

## Evaluating Advocacy Impact – and Building Organizational Capacity

The goal of public policy advocacy is, of course, changing public policy. Yet, policy change takes a great deal of time (an average of three legislative sessions, according to a survey of NC environmental groups a few years ago). Even after achieving a policy change, nonprofit advocates must remain vigilant to ensure that the policy change endures, and that it proceeds to the implementation phase as desired. Further, working in coalition makes attributing results to a single organization difficult.

Thus, while we must keep our eyes on the prize of policy change, looking *only* at what happens to a specific piece of legislation misses other – perhaps more important – results for your organization, the coalitions in which you work, and the community you serve.

Focus on your progress at multiple levels, not just policy success. Consider the following chart (created by OpenSource Leadership Strategies, Inc. and included in *Make a Difference for Your Cause: Strategies for Nonprofit Engagement in Legislative Advocacy*, Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, 2006):

PROGRESS in...	Organization	Coalition	Community
<b>Knowledge</b>	Example: Staff understands the legislative process, calendar, and key players.		
<b>Attitudes</b>		Example: The public demonstrates growing awareness about your issue's complexity.	
<b>Skills</b>			Example: Stronger public speaking skills among community volunteers.
<b>Relationships</b>		Example: Service and advocacy groups know and support each other.	

<b>PROGRESS in...</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Coalition</b>	<b>Community</b>
<b>Influence</b>	Example: Local media sees your organization as the go-to source on your issue.		
<b>Other Capacity</b>		Example: Service groups coordinate services.	
<b>Civic/Democratic Participation</b>			Example: Constituents feel engaged and empowered. Voting rates and other indicators up.
<b>Public Opinion</b>		Example: Polls show growing public support for state-level policy change.	
<b>Public Policy – Short-Term Long-Term</b>	Example: County commissioners support a bond referendum to enable co-located services.		