

Data Collection for Advocacy Evaluation: The “Intense Period Debrief”

I. Overview

In the process of evaluating the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR), Innovation Network recently developed the “Intense Period De-Brief Protocol.” We present this data collection instrument in the hope that other practitioners can adapt it for their use in evaluating the activities and success of other advocacy efforts and coalitions.

The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR), a bipartisan coalition of diverse groups and national organizations advocating for comprehensive immigration reform, engaged Innovation Network to evaluate CCIR’s lobbying and grassroots efforts.¹ In recognition that policy advocacy tends to depend on numerous external factors (e.g., economic and political environment, opposing organizations) and that change often occurs when an “opportunity window” is presented, systematic application of the Intense Period Debrief tool is intended to follow the peaks and valleys of the policy advocacy cycle. The purpose of this protocol is to engage key players in a focus group shortly after a policy window—and the inevitably corresponding period of intense advocacy activity—occurs, to capture the following information:

- The public mood and political context of the opportunity window;
- What happened, and how the campaign members responded to events;
- What strategies they followed;
- Their perspective on the outcome(s) of the period’s activities; and
- How they would change their strategies going forward based on what they learned during that period.

¹ Read more about the project on our website:
http://www.innonet.org/index.php?section_id=99&content_id=466



This instrument complements other methodologies, filling gaps in information-gathering that can occur with other types of data collection instruments. The Intense Period Debrief protocol is particularly effective in gathering information on the multiple perspectives and many different stories of what happens during an intense period of a legislative campaign, especially accounts of interactions with policymakers and their staff.

II. The Intense Period Debrief Protocol

This focus group protocol is intended to elicit qualitative information from a group of key players (such as coalition leadership, staff, committees and field organizations) just after a period of intense advocacy activity.

1. Briefly describe the context of the recent intense period.

Probes:

- What events triggered this intense period of work?
- Was it related to or leading up to a legislative opportunity? Please explain.
- How would you describe the political context of this period?
- What was the general public mood on [your issue] when these events took place?

2. Describe in detail your organization's response to those events.

Probes:

- How was strategy set? Who was involved at those meetings?
- How was strategy communicated to the broader field? Who was responsible for that communication?
- Beyond strategic decisions, what roles did leadership/committees play during this intense period?
 - Probe for concrete examples

3. Which parts of your organization's response worked well? Which parts could have been improved?

Probes:

- Strategy
- Implementation
 - Coordination, task-sharing, communication, etc.
- Would you say that internal coalition dynamics helped or hindered the execution of strategy during this intense period?

4. What was the outcome of the intense period? Would you term it a victory or a defeat?

Probes:

- As a result of this intense period of activities, what new opportunities have presented themselves for the legislative campaign for [your issue] going forward?
- What insights will you take away from that experience that could inform strategy development going forward?