



INNOVATION NETWORK: UNDERSTANDING THE PUBLIC POLICY LANDSCAPE: LESSONS FROM A RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

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Case #1: This case examines the application of the Framework for Public Policy Advocacy in a retrospective evaluation examining the impact of an advocacy grantmaking initiative.

Context: Purpose of the Evaluation

Innovation Network has played an integral role in advancing the field of advocacy evaluation since 2005. Over the years, we have partnered with various foundations across the U.S. to direct field-building initiatives into frameworks and methodologies that are most effective at evaluating policy change efforts. In January 2013, Innovation Network served as the advocacy evaluation expert on the evaluation of a national initiative aimed at impacting the economic security of low income workers in the U.S.

Through this initiative, the funder awarded over \$50 million in grants to various organizations working to advance the advocacy goals and priorities of this effort. During the lifespan of this initiative, approximately 110 grants were given to 80 organizations. **Our charge was to organize and make sense of the data presented in various grantee reports to understand the advocacy strategies implemented by grantees at the individual level and to start discerning patterns across groups.**

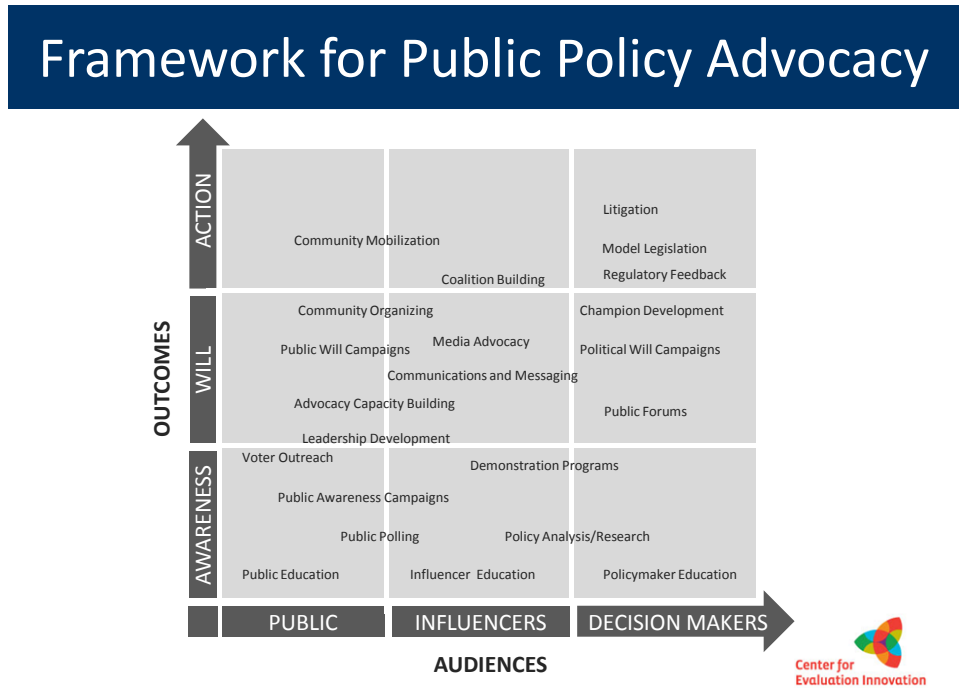
Our Process

CREATING VISUAL GUIDES

This process involved conducting an in-depth document review of over 80 grant summary reports. These narrative reports contained rich information about the activities of each grantee, including the advocacy strategies used to impact the economic security of the target population. Given the high volume of qualitative information, our first challenge was to organize data from the grant summary reports in a way that captured information specific to each grantee's advocacy related activities.

We turned to the Center for Evaluation Innovation's **Framework for Public Policy Advocacy** (the Framework), a comprehensive "map" of advocacy strategies that may be implemented in an advocacy campaign. Using the Framework, we realized, would allow us to systematize the information so that we could look at the advocacy strategies employed by each grantee individually, as well as step back and take a broader view across the initiative.

