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Measuring the Impacts of Advocacy and Community Organizing: Application of a Methodology and Initial Findings

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Key Points

· The increasing emphasis by funders on strategic grantmaking and measurable outcomes may be a disincentive to support policy and advocacy work, because of the perception that outcomes can be difficult to assess.

· A tool for measuring impact can reduce the barriers to funding advocacy and policy work.

· The tool draws upon the literatures on evaluating advocacy and organizing, social capital building efforts, and return on investment approaches to evaluation.

· The tool was applied in two sites, where funders found it useful to understand advocacy impacts and learn how advocacy can enhance their grant-making goals.

Introduction

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP*)* in Washington, D.C. is a national watchdog, research, and advocacy organization that promotes philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness. NCRP seeks to increase foundation grants for advocacy and organizing aimed at achieving long-term change among marginalized communities in U.S. society. Advocacy[1] and or-

ganizing[2] are among the most effective strategies for foundations seeking to achieve sustainable improvements and to advance opportunities for groups disadvantaged due to structural barriers to equality. Despite research that supports the efficacy of such grantmaking strategies in achieving these aims (e.g., Edwards (2008) and NCRP (2005)), a 2005 analysis of grantmaking trends[3]

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[1] NCRP defines *advocacy* as a category of activities whose primary purpose is to influence people's opinions or actions on matters of public policy or concern. Many types of activities fall under the category of advocacy and are legally permissible for 501(c)(3) public charities to engage in, such as issue identification, research, and analysis; public issue education; lobbying for or against legislation; nonpartisan voter registration, education, and mobilization; litigation; educating government agencies at all levels; participation in referenda and ballot initiatives; grassroots mobilization; and testifying before government bodies.

[2] NCRP defines *community organizing* as a process of building relationships, leadership, and power (typically among disenfranchised communities) and bringing that power and collective voice to bear on the issues that affect those communities by engaging with relevant decision makers. Community organizing can be one part of an overall advocacy or public policy campaign strategy, but it is distinguished by the fact that the agents of change are the affected constituencies, rather than paid advocates or lobbyists who attempt to represent the interests of such constituencies.

[3] The Independent Sector and the Foundation Center (2005) found that grantmaking for structural change efforts (using the proxy of "social justice philanthropy") comprised a meager 11.8 percent of total grants in 1998 and declined slightly to 11 percent in 2002. This quantitative analysis was the first attempt to establish a consistent benchmark and provide insight into the state of social justice philanthropy. The authors defined *social justice philanthropy* as "the granting of philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations based in the United States and other countries that work for structural change in order to increase the

TABLE 1 Theory of Change

Strategies and activities	Target audiences	Anticipated change
Provide information	*Foundation leaders*	*Knowledge*
· What are advocacy and organizing?	· CEOs	· Funders have enhanced understanding of what advocacy and organizing are and how these strategies can help a foundation achieve its mission.
· How can they advance a funder's goals?	· Trustees	· Funders have greater awareness that advocacy and organizing have tangible impacts and interim progress outcomes that are measurable in the short and long term.
· How can their impact be measured?	· Donors	· Funders are familiar with specific organizations that have successfully used these strategies to improve communities.
Demonstrate impact		*Attitudes*
· Quantitative	· Program Officers	· More funders see value of advocacy and organizing.
· Qualitative		· More funders believe impacts can be achieved and measured.
		· Practice of funding these strategies is normalized.
Foster dialogue & relationships		*Practices (behavior)*
· Connect funders with peers and infrastructure groups.		· Foundation leaders engage their trustees, donors, and staff in discussion about how these strategies can advance their mission.
· Connect funders with advocacy and organizing groups.		· Funders seek further information and advice to guide their next steps in considering support for advocacy and organizing.
· Connect funders to resources and technical assistance.		· More funders provide grants for advocacy and organizing that benefit underserved communities.

determined that foundations overall had not increased their support for systemic change strategies that benefit underserved communities.[4] To

opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically, and socially" (p. 5). It is important to note this definition is not intended to convey or support any specific ideological or political position.

[4] A newly released Foundation Center (2009) analysis showed an increase in social justice funding between 2002 and 2006, from 11 percent to 12 percent of overall foundation support. Social justice giving grew more rapidly than foundation grants overall during that period (31 percent compared with 20 percent). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation accounted for more than half of this growth.

probe the reasons for this in more depth, NCRP conducted a situational analysis of the philanthropic field and found that funders today seek to be more strategic, may narrow their grantmaking focus to achieve greater impact, and increasingly value evaluation and quantifiable results. Further stakeholder interviews revealed that many foundation leaders do not know how to measure the impact of advocacy and organizing and therefore do not see how these approaches can strategically

The number of social justice funders and number of recipients both declined.

advance their institutions' missions. To address these obstacles, NCRP determined that developing and applying an impact measurement tool would enable foundation leaders to understand that advocacy and organizing have quantitative and qualitative benefits for targeted beneficiaries and the broader communities where they live. This article describes NCRP's theory of change, the impact measurement tool, its application in two sites, impact findings, and preliminary evidence of the tool's usefulness.

