PROCESS IS POWERFUL:

planning and evaluation for media activists

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO METHODS AND TOOLS THAT CAN HELP STRENGTHEN THE MOVEMENT TO ADVANCE MEDIA JUSTICE

learning from
five years of projects at
CIMA:
Center for International Media Action

About This Booklet

This guide is based on five years of alliance-building projects at CIMA: Center for International Media Action. As a nonprofit organization created to support the movement for a better media and communications system, CIMA has always prioritized learning, experimentation, reflection, and sharing in our work.

The primary aim of this guide is to present an easy-to-use, movement-building resource for planning and evaluation, with an eye towards long-term change within the context of the media justice/communication rights movement. We focus on the power of process because so many of us expend considerable amounts of energy moving from fire to fire, so to speak, allowing inadequate time to reflect on how our daily work relates to our larger visions and goals. This guide is NOT a comprehensive manual to the work of planning and evaluation. Rather, we offer it with the hopes of sharing some of our tools, strategies, and lessons learned in these areas.

In particular, this guide centers on CIMA's learnings on how to build participation, strategy, and long-range frameworks through planning and evaluation. We discuss the importance of recognizing the role of power dynamics and ways to transfer power to low-income groups, people of color, and other groups/people who tend to be disenfranchised. We look to participatory principles and practices that share leadership, enable a diversity of ideas, and seek to be relevant to the lives and work of people involved. We discuss strategies for developing long-range frameworks that recognize that shifts take time, and we also consider what the interim steps and long-range goals might look like.

This guide is intended for practitioners (media and social justice activists, advocates, and allies) working to organize networks, alliances, and movement-building projects for systemic, progressive media change. We see it as a small way to advance social justice, increase equity, and build grassroots power among stakeholders.

Note

This content is not meant to be proprietary. Instead, we offer this booklet in the spirit of open source as something that we want to share. Please feel free to adapt it, copy it, and use it in whatever form works for you.

Credits

This guide was produced by CIMA: Center for International Media Action. Sections on principles and planning by Aliza Dichter and Rachel Kulick; Catherine Borgman-Arboleda and Heléne Clark contributed the sections on evaluation, in collaboration with ActKnowledge. Edited by Aliza Dichter and Elinor Nauen. Graphic Design by Marianna Trofimova (www.inch.com/~marianna/).

CIMA: Center for International Media Action works to strengthen the movement for media and communications systems to serve social justice, economic justice and human rights. CIMA helps build alliances, knowledge and strategies for structural transformation in the media and communications environment. For copies of prior CIMA publications, or more information, please visit our website: www.mediaactioncenter.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the extraordinary activists, educators and organizers we have worked with over the years whose examples and constructive criticism have been the basis of our own learning. While this booklet is CIMA's attempt to share some specific strategies that have worked for us, the insights are inherited from the on-the-ground expertise of groups such as the members of MAG-Net (Media Action Grassroots Network), the OurMedia/NuestrosMedios Network, the Boston Action Tank, the Allied Media Conference and the Rockwood Media & Communications Fellowship; the grantees of the Media Justice Fund (Funding Exchange) and the Necessary Knowledge Program (Social Science Research Council); and all the media justice and community activists who have attended meetings with us over the years. We hope you'll have the opportunity to learn about and support their work.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Principles for Practice

As activists working toward an ambitious vision of a movement to improve the systems of media and communications, we've learned that we need to attend to not just what we are going to do in our projects, but how we do it. We've learned that the oft-quoted Ghandian wisdom of "be the change you wish to see in the world" can serve as guidance for media activists if we are clear about the values we think a media system should uphold, and then ask ourselves what it looks like to apply those same values to the work we do.

Media change work tends to involve diverse stakeholders – community organizers, professional advocacy groups, policy makers, academics, funders, among others – with varied experiences, struggles, identities, and aims. The development of a guiding set of principles can be a useful tool for groups not only to articulate the values that underlie their long-range visions and goals, but also to create standards for organizing strategies and day-to-day work. By articulating their principles, groups can lay a strong foundation for deciding on what planning, evaluation and action steps they are going to follow.

However, the development and realization of a set of principles does not happen overnight. Groups need to allocate adequate time, space, and process to consider which principles might be useful in guiding their work. This process might also illuminate where organizational and individual values align and diverge; there may need to be space and facilitation to explore that. While groups may decide to include principles only where there's full consensus, it is also important to recognize differences that may surface through the process of articulating a common set of principles.

Note

There are many factors — of course — in creating successful collaborations, as well as planning and evaluation for social change, and we're only touching on a few in this guide. More than anything, we've found that this work takes **practice, patience, clear intentions, a lot of listening, and the willingness to learn from each challenge and keep going.** It also takes support, and the resource section at the end lists a number of groups and readings we've found really helpful.

Introduction: *Principles for Practice*

We at CIMA used the following steps to come up with a working list of principles and standards for how we do our work:

Articulate values

- Describe and define the nature of the system we are working towards. What are the qualities we believe the media system should embody? Discuss these in the context of how they apply to our own projects.

Learn from feedback

- Go over the comments, advice, and concerns that emerged from our projects. Write up and discuss positive feedback, appreciation, and encouragement as well as constructive criticism, push-back, and red flags.

Take our own advice

- Look back at moments where we offered recommendations or critique to others and note those as guiding points for us to follow.

Reflect and discuss together

- A facilitated retreat can be a good place to surface values and visions, and to look at where those felt either aligned or contradicted in past projects.

Get concrete

- Find examples of what it looks like to put values into practice. It might be useful to discuss past experiences where activities embodied the values and where they didn't.

Draft a statement of principles and practices

- One person might write it up, followed by review and revision by a sub-group then the full group.

Get an outside eye

- An outside editor was very helpful to make sure we were being explicit, clear, and not redundant.

Review, revise

- This step needs to be repeated as the document – and the work – evolves.

AN **EXAMPLE** OF MEDIA VALUES TO APPLY TO OUR OWN WORK

CIMA's staff and board members developed this list of principles to name both the media we are working towards and to describe how we want to shape our own work. The full version includes specific descriptions of what we mean by each item and is understood to be a work-in-progress. We offer it here as an example of what a media activist group might come up with.

See www.mediaactioncenter.org/principles for our full list.

CIMA's work is guided by the principles we believe should shape media and communications infrastructure and institutions. We aim to follow these same principles in our projects. We understand "media" as the technologies and institutions of communication, culture and information. We believe that media policies, infrastructure and practices - and our own projects - should be directed to create future systems that are:

I. Connective and multi-directional

II. Accountable, transparent and responsible

III. Universal and accessible and affordable

IV. Creative and expansive

V. Diverse and inclusive and representative

VI. Relevant to democracy and the broad exchange of ideas and political perspectives as a human right

VII. Social-justice driven

VIII. Open and free

IX. Public-interest and community-based

X. Ecologically & economically sustainable

A note on process and "all the time it takes!"

Committees... Group opinions...The cycle of review, reflect and revise. These all take up precious time, and sometimes feel slow, repetitive, taking time away from our real work. Not surprisingly, the process of planning and evaluation can often face resistance, from participants as well as the realities of the clock and calendar.

The point is not to delay our work, but to find ways of working that advance our goals at every step.

When we are planning or evaluating a project, it might feel as though we are not "taking action" – but if we are doing these things in ways that build power, deepen strategies and spread leadership, then this group work is the work of making change.

Of course, the urgencies of political opportunities or crises, and the pressures of funding, are a very real context for social-change work.

The purpose of grounding our work in principled practice, strategic planning and evaluation is so that we can develop the knowledge and methods to respond quickly and effectively to situations without being thrown off course and without being derailed from our long-range goals.

Sometimes we will need to remind ourselves that an emphasis on "expedience" or "pragmatism" has at times been the excuse that perpetuates the very imbalances of power and collective leadership that we are trying to counteract.

Sometimes we will need to remember a proverb we've heard attributed to both spiritual revolutionaries and surgeons: The situation is so critical, so urgent, that we must take our time and proceed with care.

And always, we need to make choices.

We need to find the balance between making decisions and building knowledge and consensus.

We need to deal with funders and partners who may object to the way we take the time we need to do things the way we think they need to happen.

We have a rapidly changing media system, and, as Martin Luther King, Jr, said, a long arc of history. As activists for media justice and communication rights, we are concerned with the evolution of not just technology and economics, but of culture and power. Planning and evaluation can be key tools to deal with both rapid change and long-term transformation.

Planning and Participation: Building and Sharing Leadership

OVERVIEW:

Whether we're planning a campaign, an event, an alliance or some other activist project, if we're ultimately looking to build the community of people involved in making change, then how we engage others is at least as important as what we are planning to do.

Specifically, this means thinking about who we need to involve, at what stage, and how to make it a meaningful and positive experience. As we developed collaborative projects, we learned firsthand that we must be explicit in how we account for differences in not only culture/values, but in access to power and resources as well.

This booklet has emerged primarily from the perspective of activists with the privilege to have paid jobs at a movement-building nonprofit as well as relationships with funders and large nonprofit groups. Our learning about building alliances and navigating power dynamics is grounded in these experiences. While we hope that our tools and insights will be generally helpful, we recognize that the relevance of many of our points may vary according to people's standpoints and the context of their work.

Some points in this section are lessons from our experience and reflections, and many are from the guidance of organizers and activists we've been fortunate to work with and learn from.

We've found that in the throes of activity we often overlook advice we've received, so we began developing checklists and other documents as a way to keep those points at the forefront in our planning. You might find that creating your own checklist or statement of practices is a good frame of reference for members of your group to keep on track with the values and priorities you've established.

On collaboration & power...

- Rather than defining a "participatory project" as getting others to participate in our thing, we can define "participatory" as when work participates in – is relevant to – the lives and realities of the people we want to work with and support.
- Working from a social justice perspective means that we're not just treating everyone equally, but specifically prioritizing those who are too often excluded and vulnerable, and that affects how assets, time, attention, leadership, and credit are allocated.
- Time is a resource: though everyone is "swamped," how we pace our projects can have very different implications for participants depending on what other pressures and urgencies they are facing.
- Enabling connections is as valuable as building them – which means not just reaching out to a diverse group, but enabling them to connect & communicate with each other.
- Bridges aren't necessarily positive – they may actually further inequity unless imbalances and agendas are accounted for in how relations are structured.
- Co-planning means sharing control – even giving up control. If the project needs to go exactly the way we envision it, it's probably not a good case for co-planning, but if we are able to be open to new directions and ideas, building collaboration and leadership can become one of the project's strongest outcomes.

A checklist for a co-planning meeting...

(a few key points we sometimes need to remind ourselves... add your own!)

- ❑ When setting the agenda, be realistic about what can get accomplished in a single meeting.
- ❑ If the participants haven't already been working together, make time at the beginning (or even the day before if possible) for people to get to know a bit about each other, their work, why they are there.
- ❑ Present the history, context, and goals of a project right at the beginning to catch up new people. What's already been decided, what ideas need to be reviewed or newly developed?
- ❑ Make sure everyone is clear on the meeting's purpose. Especially for a planning meeting: what decisions are on the table, or what information needs to be generated or gathered. What will be the next steps after the meeting?
- ❑ Be explicit about whether the group is to make decisions that will hold, or if they are being asked to generate ideas and feedback –and if so, who will make decisions?
- ❑ Explain, or collectively decide, what will happen with what's said at the meeting, as well as with the participant list. Get group agreement on confidentiality, attribution, and sharing.
- ❑ Provide a range of ways for people to commit to additional participation, from reporting on the meeting to their organization or community to reviewing/editing notes from the meeting to active involvement in the project.
- ❑ Create a contact list so everyone attending has everyone else's contact info.
- ❑ Document the meeting, sharing a draft with all participants for corrections and provide them all with a copy. A briefer version can be developed to share with others not in attendance, if appropriate.
- ❑ Follow up with participants within three weeks of the meeting to inform them of any next steps or developments.
- ❑ ____
- ❑ ____

Planning Case Study: Creating Shared Leadership

The project: Organize the 4th annual OURMedia/NuestrosMedios conference of grassroots media scholars, advocates and practitioners and build and strengthen OM/NM as a global network.

The team: Several members of the network, mostly academics from North America and Latin America, volunteered their time to serve on committees. We raised funds for CIMA staff and one member of the network to work as lead coordinators and hired three part-time logistics organizers on location.

The challenges: How to transform the structure and culture of this informal international association with two hundred nominal members from a hub-and-spoke model with one founder driving development to a horizontally organized network with distributed leadership and shared initiative. How to collaboratively organize with an international group each representing different facets of a diverse network (and of course with limited time).