Figure 1. Framework for Public Policy Advocacy

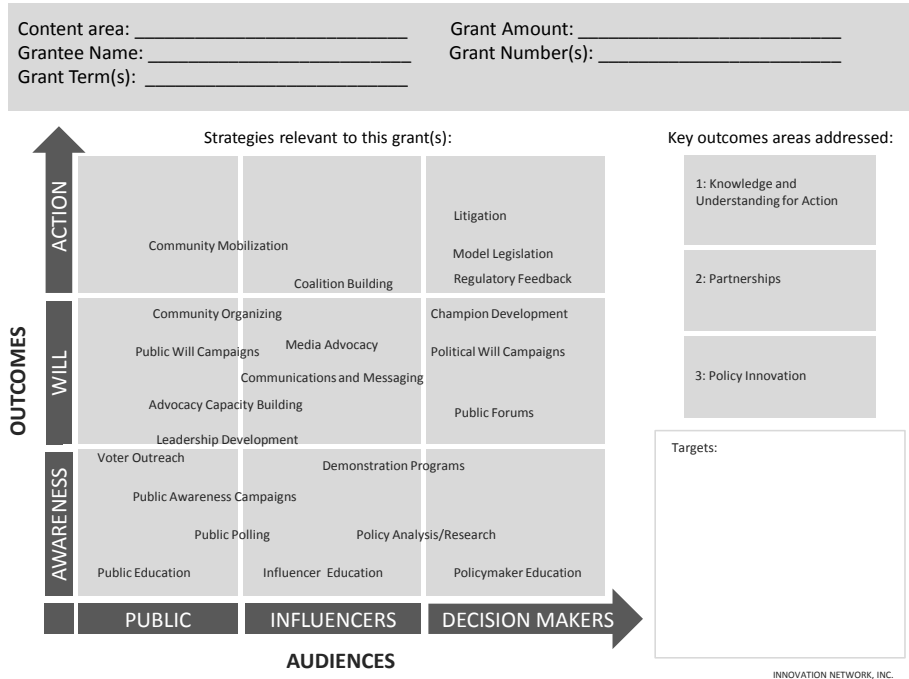


Creating visual maps of advocacy strategies allowed us to chart information to recognize patterns in the data and select points of interest for further inquiry.

To create these visual guides, we followed these three steps:

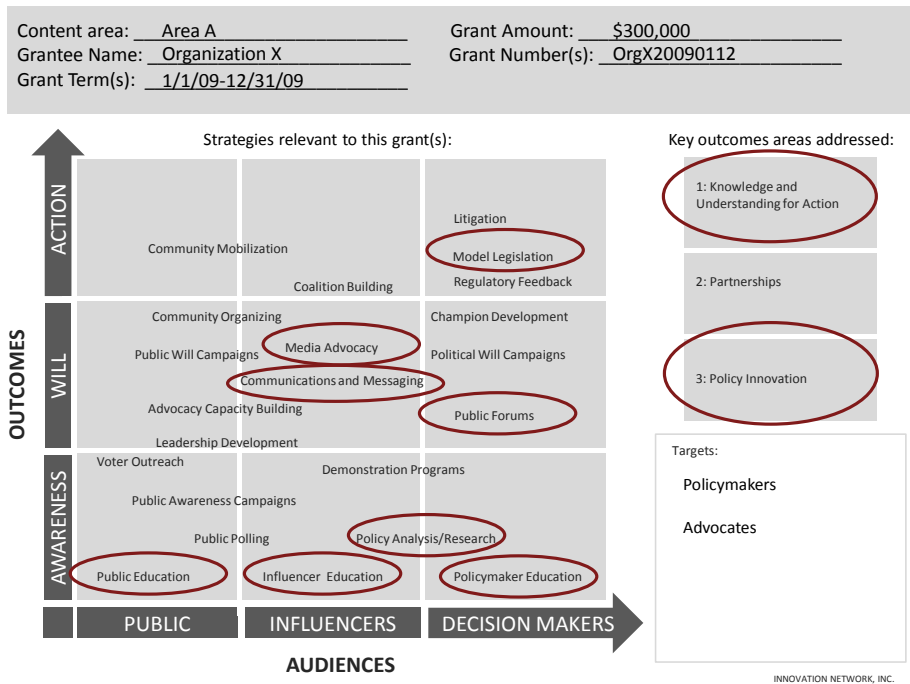
Step 1. We created a top sheet for each grant summary report.

Figure 2. Grant Summary Top Sheet



Using a simple paper-and-pencil process, we recorded key information about the grantee, advocacy strategies recorded in the grant summary reports, and other information about the grant activities (see Figure 3). This is what a completed top sheet looks like for Organization X:

