Title: Assessing Philanthropy's Role in Policy Change: A Review of the Literature

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Objective: This paper is a review of the literature on philanthropy's role in policy advocacy. The goal of this review is to outline the terrain of policy advocacy, including key themes and strategies, that can be used to produce actionable steps foundations can take to assist their partners in the quest for social change. Therefore, this synthesis of the literature includes research-based recommendations that foundations can use to guide process improvements to aid their partners engaged in policy advocacy efforts. This executive brief highlights some of the main findings presented in the accompanying literature paper.

Problem Statement: Philanthropic foundations are increasingly interested in advocacy activities at the local, state, and federal levels (Reckhow, 2013; Scott et al., 2009). The U.S. political context is embedded with challenges that make advocacy work difficult (Stokes, 2017) and the power and influence grantmakers hold (Ferrare & Reynolds, 2016) in the advocacy arena leave many members of society skeptical of philanthropy's involvement in policy advocacy (Bettis & Pepin, 2019). Given policy advocacy's non-linearity, traditional methods of evaluation (e.g., controlled experiments) are inadequate. Currently, there are more than 100,000 foundations operating in the U.S. and policy advocacy (and related programs) consistently rank at the top of funders' giving priorities (The Foundation Center, 2020). With total foundation giving approaching 80 billion dollars, how can foundations make the most of their giving to support policy advocacy initiatives across policy venues, issue areas, and despite the array of challenges that exist?

Thus, this literature review was guided by the following research questions:
1. How does the literature define success and impact in *policy advocacy*? What are key points of success and impact for stakeholders *throughout the grant cycle/partnership*? What are notable examples of failure in policy advocacy and how/why were these cases defined as failures?
2. What are some examples of quantitative and qualitative indicators of success in policy advocacy used by grantees and funders? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these indicators? How do measures of success, failure, and impact differ *throughout the term of the partnership*, across investment sectors, types of nonprofit organizations, or types of funded projects?
3. What methods for evaluating grantee/funder impact in advocacy and policy change does the literature offer sector stakeholders and how does the literature identify the utility of such methods? Does the utility of an evaluative framework vary and, if so, how?

Theme 1: How does the literature define policy goals, success, impact, and failure?

This section provides examples of how sources define the key terms of interest. When scanning the literature for definitions of success, impact, and failure, it became evident that defining policy goals was important, so that term was added.

- **Policy Goals:**
  - o "Policy goals are what the advocacy strategy ultimately is trying to achieve in the policy arena" (Coffman, 2009, p. 6).

- **Advocacy Impact:**
  - o Advocacy impact is the broad change one wants to achieve in society as a result of the policy advocacy effort (Parrish, 2008).
  - o Advocacy impacts "are the big changes and benefits sought for people, services, or systems as a result of policy change or policy goals" (Coffman, 2009, p. 6).

For example, advocating for policymakers to adopt programs that create financial incentives for states to eliminate segregation would be a goal. The impact would be that, over time, long held civil rights aspirations are met (in part) by eliminating segregation in schools (Scott et al., 2020).

- **Advocacy Success:**
  - o Success in policy advocacy is the attainment of a favorable policy outcome (Krekoski, 2009).
  - o Success in policy advocacy may occur at the culmination of a policy advocacy project and at incremental markers throughout the lifespan of a policy advocacy activity (Parrish, 2008).

- **Advocacy Failure:**
  - o Failure in policy advocacy is the inability to achieve a policy goal (Teles & Schmitt, 2011).
  - o 'Constructive failure' is defined as the justification of failure in advocacy because of the knowledge it creates that can be used to improve processes (Tompkins-Stange) or to achieve the goal through other tactics (Teles & Schmitt, 2011).

Advocacy success and failure are assessed frequently to learn if goals are being met in route to policy impact.

Key Recommendations:
- Take time to build relationships between foundations, nonprofit leaders and staff, and communities that will be directly impacted by advocacy efforts to learn the policy terrain.
- Build knowledge and expertise of the nonprofit's advocacy terrain. Doing so is instrumental in identifying policy goals, measuring impact and success, and thinking through the repercussions if policy advocacy efforts are unsuccessful.