The OURMedia network began as a mini-conference of scholars focused on grassroots media around the world. It quickly expanded to a larger conference and email discussion list that also included advocates and practitioners. One of the founders did most of the work of keeping the network connected, inviting people to join, sending news through the email list and organizing the conference. She was seeking ways for the network to embody the collective leadership and active participation that many members agreed should characterize the group. While members deeply appreciated the network, they noted that competing obligations kept active involvement low beyond conferences.

However, many participants at the group's third conference showed strong interest in having a next conference that included presentations, discussion and organizing spaces, field trips and a hands-on media laboratory.

CIMA was brought on to organize the fourth conference. Our mandate was to ensure participation from members in an open and democratic process, to strengthen the emerging network and help it connect with other media-change networks. As we created committees to help with organizing, we came across challenges that we've seen frequently in other projects. Open-ended queries to the planners produced few responses and it was rare to receive concrete suggestions (e.g., for themes or activities). These folks were most likely to reply when we offered ideas to respond to. Yet when we presented examples intended to spark other ideas, people suggested only small adjustments, and when we presented a list of choices, people generally wanted to do them all.

Planning from strength...

When starting or designing a project, it's helpful to include "asset mapping" — identifying the resources, skills, connections, and other valuable assets within our network of allies and partners, and within our community. Building from the resources we already have helps avoid being driven by the pressures of scarcity and reduces the impact of relying on outside funders.

Another challenge was how to ensure full participation for participants from the Global South and grassroots media activists, who were a priority for the group yet generally have less access to events and resources than academics or their Northern/Western peers. We found it was essential to allocate time and funds to provide translation (both in-person and over email), free or affordable food, transportation and housing, and to encourage U.S. and European academics who had a travel budget to contribute fees that could help cover others who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend.

Now, four years later, the OURMedia/NuestrosMedios network is an active global network with more than 500 members and leadership provided by international workgroups. They have held conferences in India, Australia and Africa and have a new website, social networks and other projects.

For more on the OURMedia/NuestrosMedios network, visit www.ourmedianetwork.org.

Planning Case Study: Creating Shared Leadership

On reflection, we can see **two key strategies** that helped move the OURMedia/Nuestros Medios network on this path, one intentional, the other somewhat inadvertent.

- Establishing committees with specific roles and expectations (e.g., Steering, Program, Outreach, Fundraising, Logistics, Translation), with a point-person for each to ensure deadlines were met and to keep track of committee progress.
- Creating an ambitious, innovative project. This may feel overwhelming and fall short of expectations, but can actually inspire others more than a perfect event that seems too daunting to repeat. Showing what was possible turned out to be a great way to motivate people to move forward with their own ideas.

This project and other gatherings gave us some insights about building shared leadership through event organizing, and how to overcome common challenges. A few lessons we've learned:

- Create proposals that balance between giving people something concrete to respond to but are not so fleshed-out that the only feedback is minor tweaks.
- Email is not a good format for brainstorming; better to collect ideas other ways (eg: individual conversations, things raised at prior meetings) and then use email to refine them.
- Focus on participatory activities: roundtables, strategy discussions, social time, field trips, not just presentations.
- Prioritize allocating resources (time, money, translation support) to make diverse participation possible.
- Document and share the planning experience as an important way to support subsequent leadership.

Some ideas for mitigating power imbalances when bringing a mixed group together…

- When doing an event with community people or issues, make the effort for all or part of the event to take place at an accessible/familiar community location, and not just at a convenient university site or conference room.
- Be attentive to who is given an introductory, stage-setting position. Consider who might be used to pontificating or being in a directive position and design agendas to have a prominent role for those who tend to be sidelined.
- Beware of setting up requirements that create barriers for less resourced groups to participate: such as travel, time expectations.

Widening the Circle… an outreach checklist

(a few key points we sometimes need to remind ourselves… add your own!)

- ❑ Spend time at the beginning of planning to identify the key constituencies in the relevant community or area, and especially those stakeholders who are most vulnerable and/or most affected by the issue. Prioritize those who are most typically excluded from conversations, decision-making and resources that affect them. (For example, depending on the issue and the community, these likely include people of color, low-income folks, youth, seniors, immigrants, people with disabilities, LGBT people, etc.) Talk with these folks *first.*

- ❑ Seek to include both people who have been part of related processes, for continuity, as well as people new to the project.

- ❑ Ask and listen first: Find out what people/groups are working on, current priorities and current challenges. Explain a bit about the overall idea and query their interest and feedback.

- ❑ Look for ways to connect with existing networks, coalitions, and events, and reach out to people who can serve as liaisons to those groups.

- ❑ Write up the goals and purpose of the event or project as far as they've been developed and share with potential participants. Be clear where these are open to evolve and what the intentions of the initiators/organizers are.

- ❑ Make phone calls as follow-up to reach people who are important to involve, rather than relying on email. Particularly with community organizers and leaders from groups often excluded, make the effort to reach them.

- ❑ Communicate both the incentives (such as a lead role for the group, future funding) and expectations (including time commitments for planning and evaluation stages) for participating.

- ❑ Allocate resources to maximize the ability of people to participate. Consider event locations and scheduling, funds for travel, childcare, language translation, physical accessibility, as well as taking time to support people to take on new roles and leadership. Don't let ease of availability be the default factor for participation.

- ❑ ____

- ❑ ____

Planning Case Study: Overcoming Mistrust and Disconnects

The project: Create the "Necessary Knowledge" program to give out grants for collaborative research and build a "culture of collaboration" between public-interest advocates and academic researchers working on media and communications issues.

The team: A project of the Social Science Research Council, in partnership with CIMA, funded by the Ford Foundation.

The challenge: The target groups for this project have different priorities, different ways of communicating and some skepticism on each side. How to gather their best thinking about ways to overcome the barriers, create a program that has their buy-in and willingness to participate, AND involve them in the planning despite their limited time?!

The "Necessary Knowledge" program was built around an obvious opportunity: advocates working on media issues needed more research to advance their campaigns, and academics studying those issues wanted their work to be relevant. But despite potential synergies, barriers to collaboration were deep and persistent, particularly in the U.S.

For advocates, perceptions or experiences of disrespect or even exploitation by professional researchers seen to have greater resources and legitimacy made them wary. For their part, scholars had seen how the stigma against working with public-interest or community groups could jeopardize academic careers or credibility, and told us that advocates at times dismissed the constraints and standards of academic methods. Both groups also acknowledged that differences in language, priorities, and timeframes for their work created further obstacles to working together well.

To design a program that could overcome these challenges, we knew we needed to talk with activist-scholars who straddled both worlds, with advocates and academics who had done collaborations before, and with skeptics on both sides. We also knew that the program had to avoid getting pegged as belonging to one side or the other, so that potential participants would feel that their work would be respected and valued.

The first step was to understand the perceptions and realities of power dynamics as well as the opportunities and urgencies that this program could serve. This process included several components:

- **open-ended group meetings** with scholars and advocates together, who helped us explore their perceptions and priorities.
- **a collective document** of activist recommendations, produced through interviews and small group discussions on phone, in-person and email. This formalized shared perspectives from those whose views are often received with less authority than academics.
- **individual interviews**, which enabled us to hear perspectives that might get overlooked or not get voiced in a group setting.
- **commissioned papers** from advocates, with response papers from academics and then a group meeting to discuss — putting advocacy knowledge in a format recognized by the academy.

Alliances sometimes need divides…

When disparate types of people are coming together, there may need to be some separate space at first, especially for those from a less powerful or well-resourced position. It may be important for some groups to be able to gather or caucus separately to clarify their goals, agenda, strategy, leadership as well as to build trust among themselves.

Planning Case Study: Overcoming Mistrust and Disconnects

The next phase was to develop a plan for a Collaborate Grants program to address these issues, ensuring responsiveness to the field with a decision-making committee representing both academics and advocates.

Here we faced a **classic challenge** of participatory planning: **how to engage people's best thinking while recognizing their limited time.** For this we used a series of feedback loops of research, reflection, presenting ideas, receiving feedback, revising, testing, evaluating, and then more research.

A key tactic was preparing written drafts at each stage and building in the flexibility to receive responses either in writing or interviews.

Steps that made strong program design possible were:

- Carefully mapping out the logic and theories behind the program.
- Researching similar programs, both through reading and talking with people involved.
- Asking a wide range of people specific questions relating to the challenges we perceived.
- Conducting a pilot of the project and evaluating both qualitatively (interviews) and quantitatively (numbers).
- Bringing a committee together for two days to look at the information and discuss strategy.
- Documenting and referring back to program priorities, so that time pressures or the ease of the familiar didn't persuade us to just give in to the "usual way" of doing things.

(see p. 31 for a brief case study on how we integrated evaluation into this program)

Connect to networkers, but don't overload them...

It's key to involve people who are highly "networked" and who have broad relationships and respect among diverse groups. But it's often the same individuals within grassroots groups (or communities of color, etc) who are invited – over and over – to cross class, race and cultural lines and to participate in meetings and other events, which can lead to overload and burnout. It's important to also find other people who can participate and help build these bridges.

After three years of grantmaking, the ongoing evaluation of the Necessary Knowledge Collaborative Grants program is finding that we have helped not only produce specific collaborative research projects, but also push forward the idea that scholars and activists can work together. Moreover, we developed a program that has begun to create some equity between participating academics and advocates. Given how much we learned from our inclusive planning processes, we might have done more from the start to involve and inform other power-brokers outside the program, such as academic deans and advocacy funders, so the recommendations might also inform programs they are developing.

Navigating the dynamics of difference was challenging, and often frustrating, especially when we needed to accommodate those same dominant frameworks (i.e., mainstream academic culture) that the program was created to transcend. Regular check-ins with those we hoped to serve through the program helped sustain our commitment through those challenges.

For more about the Necessary Knowledge program, see: mediaresearchhub.ssrc.org/grants/

Building together.... How to make planning a collaborative process

(for co-planning a campaign, event, new alliance, or other media activist project)
Lessons we learned to keep in mind...

- ❑ Find out who is already doing or has done similar work and what they learned.
- ❑ Use a variety of ways to seek input from others (both individual & group calls, in-person conversations, email, other tech tools, etc) and then write up the input received and re-circulate to the whole group.
- ❑ Document subgroup and committee meetings in brief, clear reports and share with the full group. Keep people updated as things are in progress so they can see where there are holes and offer to step up.
- ❑ Provide specific proposals, questions, and/or ideas for people to respond to.
- ❑ Design processes to respect the capacity of participants. For example, turnaround times for grassroots and smaller groups often need to be longer; "assignments" may need to be shorter/ fewer; and conversations/meetings more focused, shorter but more frequent.
- ❑ When asking for feedback or advice, be clear how their input will be used, and how/if they will be involved in the project moving forward, when/how the final decision will be made and by whom – and whether the person/group providing input has a role in that decision-making. Follow up to share what recommendations were or weren't taken, and why.
- ❑ Make sure that participants and partners (as well as other advisors) in a project, process, or event are clear how decision-making will happen, when and by whom, and what their role is.
- ❑ Ensure that there are grassroots/constituency-based groups in a decision-making and direction-setting role before any major decisions are made.
- ❑ Decide how the timing of the project fits into larger campaign or policy timeframes and check in with partners to adjust, where possible/necessary, for timelines to fit their current or forthcoming efforts.
- ❑ When writing documents, circulate and get consensus at the outline stage, ensuring that all involved agree before a few people handle final wordsmithing.
- ❑ Define success together with participants; take care to set measurable outcomes throughout the course of the project that reflect the collective goals and values of those involved.
- ❑ Discuss and develop awareness of the internal and external dynamics that create and perpetuate imbalance. Take time to think through how to address the ways that the dynamics of race, economics, gender, national status, etc., may lead to advantages and disadvantages when it comes to access to resources, decision-making, cultural behaviors, and other sources of power.

Long-Range Strategy Tools

How can media activists have a long-range strategy when communication technologies, economics and practices are changing so rapidly? It's because the changes are so drastic and fast that we need to know what our long-range vision is and how we will get there. That's the only way we'll be in a position to respond as tomorrow's version of blogs, cell phones or television emerges. If we believe that everyone should have access to networks; that journalism and culture should serve the public good – not just private profits; that all communities, especially the marginalized, should be able to represent themselves fully – we need to consider what exactly it will take to make that happen.

If your group is challenging the structural and systemic manifestations of injustice in media and communications – racism, sexism, capitalism and commercialism, nationalism, anti-collectivism or whatever problems your group sees as core… what is your analysis and strategy for change?