Figure 3. Completed Top Sheet for Organization X

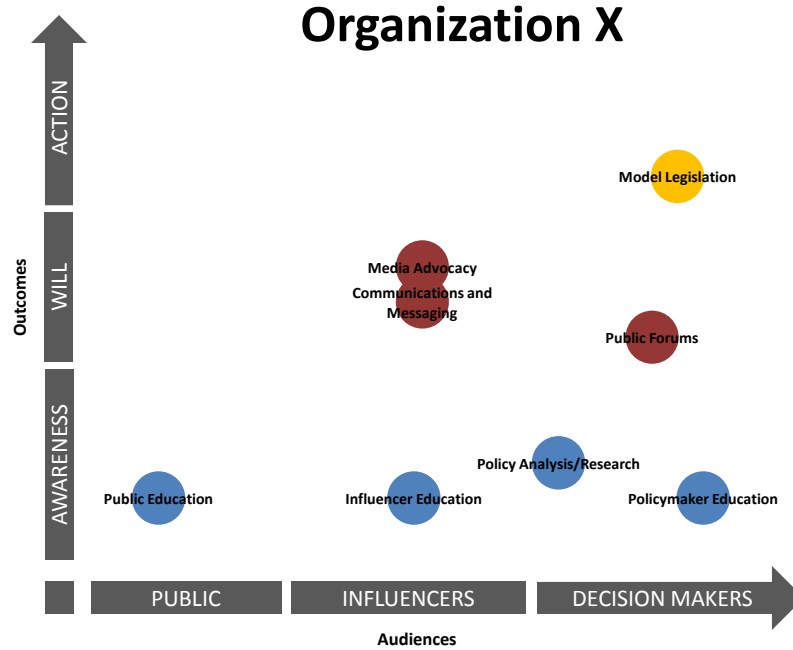


Step 2. We manually entered this data into an Excel spreadsheet, where it would be easy to manipulate and generate visual guides of the advocacy strategies used by grantees.

Step 3. We created a series of bubble charts (a chart option in Excel) to graphically display the information presented in the grant summary reports. We selected bubble charts for two reasons:

1. The ability to plot data along an X and Y axis. This was important because it allowed us to graph information along the two dimensions of the Framework—Audiences and Outcomes.
2. The capacity to show the presence and frequency of advocacy strategies for a single grantee and across various groupings of the grantees.

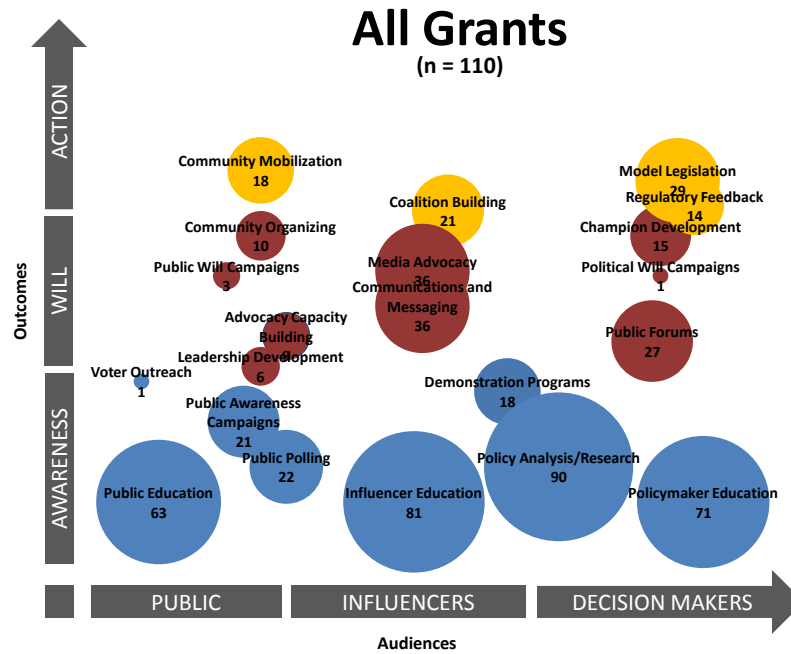
Figure 4. Bubble Chart 1: Grantee Level



This bubble chart highlights the advocacy strategies used by one specific grantee. We color coded the bubbles based on the types of advocacy strategies implemented by the grantee. For example, the blue bubbles represent *awareness* building strategies. The red bubbles represent strategies that aim to change or increase *will*, and the yellow bubbles represent strategies centered around *action*.

This type of chart provided an at-a-glance view of the specific advocacy strategies implemented by a grantee.

Figure 5. Bubble Chart 2: Aggregate Level



This chart illustrates an aggregate overview of the advocacy related strategies employed by all the grantees in this initiative. Each bubble is labeled with the strategy and the number of grants using the strategy. The size of the bubble directly correlates with this number. Looking at this chart, we see that most of the grantees are focused on strategies that target *awareness building*. Grantees that moved into the *will-building* arena generally held public forums or engaged in media or communications work. Fewer grants ventured into the *action* area, but among those that did, many offered some kind of model legislation.