Summary of Theory of Change

NCRP developed a theory of change about how to enhance funder knowledge and understanding of these strategies and ultimately promote greater foundation investment in advocacy and organizing. The theory of change (see Table 1) posited that for funders to initiate or increase their support for advocacy and organizing, they would need the following information and resources:

1. Definitions and descriptions of advocacy and organizing
2. Legal parameters for funding advocacy
3. Understanding of how advocacy and organizing may align with a foundation's mission, vision, values, objectives, and current grant-making approach
4. Evidence of impact and tools to measure the impact of advocacy and organizing that include both quantitative and qualitative dimensions
5. Examples of other funders and philanthropic opinion leaders that support advocacy and organizing
6. Access to technical assistance and peer guidance to help funders move from knowledge to action

After reviewing which of the above activities were being undertaken already by others in the field, NCRP developed a measurement tool that both quantifies and qualifies impact. NCRP will apply the tool in multiple sites, report the results, engage funders in dialogue about the findings at local events, connect interested funders to peers and experts who support advocacy and organizing fund-

ing, and share the findings more broadly at philanthropic convenings.

Development of the Measurement Tool

NCRP's principal investigator developed a methodology for measuring the impacts of advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement that drew on the latest research and practice in the field, including:

1. Literature on civic engagement, social capital, and social cohesion (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Halpern, 2005)
2. Academic research on the outcomes of community organizing (e.g., Warren and Wood, 2001; Speer, 2002; Swarts, 2008)
3. Tools developed to help philanthropic institutions assess their own and grantees' advocacy work (e.g., Alliance for Justice, 2004, Blueprint Research & Design, 2005)
4. Recent efforts by foundations to quantify a return on investment for their grants to social justice organizations (e.g., Needmor Fund [Ranghelli, 2004]; Solidago Foundation, 2008)
5. Interviews with funders, advocates, organizers, and academics about this topic

This comprehensive review of literature and practice[5] identified several key observations that informed the methodology for measuring impact.

Advocacy, organizing, and social capital. Many researchers have documented the value for society of having strong social capital (i.e., social connections and networks and related norms of reciprocity), including positive child outcomes, lower crime rates, economic prosperity, improved physical and mental health, and more responsive government. Much of the reviewed literature focused on whether and to what extent social capital has eroded over the last several decades. However, recently academics have looked more closely at the ways in which advocacy and community organizing, especially in lower-income and marginalized communities, play an important role in strengthening the social fabric. Warren and Wood (2001) documented the breadth

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[5] See detailed literature review by Lisa Ranghelli (2008a).

TABLE 2   Sample Impact Measurement Questions

1. Fiscal information

For each of the last five years, please provide the following information:
a. Total operating budget
b. Amount of budget devoted to advocacy and organizing
c. Amount of advocacy/organizing budget from foundation sources
d. Breakdown of foundation funding that was general support (unrestricted), capacity-building, and multi-year funding

2. Membership, leadership, and constituency

The following data attempt to capture, with numbers, the breadth and depth of your organization's outreach and engagement of others during the last five years:
· Number of new individual members recruited (if institution-based membership, please estimate total number of individuals across those institutions)
· Total number of trainings held for members, leaders, or constituents
· Number of unique (nonduplicate) individuals who participated in leadership development training
List the specific skills and knowledge members or constituents learned through trainings and other leadership development opportunities:
· Number of core leaders developed (e.g., members who regularly participate in planning meetings, task forces, public events)
· Number of people who turned out at public actions, events, or meetings
· Number of people mobilized to communicate with policymakers
· Number of people educated about issues affecting them (via community forums, newsletters, research publications, Web site, email blasts, other)

3. Impacts of organizing and advocacy

Please list the top five most impactful advocacy and organizing successes your organization achieved
(i.e., took the lead or played a significant role in a coalition effort) in the last five years. In addition to proactive victories, include preventing bad policies or budget cuts, etc.

For each impact, please provide the following information:
a. Provide a brief description of the impact, cite any relevant legislation, and indicate the level of government or other decision maker.
b. Indicate year campaign started to year victory attained (e.g., 2002–2005).
c. What strategies and/or external conditions were key to your success?
d. What is the policy context for this win? Why is it significant?
e. What is the dollar value (if able to be calculated)? Please note whether one-time or annual amount.
f. What is the number of intended beneficiaries that are benefiting from the victory?
g. If relevant, explain how this impact benefits people beyond the intended beneficiaries.
h. If you won this as part of a coalition effort, who else was involved (e.g., other organizations, legislators)?
i. What sources can verify this impact and your role in it (e.g., news article, allies, legislator)? Please be as specific as possible for each win and provide contact information.

4. Capacity-building and interim progress outcomes

a. Please share whether and how your organization's capacity has been built in the last five years, for example, strengthening communications, fundraising, or management; increasing budget or staff; and anything else that allows you to be more effective.
b. If you have been working on a campaign but haven't reached your ultimate goal yet, please share interim outcomes. These could include, for example: getting a proposal on the ballot or legislation introduced; having a hearing held on your issue; getting media coverage; reframing public debate on an issue to reflect your problem analysis and proposed solution; getting a pledge from a decision maker; getting a shareholder resolution introduced; building better relationships with policy makers, experts, media, allies, or other key stakeholders; building skills of your leadership to speak out, negotiate, engage in research.
c. It is important for funders to understand that even a "failed" advocacy or organizing effort has value for an organization. Please share a story about a campaign you lost. What happened? What did you learn? Why was it still a valuable experience?

