

Evaluating the Effects of Organizing — *DRAFT*

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Community Organizers Symposium
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Introduction

There is no formula for how to evaluate the effects of organizing. Differences in communities lead to groups to choose different organizing issues, styles, goals, strategies and tactics. Just as every community is different, each evaluation of a groups' organizing work will be different.

But despite these differences, in one way or another every group of people that engages in community organizing will face (or avoid facing) five broad issues: building power, developing leaders, increasing participation, making concrete, creating positive change in the quality of life of the group's constituents, and maintaining organizational stability and effectiveness. Since these will be key issues in one way or another in virtually all organizing work, these five issues can be a starting point for developing a set of evaluation questions and indicators that will be unique for each group. The chart below suggests questions and indicators for evaluating each of the five broad issue areas. The questions and indicators listed below are meant to be suggestive and not comprehensive: participants in each organizing initiative should develop their own list of questions and indicators that they can use to evaluate their unique work.

Power

The following questions about power draw from the three-part model of power developed by Steven Lukes and John Gaventa. In this model, the first face of power is the ability competing directly on some issue against other forces and win. The second face of power is the ability to define the agenda, what counts as an issue and the process for determining policy and allocating resources. The third face of power is more individual: have people internalized their powerlessness so they don't bother to compete at the first and second levels of power, or do people have the sense of empowerment that allows them to attempt to wield power. For a fuller discussion of the three faces of power, see Gaventa, John (Date Unknown). *Citizen Knowledge, Citizen Competence and Democracy Building*. The Good Society, Vol 5, No. 3, available from the Institute for Development Research (617) 422-0422.

Evaluation Questions: Building Power (First Face)	Where to look for the answer (indicators)
Have you won policy changes and new resources that improve the quality of life for large numbers of people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the policy changes?• What are the new resources?
Have you negotiated with targets who can deliver resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you have issue campaigns with clear targets and demands?• Were there direct negotiations?• Were these negotiations led by leaders (residents) or staff?
Do you have the capacity to reward/punish targets?	Rewards: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did targets seek your support for specific proposals?• Did you turn out voters who supported candidate(s)? Punishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you publicly demonstrate against targets?• Did you turn out voters who opposed candidate(s)?

Evaluation Questions: Building Power (Second Face)	Where to look for the answer (indicators)
Have you changed the way that resources are allocating and policies are made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare current process (for making policy/allocating resource) with old process.
Have you become an institutional part of the way resources are allocated and policy is made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have a contractual agreement with target? • Have new bodies been created who have real influence in creating policy/allocating resources?
Has your organization been recognized by targets, allies, other decision-makers and the media as a legitimate and representative vehicle for affecting change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the concrete ways allies have helped your group? • What are the concrete ways allies have asked for your group's help? • Have targets made public statements about your
Have you shifted local debate the issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does debate happen (e.g. mass media, government bodies, organizational discussions)? • Compare the debate before and after.
Have you shifted the debate in areas beyond where you organize?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does debate happen (e.g. mass media, government bodies, organizational discussions)? • Compare the debate before and after.
Have you acted successfully on a proactive agenda?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What lead you to organize on the issue: actions of the target or needs/concerns of your group constituents? • Did you organize to prevent an action of someone else or did you organize to implement your positive vision?

Evaluation Questions: Building Power (Third Face)	Where to look for the answer (indicators)
Do constituents (residents) view themselves as subjects (actors who can affect change) rather than objects (passive victims of the decisions and actions of others).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask constituents how change happens.
Do constituents have an analysis of what the current situation, who has power and privilege (and who doesn't), what kind of change is desired, and how that change could happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask constituents to describe the situation. • Does your group set aside time to discuss and analyze the current situation? • Does your group train constituents in power analysis?
Does your group have events and rituals that make people feel part of a community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the events and rituals? • Ask constituents what makes them feel part of the group?
Are there strong, personal relationships between constituents involved in your group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do socialize outside of your groups' meetings and events? • Can your leaders tell you the details of the personal stories of other leaders?

Participation

Every healthy organization has people involved at different levels, from core activists to upcoming leaders to occasional volunteers to potential members who may not even be aware of your group (see attached chart for a visual representation of this idea).. The exact nature of the different levels of involvement will differ for each group.