Because these questions are both overwhelming and yet so fundamental, we have been exploring specific tools that can help groups map their aspirational visions for a better world to concrete strategies for action.

We've found that **group-thinking tools and facilitated workshops** are really helpful in exploring the interplay of economics, politics, technology, social development and institutional power in the changes we want to see. There are many useful tools out there, and in this section we share three that we've been experimenting with, along with when and how to use them and some additional resources. These could be used in order as part of a strategic planning process, or individually as fits your needs.

Note

These tools and workshops are an opportunity to be creative, expansive and flexible as well as concrete. When we are discussing the questions it's not that we KNOW the answers, but we are hypothesizing, reasoning and sharing our perspectives.

It's most important to create the space for creativity, and not let the linear nature of the tools limit the vision.

The tools:

- **A timeline to identify concrete goals for the future.** Sketching out visions and predictions with specificity and pushing ourselves to state realistic timeframes for identifiable developments can be a good method of choosing goals to work towards.
- **Mapping our Theory of Change.** Once we know the long-term outcomes we are aiming towards, being explicit about the path to get there can help us build a strong logical foundation for our work. We can focus on the various conditions and factors required to achieve our goals and examine our assumptions about how change happens and what our work can do. The process can be particularly useful in setting a foundation for evaluation: identifying interim steps and short-term outcomes, as well as indicators of progress.
- **A power analysis.** Another process that builds off an identified goal (or set of goals) is a power analysis of who supports our agenda, who opposes it and how much relative influence they have. By identifying the institutions, groups and individuals who are organized opponents, potential allies, etc, we can pinpoint where we might target our efforts..

Long-Range Strategy Tools

When to use these tools - We've found these tools work well in two different contexts:

1) PROJECT PLANNING: For an organization, coalition or team that is planning projects or overall work, the tools may be most useful in a retreat and/or over a series of facilitated sessions. The group process of identifying long-range goals and trends, mapping the strategy to get there and analyzing the power players is valuable at the beginning of planning a new project, of course, but really can be used any time in the development of projects and plans.

   - To use the tools in this way, it's important to make enough time for coming to consensus and working through points of divergence or disagreement.

2) STRATEGY WORKSHOPS: At a conference or other gathering of activists, these tools can be used to ground strategy discussions and surface key questions, debates and opportunities for our movement. They can be adapted for a 90-minute workshop (choosing one or at most two tools), or for a longer session or series of sessions. In a mixed group, the focus would not be to find consensus, but rather to explore critical questions – and to identify where we have disagreements, where there is strong alignment, and where we need more information or more discussion.

   - One of the benefits of using these tools in a workshop is to introduce people to a few methods they can use with their own groups. Handouts with resources for getting additional info on these tools are helpful.

The resource section at the end of this guide lists several sources of other great tools, as well as publications and groups that offer guidance on how to structure and facilitate planning sessions.

A few thoughts on using planning tools and strategy workshops...

- It's essential to start with a shared understanding of whether the intention is to come to consensus on vision, theory, strategy, or whether the purpose is to surface ideas and discussions, including where there are differences and questions.
- Having an outside facilitator can be key for an effective planning and strategy session. It can be really challenging for someone to support a group going through a process if they want to also contribute or have a vested stake in the outcome. If a group can't hire a facilitator, they might look into an exchange with an ally group where each organization provides someone to facilitate for the other.
- Before launching into the tools, depending on the nature of the group and your history together, it can be valuable to set the framework with initial discussions such as the scope of the vision to be generated, and the meaning and implications of concepts like "power."
- When beginning any workshop or group process, we've found it's important to begin by going over the purpose, outcomes/objectives and process for the session (as Rockwood Leadership Program calls it, the P.O.P.) to make sure there's clarity around what is and isn't on the table for that particular meeting, what you hope to achieve and how.
- We need to remember to set the context when we are using these tools: What are some of the relevant conversations that have come before and what are the next steps in the process, how will the information surfaced in the session be used, by whom and when?

Strategy Planning Tool 1: Timelines

Timeline Version One: Past and Future Trends

Purpose: To help identify long-, middle-, and short-range goals within a realistic timeframe.

Materials:

- A long sheet of butcher paper or roll paper, attached to a wall (6 to 20+ feet, depending on size of group and space).
- Markers, plus tape or paint to make the template.
- Large sticky notes or shapes of colored paper and tape (moveable artists' tape if the group wants to be able to revise the timeline)

  Note: If the group needs a large timeline, including labels or symbols (such as smiley faces or frowns) to indicate positive/negative throughout the paper can help people understand how to use the chart even if they are only looking at a small section at a time.

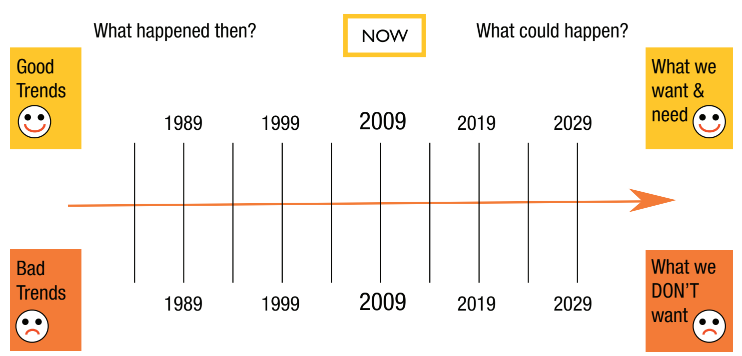
Setup: This timeline looks 10 to 25 years back and the same distance forward, with NOW in the center. It is divided horizontally as well, so that the top part is for "positive" items and the bottom row is "negative."

The past is labeled "what happened then" and the future is "what could happen." The rows lead to a good or bad future.

Seeing how the present was shaped by our history (what we do and don't know of it) helps put the future in context of what we work on now.

Depending on the group/setting, the labels for the sections may vary, especially the text that the arrows are pointing to.

Example design for basic trends timeline



Process:

- The timeline can be filled out in a workshop setting, with pairs or small groups working together to come up with items to put on stickies and put on the timeline.
- Or, especially for a large group or at a conference or retreat, the timeline can be up on the wall with stickies and markers available for individuals to add to it over the course of an afternoon, evening or a couple of days (we've done this during a dinner event and also over a 3-day conference).
- Then in a workshop or meeting, people come together to reflect on what they are seeing on the timeline – where there's a lot of items, where there are few, where people might disagree about what's positive/negative, what the big concerns/opportunities are, etc.
- This can become the basis for a group discussion or additional activity to focus on how to work towards the desired trends to prevent the unwanted developments, what we can learn from history, and so on.

Strategy Planning Tool 1: Timelines

Timeline Version Two: Long-Term Vision

Purpose: To help identify long-, middle-, and short-range goals within a realistic timeframe.

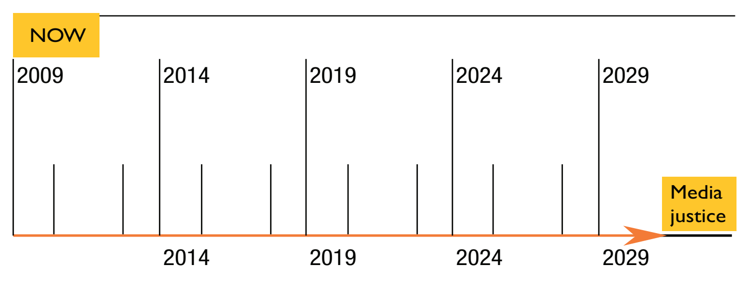
Materials:

- A long sheet of butcher paper or roll paper, attached to a wall (6 to 20+ feet, depending on size of group and space).
- Markers, plus tape or paint to make the template.
- Large sticky notes or shapes of colored paper and tape (moveable artists' tape if the group wants to be able to revise the timeline)

Setup: This timeline looks 10 to 25 years forward, starting at NOW. The horizontal points forward and the vertical lines mark the years. Whatever the endpoints are, it's important to have shorter timeframes marked, as well as some space at the end for items that are further into the future, but important long-range goals to keep in mind.

Depending on the group needs and size (and with sufficient time for the activity), the tool can be made more detailed/complex by using different colors for different types of items on the timeline, or by having rows for different aspects of the future (e.g. education, journalism, etc).

Example design for basic vision timeline



Process:

- The timeline can be filled out in a workshop setting, with pairs or small groups working together to come up with CONCRETE, SPECIFIC things they want to see – institutions, policies, conditions – things that could be seen or measured to confirm they are true.
- Then they write each item on a sticky and identify the year by when this reality could be achieved and place it on the timeline.
- For items that are 10 or more years out, the groups then identify interim steps/stages toward that item that can be located at 5 years or sooner.
- The full group then comes back together and takes time to look at the timeline, discuss what they see (what's noted frequently, where are there different ideas on timing, what's less common, what's missing, etc).
- The results can be used in a priority-setting session to choose goals to work towards, and/or a strategy session to map a path to that goal.

Strategy Planning Tool II: Theory of Change

Theory of Change (TOC) is a great way to help develop a strong, logical strategy for social-change work. Mapping a Theory of Change is often done as a group, over a series of facilitated sessions. It's used in strategy development, program design and evaluation.

We've used the TOC method developed by ActKnowledge and the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change. Similar methods by other groups may be called "pathway mapping," "outcomes mapping," "outcomes pathways," or "backwards mapping."

Even a short version of a TOC process can be valuable for grounding a strategy discussion. A group can use the method to begin a structured conversation about the logic of what it will take to realize their goals.

In a mixed gathering (at a conference for example) it can bring out different perspectives on how change happens and specifically on such factors as the role of government – initiating really important conversations for us to be having in our movement and across our coalitions.

> The purpose is to understand what, specifically, needs to come about in order for your long-term goal to be realized, and from there to determine what would be the most effective strategies and actions to make that happen. It's a way to open up creative thinking.

Developing the Theory can be challenging and complicated, because it requires a concrete focus on the conditions required at every step, and not on activities. The challenge is to investigate our logic about the systemic change we seek, and to be explicit about the our assumptions, so *it's really helpful to have a facilitator who is familiar with the process.*

It's a really useful tool, but you'll need a more comprehensive guide than we can offer here. This description is to give you an idea of how it works and hopefully spark your interest in using tools to map out the pathway to the change you seek.

Theory mapping can be complex, but so is systemic change, especially when we are looking at media, and need to account for the economics, technology, politics, education, culture and social behaviors that all interplay in shaping our communications environment. Using a mapping method like this, and/or having an outside facilitator can help us get explicit about what we need to do to have the long-term impact we seek.

We've gone through a few TOC workshops over the years, read about this and other types of logic mapping, and eventually took a 3-day training on facilitating the method. It was an investment of time to understand it, but now we can use it in a range of ways, and even a 30-minute workshop with a group can be really powerful for raising important questions and conversations.

See the description below for a general overview of the process and check out the resources for more.

TOC GUIDES

www.TheoryOfChange.org --

Created and run by ActKnowledge, this site has an introduction to the model, guides, articles and an online TOC tool. Check out the *Community Builders Approach to Theory of Change* guidebook under "resources."

The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change has a guide for communities to assess what it will take to work towards racial justice:
"Dismantling Structural Racism: A Racial Equity Theory of Change"

--visit **www.aspenroundtable.org**

and search for "racial equity theory of change"

TOC TRAINING AND FACILITATION

ActKnowledge leads Theory of Change sessions and workshop series for non-profit groups. They also train facilitators and may be able to recommend some-one for your group or provide a training. See: **www.actknowledge.org**

If you are working on structural racism issues and seeking facilitation for the Racial Equity Theory of Change, contact the Aspen Roundtable: **www.aspenroundtable.org**

Strategy Planning Tool 11: Theory of Change: Basic overview of the process

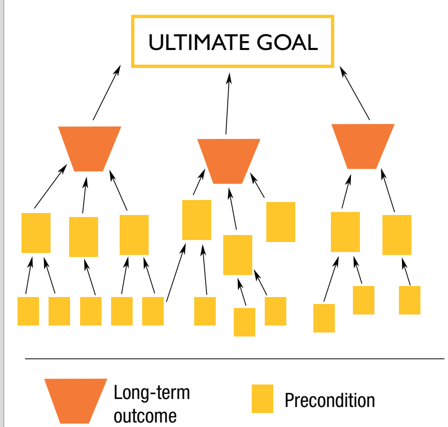
Note: The trick with mapping the logical path towards the ultimate goal is to avoid talking about projects, activities, interventions until you've mapped out what you see as the path of change, based on the developments needed in a community, society, industry, government (etc) to achieve the long-term goals.