Note. For full survey, please contact Lisa Ranghelli at NCRP.

of faith-based community organizing (FBCO) and the important role that FBCO groups play in bringing ordinary people from diverse backgrounds together to participate in the democratic process, enhancing forms of social capital that are both "bonding" (within groups) and "bridging" (across groups). Herman and Renz (2008) identified a correlation between stakeholder engagement and organizational effectiveness, indicating that nonprofits that engage with and respond to stakeholders are better positioned to achieve their mission than those that do not. This literature suggests that the very process of engaging marginalized residents and building networks and

> *Recent efforts to measure the impact of community organizing are evolving on a somewhat parallel track to advances in advocacy evaluation.*

relationships within and across constituencies has impact, in addition to the impacts of actual policy wins. The challenge then is to find ways to capture and measure the benefit of this work among organizing and advocacy groups and to help foundation leaders understand this added value. As described below, the methodology attempts to quantify some of this by collecting data from community-based organizations on the numbers of people they engage in a variety of ways and the numbers and types of relationships they have with other organizations and networks.

Parallel work on advocacy and organizing evaluation. Recent efforts to measure the impact of community organizing are evolving on a somewhat parallel track to advances in advocacy evaluation.[6] Common themes are emerging

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[6] A third approach incorporates systems theory into evaluation; for example, see W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2007). For an explanation and discussion of systems theory and structural racism, see Jagpal (2008).

between the two, including the use of theories of change to guide work, the use of indicators that capture interim benchmarks as well as policy wins, and the importance of measuring capacity-building steps. It is not surprising that the literature on outcomes of organizing places greater emphasis on leadership development and civic engagement. Although organizers have long focused on these more qualitative aspects of the work, recently researchers have applied rigorous methods to assess organizing's effectiveness. For example, Speer (2002) found a statistically significant difference in policy skills, knowledge, and experience between leaders of a faith-based organizing project and ordinary residents. A six-year mixed methodology assessment of school-reform organizing in several sites (Mediratta, Shaw, & McAlister, 2008) found that organizing contributed to improved student outcomes and identified youth engagement in organizing as associated with improved student motivation. The separate bodies of work on advocacy evaluation and organizing outcomes would benefit from cross-pollination, and this is beginning to happen.[7] In developing its impact measurement methodology, NCRP drew on both strands and identified the specific opportunity to bring visibility within philanthropy to the lesser-known but important research on the impacts of organizing.[8] The methodology incorporated questions on capacity-building and interim benchmarks as important evidence of progress toward policy goals. Examples of interim benchmarks NCRP included in the tool are listed in the Sample Impact Measurement Questions (see Table 2). Documenting the positive outcomes of a campaign that may have failed to achieve its intended objective is another key component.

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[7] For example, the Alliance for Justice Nonprofit and Foundation Advocacy Initiative recently launched its online library, Resources for Evaluating Community Organizing (RECO), and the January 2009 national convening on advocacy evaluation, Advocacy Evaluation Advances, included presentations on evaluation of community organizing.

[8] Organizing's visibility in the philanthropic sector has been enhanced further by the 2009 release of the GrantCraft guide *Funding Community Organizing: Social Change Through Civic Participation*, developed in collaboration with the Linchpin Campaign, a project of the Center for Community Change.

TABLE 3   Some Challenges of Measuring ROI and Methodological Responses

ROI challenge	How addressed in methodology
"Silver bullet" reliance on one metric; difficulty of quantifying some impacts	Use of qualitative measures as well as ROI
Confusion between outputs, outcomes and impacts	Clarify terms by focusing on impact, measured in terms of benefit already accruing to individuals or proven future benefit to individuals. An output or an outcome with as-yet unrealized benefit is documented as an interim benchmark.
Gauging cause and effect between advocacy change and broader society benefit; addressing interdependencies	Methodology does not try to link impacts to broad indicators such as unemployment or poverty rates that are affected by many factors outside control of nonprofits.
Reliance on self-reported data by nonprofits/grantees	Independent verification of every impact, organization's role, and monetary value
Difficulty of attributing individual nonprofit role in achieving impact	Organizations only report impacts in which they played significant or lead role. Use of aggregate ROI across a set of organizations in one location focuses findings on shared contribution rather than individual credit.
Difficulty of attributing individual funder role in achieving impact.	Each organization reports total funding for advocacy/organizing per year for five years. NCRP reports data in the aggregate across all sample organizations, focusing on collective contribution of multiple funding sources rather than individual funder credit.
Long-term nature of advocacy and organizing work; potentially long-term benefit from impacts	Methods include retrospective five-year measurement of impacts, inclusion in sample of organizations that have been in existence long enough to achieve impact, and collection of data on interim benchmarks for ongoing advocacy campaigns. When impacts have proven future benefit, monetary value is estimated for an additional three years.
Use of ROI to evaluate grantees, make comparisons across different programs, or make funding decisions about specific programs or organizations	Methodology is not designed or intended to evaluate individual grants or grant programs, or to predict the future success of programs; the goal is to demonstrate impact to funders uncertain of the value of advocacy and organizing.

Note. ROI = return on investments.