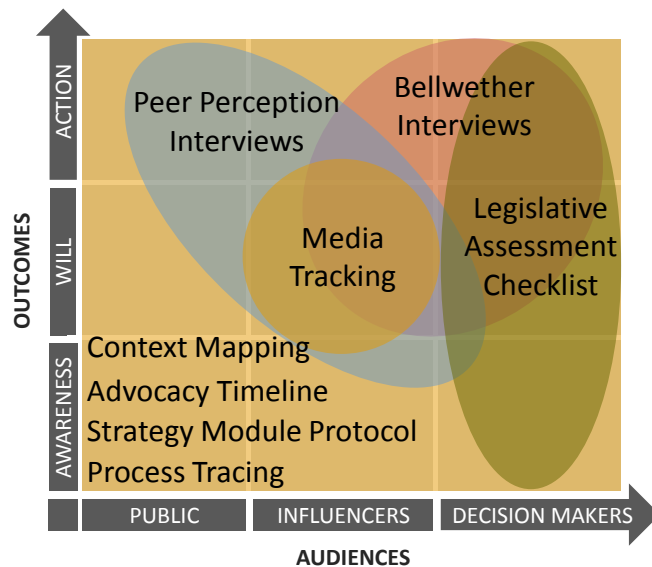
This type of chart helped answer the following types of questions:

- 1) Who/what groups were the primary targets of grantee organizations (x-axis, Audiences)?
- 2) What types of strategies did this grantmaker fund?
- 3) Given the spread of grantee strategies, where does it make sense to focus for case study reflection?

DEVELOPING DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The information presented in the bubble charts allowed us to see patterns across different subsets of grantees. Reviewing the bubble charts and the Framework for Public Policy Advocacy, we mapped out different data collection methodologies and tools that would be relevant based on the areas of the Framework that the grantees were focused on, as well as the areas that were of particular interest to the funder (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Data Collection Methodology Grid



As you can see in the above visual, different data collection tools collected information that informed different parts of the Framework.

Specific data collection tools are detailed below.

Data Collection Methodologies/Instruments

Strategy Module Protocol. This is an interview protocol designed to capture information from the grantee across the entire Framework for Public Policy Advocacy. The evaluator using this interview protocol can pick and choose modules to use based on the advocacy strategies implemented by the grantee.

Bellwether Interview Protocol. This interview protocol targets influential people in the public and private sectors whose positions require that they are politically informed and that they track a broad range of policy issues.¹

Peer Perception Interview Protocol. This interview protocol assesses a grantee’s overall contribution towards an advocacy success from the perspective of a peer organization.

Media Tracking Guidelines. These guidelines specifically focus on advice for keyword generation, instructions for implementation, advice on capturing information from ethnic news media, and tips for organizing media tracking spreadsheets.

¹ For more on the Bellwether methodology, see: http://www.innonet.org/resources/files/Unique_Methods_Brief.pdf

[Legislative Assessment Checklist](#). This document provides the evaluator with a checklist to assess the different stages of a legislative effort, from planning through implementation.

Analysis and Mapping Guides

[Context Mapping Guide](#). The goal of this guide is to better understand the contextual environment (e.g., political, social, and/or economic) in which the grantee was operating. This guide helps the evaluator to understand who are key players, allies, and opponents of the work, and what barriers and opportunities the grantee is facing.

[Advocacy Timeline Guide](#). This document provides a framework to outline the succession of major occurrences along the continuum of a particular advocacy campaign. The information documented in an advocacy timeline may be grantee specific or it may cover all important events related to a specific campaign.

[Process Tracing Analysis](#). The purpose of this analysis is to understand the extent to which outcomes have occurred, as well as the level of influence of the grantee organization and/or group of grantees in contributing to an advocacy success.²

Using these tools, evaluators gained information across the entire Framework—sometimes through multiple tools targeting different perspectives. Triangulation of the data in this way was important to the evaluators to understand grantee activities and contribution to success.

Key Insights

- Using the Framework for Public Policy Advocacy allowed us to understand and communicate the work of this cohort of grantees. Given the large number of grantees, the Framework provided a **systematic way to sort the grantees for further analysis based on the type of advocacy work** they were engaged in.
- The Framework provided a structure around which to **visually communicate advocacy strategy information**. By using bubble charts as a method to make sense of the data, key stakeholders were able to quickly understand the breadth and depth of the strategies pursued by this group of grantees. The bubble charts allowed both funder and evaluator to have a quick, at-a-glance visual of the key advocacy strategies supported in this initiative.
- The Framework provided additional guidance in **developing a comprehensive data collection strategy**. We developed data collection tools based on the perspectives of different target audiences involved in the advocacy effort.

² For Claire Hutchings and Kimberly Bowman’s AEA365 post discussing Oxfam GB’s approach to process tracing, see: <http://aea365.org/blog/?p=8166>