This is a visual mapping process: using big paper on the wall and then cut-out pieces you can move around. The map usually looks like a tree graph or flow-chart, but can also be done as bricks along a road or whatever visual works and lets you move the pieces around as you discuss the logic of the path.

1. The mapping starts by identifying the **long-term goal** (consensus & clarity on this can take time), describing some of what it would "look like" to have reached that goal.
2. The next step is to identify the necessary and sufficient **preconditions** for that goal–what would need to be in place for it to happen, what would need to exist?
3. Then, looking at those preconditions, what are the preconditions before them? What components need to be in place to have those conditions occur?
    - Each condition is itself a goal or **outcome** of the situation below/before it, and a precondition of the condition above it.
4. At each step, we spell out the **rationales** underlying or behind our theory. Why does one precondition lead to the outcome above it? Why is a particular precondition required for the ultimate goal?
5. We also need to state specifically our **assumptions**, the conditions or realities we presume to be already true and don't need to make happen. We need to be clear what we are assuming and what we might need to research or test.
6. The **indicators** for each outcome are a key element (and make the TOC useful later for evaluation). The question is how would we know the outcome is achieved? What does it look like? Are there numbers that represent the critical mass necessary (eg laws in 5 states, or 80% of people, etc) to consider that outcome successful?
7. By continuing to map the chain of preconditions for each outcome, we can determine the conditions that the project, organization, campaign (etc) will try to create. Only then do we look at the types of **interventions** (activities) that can produce that outcome.
8. To use the TOC to identify key strategies and approaches for your work, you can hone in on the specific outcomes that are most fitting for you to target by looking at both what other groups are doing (you can indicate this on the map) and also which outcomes seem most appropriate given your particular assets, strengths, goals, constituency, etc.

Even if your group can't dedicate time to mapping out a TOC over a number of meetings, a half- or full-day gathering can be very useful for exploring your goals and assumptions. The process can help you see where you need more research, where you need to develop activities, and where there are internal disagreements about priorities and strategy. **The result is not a fixed "answer" but a tool for creative and strategic thinking that you can continue to use as your learning and work evolve.**

Example outline of a basic theory of change map



Final map would also include the assumptions, the interventions (activities), and the indicators (the measure of each outcome). You can also highlight on the map which outcomes other groups are working on.

Visualizing the Theory

Large paper, markers and stickies are great for working out the ideas, and it's also key to save the important data and ideas that are generated. These can be typed up, and flow-chart or drawing software can be used to make an electronic version of the map. There's an online tool at TheoryOfChange.org.

It's important to find ways to capture and keep working with the knowledge that's generated.

Strategy Planning Tool III: Power Analysis

We learned this method from Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), the Praxis Project and other community organizers. It can help us see who is – or could be – key to reaching our goal . Power analysis can be a foundation for strategic discussions that look at the authority, self-interest and motivators of decision-makers and what's likely to move them. It can be used to focus in on the various strengths and challenges for ally groups and opportunities for organizing and alliance building. Here's a simplified version – check out the resources for more.

Purpose: To identify who supports/opposes our goal, who has power, who might be moved and where we can focus to build power. Once we map out who the "players" are, we can develop strategies for who we need to target, and how we want to engage with them; we can look at what influences them.

Materials: Large paper with the basic template/grid. Sticky notes of different colors or cut-out paper & tape. Markers. Handouts useful in a larger group for small-group work.

See example grids on the next page

Process:

The group first needs to agree on and name the goal to focus on. This can be a specific campaign goal or a broader long-range agenda. The timeline or Theory of Change tools can be useful in defining the goal.

With a smaller group (up to 5-6 people), the basic mapping can be done all together, or it can be useful to break into pairs or groups of 3 or 4 and each use a worksheet to answer the questions:

1. Who are the key decision-making bodies?
2. Who are the key organized opposition groups/forces?
3. Who are the key organized ally groups/forces?
4. Who are the unorganized groups that are most affected by this issue or most important to organize to make change?

Then for each group listed, identify:

a. Where do they stand on the issue (from +3 support to -3 oppose)

b. How much power do they have (from 10= decisive to 0= no influence)

The next step is to use different colored sticky notes or cut-out paper to plot these different groups on the grid. This may take some discussion to agree on where to locate them.

From there we can look at:

- where on our side do we need to build power
- which powerful players in the opposition do we need to move/shift in their position
- which neutral groups should we be organizing to gain their support and/or build their power

Toolkits:

There's a comprehensive Power Analysis tool in the "Power Tools" kit, an excellent set of community organizing resources from the Los Angeles-based Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education, (SCOPE LA). SCOPE also offers training in Power Analysis. See: www.scopela.org

The Praxis Project provides an excerpted power analysis tool adapted from resources developed by SCOPE. (MS Word document download): www.thepraxisproject.org (click on Information Resource

Strategy Planning Tool III: Power Analysis

Simplified version of a Power Analysis Grid

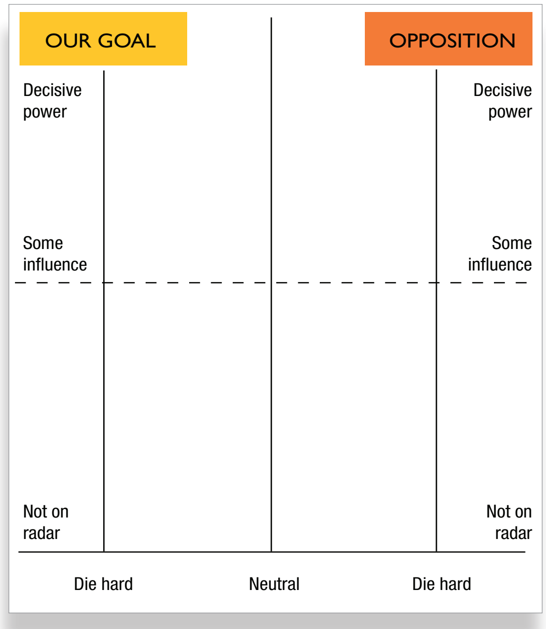
This basic template can be used for a quick mapping, or for more detail:

Vertical axis

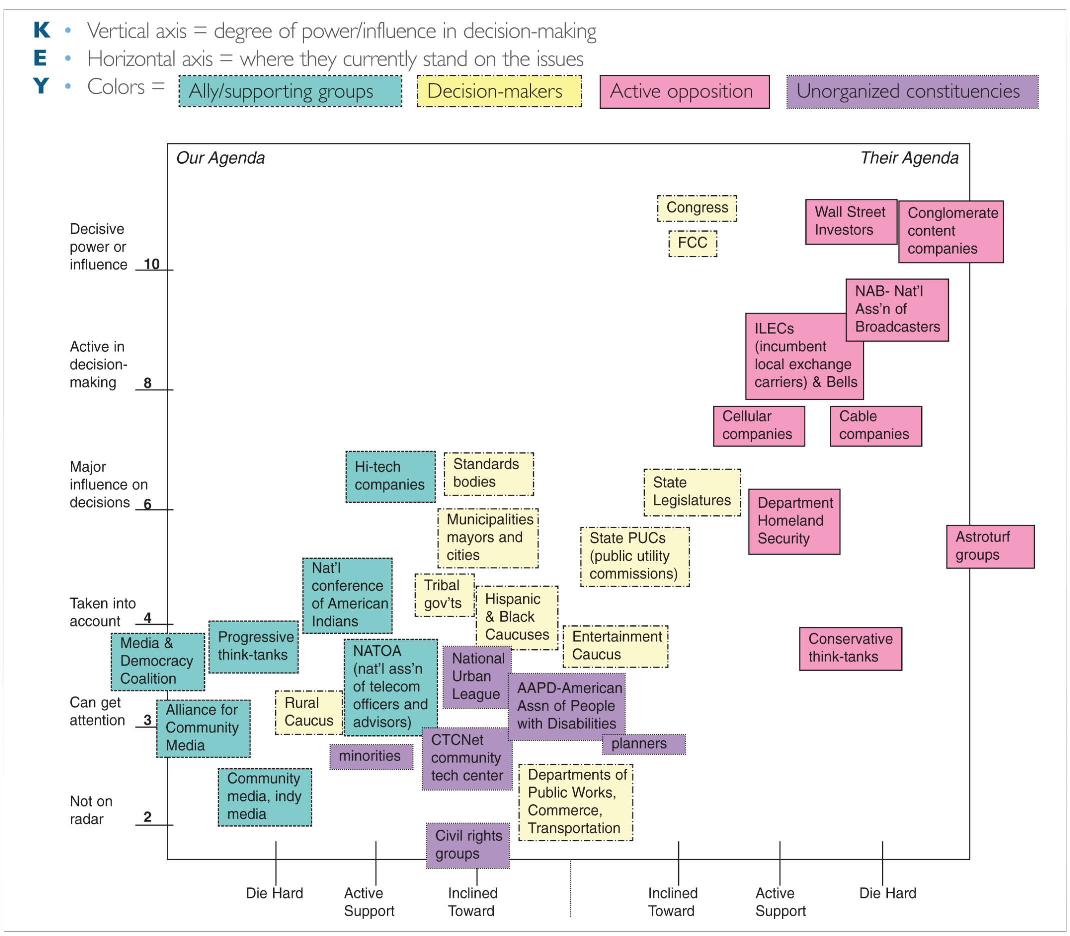
- Decisive decision-making power or influence
- Active participant in decision-making
- Power to have major influence on decision-making
- Taken into account in decision-making
- Can get attention
- Not on radar

Horizontal axis

- Die hard (our agenda)
- Active support (our agenda)
- Inclined towards (our agenda)
- Neutral
- Inclined towards (opposition)
- Active support (opposition)
- Die hard (opposition)



Example Power Analysis Map from a 2005 strategy meeting on open, accessible networks



Reflections for social change and movement-building groups

The following sections are offered as a resource to social justice and social change groups interested in pursuing evaluation as a tool for building a more reflective, learning organization and using strong, knowledge-based advocacy and change strategies.

Part one (why): contains some background on the role of evaluation in social change work, and the opportunities provided through the use of evaluation itself as a strategy for achieving social justice.

Part two (how): provides an outline of concrete key features of social justice evaluation, to be used as a map to help groups develop their own approach.

Part three (tools): is an evaluation toolkit, with worksheets that you can use to develop an evaluation framework for your group or project

Some general thoughts on evaluation...

- Understanding long-term goals and what interim steps are needed to get there is a key foundation for evaluating a project. We need to set measurable outcomes along the way that will lead towards longer-term goals.
- Developing a Theory of Change or other strategic framework and logic as part of the planning is a way of building in evaluation from the beginning. As action research, this enables us to learn as we are moving, and not just in retrospect when a project is completed.
- Being realistic about a group's capacity is key for setting objectives, though not always easy to predict, so it's important to check in about this at the beginning, but then revisit as the project develops.
- Assessments and recommendations are most valuable when they can be incorporated into the planning and implementation of ongoing projects. To achieve this, produce useful project input early and do interim evaluations.

Suggestions:

- Build in feedback and evaluation loops before, throughout and after projects. Include evaluation steps in project timelines.
- Plan for and don't skip an evaluation stage after the initial activities of a project and one at the end of the first phase of work or completion of the project/event.
- Realize that we may need to push back to funders when their outcome/evaluation measures don't meet ours or the groups we work with.
- For major projects or events, let participants know they will be re-contacted after some time has passed for reflective assessment on whether and how the project/event was useful. Be sure to in fact do this follow-up.

PART ONE (Why): Evaluation and Social Justice

Often in a nonprofit and social justice context, "evaluation" may bring to mind bean-counters and power relationships in which those who control the resources get to decide if those who are doing the work are being cost-effective enough to be allowed to continue.

"Social justice," on the other hand, usually implies transparency and fairness. It certainly assumes value has a more lofty measure than some numbers in a chart.

So, there is an apparent disconnect between the concept of evaluation and the concept of social justice. To those who have reconciled the two concepts, there remain **challenges in practice**, including:

- Determining goals for a social justice movement that can be achieved in the near future and within the current generation.
- Identifying smaller scale and detectable changes that are important and necessary for the ultimate social justice goal.
- Attributing outcomes to particular strategies and interventions – this is probably the biggest problem. Given the complexity of social justice work, if the intended improvements are in fact obtained, how can we know what strategies, actions or groups are responsible?

These just scratch the surface of practical problems in evaluating social justice movements and outcomes. However, although these challenges are serious, social justice movements and their effectiveness can be, and need to be, assessed.