Quantification and return on investment approaches. There is debate in the field about the extent to which evaluations that use quantifiable metrics, such as return on investment (ROI), are appropriate in this context.[9] Although a retrospective ROI may not necessarily focus on measures that are useful for an organization's day-to-day work, a GrantCraft guide (Proscio, 2005) noted that some proponents of advocacy funding see value in calculating an ROI when possible to show how philanthropic dollars are leveraging other kinds of public and private investments. These types of measures can convince interested funders who are not currently funding advocacy that it is a worthwhile strategy to support. Several social justice grantmakers have employed ROI calculations with their grantee portfolios.[10] Individual organizations working at the local and state level have employed ROIs as a means to document their organizing and advocacy impact.

[9] See Tuan (2008) for a review of methods for estimating social value creation and their limitations.

[10] For examples, see Ranghelli (2004) and Solidago Foundation (2008).

TABLE 4 Site Selection Characteristics

Objective	Site characteristics
Identify potential organizations to study	Presence of a vibrant mix of advocacy and organizing groups
Identify potential infrastructure partners	Presence of grantmaker association and/or nonprofit association interested in the project
Identify target audience for research	Presence of foundations that could begin to fund or increase their support for advocacy and organizing
Identify potential allies	Presence of foundations that currently support advocacy and organizing

Shapiro and Mathur (2008) examined the social and economic impact of institutional philanthropy more broadly and found that, among eight categories of grantmaking, including education, arts, health, human services, and the environment, grants for public affairs/society benefit[11] had the highest ROI, which was 22 to 1.

A number of challenges exist in calculating an ROI. Advocacy evaluation literature emphasizes the need to focus on contribution rather than attribution and to use data to make a case that an advocacy effort contributed to a policy outcome rather than trying to demonstrate a direct causal link between the two. By extension, it is difficult to make a causal link between a single grant that supported an advocacy effort and a particular policy outcome. Often many stakeholders are involved in a policy campaign, and it is hard to determine how much credit should be assigned to any one grantee's effort. Also, a grantee may have multiple funding sources for its advocacy work, making it difficult to attribute the role of a single funder. One social justice grantmaker attempted to address these challenges by discounting the value of the grantee victories based on whether the grantee deserved full or shared credit for the win and discounting the foundation's contribution

[11] Shapiro and Mathur (2008) drew data from the 11 major codes in the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) classification system used by the Foundation Center. For the major code "public affairs/society benefit" the authors included ROI calculations for the following subcategories: civil rights and social action; community improvement and development; philanthropy and volunteerism; and public affairs/society benefit-general.

based on what proportion of the grantee's budget the funder's grant represented. In developing its impact measurement tool, NCRP attempted to address the shortcomings of the ROI (see Table 3) but included it as a central feature in its methodology, because it is a tangible measure that resonates with many philanthropic leaders.

Summary of Research Approach
Drawing on the aforementioned literature and tools, NCRP developed a mixed methodology to measure the impacts of advocacy, community organizing, and related civic engagement. The next sections describe the tool itself and present findings from its application in the first two sites.

Site Selection
NCRP chooses project sites based on a number of characteristics (see Table 4). These four characteristics are essential to ensuring the research findings are meaningful, stakeholder associations can help disseminate and foster dialogue about the findings, and the right funders are part of the conversation (i.e., those that already see the value of funding advocacy and organizing and can serve as peer mentors and those that could be open to adopting these funding strategies).

Sampling of Organizations to Study
NCRP uses a snowball sampling technique to identify potential community organizations to be studied in each site. Simply put, the researcher gathers suggestions from nonprofit organizations, foundations, and other community leaders until no new organizations emerge. After a complete

TABLE 5 Criteria for Inclusion of Organizations in Research Sample

Objective	Criterion for organization
Longevity	Has been in existence for at least five years
Commitment	Mission and activities demonstrate commitment to organizing or advocacy.
Capacity	Has the equivalent of at least one full-time staff person devoted to this work throughout the five-year time frame (e.g., could be one full-time or two part-time employees); currently has staff time and capacity to provide data for the research
Constituency	Focuses on a core constituency of lower-income people, people of color, or other marginalized groups, broadly defined
Geography	Works on a local, regional (within-state), or statewide level (may also work on the federal level, though not exclusively)

list is generated, NCRP narrows the list to organizations that can demonstrate meeting a set of criteria (see Table 5).

Through this process, NCRP develops a sample of up to 15 organizations that reflects the diverse constituencies in the state, a broad range of issues, and different organizational approaches. For example, in New Mexico, the first site, 14 organizations agreed to participate. Six groups were statewide and eight were local. Ten directly engaged constituents and built leadership; four relied primarily on staff to advocate. Across the sample, the constituencies represented were quite diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, income, immigration status, and population density (urban/rural). Organizational approaches were also diverse, ranging from an exclusive focus on advocacy or organizing to a mix of services and advocacy. Some groups engaged individual constituents, whereas others organized churches and community institutions.

Data Collection Tool

The principal investigator developed a detailed six-page questionnaire covering a range of topics (see Table 2 for an excerpt). These include:

1. Organizational background — Questions relate to mission, history, geographic scope, and demographics of constituency.
2. Fiscal information for five-year period — These data provide a cost basis to calculate an ROI, determine the extent of foundation contribution to advocacy and organizing, and clarify the type of support foundations provide (e.g., unrestricted, multiyear, capacity-building).
3. Membership, leadership, and constituency — This captures the breadth and depth of engagement with various stakeholders during the five years. The indicators show the range of constituency involvement, from committed leadership by a core of individuals who have received extensive training to membership in an organization, which is a less intense but significant demonstration of ongoing participation, to attendance at public meetings and contacts with policymakers, which are more intermittent forms of involvement but integral to achieving policy success.
4. Impacts of organizing and advocacy — This lists campaign victories for the five-year period and quantifies as many of the impacts as possible. Many policy changes simply cannot be quantified but are equally significant. Impact data verification is an essential component of the tool to credibly report an organization's role in a policy change.
5. Capacity-building and interim progress outcomes — This documents progress made in campaigns that have not achieved their ultimate goal yet. The information collected here helps to demonstrate how organizations are achieving benchmarks en route to policy change and building their capacity, even when a policy campaign "fails."

