



FOR LASTING CHANGE, ADVOCACY MUST GO BEYOND POLICY WINS

Advocates and funders alike tend to focus on policy wins – in other words, when a proposed policy becomes law. However, the implementation of a given policy is just as important as its formulation. *[Beyond the Win: Pathways for Policy Implementation](#)* makes the case that using advocacy to shape implementation processes – including rulemaking, funding, and stakeholder engagement – is critical to ensuring that a policy change fulfills its intended outcomes.

“Seeing the fruits of advocacy efforts put into law makes advocates and champions feel that their hard work, often many years in the making, has paid off. However, in reality, ‘the win’ is just the beginning.”

BEYOND THE WIN: PATHWAYS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Advocacy for implementation is different from advocacy for policy adoption; it requires knowledge about rulemaking and regulations and an understanding of advocates’ role relative to the agencies involved. *Beyond the Win* intends to provide advocates and funders with a common language for talking about policy implementation, a mechanism for focusing implementation advocacy strategies, stronger theories of change for the role of advocacy in implementation, and improved measurements of progress for the field.

Atlas Learning Project

Now more than ever, funders need to learn from each other and put effective approaches and strategies into action. *[Beyond the Win](#)* is part of the Atlas Learning Project, a suite of resources from The Atlantic Philanthropies and other experts in the field aimed to help funders think strategically about how to defend, sustain and advance progressive policy change. With smart thinking, bold action and sustained focus, funders and advocates will be better positioned to succeed in advocacy and policy change.

HOW TO SUCCEED BEYOND THE WIN

Policy implementation advocacy is distinct from campaign advocacy in a number of ways, including the following:

- Technical expertise about the policy and the implementing agencies is necessary to engage effectively with the government and NGO staff that will put the policy in place.
- Parties not involved in the policymaking process – including agencies, intermediaries and beneficiaries – must be accounted for and brought into the fold. These parties may have very different priorities and interests from the lawmakers who enacted the policy.
- Collaborative, cooperative approaches are far more likely to succeed than oppositional ones in which advocates position themselves as “watchdogs” for implementing agencies.

There are three types of advocacy activities related to policy implementation:

- **Administrative advocacy**, including providing research and technical expertise to administrators, organizing support for important times like public comment periods and convening and organizing stakeholders who will be affected by the rules.
- **Implementation advocacy**, such as ensuring funds are spent in expected timeframes, communicating to organizations or individuals about the new services available and shoring up philanthropic resources to ensure sufficient monitoring and evaluation.
- **Ongoing capacity maintenance**, or keeping connections strong with administrators to protect the achievements through future changes in the political environment.

The report offers three frameworks through which advocates can better understand policy implementation advocacy, including:

- **Bureaucracy:** This framework offers a clear understanding of the unique way government agencies operate, how bureaucratic organizations influence agency process and behavior and the levels and motivations of agency actors. This framework allows advocates to more effectively engage with the government agencies responsible for

implementing a given policy by understanding exactly how the relevant actors work together and what influences their decisions.

- **Policy implementation:** Traditionally, political scientists have focused on top-down or bottom-up models for policy implementation. This framework for understanding the degree of conflict and ambiguity of any policy offers guidance on how to think about degrees of centralization and related advocacy strategies and tactics.
- **Democracy:** This framework looks at the role that the public can play in policy implementation. Advocates can consider different theories of public participation to most effectively engage and mobilize the public in implementation efforts.

The report also provides specific examples of how the three frameworks can inform the three types of advocacy activities described above and questions for assessing progress.

Advocates have several opportunities to build on the knowledge acquired about policy implementation advocacy:

- Continuing to clarify the extent and nature of advocates’ role in implementation.
- Developing a clearer understanding of how to ensure smoother hand-offs of policies (from federal to state agencies, or from agencies to nonprofits on the ground, for example).
- Considering how implementation frameworks and roles may vary for larger-scale campaigns in which multiple, coordinated policy efforts may be necessary for a broader movement or sense of momentum; and
- Using the theories presented in this report to advance advocacy and policy change evaluation.