There are no perfect solutions, but **the important thing is to be able to measure progress towards social justice goals**, not simply the end in itself. If social justice goals are met, they will, perhaps ironically, be easy to measure and evaluate – they will, by their very nature, be observable to all.

Before delving into the practical and conceptual steps to evaluating social justice, it is important to recognize that we cannot take the definition of social justice for granted. What it looks like to one may be the complete opposite of what it looks like to others, even if we all agree with abstract ideas of fairness, freedom, or opportunity.

It is surprising how difficult it is to assess whether progress towards social justice is being made if you lack a precise definition of what you are trying to achieve.

How does evaluation offer options for enhancing social justice?

There are two ways to think about evaluation of social justice work. One is to construct an evaluation that adds knowledge to the effort by measuring whether goals are met and strategies are working.

Another way is to think about the evaluation itself as enhancing the social justice effort. If done in ways that are participatory, include sharing knowledge and power, and help clarify what it takes to succeed, then evaluation becomes one more strategy that can change relationships of power and social inequity.

Some Benefits of Doing Evaluation in a Social Justice Context

Need for Critical Thinking and Analysis

While social change organizations are often very aware of the limitations of "traditional" approaches to evaluation, they may also feel frustrated with their inability to measure progress, capture success, and have their work benefit from a rigorous analytical process.

As one executive director recently told us, "I'm tired of people saying movement building work is too long-term and impossible to measure. I feel like it's an excuse and I think we need to be accountable, to know if we're making progress."

> "Analysis of real-life organizing experience is a vital source of new knowledge and ideas about social change processes. Talking about ideas and producing analysis together is action that produces social change: facilitating a conversation among a group of people about what change they seek and how they plan to achieve it is in itself a social change strategy."
>
> ~ Molly Reilly, from "An Agenda for Change in the USA" (see resources section)

Developing a Movement Knowledge Strategy

When evaluation is approached as a learning opportunity for an organization, it provides critical opportunities to develop a "knowledge strategy." Knowledge is a critical piece of any social change strategy, and evaluation can be an opportunity to build organizations, collaborations, and strategies in a number of important ways.

Evaluation provides:

- An opportunity for groups to clarify and articulate for themselves how change happens.
- A much-needed space for reflection as a basis for strategic action.
- A system for tracking, measuring, and accounting for progress.
- A process for gathering and analyzing the key knowledge needed to inform planning.
- An opportunity to involve staff and other key stakeholders in a way that reflects social justice values.

Documentation of New Models

Those of us involved in social change often feel there is little time for reflection and documentation of our learning, strategies, and models. The process of evaluation offers an important opportunity to document and disseminate information that can both inform other groups' work and help make a case to funders and others about the nature and value of grassroots organizing and other social justice strategies. This documentation can include research and reporting on the work of other organizations as well, which can be used to inform and substantiate our own projects and campaigns.

Making the Case for Organizing and Movement-Building

A recent report by the Women's Funding Network, "Measuring Social Change Investments," formalized for funders what organizers already know: that social change investment needs to focus on a broader spectrum of efforts, beyond those that aim to directly affect public policy. The report found that change at the community level is important in driving what happens legislatively, and that the interplay between cultural shifts in the public sphere and action at the institutional level is core to the what makes change possible. As one long-term study of water policy–making found, focusing evaluation on shorter-term outcomes missed completely "the truly important results of these [collaborative] processes, including the building of social and political capital, the learning and change, the development of high quality information, new and innovative ideas, new institutions and practices that are adaptive and flexible, and the cascade of changes in attitudes, behaviors and actions." (Sarah Connick and Judith E. Innes)

Developing evaluations to measure social justice progress <u>on our own terms</u> can help document and demonstrate the importance of community-based and movement-building work.

Some Challenges

Evaluation Imposed from the Outside

Grassroots and social change nonprofits and foundations in the US often find evaluation an irrelevant task imposed upon them by funding agencies, and at best a task they know can be useful but are unsure how to pursue in a way that is appropriate for their strategies and values. This can be especially true for groups using movement-building and organizing approaches to achieve social justice goals.

In this context, evaluation is perceived often as a burdensome task unrelated to the core work of the organization, and even potentially harmful by pushing for inappropriate and ineffective "logic models" and "outcomes." In addition, the pressure to state accomplishments and outcomes when seeking funding may even create divisiveness when groups are put in a position to claim "attribution" instead of "contribution" to social change work, which is by its nature a collective process.

The typical approach to evaluation, particularly in cases where the evaluator or evaluation process is beholden to a funder, can be problematic for a number of reasons:

- there is often an inherent power imbalance, with external evaluators coming in to assess the worth or merit of a program, and controlling the findings and final reporting;
- an external process is unlikely to be internalized by the organization;
- the building of organizational capacity and strategy requires an internal capacity to evaluate, analyze and reflect deeply on work, something more likely to be built though a collaborative or participatory approach to evaluation.

A Focus on Short-Term Gains Over Movement-Building

When evaluation is not grounded in a working conceptual model that includes the power relationships and changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior that are needed for large-scale social change, then assessments may be driven by technical, apolitical thinking that affects the selection of evaluation goals and indicators of progress. In these cases, immediate policy impact is often prioritized, rather than the process and relationship-oriented goals that movement-building history and experience tell us are critical for sustainable social change.

While assessing advocacy work is an ongoing challenge and focus of much discussion by funders and evaluators alike, the dominant model for counting "success" still tends to be focused on constituency mobilization and short-term policy gains, generally orchestrated by professional national advocates, rather than 'movement-building' approaches which view short-term policy gains as just one strategy, along with broader efforts to build leadership infrastructure, collective power and citizen-centered efforts.

A change strategy of building critical consciousness and active citizenship through engaging people in analysis of issues and context and envisioning solutions requires a different sort of measurement and assessment. Rather than trying to fit social justice groups into a typical evaluation model, it can be much more powerful for groups to become involved in re-defining how evaluation works, in partnership with evaluators who share an understanding of social justice.

PART TWO (How): Key features of evaluation for social justice

The problems of evaluating long-term changes are not unknown. Several foundations have produced excellent papers on evaluation of policy and social change. Practitioners and activists have collaborated on evaluation, bringing key lessons to light.

Some key principles that have been outlined in these works:

1. The critical importance of knowing what social change is desired and having a plausible plan to achieve it. Then, evaluation tests whether or not the plan was executed as planned and if it worked as intended. In *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*, by Guthrie, Louie, David and Foster (2005), written for The California Endowment, the authors call this "prospective" evaluation:

   > "…a prospective evaluation sets out goals for a project at the outset and measures how well the project is moving toward those goals throughout the project's life. Unlike retrospective evaluation, prospective evaluation can help a funder monitor the progress of a grant and allow the grantee to use evaluation information to make improvements in its program as the program is in progress. Like retrospective evaluation, prospective evaluation is useful for looking at efforts at the grantee, initiative or program level."

2. The necessity of being clear and specific about long-term outcomes. You can't plan to reach an outcome if you don't really know what you mean; you can't evaluate if you've achieved a goal without being clear about what the goal is.

3. Evaluation should model social justice principles by being transparent and democratic, with ownership of the research questions and methods by as many stakeholders as is practical.

Evaluation Lessons

- Know your goal and have a clear plan
- Be clear and specific about projected long-term outcomes
- Model social justice principles: be transparent, democratic, and attentive to power dynamics and the role of those most vulnerable and typically excluded

Essentials of Evaluation of Social Justice Initiatives

- Transparency
- Participation
- Explicitness of power relationships
- Conceptual framework (A Theory of Change) [see p. 16]
- Ownership of the questions and the means
- Good working partnership with evaluators with research expertise; being open to bringing in people knowledgeable in any area that will help with the work

RECOMMENDATIONS

Frame evaluation as a tool for change

By redefining evaluation with an emphasis on the process of group learning we can deemphasize the sense of being "judged." Evaluation can be seen as a way to facilitate thinking, provide data needed for planning, and help a group become a learning organization.

Plan when and how to use findings

Social justice groups generally feel that the worth of an evaluation is directly proportional to its ability to inform and strengthen their ongoing practice. Given this, its essential to define from the beginning exactly when and how findings will be used, and plan for this in timelines. For example, findings might be used as the basis for an upcoming planning workshop or for a strategy discussion with partners, as well as for fundraising.

Consider how to build evaluation capacity with limited resources

Evaluation can be resource- and time-intensive. While the ideal situation might certainly be to have adequate funds dedicated to evaluation, we know that this isn't always the case. Even when it is, there is the risk that an evaluation team is brought in, delivers a report which then perhaps is incorporated into fundraising materials, but spends most of its time collecting dust on a shelf. We feel the goal for social justice organizations needs to be building internal capacity to evaluate and reflect.

➩ **Make time for reflection:** This isn't a luxury, but an important social change strategy. It's essential to find time and space to bring staff and stakeholders together to ask:

- What worked best last year (or with a specific program)?
- What changes did we see?
- Why do we think we were effective?
- What didn't work so well?
- Why?
- What lessons are there to be learned, and what can we do differently?

This process might be best facilitated from the outside, but it's not mandatory. Documentation is important, though, so future conversations can be informed by this work.

➩ **Get help with the plan:** Even if a group can't (or doesn't want to) hire an evaluator, an outside consultant can help set up an assessment and learning process. If not an evaluation consultant, a graduate student with some training or an ally from another group with evaluation experience might be a resource to help an organization develop a plan for internal data collection, analysis, discussion, and reporting.

An appropriate and relevant approach usually combines:

- Articulating a framework that establishes shared assumptions about how change happens.
- Defining the change you would like to see over the longer term, the steps you are taking to achieve changes, and the signs (indicators) that you are making progress.
- Looking for patterns of effectiveness and value as they emerge, and then incorporating them into the change model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Define success

An approach we have found effective is having a consultant or evaluator facilitate a process where groups self-define and articulate what they believe needs to happen to reach their larger goals, and then have them use their own standards (rather than ones imposed from the outside) to establish progress and accountability measures. The planning tools on p. 12 can help with this.

Participatory Evaluation: Include key people

Participation in evaluation is important for a number of reasons. First, including the perspectives of both those doing the work and those they aim to serve is essential for a democratic, social justice approach. Second, we know that research and analysis is strongest and most relevant when informed by a variety of viewpoints and perspectives.

Bringing in different perspectives is especially important in evaluating collaborative efforts and initiatives.

Participatory evaluation in this context means both centralizing the priorities and perspectives of the constituencies most affected and also integrating differing perspectives, values, and opinions.

A participatory evaluation may have staff, project participants, community members, and other stakeholders involved at several different stages:

1. Defining the purpose of the evaluation: What are the questions that participants want answered? How will the evaluation be used?
2. Articulating what "success" and "effectiveness" looks like from different perspectives, and what is needed to get there.
3. Helping determine and give feedback on the design of the evaluation.
4. Assisting with data collection
5. Participating in data analysis
6. Collaborating on final reporting
7. Determining how findings should be integrated into organizational planning and decision-making.

As Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller remind us,

"Participation is empowering only when those who participate make decisions and choices."

(from A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation)

Note

Including participants such as allies and community members in an evaluation process needs to be attentive to both the impositions on their time and also how to make it a worthwhile and valuable experience. This can be helped by providing both a learning opportunity in methods and tools, and also a means of giving people more of a shared leadership position.

Opportunities to shape the evaluation questions, define success, analyze the learning, and decide what to do with the findings can bring people into a more powerful role related to the work.

Evaluation Case Study: Participants Assess An Exploratory Program

The project: Evaluate a pilot program in progress: assess the new "Knowledge Exchange" program – bringing together community organizers and national advocates – in order to shape the development of this project and learn from it for future work.

The team: The program was a collaboration of Consumers Union and the Media Justice Fund of the Funding Exchange, which hired CIMA to do the assessment.

The challenge: The program was exploratory, planners didn't know what the exact outcomes would be, and the goals were long-term and hard to measure (e.g.: improved relationships, a stronger media-change movement).

The Knowledge Exchange was developed by the Media Justice Fund of the Funding Exchange and Consumers Union as an experiment in bringing together DC-based national media policy advocates and local grassroots media organizers from around the country to share knowledge and build relationships. The pilot program was conducted in three rounds, a week-long meeting in the fall, another in the spring and again in the summer.

Because this was an exploratory program, CIMA developed a "learning assessment" that was based on listening to and reflecting back the participants' experiences, rather than setting up a series of indicators and outcomes in advance and then seeking to measure if the program achieved those specific targets.