6. Stories of impact — Stories and case studies are valuable tools to convey some of the richness and complexity of the advocacy and organizing process and its effect on individuals and communities. Numbers and ROIs alone provide an incomplete sense of impact. Also, varied information resonates with different audiences, thus the measurement tool is designed to document impact in multiple ways.

7. Resources for advocacy and organizing — This includes questions about barriers to raising funds, opportunities lost from inadequate resources, approaches to engaging funders in this work, and ways foundations can best support advocacy in the future. The information gathered here informs NCRP's outreach to foundations through this project and informs recommendations for effective advocacy and organizing funding strategies.

> *NCRP has applied the measurement tool in two sites: a southwestern state in 2008 and a southeastern state in 2009.*

NCRP developed an evaluation plan to gauge success of the tool's application using qualitative and quantitative methods. After NCRP applies the tool and presents findings, NCRP surveys funders at each site to determine whether the research report and related discussion enhanced their skills and knowledge about advocacy and organizing and their impact. After six months, NCRP surveys funders again to find out if they acted on the information they received by taking any specific steps, such as sharing the information with their trustees, consulting with peers to learn more, or conducting site visits of community organizations. At a later date, NCRP surveys funders a third time to see whether they allocated new or more grant dollars for advocacy or organizing. In addition, NCRP surveys the sampled organizations at several points over the ensuing months

and years and collects financial data to determine whether the project aided the organizations in garnering more resources for their work from a wider range of foundations.

Application of the Impact Measurement Tool

To date NCRP has applied the measurement tool in two sites: a southwestern state in 2008 and a southeastern state in 2009. In each site, the principal investigators met individually with senior staff from the sample of organizations (14 organizations in Site 1 and 13 organizations in Site 2). Because it was not feasible to collect extensive information in one meeting, each organization subsequently submitted detailed responses to the questionnaire electronically, by fax, or by telephone. The investigators followed up by email and telephone with the organizations to clarify responses and fill in incomplete information as needed. Next, research staff verified the quantitative impacts to ensure that the dollar amounts and number of beneficiaries estimated by groups, as well as the groups' role in the wins, were accurate. For example, advocates in Site 1 secured the passage of a state housing trust fund. Through the relevant state agency, researchers verified the role of advocacy groups in the campaign, the amount of the win, which was $15 million in direct state appropriations and $168 million in other leveraged resources, and the number of beneficiaries, which was 2,042 households. Sources of verification for impacts included elected officials, public agency representatives, published newspaper articles, and other stakeholders knowledgeable about a campaign. If a policy change (such as a minimum wage increase) had an annual monetary benefit that verifiably would continue in future years, researchers estimated three years' worth of prospective monetary value in the total amount calculated for that impact.

If a new policy was secured but no discernible positive benefit could be proven, then NCRP did not count the win as an impact. For example, a law was enacted to curb abusive practices by employers against day laborers, yet the state labor agency had not enforced the law and there was no evidence that workers were benefiting from the

TABLE 6 Findings in Sites 1 and 2

Summary of findings	Site 1: New Mexico	Site 2: North Carolina
Total organizations in sample	14	13
Total monetary benefits	$2.6 billion	$1.8 billion
Total funding for advocacy and organizing	$16.6 million	$20.4 million
Aggregate ROI	$157	$89
Key quantifiable impacts		
Wages and benefits	$500 million in minimum and living wage increases benefiting 250,000 workers	$230 million in expanded unemployment benefits for thousands of workers
Housing	$131 million in savings on points and fees for 43,000 homebuyers because of anti-predatory lending law	$327 million in affordable housing appropriations, construction spending and tax revenue generated by Housing Trust Fund
Education	$84 million for tiered salary structure, increasing pay for 18,400 teachers and improving retention	$170 million additional bond money for school repairs benefiting 36,000 students
Key nonquantifiable impacts		
Environmental justice	State lowered acceptable level of uranium in groundwater from 5,000 to 30 micrograms per liter	State banned new or expanded lagoons and sprayfields on industrial hog farms
Civil and human rights	State banned police from asking noncriminals about their immigration status	State anti-bullying law passed with LGBTQ protections
Children's health	Native youth secured mental health services and a new building for their school-based health center	State regulation banned exposure to arsenic in playground equipment
Civic engagement numbers		
New core leaders	707	3,113
Individuals participating in leadership training	8,295	8,799
Individuals communicating with policy makers	12,603	31,425
Individuals joining community organizations	16,935	126,242[a]
Individuals attending public actions or meetings	57,341	76,490

Note. ROI = return on investments; LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning.
[a] The participation of three congregation-based organizing groups in the sample explains this unusually large number, which includes all members of each congregation that is an institutional member of one of the three organizations.

change. However, NCRP considered a policy that had yet to be carried out as an interim outcome or benchmark, because organizers continued to advocate for implementation that would benefit targeted constituencies. The methodology sought to document such achievements as well.

