

Advocacy Metrics Framework

Module 4.7 — Data-Informed Advocacy: Activity vs. Outcome Metrics

The Central Distinction

Activity metrics measure what you did. **Outcome metrics** measure what changed because you did it. Most advocacy organizations track almost exclusively activity — and then wonder why they can't demonstrate impact. The distinction is the whole point of measurement.

Type	Measures	Example	Characteristic
Activity Metric	What you did	1,200 social media impressions on campaign post	Easy to collect; available from your own systems; does not prove impact
Outcome Metric	What changed because you did it	Attitude shift among target voter segment (+12 pts on ordinance support in post-campaign survey)	Harder to collect; requires pre/post measurement; directly measures advocacy success

Common Advocacy Metrics Classified

Classification	Metric	Why It Belongs Here
ACTIVITY	Social media impressions	Reach estimate — not evidence of attitude or behavior change
ACTIVITY	Email open rate	Suggests message delivery, not whether content persuaded
ACTIVITY	Event attendance	Suggests engagement, not commitment or attitude change
ACTIVITY	Calls/emails to legislators	Activity proxy — useful if correlated with response, not alone
ACTIVITY	Media stories published	Coverage volume — does not measure message penetration or frame control
ACTIVITY	Volunteer hours logged	Organizational capacity indicator, not advocacy outcome
OUTCOME	Decision-maker vote change	Direct measure of advocacy goal — did the decision change?
OUTCOME	Policy adopted / amended	Ultimate policy outcome — most direct measure
OUTCOME	Attitude shift (pre/post survey)	Measures persuasion — most direct advocacy mechanism indicator
OUTCOME	Behavior change in target audience	Downstream of attitude; most valuable for community-level advocacy
OUTCOME	Legislator commits to bill sponsorship	Decision-maker relationship outcome — precedes policy change
OUTCOME	Coalition member converts to champion	Organizational alignment outcome — expands advocacy capacity

Five Questions to Test Any New Metric

If a metric is easy to collect, it's probably measuring activity. If it's hard to collect, it's probably measuring something real.

#	Question
1.	What specifically does this metric measure — activity or change?
2.	What theory of change connects this metric to your advocacy goal?
3.	Have you tested that assumed connection, or are you assuming it?
4.	If this metric improved significantly, would your advocacy goal be closer to achieved?
5.	If this metric stayed flat, would that tell you something was wrong with your strategy?

The Measurement Trap: Advocacy organizations measure what's easy, not what matters. Impressions, open rates, and attendance counts feel like evidence of impact. They're evidence of activity — which is necessary but not sufficient. Every activity metric should have a predicted pathway to an outcome metric. That pathway should be tested, not assumed.