Surveys and interviews after each round were used to generate concrete recommendations for the evolving program and related future projects. The assessment was considered "formative," in that the evaluation of each round of activities was used to improve the following round, and then there was a final assessment that looked at emerging outcomes from the model. The evaluator didn't attend or observe the program activities, but rather played a role of synthesizing feedback, noting opportunities for improvement, highlighting patterns of effectiveness in the initiative, and making recommendations based on participant insights. Given the diverse backgrounds and change theories of the participants, developing an integrated assessment enabled CIMA to present both individual perspectives and common themes, to reflect back the questions that the planners and participants discussed and debated among themselves.

Time limitations

Often one of the biggest challenges of participatory processes is the reality of time limitations in writing up ideas, giving input, reviewing documents, and so on. While a facilitated discussion among all participants often might be ideal, time and resource constraints can make this difficult. What often works, and was the case in the Knowledge Exchange Assessment, is having the evaluator collect input from participants in a variety of ways that fit their availability (online surveys, phone interviews and email), then develop a draft that is then circulated for their review before a final draft is completed.

Dealing with power imbalances

Power imbalances can often be an obstacle in participatory processes, and so it's important to consider this when structuring the process. The Knowledge Exchange involved national professional advocates, a funder, and grassroots organizers, so there were definitely issues of power that needed to be dealt with. The evaluator shared the draft with the grassroots organizers prior to sending to the advocates, so that the grassroots point of view was then formally established by their signing off on the document, prior to the national advocates having a chance to do the same.

Discovering outcomes

In this program the outcomes were "emergent" – that is, we learned through the assessment what to look for as indicators of success. As the program evolved, we looked for evidence of shifts in how grassroots organizers and national advocates understood the intricacies and dynamics of each other's work. We also looked at the impact beyond the program, at the development of relationships and collaboration between local and national groups, shifts in resource allocation from national to local groups, and changes in decision-making in coalitions and projects.

For more about the Knowledge Exchange program, visit the Media Justice Fund at www.fex.org/mjf/

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop and document your theory of how change happens

As described in the section on planning (see p.12), developing a Theory of Change can be especially valuable for grassroots and social justice organizations – the thinking, conversations, and analysis that go into this work can themselves be considered a social change strategy.

Just as evaluation is most powerful when it is closely integrated with planning, developing a Theory of Change can be an indispensable foundation for evaluation. In an evaluation context, a Theory of Change process is particularly useful to:

- Help an organization or participants in an initiative or collaborative think about and define what they are trying to achieve.
- Establish the framework for the evaluation by helping to define what important questions need to be answered, why, and what information will help to answer them.
- Document how change happens, and how to share these new models and thinking.

A cautionary note

A full Theory of Change process, as often undertaken by foundations or larger, well-funded projects, can often be quite time and resource intensive. It often involves a degree of understanding and articulation of the broader forces at work, beyond the direct sphere of influence, leaving participants with more questions than answers. While we feel this work is essential, we've found that a Theory of Change "lite" is often the best approach. In this case a facilitator takes participants through a process where they identify:

1. the big changes they are working towards in the long-term (such as more equitable distribution of and access to resources)
2. what they are doing to reach these goals and why they believe these strategies will be effective
3. what they will see along the way that will let them know they are making progress.

See page 16 for more on developing a Theory of Change

Identify indicators of progress

When profound social change is the ultimate goal, it can be a challenge to pinpoint what the interim stages look like. A number of theories have looked to the conditions that history tells us likely need to be in place for the often serendipitous outcomes to be achieved. Building capacity for change can include:

- Political education of communities.
- Alliance building: increasing number of partners, levels of collaboration, breadth/diversity of partnership, improvements in alignment efforts.
- Increased levels of participation in decision-making.
- Informing, educating policy-makers.
- Building constituencies.
- Building and strengthening relationships with decision-makers.
- Skills built in navigating complex, judicial, legislative related-processes.
- Increased organizational capacity, including sharpened strategies, management abilities.
- Shift in social norms – aligning advocacy and policy goals with core social values and behaviors. Includes changes in awareness of an issue, problem definition, change in beliefs, attitudes, values, priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dialogue with funders/donors

Funders are often unsure how to approach evaluation. They may press groups into a certain approach as they are unaware of other options to ensure accountability for their grantmaking. Quite often, a funder understands that evaluation is most effective when it is a learning tool, but it may be unclear what this looks like. Groups can work to establish a conversation about evaluation, which both recognizes and supports the needs of the grantmaker within the foundation, as well as meets the needs of the practitioner group. Groups can present a proposal to the funder, which includes accountability mechanisms (such as oversight and final reporting from an outside evaluator), along with the evaluation goals that the organization feels are important. Another effective strategy might be to partner with an ally evaluator and put together a proposal for evaluation, with the expectation that if funding is received, that evaluator would then work with the organization.

Use new models

There are some situations, such as choosing an external evaluator, drawing on existing publications as resources, or seeking funding for an evaluation program, where you may want to identify a particular evaluation method.

Note that much of the research on evaluation comes out of an academic framework or from within the funder world, and can be fairly technical and jargonistic. If you are looking into current forms of evaluation, here's some of the language you might encounter: "Complexity thinking" and "Systems change" frameworks look at such things as the creation of "social and political capital," innovation, building of relationships and networks, changes in attitudes, behaviors, and actions. Through a systems framework, an evaluation aims to capture effectiveness and value that arises from interventions, with the assumption that these outcomes might be much different then what was initially imagined. "Developmental evaluation" focuses on capturing what emerges from a program or initiative and feeding these findings back into the evolving initiative. "Outcome mapping" was developed to evaluate complex, collaborative development initiatives; it allows for capturing change happening in a direct sphere of influence.

Core Factors

In our experience, there are **three core factors** that contribute to the usefulness of evaluation for strengthening organizations and advancing a social change agenda:

1. when the evaluation is integrated with, and helps advance, political approaches to achieving social justice ends
2. effectiveness in analyzing and capturing change occurring in a complex environment
3. the ability of participants to insist on, and accept, the bad news with the good, to appreciate the importance of critique in learning

Evaluation as a collaboration: The roles of "inside" and "outside" evaluators

Evaluations have traditionally been broken up into "insider" or "outsider" assessments, with each approach having its pros and cons. Insider evaluations, conducted by a group itself, benefit from an intimate understanding of the issues, dynamics, change theories, and values of the organizations or initiatives to be examined, and can help build internal evaluation and reflection capacity. An evaluation where staff and key stakeholders are actively engaged can help participants learn about the program, develop critical, evaluative thinking, and creates buy-in to the evaluation, increasing the likelihood that results will actually be used.

However, insiders may be less likely to question basic assumptions, and those evaluating from within the group may be – or may be perceived to be – more susceptible to bias. For an evaluation to provide the most relevant, pertinent information the process must be rigorous to a degree where "bad news" can be delivered and tough questions asked.

An outside evaluation can often bring a more objective lens, although an outside evaluator won't necessarily share the values or theories of the organization. There is a risk that outside evaluators have a very different perspective on the value and impact of particular outcomes, as well as a different sense of how the values of the organization/initiative need to be integrated in the evaluation approach.

An external evaluator can often elicit feedback from staff, stakeholders, and constituents and other key informants in a way that might be difficult for an insider to do. Especially if it is determined that the findings will be anonymous, this process can provide important feedback.

We've found that a combined "insider-outsider" approach can be effective. These are often referred to as collaborative, participatory, empowerment, learning-oriented, or appreciative inquiry forms of evaluation. While these approaches differ slightly in the level of control ceded to the evaluator, they share in viewing the evaluator as a facilitator who creates a process and environment for learning and assessment. Overall, a collaborative evaluation approach tends to emphasize the use of findings for decision-making and action.

Ultimately, decisions about who will be involved in the evaluation, to what degree, and the balance of work between the evaluator and the rest of the evaluation team depends much on the purpose of the evaluation. For example, if the evaluation will be used for external accountability, as defined by a funder, than the evaluator might need to have a more dominant role. We recommend clarifying this in advance with the funder, to ensure that the process maintains the benefits of more participatory approaches.

Evaluation Case Study: An Inside-Outside Evaluation Team

The project: Evaluate the "Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere" (NK) program as a model of building activist-academic collaboration in order to understand and disseminate successful strategies and raise funds and support for this type of work

The team: The NK program was produced by the Social Science Research Council in collaboration with CIMA. As part of the core planning staff for the program, CIMA served as the internal evaluators, partnering with the social-change research organization ActKnowledge as the external evaluators.

The challenge: How to build-in evaluation as part of the program operations, but maintain objectivity so we could effectively learn what was and wasn't working, including the unexpected.

See the case study of the planning process for the NK program on p. 9

The Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere program was created to bring to together activists and academics to advance political change agendas involving the media and communications system. The evaluation, which was incorporated from the beginning as part of the program design phase, used an insider-outsider approach. In an "outsider" role, evaluators from ActKnowledge facilitated the project's theory of change process and provided oversight for the design of the evaluation and analysis of findings. The insider evaluation role played by CIMA was important in ensuring the findings were considered in planning and decision-making, while ActKnowledge as an outsider helped ensure rigor and guarded against bias.

A number of times we have found that doing research on effective practices of other organizations is valuable both for sharpening program strategies as well as clarifying and supporting evaluation frameworks. In this developmental evaluation – meaning that the evaluation was actively informing program development – an understanding of what value and impact other programs had experienced helped provide some indication of what evaluators should look for in their own assessment.

The Necessary Knowledge program ultimately aims at complex systems change, with the top level outcome in the Theory of Change stated as "a more open, participatory, informed public sphere." In this case, program designers and evaluators were not testing a firm change theory, as much as seeing what emerged from the interactions between scholars, activists, and program staff. Some of the indicators included changes in learning and strategy formation within the activist organizations, as well as shifts in academic understanding of how social change happens, and what is needed to contribute to activist work.

To read more about the strategies, outcomes and evaluation data from the Necessary Knowledge program, see the reports at mediaresearchhub.ssrc.org/grants

PART THREE (Tools): Activities and Worksheets

The Resources section at the end of this guide lists several online and offline toolkits for evaluation and planning.

The "So That" Chain

In A Practical Guide to Documenting Influence and Leverage In "Making Connections" Communities, the Annie E. Casey Foundation offers the "so that" chain for grantees as a tool to building their conceptual model.

A *"so that"* chain can be a useful exercise to more explicitly show the short-, intermediate-, and long-term changes that will lead to lasting change. It is a tool for describing a strategy and how it links systemic change to positive impacts in people's lives.

The concept can be used in a workshop or discussion setting, in a facilitated process, or among a group trying to articulate the logic of their plans.

Once a group describes a "so that" chain, it can be used as the basis for additional questions, such as WHY participants are sure one thing will lead to another and what the FACTORS are that can make that outcome more or less likely. It can also be a starting place to look for indicators, that is, how will the group know when a particular stage has been achieved.

A SAMPLE "SO THAT" CHAIN

We will (activity or strategy here):

Increase media coverage about the amount of money low-income families and individuals pay for cable and internet access and the implications of what happens when they have reduced access.

So That

Public awareness of this issue increases. [Influence Outcome]

So That

Policy-makers increase their knowledge of and interest in this issue. [Influence Outcome]

So That

Policies change to create options for cable and broadband more affordable rates. [Influence Outcome]

So That

New business models and requirements for industry are developed to provide more affordable TV and internet services. [Influence Outcome]

So That

Individuals and families have increased ability to make affordable choices for access to content and communication networks. [Impact Outcome]

So That

Low-income individuals and families are able to have full access to educational, informational, communication, and cultural benefits of the internet, the government, and other services that are increasingly online.

A Toolkit for Building Evaluation Capacity

This toolkit was prepared for an evaluation workshop that CIMA produced for media and communications activists and scholars, as part of the Necessary Knowledge Workshop on Collaborative Research and Advocacy in 2007. It was developed by Catherine Borgman-Arboleda for CIMA, with contributions from Felicia Sullivan and Dorothy Kidd. Graphic design by Marianna Trofimova.

This toolkit can be used for groups to conduct their own simple evaluation workshop, and as an aid to articulating and measuring change goals. The toolkit contains the following:

1. A brief guide to using the toolkit
2. Handout: "Impact on Our Terms"
3. Worksheets A & B: blank templates to write your "change map"
4. Worksheets C, D, E: examples

A Brief Guide to Using the Evaluation Toolkit:

1. A FEW QUICK POINTS ABOUT EVALUATION: (you can put the headings up on the board or easel)

➪ WHEN DO YOU EVALUATE?