Research staff used IRS Form 990s filed by the sample organizations, when available, to check their financial information but did not attempt to independently verify the data the organizations provided related to civic and voter engagement. However, given the level of accuracy of the other data that were verified, the researchers had confidence that the civic engagement estimates were reasonable.

For each site, researchers aggregated the quantifiable data across the sample to determine the total monetary benefits of all the impacts. Financial data from each organization were aggregated to determine the total amount invested by foundations and other sources to support advocacy and organizing across the organizations. NCRP calculated an ROI using the following formula:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{aggregate dollar amount of all wins}}{\text{aggregate dollars invested in advocacy and organizing}}$$

NCRP included only impacts that could be verified in the calculations. The ROI figure shows how collective financial support by grantmakers and other funding sources for a set of organizing and advocacy groups in a location over time has contributed to the collective policy impacts of these organizations. It is impossible to demonstrate a causal link between a specific grant and a specific impact, and it is difficult to prove that one organization was exclusively responsible for a policy change. The use of an aggregate ROI helps focus the findings on the investment and effort that all of the organizations and their funders together have made that contributed to success.

NCRP does not intend the ROI to be a precise figure, but it provides a solid basis for understanding the extent of benefit for communities from investments in organizing and advocacy. It does

not capture every input that contributed to these successes. For example, many campaigns that achieved victories between 2003 and 2007 were initiated prior to 2003, and those earlier investments are not captured. There were undoubtedly many coalition efforts in which organizations not in the sample participated, and their financial information also is not reflected in the ROI. However, for the wins that were included, one or more of the groups in the sample played a significant or lead role in achieving the victory. Because a large proportion of the wins are not quantifiable, the ROI is actually an underestimate in that it fails to capture many significant benefits that are more difficult to measure, such as preventing water and air pollution. These benefits are noted in the findings.

Before administering the impact measurement questionnaire at Site 2, NCRP modified it based on Site 1 feedback from nonprofits in the sample and comments from funders. Researchers revised the format to ease completion and changed the wording of some questions to make them clearer. There were additional notable changes:

1. The original questionnaire asked organizations to list all of their campaign wins, which proved to be too broad a question. The revised questionnaire instead asked for the five most impactful advocacy and organizing victories in which the organization played a significant or lead role.
2. Because several funders asked for more information about effective strategies employed by the organizations and the policy context for the victories, NCRP added questions related to these topics.

Findings From the First and Second Sites[12]

Table 6 summarizes the main findings and select impact highlights for each site for the five-year period (2003–2007). NCRP acknowledges that the small sample size, variable policy environments in each site, and changes to the methodology do not allow for cross-site comparison.

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[12] See Ranghelli (2008b) for the full findings in Site 1 and Ranghelli and Craig (2009) for the findings in Site 2.

In each site the findings demonstrated an impressive return on investment and dramatic monetary benefits. Several researchers, evaluators, and advocates in the reviewed literature and practice cautioned that it could be difficult to quantify many types of policy change, and this proved to be true, especially for environmental justice, civil rights, and human rights policies. These changes likely have a monetary impact, but quantifying such an impact proves challenging. For example, environmental campaigns that reduce air or water pollution may diminish health harms for residents, thereby increasing their earning power and decreasing their need for costly health interventions.

The research found that organizations are achieving many important outcomes not counted as impacts, because benefit has not been realized yet but likely will in the future. For example, one organization secured a $365,000 federal commitment for HIV/AIDS testing, education, prevention, and treatment but is still working with its congressional delegation to ensure the funds are allocated and disbursed. Even impacts that are already demonstrating benefit often are the subject of ongoing advocacy campaigns as organizations seek to further improve policies. Although the tool did not systematically catalog these short-term outcomes, it is clear from the questionnaire responses that organizations are continually building their capacity in specific ways and achieving milestones as they work toward their ultimate advocacy goals. By documenting examples of these milestones and instances where organizations failed to achieve their objective but still made important contributions — such as reshaping the way an issue is publicly debated — NCRP sought to demonstrate to funders that their grants have impact and generate a return on investment even during a grant period in which the final goal has not been achieved.

The research documented a range of effective strategies that contributed to advocacy and organizing success. Although all levels of civic engagement were important to achieve and sustain policy impacts, affected constituents' direct interaction with decision makers proved to be quite productive — both one-on-one and in large public meetings. Constituent engagement in advocacy was aided by leadership development, which enabled close involvement of committed residents who shaped the policy proposals and directed the advocacy campaigns. This leadership process had a ripple effect as those trained and mentored in one organization went on to become leaders in other arenas, often starting new organizations, joining boards, running for public office, and otherwise contributing their leadership skills to the community. Building bridges across race, ethnicity, class, and culture was an important aspect of the organizations' constituency engagement work and contributed to policy success. For example, one organizing group built a racially diverse interfaith membership of congregations and secured neighborhood improvements, youth summer jobs, health services for the uninsured, and education funds for school repairs. The group partnered often with the local Urban League and ministers, who credited the organization with rebuilding "a little bit of trust that has been torn down by racism."

