INFORMING CHANGE

Advocacy Progress Tracker Overview & Discussion Guide

ABOUT THE ADVOCACY PROGRESS TRACKER

The Advocacy Progress Tracker (**APT**) is a tool for documenting tangible progress toward outcomes and/or goals outlined in a strategic document, such as a theory of change or impact framework. Organizations engaged in advocacy and policy change efforts can use the APT to track incremental signs of progress over time. This information can then be analyzed, thematized, reviewed for patterns, or fed into a larger organizational or program evaluation process. Regularly recording and reviewing APT results can contribute to:

- A more nuanced understanding of your organization's progress via later formal evaluation research.
- Your team's internal culture of learning.
- Timely adjustments to your tactics or strategies in response to changes in the landscape signaled by results in the APT.
- Systematic collection of stories for possible use in communication efforts.

HOW TO USE THE ADVOCACY PROGRESS TRACKER

ADVOCACY PROGRESS TRACKER TEMPLATE

We have created a sample Advocacy Progress Tracker template, which you can copy and modify to create an APT tailored to your organization.

- Go to **https://bit.ly/APTTemplate** to access the (view-only) template (must be signed into a Google account).
- Go to **https://bit.ly/APTSampleResults** for an example of a spreadsheet of entries generated from the sample APT template.

The APT is simple and can be used simultaneously by multiple staff members who have knowledge of work being done directly by the organization or work resulting from organization resources (e.g., grantees funded by the organization, advocacy by other organizations using your tools or publications). For the APT to be most useful, all staff using it should understand the outcomes and associated indicators with which the APT is typically set up. However, the APT can still be used in the absence of a theory of change and formal outcomes—the user(s) would just need to identify the categories according to which they want to sort their data (e.g., "spontaneous appreciation," "formal recognition," "use of our language in the media").

- Whenever staff become aware (e.g., through an informal conversation with a grantee, email communication, observation at an event, etc.) of information pertaining to an outcome and/or indicator, that information should be entered into the APT as promptly as possible to avoid misremembering details.

- We recommend establishing a regular meeting cadence to discuss the APT's collected data. *(For the purposes of this guide, we assume a 30-to-90-minute quarterly meeting, depending on how many instances or indications of progress have been recorded, but the user may elect different cadences or review processes.)*

- At these meetings, designated staff are encouraged to use the **Discussion Guide** below to review results collected during the previous quarter (or other time period).

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide provides a structure for documenting and "analyzing" the spreadsheet generated by the APT. Because multiple individuals may populate the spreadsheet, it is important to ensure alignment across all staff in recording evidence.

Ideally, a team using the APT would meet at least once annually for a couple of hours to make space to engage in a deeper review of APT results collected over the past year.

Sample Review Meeting

Spend the first 10-15 minutes reviewing the spreadsheet for the prior period (or do this separately before the meeting). Proceed directly to the **Discussion Questions** below. If more than 20 or so entries have been made over the previous period, the meeting may need to be longer. Simply ensure there is plenty of time for all participants to read each of the entries in detail.

For interim meetings (shorter, more frequent ones), we suggest focusing solely on the "Progress Toward Outcomes" questions in the list below. For annual meetings where more data, and a more thorough review process will be necessary, we recommend all relevant questions from the full list below.

Discussion Questions

Progress Toward Outcomes

1. For each outcome, what stands out to you the most?

2. What provisional conclusions do you draw about where progress is or isn't occurring? Do you have any hypotheses about why that may be the case? If so, how might you test them in months to come?

3. Where are the stories of progress (positive-trending indicators) most concentrated? Which outcomes are most represented in the tracking spreadsheet?

4. Is there anything unexpected in these results?

Themes Across Outcomes

5. What themes or patterns in the results do you observe? (e.g., do you see that an advocacy campaign using certain language is getting traction? Are certain research products getting enough circulation?) Might these themes be helpful to integrate as outcomes or indicators in the APT to help organize your data?

6. What contributes to staff's, grantees', or partners' ability to make progress during this time? Do you observe any common factors?

7. Are there any relationships between the people reporting positive trends in the indicators?

8. From what type(s) of source are you collecting information most frequently? Is it too much? Too little? What might you do to right-sized your collection of results?

Context

9. Is external context affecting progress in any way? Is there anything you should be mindful of when continuing to track indicators of progress?

10. Consider the quantity and quality of recorded data over the time period under discussion (whether positive or negative). What factors might account for it? Do certain contexts produce a lot of feedback from your stakeholders? Are others generating less uptake?

Next Steps

11. Given the quantity and quality of data recorded, are there changes the team needs to make to improve either?

12. Are there any other next steps for the team to take? Is there anyone you should follow up with?

13. What key story(ies) of progress, if any, should you consider highlighting later?

14. Are there any strategies your team needs to rethink? Are any of your indicators or outcomes in need of revision or deletion? Are any outcomes or indicators *essential* to add?

15. Who should do what by when?

SAMPLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS & INTERIM OUTCOMES

Here are sample evaluation questions, outcomes, and indicators crafted for the fictional **Alliance for Civic Canines (ACC)**, an advocacy organization that promotes increased civic engagement amongst dogs.

Evaluation Questions

The overarching goal of evaluating this organization will be to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is ACC achieving the outcomes outlined in its Theory of Change (e.g., a more receptive environment for dog input, more stakeholders advocating for canine participation)?

2. In what ways can ACC improve or strengthen its programs, partnerships, or internal processes to enhance its ability to achieve the desired outcomes in its Theory of Change?

3. How might ACC shift its strategies or adapt its programs to respond to environmental and social changes related to its mission (e.g., political, economic, media)?

Outcomes & Indicators

1. **Outcome #1:** Government and civic bodies are more receptive to active canine input and participation.

   a. **Indicator #1A**: Key stakeholders put forward new ideas for increasing canine input and participation.

b. **Indicator #1B**: The issue is presented in media stories in ways that align with ACC's descriptions or framing.

c. **Indicator #1C**: Individuals associated with ACC (e.g., participants, staff, board) are seen as credible and influential on the topic.

2. **Outcome #2**: People are more informed about the benefits of active canine input and participation.

a. **Indicator #2A**: Feedback from partners and users on the usefulness of ACC's tools and research.

b. **Indicator #2B**: Evidence that ACC's positions are being adopted/endorsed by government and civic leaders.

c. **Indicator #2C**: Growing positive sentiment amongst the public about the need to have dogs involved in civics.

3. **Outcome #3**: More stakeholders actively advocate for canine civic participation.

a. **Indicator #3A**: Increase in the number and depth of ACC's partnerships with local organizations.

b. **Indicator #3B**: Leaders proactively use their influential positions and voice to increasingly push for dogs to have a seat at the table.

c. **Indicator #3C**: More like-minded organizations or movements are founded throughout the country, further increasing the visibility of the civic canine movement.