While evaluation usually happens at the end of a project, we've found that developing a change theory/evaluation framework is important to do at the beginning of a project, as a core part of strategic planning. This helps make sure all participants are on the same page about what the project aims to achieve and how you'll get there. Early thinking about evaluation helps surface assumptions that may or may not be shared, and ensures that you're able to set up processes for data collection early.

➪ This process can also help you lay out your funding proposals; it's the kind of thinking that funders are looking for.

➪ THINKING ABOUT EVALUATION AS A LEARNING/PLANNING TOOL

We wanted to point out the differences in how you might think about approaching evaluation. In the past, evaluation has often been seen as an outside "judgment" on how well or poorly something is doing. When working on complex social/structural change initiatives, we'd encourage you to think about this work as an assessment (or learning evaluation) that looks at measuring for the purpose of improving, rather than proving, and focuses on learning and building knowledge that can strengthen overall advocacy and organizing efforts.

➪ CONTRIBUTION VS. ATTRIBUTION

Another important point: Look at contribution rather than attribution. You are interested in making systemic change, and this will be multidimensional rather than linear, so think in terms of contribution, rather than taking individual credit for change.

➪ TAKE CONTROL:

Establish your own hypotheses about how change happens and the role your organization or project will play (rather than having funders do this for you, for example). This Theory of Change approach demonstrates how your strategies map to the outcomes you want to achieve, and why – i.e., what the underlying assumptions are.

➪ There are ways to think about claiming/defining the impact of media projects that go beyond traditional metrics that are often imposed from the outside.

➪ See the handout "Impact On Our Terms"

2. USING THE WORKSHEETS:
(Worksheets A & B are to be filled in; C, D, and E are for references and examples)

➪ Worksheet A: this is where you will be recording your own change maps. The other pages are examples to help you fill this out.

➪ **Outcome statements:** concrete measurable outcomes that you are trying to achieve, on the path to longer-term change goals.

- Worksheet C has examples of types of change goals, and then examples of specific outcome statements.

➪ **Strategies:** what you are actually doing to achieve your outcomes

➪ **Assumptions:** why you think your strategies will lead to your outcome statements. What theories, evidence, research can you site to back up your hypotheses?

- Worksheet D has examples of outcome statements, strategies, and assumptions.

➪ **Indicators:** what you will actually observe to let you know you are making progress towards your outcomes

- Worksheet E show examples of outcomes and indicators.

➪ Worksheet B:

➪ Here you record your outcomes statements, your indictors of progress (what you will actually be able to observe that will let you know you are making progress towards your outcomes) and data you will collect.

- **Data collection:** Here you describe what information you will be collecting to track progress on indicators. This could be either qualitative (interviews, observations) or quantitative (number of people attending a meeting, new members, etc.), or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative measures.

➪ Worksheet C:

➪ An example set of "change goals" – the types of change that groups have mentioned wanting to achieve, each mapped to examples of specific outcome statements or concrete, measurable outcomes that projects might aim to achieve.

➪ Worksheet D:

➪ An example of how outcome statements (concrete, measurable) are grounded in strategies and the assumptions behind those strategies – such as: Why do you think your strategies will lead to your change goals? What theories, evidence, etc. can you cite to back up your hypotheses?

➪ Worksheet E:

➪ An example of how outcome statements map to indicators: what you will actually observe to let you know you are making progress towards your outcome statements.

Impact on Our Own Terms

(a brief start to turn thinking around)

Often we are pressured to demonstrate impact in a manner that has been defined in the context of commercial and corporate media. Some of the traditional ways of measuring media impact are:

- Number of viewers / listeners / readers / hits
- Revenue from sponsorship / underwriting / advertising
- Quality of the production
- Amount of coverage in the mainstream press

Yet those of us working in non-commercial, community or alternative media don't always view these impacts as the most important. International development projects (i.e. UNESCO's Community Multimedia Center Programme) view successful media and communication projects as serving to alleviate poverty or providing greater social inclusion. New efforts around citizen journalism look to the level at which underserved communities, local voices, and civic dialogues are present. Many community-based media projects (i.e. youth media, ethnic media) seek to transform and empower the communities they work in. Here are alternative ways in which media impact can be measured:

Individual Impacts

- Number of people who have been trained to create their own media
- Increase in individual self-esteem and confidence about skills and abilities
- Freedom of expression and creative expression
- Improved outlook on future
- Improved sense of well-being and belonging
- Breaks down individual isolation
- Helps individual participate in social or collective project
- Increases media content (representation) of individual narratives of under-served and marginalized communities that are seldom represented
- Increases skills in practices of deliberative and participatory democracy
- Improves capacity to withstand other social problems, for eg. youth vis a vis addiction to drugs, risk of HIV, etc.

Organizational Impacts

- Increase in the number of people who access the organization's resources
- Improved communication tools
- Stronger understanding of organizational mission (internally / externally)
- New partnerships and collaborations
- Stronger awareness amongst constituencies / stakeholders about key issues important to the organization
- Increases media content (representation) of narratives of under-served and marginalized communities
- Increase processes of democracy, ie media, of collective intelligence and participation by under-served and marginalized communities

Community Impacts

- Number of groups who came together to work on a project
- New connections formed between groups
- Increase in volunteer efforts
- New community-wide dialogues and debates
- Increased awareness about important community-wide issues / problems
- New means of sharing knowledge for a common purpose (techniques, issues, etc.)
- Representation of counter public spheres raises new issues, and new perspectives about conditions, experiences, critiques and remedies (alternative policies) of particular populations which then circulate for social change
- Lessons about alternative remedies (ie. practical case studies) which make practice more effective
- All this adds to the creation of democratic alternatives

There are many, many more ways in which impact can and is reworked to meet the needs of our communities.

Compiled by Felicia Sullivan and Dorothy Kidd

Worksheet A

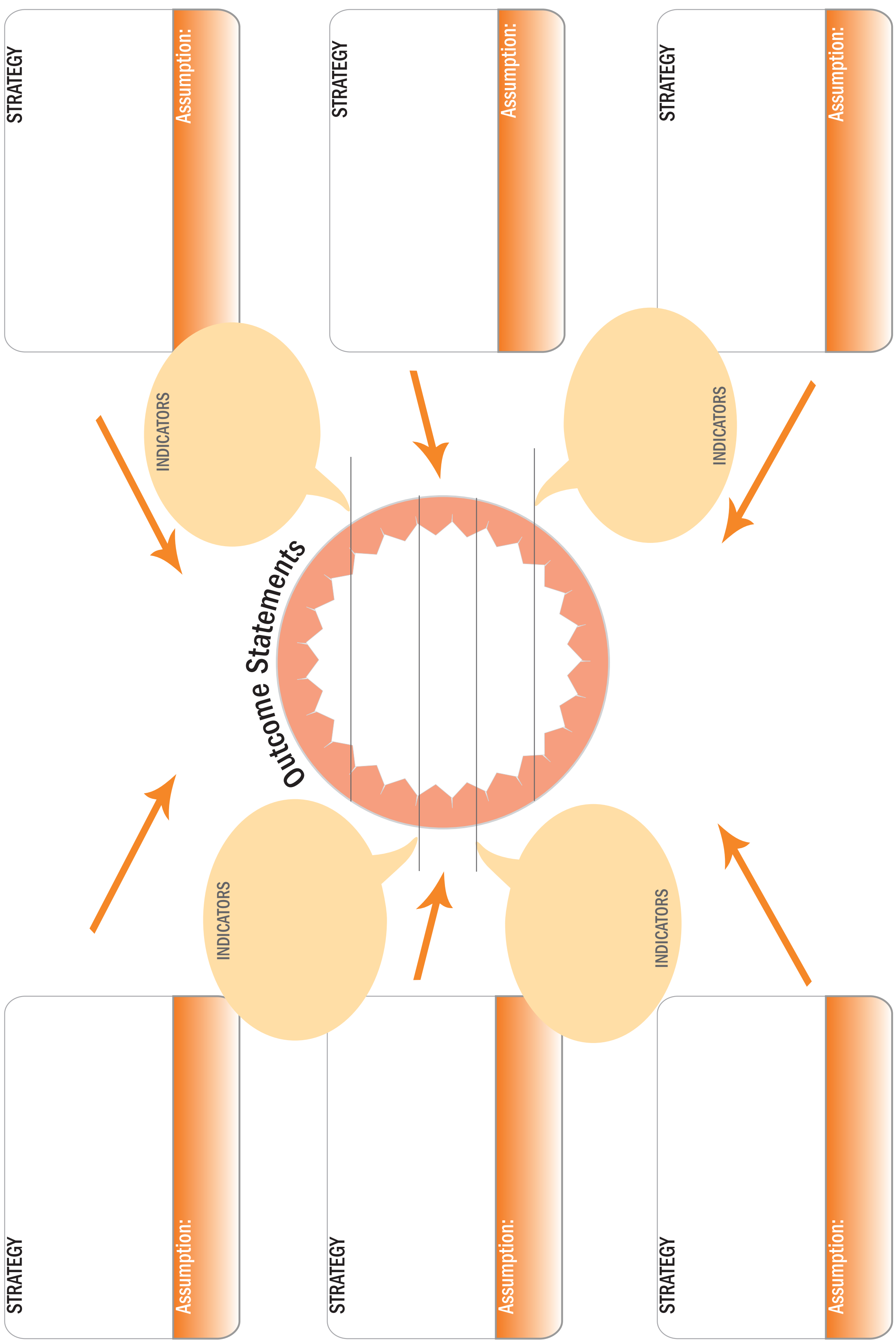
CIMA CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ACTION

WORKSHEET **A**

Evaluating Your Research Project: A Change Map & Evaluation Framework

Or, how is the world going to be different because your research exists, and how will you know?

Project Name



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ACTION

WORKSHEET **B**

Evaluating Your Research Project: A Change Map & Evaluation Framework

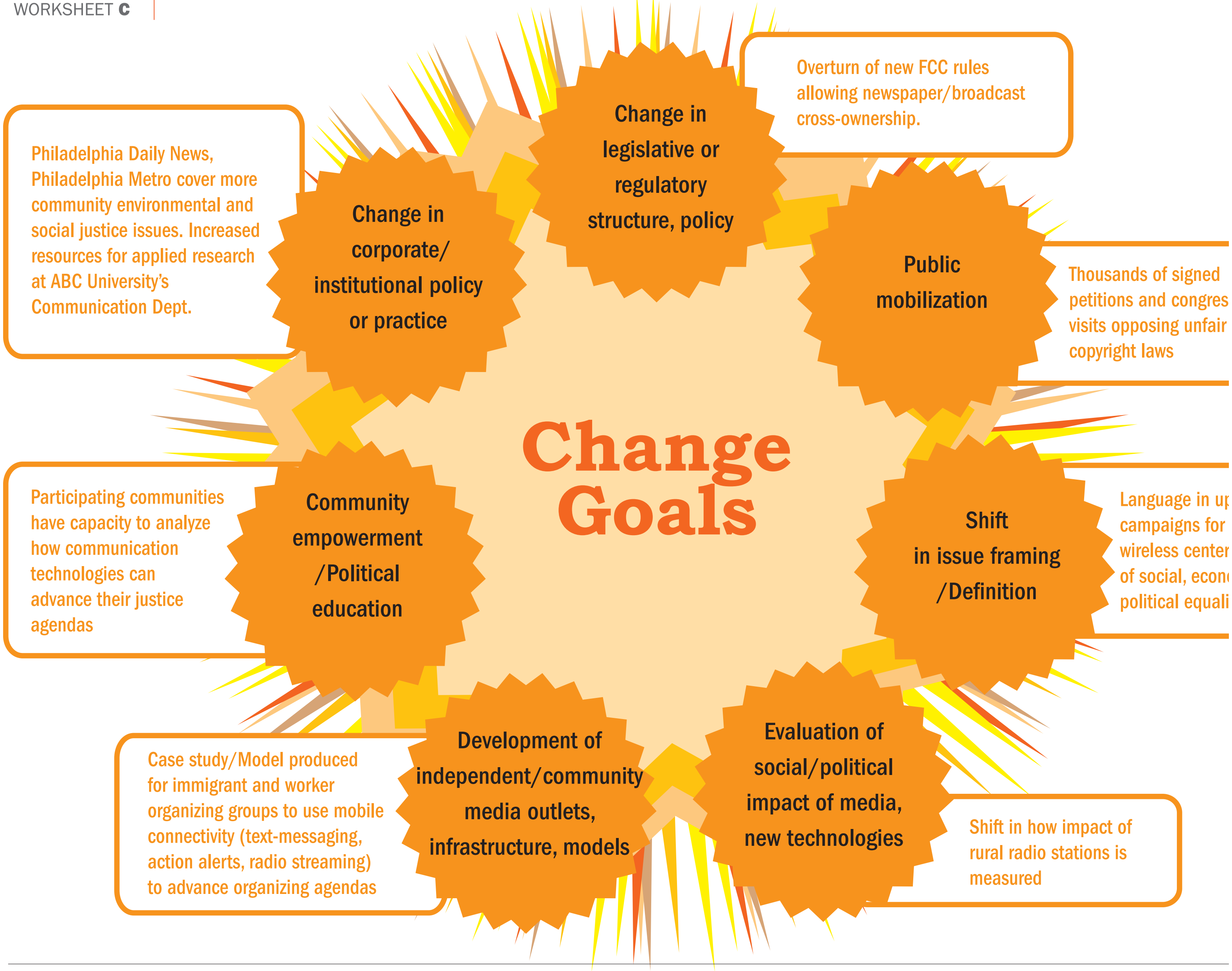
Or, how is the world going to be different because your research exists, and how will you know?

