

GROW: BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND



Building on the experiences and expertise of seasoned staff and partners across a range of fields, PolicyLink has identified the essential components of successful equity advocacy efforts. This information has been assembled in Getting Equity Advocacy Results (GEAR): a suite of benchmarks, methods, and tools for advocates, organizers, and their allies to track the results of their equity campaigns.

GEAR offers important benchmarks for advocates to **BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND** equitable change. Equity advocacy benchmarks can be considered the 'mile markers' in campaigns for policy change. They can be useful for charting the course of a new advocacy effort, providing feedback on the progress of an existing one, and reporting on the success of a completed campaign focused on advancing equity.

More information on measuring the success of equity advocacy is available online: www.policylink.org/gear.

Equity advocacy does not—and should not—cease when a favorable policy outcome is first reached. In fact, it is through the continued effort of equity advocates, champions, and their allies that policy changes to promote equity are implemented and imbedded into practice. Just as strong community leadership and engagement, effective uses of power and influence, strategic research and communications are crucial components to seeding change, they are also essential elements for bringing that change to fruition.

There are four general components of advocacy to **BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND** equity: implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of the adopted change; influence of the proposed change on other equity issues and objectives; further development of equity leadership; and cultivation and protection of equity improvements. Benchmarks for each of these areas, and guiding questions to navigate them, are detailed on the following pages.

BENCHMARKS TO BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND POLICY CHANGE

Implementation, Enforcement, and Monitoring of Proposed Change

Guiding Questions

Equity Benchmarks

What mechanisms are established to ensure that the equity provisions of the policy are implemented as intended?

A plan to implement the adopted policy and its equity provisions includes roles, responsibilities, resources, and timelines for implementation, as well as indicators to measure progress and equity impacts, and is transparent to the collaborative, its allies, and the larger community.

Channels of communication are developed for the collaborative, its allies, and the larger community to receive updates about, and review progress of, the ongoing policy implementation and the advancement of equity objectives.

The collaborative, its allies, and the larger community trust the implementers to follow through on policy implementation and to remain focused on reaching the equity impacts—particularly for groups, communities, and people most affected by the issue—based on demonstrated leadership, accountability, and commitment of the implementers.

The collaborative and its allies are committed to track the implementation, provide community support to achieve equity objectives of the policy, and take action to improve effectiveness of the equity provisions when needed.

How does the policy change contribute to addressing the issue, changing community conditions, and advancing equity objectives?

Data and information to track community changes are disaggregated (e.g., by population, place, race, etc.) and analyzed at multiple time points after policy adoption to illuminate equity dimensions of the policy (e.g., consequences for people of different races, classes, or genders) and the success of implementation in advancing equity objectives.

Data and information regarding the ongoing community changes are accessible (e.g., culturally, linguistically, and physically) and transparent to all.

Traditional and community-based research (e.g., demographic and economic secondary data, collection of primary information from and by residents, mapping of community trends) reveal improvements among specific groups, communities, and people affected by the issue.

How do advocates and their allies monitor the effectiveness of the policy implementation and enforce follow through on equity provisions?

Advocates leverage their relationships with implementers as part of an “inside strategy” to encourage effective implementation approaches and to provide insight from authentic community experts and technical advisors on how to address implementation problems for equity impacts.

Advocates leverage broader, more inclusive channels of communication (e.g., open letters to implementers, media strategies) as part of an “outside strategy” to applaud success and to draw attention to and improve accountability and leadership on implementation, when needed.

Strategic allies outside of the collaborative (e.g., policymakers, their associates, elected officials, other influential leaders) stay engaged and inquire about the progress of implementation to reinforce accountability and the need for equity impacts.

Influence of Proposed Change on Other Equity Issues and Objectives

Guiding Questions

Equity Benchmarks

How has the equity campaign brought greater attention and resources to address the issues affecting impacted groups, communities, and people?

Media and framing analyses reveal increased and improved prominence of the equity issue in the public discourse following the introduction and adoption of the policy proposal.

Activities or information regarding changing community conditions (e.g., formal and nontraditional research, disaggregated data, and information derived from news media and social media) generated by original equity campaign spurs other campaigns to further equity goals.

The activities and impacts of the original equity campaign are linked with new or increased resources to address issues affecting impacted groups, communities, and people.

How has the decision on the proposal for equitable change led to increased power in the affected communities?

Community members report increased opportunities for engagement in decision making, increased access to relevant data and information, improved leadership and/or greater control over issues affecting their communities.

Power mapping reveals that community members have increased power to influence matters related to the issue.

Traditional and community-based research reveal increased traction for community input in decision making.

Further Development of Equity Leadership

Guiding Questions

Equity Benchmarks

In what ways does the capacity of the community to advocate for equity continue to grow and evolve with the implementation of the proposal?

Opportunities for community members to learn about the equity issue and community conditions and to develop skills related to organizing, research, communications, and capacity building are more available and utilized more following implementation.

Opportunities for mentorship and leadership development are available to cultivate new community leaders focused on advancing equity.

In what ways are the capacity and expertise of the community considered valid and meaningful?

The community is consulted as experts on the issue by media, academia, and other influential thought leaders.

Community members gain power through election, appointment, invitation or other engagement in decision-making entities and processes.

Cultivation and Protection of Equity Improvements

Guiding Questions

Equity Benchmarks

How are equity improvements institutionalized within existing systems over the long term?

Formal strategies for meaningfully engaging authentic community leaders and members in the ongoing implementation are embedded into processes related to future implementation and decision making.

Meaningful community representation, participation, and engagement in the systems and decisions that impact the issue are increased and improved.

Equity indicators are developed to measure progress on the issue and are used as a platform for developing other programs and policies.

THE ONGOING ROLES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, CAPACITY BUILDING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATIONS TO BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND

Equity is produced when communities are empowered to shape their environments so that they can thrive and prosper. This requires systems that are inclusive of community voices, as well as leaders to turn the wheels of change. To get there, campaigns for policy change involve dynamic processes weaving together organizing, capacity-building, research, and communications strategies. When working to **BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND** equity improvements, the advocacy efforts must balance and sustain all of the critical actions: community organizing, capacity building, research, and communications. In the implementation phase, these activities might take on a different focus and level of engagement. They might be focused on increasing accountability or advancing or protecting a particular aspect of the new policy. Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding implementation might trigger advocates to move to other, more active stages of the campaign, such as **BUILD THE BASE** or **NAME AND FRAME THE SOLUTIONS**. Examples and further information on how advocates engage in these ongoing activities are available in the **GEAR Overview: Tools for Navigating Change**, available online.

STRATEGIES TO DEFINE AND MEASURE SUCCESS

Effective strategies for measurement and analysis of equity impacts must match the differing demands, resources, and courses of each equity advocacy campaign. The **BUILD, ADVANCE, AND DEFEND** benchmarks, which include all activities—community organizing, capacity building, research, and communications—are well suited for adaptation to a wide range of equity-focused indicators, surveys, interview questions, and other participatory evaluation strategies for individual campaigns. Recommendations for using GEAR benchmarks for measurement are available in the **GEAR Guide: Planning and Assessing Success**.

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To learn more, visit: www.policylink.org/gear