Evaluation Questions: Increasing Participation	Where to look for the answer (indicators)
What are the different levels of involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the activities that constituents do? • How frequently are constituents involved in your organization? • Ask constituents how strongly they identify with your organization? • What are the organizational structures and defined roles for participation (e.g. issue committees, officers, meeting facilitator, mailing team)?
How many people are involved at each level of involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count the numbers.
What activities are held to involve constituents at each level of involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the activities.
What decisions are people (at each level of involvement) involved in (and NOT involved in)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What decisions are made? • Who is consulted before decisions are made? • Who has the last word on decision? • Who has veto power?
How long have people (at each level of involvement) stayed in your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask people how long.
Do people move to new levels of involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask people if they move up. • How long have people been at their current level of involvement?
What sectors of the community (ethnic, racial, national, linguistic, class, gender, etc.) are under-represented and over-represented at each level of involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask people what are the different sectors in the community? • Compare percentage in the community with participants at each level.

Leadership

There are two levels of leadership development that must be evaluated. First, is the level of organizing skills that leaders have learned: chairing meetings, doorknocking, one-to-one meetings, planning actions, etc.. Second, is the level of critical consciousness and empowerment: the ability to articulate what is wrong with the status quo and how residents working together can change it.

Evaluation Questions: Developing Leaders	Where to look for the answer (Indicators)
What organizing skills have leaders learned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask leaders what skills they have learned.
To what degree have leaders developed analytic skills and a critical consciousness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can leaders articulate mission of organization? • Can leaders articulate goals and strategy? • Can leaders describe the different parts/activities of your organization and how they fit together? • Can leaders articulate an analysis of power and privilege in there community? • Do leaders have a clear sense of how change could happen?
What do leaders do (and what do leaders leave to staff to do)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit and mobilize other leaders (1:1 meetings, doorknocking, house meetings, etc.) • Mentoring other leaders • Setting meeting agendas and facilitating meetings • Negotiate with targets
Is leadership stable, but not stagnant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have leaders been in your organization? • How long have leaders been at their current level of involvement? • Are participation opportunities for people who are new to the group? • What percent of people who newly become involved in your group stay involved for at least a year?
Is leadership development an on-going, institutionalized part of your group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the formal mechanisms for leadership development? • How often do these formal mechanisms for leadership development occur? • What percentage of leaders at all levels participate in formal mechanisms for leadership development?

Community Change

Community organizing aims to improve the quality of life for a significant number of people. The following section looks at some very general questions you could use to evaluate community change. Of course, more specific questions in this area must be developed by participants in the organizing process.

Evaluation Questions: Making Community Change	Where to look for the answer (Indicators)
What is different in your community because of you organizing?	
How many people have been affected by these changes?	
How significant have these changes been?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask people who have been affected by the change what it has meant to them.
How do changes caused by your organizing work compare with trends in the same area that occurred independent of your organizing?	
Were there missed opportunities that you could have taken advantage of if you had organized around different issues or demands?	

Organizational Issues

The following chart lists some evaluation questions for organizational issues that are particularly relevant to groups that combine community organizing and community development. Again, your evaluation questions will be unique to your organization.

Evaluation Questions: Organizational Issues	Where to look for the answer (Indicators)
Is your organizing a priority for your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time does the board spend on community organizing relevant to other areas of work? • How much are organizers paid compared to other program staff? • Does organizing work figure prominently in group's publicity (e.g. newsletter, brochures, annual meetings, annual reports)? • What percentage of the group's budget is spent on organizing? • What percentage of the groups' time (staff and volunteers) is spent on organizing?
Is your organizing integrated into all facets of your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all staff have a role in involving constituents in your group? • Do all staff have a role in developing leaders? • Do all staff understand and support the organizing strategy? • Does the board have a defined role in organizing work?
Is your organization constituent- or staff-driven?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all program areas have a committee of constituents that oversees and evaluates the work? • Do constituents set the group's priorities? • Do constituents evaluate the group's work?
Is your organization stable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your group face serious financial problems? • Is there excessive staff turnover?