

## Outcomes and Assessment Methods for Policy and System Change Efforts

This document is meant to serve as a resource to identify and choose appropriate assessment methods to measure project outcomes and impacts. It is important to first understand the various components of any program or initiative: inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

**INPUTS**

**ACTIVITIES**

**OUTPUTS**

**OUTCOMES**

- SHORT-TERM
- INTERMEDIATE
- LONG-TERM

**Inputs** are the resources, including staff, staff-time, money, facilities, equipment, supplies, etc used in delivering a program

**Activities or Strategies** are the tasks performed using the inputs to fulfill program objectives i.e. the strategies and techniques used for program implementation.

**Outputs** are the direct products of program activities and represent the volume of work accomplished i.e. number of classes taught, meetings organized, participants served, etc.

**Outcomes** are **impacts or changes** for individuals, groups or populations as a result of new policies being established or by participating in program activities. Outcomes can often be confused with activities and/or outputs. An **outcome is not the volume of work accomplished** i.e. number of classes held, participants served or level of participant satisfaction.

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The impact and success of policy and systems change related work is often not visible in the short-term and may take many years to come to fruition. So progress towards long-term policy and systems change goal can often be measured through incremental or short-and intermediate-term outcomes i.e. the changes or interim steps that might be achieved on the way to long-term policy change.

Given below is a menu of changes or outcome categories that can result from efforts focused on policy and system change, a listing of activities that may enable each of the changes to occur and some sample methods to assess impacts. This list is not exhaustive and is only meant to serve as a resource for applicants to identify and develop methods to assess the effectiveness and impact of their policy and advocacy strategies.

## **EXAMPLES OF OUTCOME CATEGORIES AND ASSESSMENT METHODS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE EFFORTS**

Policy and systems change work can result in the following outcomes:

<b>1. SHIFT IN SOCIAL NORMS</b>	
Examples of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in awareness</li> <li>- Increased agreement on the definition of a problem (e.g., common language)</li> <li>- Changes in beliefs</li> <li>- Changes in attitudes</li> <li>- Changes in values</li> <li>- Changes in the salience of an issue Increased alignment of campaign goal with core societal values</li> <li>- Changes in public behavior of targeted population</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Framing issues</li> <li>- Media campaign</li> <li>- Message development (e.g., defining the problem, framing, naming)</li> <li>- Development of trusted messengers and champions</li> </ul>
Example of assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- pre- and post-tests</li> <li>- focus groups</li> <li>- policymaker/community surveys</li> <li>- Testimonials</li> </ul>
<b>2. STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
Examples of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved management of organizational capacity of organizations</li> <li>- Improved strategic abilities of organizations</li> <li>- Improved capacity to communicate and promote policy and systems change messages</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership development,</li> <li>- Organizations capacity building trainings,</li> <li>- Communication skill building</li> <li>- Applied skill building,</li> <li>- Strategic planning skills</li> </ul>
Example of assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge and skills survey</li> <li>- Number of community and legislative presentations</li> <li>- Number of community members and policymakers trained and/or engaged on an issue.</li> </ul>

<b>3. STRENGTHENED BASE OF SUPPORT ORGANIZED TO ADVANCE POLICY</b>	
Examples of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased level of collaboration (e.g., coordination)</li> <li>- Increased number of partners supporting an issue</li> <li>- Strategic alliances with important partners (e.g., stronger or more powerful relationships and alliances)</li> <li>- Increased public involvement on an issue</li> <li>- Increased awareness of issue among selected groups (e.g., policy makers, general public)</li> <li>- Increased level of actions taken by champions of an issue or policymakers</li> <li>- Increased media coverage and visibility of the campaign message.</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership or partnership development</li> <li>- Coalition building,</li> <li>- Media campaigns,</li> <li>- Community education,</li> <li>- Community engagement and outreach campaigns</li> <li>- Policy analysis,</li> <li>- Policy impact statements</li> </ul>
Example of assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of testimonials at hearings,</li> <li>- Level of public attendance at community meetings or forums,</li> <li>- Level of engagement by public through electronic platforms,</li> <li>- Number of signatures on petitions or policy platforms</li> <li>- Level of media coverage</li> </ul>
<b>4. IMPROVED SOCIAL OR PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS</b>	
Examples of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved social and physical conditions (e.g., poverty, education, access, health, etc.)</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct interventions through new or pilot programs,</li> <li>- Services or infrastructure to improve environments and facilitate healthy choices and behaviors.</li> </ul>
Example of assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Client feedback surveys,</li> <li>- Interviews with those using programs,</li> <li>- Pre- and post-tests,</li> <li>- Focus groups</li> </ul>
<b>5. POLICY LEVEL CHANGE</b>	
Examples of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy Support</li> <li>- Policy Development</li> <li>- Policy Adoption (e.g., ordinance, legislation, legally-binding agreements)</li> <li>- Policy Implementation</li> <li>- Policy Enforcement</li> </ul>

Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research and data collection</li> <li>- Community assessments</li> <li>- Issue briefs or white papers</li> <li>- Policy recommendations</li> <li>- Pilot programs</li> <li>- Educational briefings</li> </ul>
Example of assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Circulation of reports and data,</li> <li>- Adoption of policies,</li> <li>- Level of action taken by workgroups or committees related to issue, etc.</li> </ul>

Please contact the Health System staff if you need assistance with identifying outcomes and methods to assess and track outcomes and impacts.

This document was adapted from the following resources:

- “Policy and Advocacy Change”, The Evaluation Exchange. (2007) Harvard Family Research Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Vol XIII (1). Accessed from <http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/original/application/6bdf92c3d7e970e7270588109e23b678.pdf>
- “A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy”. (2007). Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation by Organizational Research Services. Accessed from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-aguidetomeasuringpolicyandadvocacy-2007.pdf>