population.
- The *International Lands Conservation Program* (1999 – present). Conserve *old-growth forests* and extend wilderness areas in Canada and Australia;
- *Project Health Colorado* (2011-2013), a public will building campaign that engaged individuals and organizations in a statewide discussion about *health care*; and
- The *Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy (TTEP) Initiative* (2008-2013). Pass or expand formal and informal *smoke-free policies* at five Tribes.
SAMPLE CASE EVALUATION:
The TRIBAL TOBACCO EDUCATION AND POLICY (TTEP) INITIATIVE

• Advocacy strategy and tactics: local-level advocacy capacity building, community education, and passage of smoke-free policies

• Design:
  ▶ Formative and summative. Included a logic model
  ▶ Participatory approach to facilitate strategic learning (e.g., “sharing sessions”) sensitive to cultural context and historical antecedents
  ▶ Mixed-methods: web-based monthly data collection, media analysis, technical assistance survey, dialoguing sessions, spider diagrams, Most Significant Change stores, Aspen Policy Mapping tool

• Dissemination: Site reports, 2-page Community Change stories, annual meetings at sites to reflect and celebrate. Shared locally and nationally.
APC EVALUATION DESIGN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Partner with funders, advocates early and often
- Determine the evaluator role
- Know the initiative and its context—clarify terms and definitions
- Embrace initiative complexity and consider different evaluation models
- Use a theory of change and/or logic model to advance stakeholder understanding
- Refer to the repository of advocacy and policy change outcomes
- Balance attribution and contribution, prove vs. improve
- Address challenges to design and issues of rigor
- Engage in effective, continuous communications
FRAMING THE APC EVALUATION

Strengthening advocacy, grant-making, and policymaking.

- Tailored APC inputs, outputs, outcomes, impacts and indicators
- AEA Guiding Principles for Evaluators
- Experimental design
  - Quasi-experimental design
  - Non-experimental designs
- Traditional and unique evaluation methods
TRADITIONAL AND UNIQUE EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Advocacy capacity:
- Expertise
- Partnerships
- Leadership
- Resources

Problem recognition:
- Public and policymaker awareness

Agenda setting:
- Issue saliency and policymaker support

Policy formulation:
- Analysis of policy solutions

Policy adoption:
- Policymaker support
- Selection of policy proposal

Policy implementation:
- Developing the blueprint for action

Policy evaluation:
- Systems change
- Changing Lives
- Expanding Democracy
- Social Norms

Surveys
Interviews
Observations
Case Studies
Advocacy capacity assessments
Policymaker instruments
Media analyses
Financial analyses
Policy analysis
Document review

Policymaking Stage Model
ROLE OF THE EVALUATOR

- Informing advocate, funder strategic learning to increase advocacy effectiveness
- Building an evaluation culture and strengthening advocate evaluation capacity
- Informing funder grant-making
- Educating decision-makers
EVALUATOR AS ADVOCATE?
ADVANCING INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION PRACTICE, ADVANCING THE FIELD

- ‘Mindful’ evaluation practice – honest self-appraisal of advocacy, political, and policymaking acumen
- Bridge-building to advance the field
- Creating vehicles and venues for sharing
- Link evaluation practice and findings to the scholarship on advocacy effectiveness, models of change
THANK YOU!

- Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program
- Center for Evaluation Innovation
- Community of APC evaluators
- Evaluation ‘pioneers’
- Advocates and funders

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