The Advocate’s Evaluation Toolkit

POLICYMAKER RATINGS OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

Policymaker ratings were developed by the Harvard Family Research Project and have since been used in a variety of advocacy settings. The method is designed to increase understanding of political support for your advocacy issue. It focuses on a specific subset of policymakers who you identify as important to your advocacy efforts.

Policymaker ratings are designed to draw on the expert knowledge of advocates who frequently work with different policymakers. It works best when advocates (or their partners) rate policymakers with whom they have regular contact or have verifiable information. The ratings are a set of scales that include policymakers support for and influence on the given issue.

Policymaker ratings can be completed a single time as information to guide strategy. They can be repeated in a regular basis to monitor changes and continue to guide strategy. They are a very low-effort strategy for collecting information about political will.

IMPLEMENTING THE TOOL

To implement a policymaker rating, you will first need to identify:

- The issue: Clearly identify the issue you want to rate. It should be narrow enough for raters to think about specific examples of policymakers supporting the issue in the way that matters to your advocacy efforts. For example, rather than broadly identifying “healthcare” as your issue, you might want to focus on, “increasing access to healthcare for low-income individuals” or “supporting implementation of the Affordable Care Act.”

- The policymakers you want to rate: You will want to decide who to rate up front, because you may need to adapt the sample tool. The sample was created for rating legislators. If you are focusing your advocacy efforts on Exchange Board members or regulators, you will need to update the tool.

Once you define your issue, identify your policymakers, and adapt the tool, the next step is to identify the advocates who can complete the tool for each policymaker. Ideally, you will have at least 3 – 5 advocates complete the tool for each policymaker.

Introduce the advocates to the purpose of the tool and request they each independently complete the tool for each policymaker you identified. To analyze the data, you can either review it manually (this works if you are only analyzing a couple policymakers with a couple advocates) or enter it into a data analysis workbook. A sample workbook is included with the sample policymaker rating tool.

Are you interested in more tips and tools for advocacy evaluation?

Spark Policy Institute's [www.sparkpolicy.com](http://www.sparkpolicy.com) interactive Advocate's Evaluation Toolkit is available at [www.sparkpolicy.com/tools/aet](http://www.sparkpolicy.com/tools/aet). Please share your stories about advocacy evaluation, share your tools, and access tools and ideas from other organizations.

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USING THE INFORMATION

Questions to explore while reviewing the results:

- Among those with a high level of confidence in their ratings, which policymakers are both highly supportive and influential?
- Do we have some policymakers where none of our advocates have a high level of confidence in their ratings? If so, how might we learn more?
- Do we have some highly influential policymakers who are only somewhat supportive? If so, how can we build their level of support?
- Do we have some policymakers with a high level of support who are not influential? If so, how can we use that support effectively in other ways?

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Spark Policy Institute's [www.sparkpolicy.com](http://www.sparkpolicy.com) interactive Advocate's Evaluation Toolkit is available at [www.sparkpolicy.com/tools/aet](http://www.sparkpolicy.com/tools/aet). Please share your stories about advocacy evaluation, share your tools, and access tools and ideas from other organizations.

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