Project Name

Outcome Statements	Indicators What will be observable?	Data Collection What information do you need to get?

WORKSHEET C

Change goals are examples of the types of change that grantees have mentioned wanting to achieve.
In orange are examples of specific outcome statements or concrete, *measurable* outcomes that projects might aim to achieve.



CIMA CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ACTION

WORKSHEET **D**

Outcome statements ~ Concrete, measurable outcomes that work aims for, on the way to larger change goals

Strategies ~ What you are actually doing to achieve your outcomes

Assumptions ~ Why do you think your strategies will lead to your change goals? What theories, evidence, etc. can you cite to back up your hypotheses?

Outcome statements	Strategies	Assumptions
Shift in how impact of rural radio stations is measured	Development of metrics that serve as a model for rural radio stations to measure impact	Rural radio stations have little meaningful data on audiences. Arbitron methodology is insufficient
Thousands of signed petitions and congressional visits opposing unfair copyright laws	Outreach to artists, educators, and critics who use or might use Fair Use material	Groups don't know about policy opportu-nities. They represent a strong case to policymakers
Increased resources for applied research at ABC University's Communication Dept.	Produce a conference for applied researchers, publish in journals receptive to engaged methods	Applied research not seen as credible within the department
Overturn of new FCC rules allowing newspaper /broadcast cross-ownership	Look at correlation between media consolidation and minority/women ownership	Scarcity of data on how consolidation impacts minority ownership. Is crucial, FCC considering broader consolidation issues.
Language in upcoming campaigns for muni wireless centers on goals of social, economic, political equality	Produce a toolkit explaining how to negotiate digital inclusion provisions in municipal broadband initiatives	"Digital Divide" frame is simplistic. Use of a new framework implies policies beyond just access (eg tools, training
Participating communities have capacity to analyze how communication technologies can advance their justice agendas	Community volunteers participate in research process	Participatory methods increase quality, validity of research. Community capacities are built, political consciousness raised.
Philadelphia Daily News, Philadelphia Metro cover more commu-nity environ-mental and social justice issues	Institute a community-editorial board with monthly meetings	Individual journalists/editors can be receptive to needs of community. Communities empowered to demand more responsive media
Creation of new regulatory proposals to protect consumer rights & guarantee access to culture (Brazil)	Research results presented in workshop for members of congress, nat'l consumers groups, & other advocacy groups	Brazil is currently debating future of media/telecom regulation and there are opportunities for research to support consumer's/citizen's rights

Worksheet E

WORKSHEET E

Outcome statements ~ Concrete, measurable outcomes that work aims for, on the way to larger change goals

Indicators ~ What you will actually observe to let you know you are making progress towards your outcome statements

Outcome statements	Indicators
Shift in how impact of rural radio stations is measured	Rural radio station WNIT and one additional radio station are able to use model to secure funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.
Thousands of signed petitions and congressional visits opposing unfair copyright laws	10,000 petitions signed, 500 visits
Increased resources for applied research at ABC University's Communication Dept.	Department breaks precedent, offers course "buy outs" for applied/engaged research
Overturn of new FCC rules allowing newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership	Research is submitted to FCC for 6/21/06 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on broadcast
Language in upcoming campaigns for muni wireless centers on goals of social, economic, political equality	"Digital Inclusion" framework, and priorities re: serving excluded communities appear in city documents
Participating communities have capacity to analyze how communication technologies can advance their justice agendas	Community members are able to articulate both how communication technologies can support their organizing work, and what they are at risk of losing
Philadelphia Daily News, Philadelphia Metro cover more community environmental and social justice issues	News outlets cover community issues raised in meetings with editors/journalists
Creation of new regulatory proposals to protect consumer rights & guarantee access to culture (Brazil)	Research is discussed, cited in gov't/civil society convenings for designing a new legal framework for telecommunications and intellectual property.

The MONEY game: thoughts on dealing with funding

When planning a project, we need to be clear how we will deal with funders, as they can be a major influence on the project's development as well as the dynamics between collaborators.

As a group that has often worked directly with funders and with relatively well-resourced groups, we at CIMA learned a number of lessons that were important in being true to our values and intentions. These points are excerpted from a list we created for ourselves, to keep us on track when navigating those high-pressure waters.

It can be very valuable to spend some time talking through these issues in your organization or coalition. We invite you to print this list and use it in discussion to come up with your own list of considerations when dealing with funders and financial resources.

Funding & Transparency

$ Be clear and open with partners/allies about funding, including who has funded the project so far, and if partners/allies' participation, support or involvement will be referenced to funders.

$ Be generous about sharing information about funding opportunities, sources or strategies with allies.

$ Communicate with partners about our understanding of limitations and implications of funding for a particular project, and decisions to appeal (or not) to funders at various points.

Navigating the Pressures

$ The benefits of appealing to funders can be a very strong influence; we need to be aware when decisions about our projects and goals are made with an eye to being funded and handle that strategically and tactically.

$ Take care when working on projects with, or for funders. We need to consider and discuss with partners the limits and implications that could come with specific grants, foundation funding or other sources, and account for this in planning.

$ Be conscious of how projects are framed and positioned to attract funders and how doing so may reinforce imbalances. We often need to make a strategic consideration if it's more important to resonate with a funder's interest or stick with the frames and language that emerge from the work on the ground.

Spreading the Wealth

$ Seek to raise and allocate funds so partners can participate fully in joint projects.

$ Ask community-based project participants about ways to enable their involvement. When available, stipends and other forms of reciprocity can sometimes make participation from grassroots groups possible.

$ Encourage partners with resources to compensate community-based project participants for their involvement. For example, if staff at a funded organization are paid to do planning and prep work on a given project, and they want help from community-based partners, can they consider allocating/offering resources to compensate that time.

$ Try to push back to funders who don't want to fund grassroots groups directly. Or, if you can get money to work "with" an ally who is not able to get the funds to do that same work, seek ways to transfer funds to them directly for their leadership.

$ Be willing to step away from funding opportunities that compete with allies with less access to resources.

Educating Funders

$ Take and make opportunities to educate and encourage funders, especially new funders, to support media activist organizing and to direct resources to community- and constituency-based groups.

$ Bring up factors of racial, economic, gender, and other inequities to funders. We all need to raise these issues as a core part of the work and not just leave it to interested parties, such as women, people of color, or community groups, to raise them.

(this is just a partial list, these can lead you to many other excellent tools, readings and groups)

Planning & Evaluation Tools for Social Justice Work

Building collaborative strategic plans and collective power:
(all available free online except where otherwise noted)

"A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation," guidebook on power & movement-building, from Just Associates
www.justassociates.org/ActionGuide.htm (some chapters online, book is worth buying)

"Counting Our Victories: Popular Education and Organizing,"
training guide and video for grassroots groups, from Repeal the Deal Productions
www.transformcommunities.org/resources/counting_vic.html (book and video to purchase)

"Power Tools: A Manual for Organizations Fighting for Justice,"
comprehensive social-change toolkit, from Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education
www.scopela.org to find out more (contact SCOPE to order the manual and CD-ROM kit)

"Re:Imagining Change – An Introduction to Story-based Strategy"
a manual for using stories to define struggles and shape campaigns, from SmartMeme
www.smartmeme.org/change (order the book, or download – for a donation if you can)

Strategy tools for collaborative planning, from the Community Problem-Solving Project at MIT
web.mit.edu/cpsproject/strategy_tools.html

Tools for planning and designing an advocacy campaign, from The Change Agency
www.thechangeagency.org/01_cms/details.asp?ID=57

Workshop activities for developing a strategy and strategic thinking, from Training for Change
www.trainingforchange.org/content/section/4/39/index.html#29

Coalition-building checklists, tools for facilitation, vision and more, from Hollyhock Leadership Institution
www.hollyhockleadership.org/resources

Comprehensive online toolkit - including planning, facilitation and evaluation, from Community Toolbox
ctb.ku.edu/en/dothework

An organized library of tools and links to resources, from the Center for Collaborative Planning
www.connectccp.org/resources/

Power Mapping: a tool for utilizing networks and relationships, from Idealist
www.idealist.org/ioc/learn/curriculum/pdf/Power-Mapping.pdf

Logic models, theory of change and evaluation guides and tools

An online visual "logic model" for planning advocacy and policy change, from Continuous Progress
www.planning.continuousprogress.org

Tools for assessment, building logic models and evaluation plans, from Innovation Network
www.innonet.org (free online tools with registration)

"The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change," from the Aspen Roundtable and ActKnowledge
theoryofchange.org/pdf/TOC_fac_guide.pdf (book free to download)

"Outcome Mapping" Toolkit (including karaoke!), from International Development Research Center
www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html (online guide and tools)

Advocacy Evaluation Toolkit from the Alliance for Social Justice
www.advocacyevaluation.org (tools for purchase by nonprofits or foundations)

"A Practical Guide to Documenting Influence and Leverage In 'Making Connections' Communities," from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/cc2977k439.pdf (free)

"A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy," from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org/upload/PublicationFiles/DA3622H5000.pdf (free)

Groups Offering Training & Facilitation (U.S. based)

The authors of this guide may be available for consulting and facilitation in planning and evaluation, or can recommend others. All of us are familiar with Theory of Change work.

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Strategy development and movement-building workshops, consulting & facilitation:

Center for Collaborative Planning (California) - www.connectccp.org

Grassroots Policy Project (national) - www.grassrootspolicy.org

Movement Strategy Center (national) - www.movementstrategy.org
(also has a network of consultants and can provide recommendations)

Praxis Project (national) - www.thepraxisproject.org/

Project South (US South) - www.projectsouth.org

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (California/national) - www.scopela.org

Theory of Change workshops, consulting & facilitation:
ActKnowledge, a New York City-based Social enterprise that connects social change with a rigorous study of how and why initiatives work - www.actknowledge.com
(also has trained TOC consultants and can provide recommendations)

Racial Equity Theory of Change training & facilitation:
Aspen Roundtable on Community Change (national) - www.aspenroundtable.org

Training in facilitation & how to facilitate strategy work:
Training for Change (US and Canada) - www.trainingforchange.org

Articles on Evaluation

Research articles on advocacy evaluation from Innovation Network
http://www.innonet.org/?section_id=3&content_id=601

Who Measures Change?: An Introduction to Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of Communication for Social Change, from Communication For Social Change Consortium
www.communicationforsocialchange.org/pdf/who_measures_change.pdf

Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A Scoping Study, from Action Aid
www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf/Scoping%20advocacy%20paper%202001.pdf

Measuring Success: What's New, What's Next?, slide presentation from Just Associates
www.justassociates.org/index_files/ES_M&M.pdf

Making Change Happen: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice Equality and Peace, from Just Associates
www.justassociates.org/index_files/MCH3red.pdf

An Agenda For Change in the USA: Insights From a Conversation About Assessing Social Change in Washington, DC, from Just Associates
www.justassociates.org/index_files/agendaforchange.pdf

Outcomes of Collaborative Water Policy–Making: Applying Complexity Thinking to Evaluation, by Sarah Connick and Judith E. Innes
repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=iurd

Strengthening Social Change Through Assessment and Organizational Learning, from the Community Learning Project
comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2005/mott.htm

Evaluation of the oppressed: A social justice approach to program evaluation, by Mohamed Ismail Ibrahim
scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI3078693/

Measuring Social Change Investments, from the Women's Funding Network
www.wfnet.org/resource/white-paper/measuring-social-change-investments

Books on Evaluation

Catsambas, Tessie Tzavaras & Preskill, Hallie. (2006) Reframing Evaluation Through Appreciative Inquiry. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Patton, Michael Quinn. (2008). Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

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