> *In each site the findings demonstrated an impressive return on investment and dramatic monetary benefits.*

Other successful advocacy and organizing strategies included:

1. Strategic coalitions in which organizations had clearly defined roles and mutual respect, were well-coordinated, and engaged unusual allies.
2. Partnerships and relationships with policymakers to enlist their help in educating peers and crafting policy proposals.
3. Use of expertise and quality research that persuasively made the case for change.
4. Technical support from and alliances with national advocacy and organizing networks and academic institutions.

TABLE 7 Summary of Survey Responses from Presentations of Impact Findings

Funder survey responses	Site 1 (%)	Site 2 (%)
Overall response rate	62	50
Reaction to findings:		
Feel that your understanding of benefits and impact of advocacy and organizing has broadened or increased	86	75
Think you are more willing to consider funding this type of work	76	44
Feel better prepared to make the case to others at your foundation to start, continue or increase funding for this work	95	56
Aspects of findings presented you think will be most persuasive to other funders:		
Quantitative impacts	76	56
Return on investment	81	56
Stories of underrepresented communities creating long-term change	57	38
Data on civic engagement in the democratic process	52	31
Nonprofit survey responses	**Site 1 (%)**	**Site 2 (%)**
Overall response rate	76	41
Reaction to findings:		
Feel better-prepared to explain the benefits and impact of your advocacy, organizing and civic engagement work to a funder	100	86
Think that the report will help you make a more compelling case to foundations that don't currently fund you	91	82
Think that the findings will help you maintain or increase funding from current funders	82	64

Note. Site 1 = New Mexico; Site 2 = North Carolina.

5. Use of media and messaging to reframe issues and reach the broader public as well as decision makers.
6. Engagement in legal advocacy and filing lawsuits to integrate the judicial branch of government into the problem-solving process.

Overall, the policy environment in a state also likely was a factor in the ability of organizations to achieve policy success. For example, Site 1 had a much more favorable policy climate with respect to immigrant rights than did Site 2, which may have contributed to different outcomes on this issue regardless of the efficacy of the advocates'

work. Advocates cautioned funders to be aware of the policy environment their grantees face and jointly set realistic expectations for how much can be accomplished and how long it may take.

The impact tool captured both quantitative and qualitative information on effective foundation strategies to support advocacy and organizing. The research found that flexible general support funding and multiyear grants were the most effective ways to support organizing and advocacy. Other ways that funders supported their advocacy and organizing grantees included (1) listening to grantees to learn how a funder can streamline and

improve its grants administration procedures, (2) providing leadership development programs, (3) convening stakeholders on a specific issue to facilitate joint planning and coordination, and (4) providing capacity-building and strategic planning support for a grantee. For example, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in North Carolina changed its funding practices after soliciting feedback from grantees and simplified its application process for grants under $35,000. This same funder convened statewide advocacy organizations to better coordinate civic engagement, communications, and policy collaboration among them and provided funding to build this enhanced capacity.

Evidence of the Tool's Usefulness

The tool has been applied in two sites, and NCRP is completing research at a third site in a midwestern state. NCRP's plan is to implement the project in several sites in regions throughout the country over the next few years. Although it is too soon to determine whether the project is changing funder behavior, there are already signs that the impact measurement tool is effective in educating funders about advocacy and organizing. In events cosponsored with the state association of grantmakers in each site, NCRP presented the findings of the research to both the participating community organizations and to funders who have grantmaking programs there. Before each event, the field staff of the organization engaged in extensive outreach to foundation leaders in the sites to identify those who already support advocacy and those who were interested in beginning or increasing grantmaking for these strategies. A mix of such funders attended the events and engaged in needed dialogue with each other and community leaders about the findings and effective advocacy and organizing strategies to address the pressing issues facing their communities.

The reaction to the findings and discussions was encouraging, as evidenced by comments from attendees and responses on the anonymous evaluation forms they completed (see Table 7). According to Terry Odendahl, the former president of the New Mexico Association of Grantmakers, feedback from its membership has been positive. The association distributed the report on the im-

pacts of advocacy and organizing, along with its own report on philanthropic trends in the state, to every state legislator. Odendahl elaborated on the utility of the report, stating: "Right now there is some backlash against advocacy among elected officials, and this timely report highlights the many positive benefits to the state from advocacy and organizing, which is often accomplished in partnership *with* government."

> *A mix of such funders attended the events and engaged in needed dialogue with each other and community leaders*

The evaluation form also asked funders what other tools they need to help their foundation take the next step. Two responses tied for the most frequent, the first being "more information about the legal framework for funding these strategies." This first response is a strong indication that foundation leaders operate with an incomplete understanding of how much leeway they have legally to support advocacy among their grantees. One funder commented that the foundation's trustees confuse advocacy with lobbying[13] and see advocacy as "soft" or indirect. This funder noted that the report measuring impact would help dispel this perception among board members. In Site 1, an equal number of respondents (52 percent) said they needed "more information about organizations that engage in these strategies." Addressing this second response, one foundation director suggested that there would be value in bringing advocacy organizations and funders together, not-

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[13] Lobbying is an attempt to directly or indirectly influence the passage or defeat of government legislation. Lobbying can be one part of an advocacy strategy, but advocacy does not necessarily have to involve lobbying. This is a critical distinction. Federal laws determine how much lobbying a nonprofit organization can engage in, but there are no limits on how much nonlobbying advocacy a nonprofit can undertake. See Alliance for Justice (2004) for a detailed overview of the legal guidelines and restrictions related to lobbying.

ing that s/he had been familiar with only six of the 14 groups in the research sample. The nonprofit leaders at the event agreed; 68 percent suggested that more one-on-one dialogue between community groups and funders would help to make a stronger case for funding this work.