Theme 2: What are examples of qualitative and quantitative indicators of success in policy advocacy?

This section provides examples of how sources across the environmental scan of the literature identified intermediate markers of success. While Table 1 provides several examples of quantitative and qualitative indicators of success, this list is in no ways exhaustive. Any indicator of success selected will depend on the advocacy issue, the advocacy activity, and other factors that are unique from one advocacy project to another.

Table 1: What are multiple measures of success and how do funders identify them?[1]

Multiple Measures of Success		
Qualitative Indicators of Success	Quantitative Indicators of Success	Sources
• Number and quality of relationships built with key stakeholders • Outreach conducted in directly impacted communities • Type of communications held with decisionmakers • Number and quality of expert testimony given • Quality of life changes occurring for targeted populations • Personal growth of nonprofit leaders (e.g., skills gained, expertise acquired) • Advocates influence on key policy audiences (e.g., policymakers, the media, voters change rhetoric) • Strength of coalition networks built and the extent of network activity	• Passing state ballot initiatives • Passing incremental legislation • Gaining targeted number of co-sponsors (legislators, regulators, decisionmakers) • Number and quality of compelling research produced and disseminated • Number of opposing laws and regulations blocked or averted • New donors accrued and types of donors gained (individual, foundation, corporate, etc.) • Number of champions recruited for the policy issue(s)	Bugg-Levine, 2019; Coffman, 2009; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Lewis, 2015; National Council of Nonprofits, n.d.; Parrish, 2008; Robson et al., 2020; Save the Children, n.d.; Scott et al., 2017; Shanks & SoRelle, 2021; Stachowiak, 2007; Teles & Schmitt, 2011; and Tompkins-Stange, 2018.
Multiple indicators of success are identified through: • In-depth conversations with nonprofit grant leaders and staff • A thoughtful consideration of the advocacy terrain, including the geographical context, the political context, or the timeframe in which the issue is advanced • Relationship and trust building between funders, advocates, and the communities that will be directly impacted by policy advocacy		

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[1] The items listed in this chart are necessarily incomplete. The multiple measures of success for a policy advocacy project will vary depending on a range of factors, including the political conditions, the communities served and impacted, and the specific policy issues. Further, "qualitative" and "quantitative" category labels may also have its limitations; there are qualitative dimensions to some quantitative indicators and vice versa. Foundations, alongside their partners, should apply an analytical lens to determine which indicators are right to track and evaluate.

Key Recommendations:
- Adopt multiple measures of success instead of focusing on a single policy goal.
- Incorporate this "multiple measures" framework when evaluating advocacy projects.

Theme 3: What methods for evaluating impact in advocacy and policy change exist for foundations?

This section provides foundations with 3 sample evaluative designs to consider when measuring policy advocacy success (see Table 2). These designs may be incorporated when evaluating a range of policy issues, project activities, and indicators of policy advocacy success.

Table 2: Sample Evaluation Designs

Method	Description	Use
Bellwether Reviews	Bellwethers are individuals whose perspectives are influential on the policy advocacy issue and these reviews can be repeated over time	Best suited to track political will (level of support for a policy issue), and can be used with policymakers, funders, members of the media, researchers/think tanks, other advocates in the network, and other stakeholders across a broad range of political issues
Intense Period Debriefs	IPDs gather in-depth data and real-time information on key shifts in policy advocacy	Tracks what occurred during a policy window opening by targeting key groups, individuals, and stakeholders that occupy different positions in the advocacy terrain
System Mapping	Designed to assess organizations, including individual organizations or relationships among multiple organizations or actors	Informant interviews and network analysis conducted to codify how an organization's network is structured, including how people, groups, or institutions are connected and the strengths of those connections

Key Recommendations:
- Be cautious when relying on a single evaluative technique as results can be misleading.
- Adopt a more expansive evaluative framework that includes qualitative assessment methods like in-depth interviews, case studies, and focus groups that can help determine how and why an advocacy project was successful.
- Evaluation is an iterative process and can happen at multiple points in the advocacy journey. When appropriate, use evaluations as a strategic learning opportunity to course correct (e.g., track new indicators of success) to achieve policy goals and long-term impact.