

## GET SET: NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS



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 **NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS** for 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.

More information on measuring the success of equity advocacy is available online: [www.policylink.org/gear](http://www.policylink.org/gear).

Equity advocacy efforts require a great deal of preparation before a campaign for equity can be undertaken. To achieve policy change, equity advocates must develop a clear understanding and description of the problem, and develop policy change objectives that engage and satisfy multiple stakeholders. Careful attention to developing and vetting a communications strategy, with a focus on language and messages, as well as an approach to social and traditional media, have important consequences for the final outcome of the campaign and the advances toward greater equity achieved along the way.

Equity advocacy to **NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS** includes four key components: research and identification of the problem and policy change objectives, framing the problem and policy change objectives, identification and cultivation of stakeholders and allies, and identification and development of strategies for decreasing opposition. Benchmarks for each of these areas, and guiding questions to navigate them, are detailed on the following pages.

## BENCHMARKS TO NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS

### Research and Identification of Change Objectives

Guiding Questions	Equity Benchmarks
<i>What research is used to understand the problem and identify possible policy change objectives?</i>	Identification of possible policy change objectives is informed by thorough research and analysis of the problem, its causes, its impacts on people and communities, and the opportunities to advance equity.
	Data and information to understand the problem and possible policy change objectives are disaggregated (e.g., by population, place, race, etc.) and analyzed frequently during the campaign to illuminate the equity dimensions (e.g., consequences for people of different race, class, or gender) of the possible policy change objectives.
	Community knowledge and expertise and academic and professional research are combined to understand the problem and develop possible policy change objectives.
<i>How does the selection of policy change objectives consider and improve conditions for equity?</i>	Data and information are available and accessible (e.g., culturally, linguistically, and physically) to the collaborative to support selection of policy change objectives with desired equity impacts.
	Selection of the policy change objectives is informed by accurate, up-to-date information on the changing social, political, and environmental circumstances surrounding the problem.
	The structure of the campaign and the leadership of the collaborative are assessed upon selection of the policy change objectives and adjusted to ensure diverse representation of both authentic community experience and technical capacity.
	Policy change objectives address meaningful change to reduce or eliminate the problem and bring the community closer to its vision of the future.

### Framing the Issue and Change Objectives

Guiding Questions	Equity Benchmarks
<i>What are the key messages of the equity advocacy effort?</i>	Language, messaging, and framing about the problem and the policy change objectives are developed and agreed to by collaborative members.
	Framing analyses—studies of the themes, ideas, and messages used in the media—inform the campaign strategy about perceptions of the specific problem, the policy change objectives, and overall views of equity.
<i>How are messages packaged and delivered to target audiences?</i>	Target audiences for campaign message delivery are identified from power mapping information regarding policymakers and their advisors, and communications research into the favored forms of media among them and their constituents.
	Language, messaging, and framing agreed to by collaborative members are consistently used when contacting target audiences (e.g., policymakers, thought leaders, media, etc.).
	Communications activities (e.g., fact sheets and other written materials, commentary, articles, media interviews, staged media events, etc.) promote awareness and understanding of the problem, and help to broaden understanding and support for the policy change objectives among target audiences.
	Communications regarding the problem and the policy change objectives are accessible (e.g., culturally, linguistically, and physically) to the target audiences, and make use of specific cultural and ethnic media outlets.

***In what ways do strategic communications activities contribute to advancing the cause?***

The framing and messaging employed by the collaborative regarding the problem and the policy change objectives are repeated and used by target audiences.

Target audiences take action in response to calls to action for the campaign for policy change.

The collaborative is sought by policymakers, thought leaders, allies, and the media as a credible and expert voice about both the problem and policy change objectives.

Social norms (e.g., public beliefs, attitudes, values, priorities, behaviors) related to the problem shift to reflect or become better aligned with the policy change objectives.

## Identification and Cultivation of Allies

### Guiding Questions

### Equity Benchmarks

***How are influential supporters and champions of the policy change objectives identified and cultivated?***

The discussions and efforts of the collaborative, together with periodic power mapping, identify different categories of potential supporters: those who are part of the policy process and external to it, existing and potential champions, allied policymakers, unlikely allies, and others.

Influential supporters, internal and external champions, unlikely allies, and allied policymakers are consulted about the policy change objectives and the direction of the campaign.

Collaborative members and their allies strategically raise awareness of the problem and build support for the policy change objectives.

New, needed champions are identified and a strategy to develop and secure their participation in the campaign is developed.

***How are influential supporters and champions of the cause mobilized and retained for ongoing participation in the campaign?***

Development of the campaign strategy reflects restrictions of participating collaborative members (e.g., non-negotiable criteria regarding advocacy outcomes).

Leadership of the collaborative and the strategies being used to advance policy change objectives reflect the goals and restrictions of the campaign participants (e.g., non-negotiable criteria regarding advocacy outcomes).

Collaborative members develop new or refine existing skills and knowledge to encourage and support continued and expanded involvement in advocacy activities.

The collaborative consistently tracks its base of support in terms of the hurdles it must surpass to advance its campaign goals and identifies where additional support is needed and develops strategies to secure it.

## Identification and Development of Strategies to Decrease Opposition

### Guiding Questions

### Equity Benchmarks

***How are opponents to the cause identified?***

The discussions and efforts of the collaborative, together with periodic power mapping, reveal different categories of potential opponents: institutions and influential people who are “on the fence,” those who disagree with the equity framing and/or those who are opposed to the policy change objectives.

Media analyses and framing analyses reveal the activities and allies of the opposition, and strategies are developed to respond either directly or through adjustments in proactive strategies.

Collaborative members commit to leveraging useful relationships to help advance the campaign.

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### **How is opposition to the campaign averted?**

Communications activities frame the debate and set the agenda in favor of the policy change objectives to proactively block the opposition.

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Strategies are developed to persuade those who are undecided about the policy change objectives to become supporters and/or dissuade them from engaging in public discourse to defeat the campaign.

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### **How is opposition to the campaign isolated, blocked or countered?**

Efforts to block or counter the opposition to the policy change objectives include both proactive and defensive strategies.

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Research reveals key points of the opposition's position, their tactics and activities. Strategies to inoculate or respond are developed and implemented.

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Debate and dialogue with the opposition reveal points of agreement between both sides, possibilities for improvement in the equity advocacy position, or opportunities for compromise or partnership that do not compromise the policy change objectives of the collaborative or of individual members' restrictions (e.g., non-negotiable criteria regarding advocacy outcomes).

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Communications and advocacy activities discredit or decrease the perceived impact of opponents' activities and statements among target audiences. Strategies are developed to respond either directly or through adjustments in proactive strategies.

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## **THE ONGOING ROLES OF ORGANIZING, CAPACITY BUILDING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATIONS TO NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS**

Equity is produced when communities are empowered to shape their environments so that they can thrive and prosper. This requires policies that are inclusive of community experiences and engagement, as well as leaders to turn the wheels of change. To get there, campaigns for equitable change involve weaving together organizing, capacity-building, research, and communications strategies. In efforts to **NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS**, research and communications are critical for defining the problem and the need for solution(s). Sharp advocacy strategies are also needed to win supporters and build momentum to advance equitable change. Capacity building throughout this process is also critical, as collaborative members must participate in different parts and phases of the campaign, armed with

powerful information and messages. 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 must match the differing demands, resources, and courses of each equity advocacy campaign. The **NAME AND FRAME THE EQUITY SOLUTIONS** benchmarks, which emphasize research and communications, and require ongoing attention to capacity building, are well suited for adaptation to document review methodologies, interview protocols, 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](http://www.policylink.org/gear)