The audience that seemed to benefit most from the report and release events were community foundation leaders. In fact, in New Mexico, Randy Royster, president of the Albuquerque Community Foundation, concluded the event with a call to action, sharing the story of his own board's recent decision to begin supporting advocacy; he urged others to do the same. According to Billie Blair, president of the Santa Fe Community Foundation:

> We found the research so compelling that we intend to find a way to present it to our entire Board of Directors to get across the message of the impact of funding advocacy. The Community Foundation has been proud to be among the funders of many of the nonprofits in the profile. The numbers of $1 to $157 in return are impressive. Clearly, the findings make staff think more aggressively about investments in nonprofits doing this work.

Similarly, at least two community foundations in North Carolina have distributed copies of the impact report to their trustees and plan to discuss how it might guide future grantmaking strategies.

NCRP is planning next steps to build on the positive momentum from the events, including working with community foundation leaders to develop a PowerPoint presentation and discussion guide that can be used to facilitate conversations among foundation boards and donors about the impacts of advocacy and organizing and use of these strategies to advance their mission. NCRP will survey funders and community leaders in the future to determine whether funders have changed their behavior and whether the organizations have secured more resources from more diverse funding sources for their work. Over time, NCRP will adjust its theory of change and strategies as needed, based on whether it achieves these intended outcomes.

Recommendations for Foundations

NCRP urges funders that do not currently support advocacy and organizing to:

1. Learn more about the legal framework and latitude funders have for making grants to nonprofits that employ these strategies. The Alliance for Justice has developed extensive resources on this topic geared to foundations.
2. Examine the foundation's mission, goals, and theory of change to see whether and how advocacy and organizing can help the foundation achieve its objectives. Foundations that fund social services may want to learn more about organizations that effectively combine services and advocacy to maximize impact.
3. Find out about organizations that are organizing and advocating for the issues and constituencies the foundation cares about and approach them to learn more about their work. If an organization is open to site visits, these can be powerful learning tools.
4. Seek out peers in philanthropy that already fund advocacy and organizing and can serve as a "mentors," helping funders navigate the landscape and learn how to identify effective organizations.
5. Explore ways to get acquainted with advocacy issues, such as joining a funding collaborative, convening stakeholders to explore solutions to a pressing problem, or conducting research to inform policy debates.

Regional and state grantmaker associations can serve as catalysts for networking among funders and making connections between funders and local community organizations.

For funders that already support advocacy and organizing, early evidence indicates that measuring impact with the type of tool described in this article can help explain the value of these strategies internally with staff and board as well as with peers. One national social justice funder that employed a return on investment with a set of grantees has used the ROI, which was 512 to 1, for both purposes. Dave Beckwith, executive director of the Needmor Fund, observed, "I love this number. It reaffirmed to our board that our

strategy of funding community organizing is the right one." He added, "Also, it is encouraging to organizers, to other funders, and to skeptics. It sends a message that organizing works and we can prove it."

Elements of the impact measurement tool potentially could be adapted for use by foundations that fund advocacy and organizing to jointly develop and track progress measures with grantees. However, NCRP would caution funders seeking to estimate an ROI for an individual grantee for evaluative purposes. Echoed Beckwith, "The story of an organization is much more specific than this instrument can test, and also it should not be used for too short a time frame." Referring broadly to social value creation measurement tools that integrate costs, Tuan (2008) cautioned against one metric serving as a "silver bullet," noting that "each methodology and its accompanying results are only one factor in an organization's decision-making process." Over the last decade, many tools to evaluate advocacy and organizing that may be more appropriate have been developed and refined by others, including the Alliance for Justice, Blueprint Research & Design, the California Endowment, GrantCraft, the Harvard Family Research Project, the James Irvine Foundation, Organizational Research Services, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Innovation Network, the Aspen Institute Global Interdependence Initiative's Continuous Progress, The Urban Institute/Center for What Works, and others.

In addition to educating and mentoring their peers about advocacy and organizing, funders also can ensure that their grantmaking approach best supports these strategies by providing more flexible grants, specifically general support and multiyear funding. The results of the measurement tool overwhelmingly affirmed the value of these funding mechanisms. Beckwith concluded, "The best capacity building for community organizing and powerful advocacy work is adequate, patient operating support for community organizations."

Conclusion

The application of NCRP's tool demonstrates that advocacy and organizing do have measurable impact. The number of policy wins, the number of beneficiaries, and often the monetary value of those wins can be estimated. Interim benchmarks can be tracked to document progress in advocacy campaigns. Capacity-building and constituency engagement outcomes also can be measured, and these remain valuable even if an organization fails to achieve its ultimate advocacy goal.

> *"Also, it is encouraging to organizers, to other funders, and to skeptics. It sends a message that organizing works and we can prove it."*

Preliminary evidence suggests that the tool has been effective in enhancing funder understanding of advocacy and organizing and in demonstrating that these strategies can have significant impact and broad societal benefit. NCRP will further apply the tool in more sites and follow up in sites where it has already been applied to determine whether the tool is effective at actually persuading funders to initiate or increase funding for advocacy and organizing.

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