

Advocacy impact, goals, interim outcomes and activities

Impacts are the positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by advocacy efforts, directly or not, intended or not. Impacts signal what will happen after an advocacy goal is achieved.

The **advocacy goal** is the subject of your advocacy effort. It is your vision for the next 10-20 years. The advocacy goal can be general, for example, **develop and implement a national evaluation policy**. Goals indicate what the advocacy strategy is aiming to accomplish in the policy or funding environment

Advocacy interim outcomes are shorter-term results that must be achieved in order to reach the advocacy goal. Generally, the time frame for an advocacy interim outcome will be 1-3 years. It must focus on a specific action that the organization can take. For example an advocacy interim outcome can state, **all major political parties endorse the development of a national evaluation policy in their core commitments by 2015**. Advocacy strategies usually have multiple interim outcomes that are achieved on the way to that goal.

Sometimes policy goals take years to achieve. Interim outcomes signal important progress to be achieved along the way. Capturing interim outcomes also ensures that evaluations do not conclude unfairly that, if policy goals are not achieved, entire advocacy efforts failed. Examples of interim outcomes can be both increased advocacy capacity, as well as audience changes that indicate movement towards advocacy goals. Can you choose more than one interim outcome to work on at a time? This depends on your organizational resources for advocacy. It is generally advisable to focus your work on only as many interim outcomes as you can realistically achieve. Advocates who attempt to fix everything run the risk of changing nothing in the process.

Advocacy tactics or activities are the specific outputs and products which contribute to the interim outcomes, and might include events, conferences, press releases, publications, meetings etc. The advocacy tactics/activities help to achieve the interim outcomes. For each advocacy tactic, it is important to identify the roles of specific VOPE members who have the responsibility for taking it forward.

SMART Goals and Interim Outcomes (and also change-oriented)

Your goals and interim outcomes should be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Resourced, Relevant and Time-bound. They should also be change-oriented rather than activity-oriented. They should describe the change you intend to bring about, not what you intend to do. The change should be quantified and the interim outcome should state who will do it and by when. E.g:

Original objective: To mobilize the government to invest in national evaluation policy.

SMART objective: To assist the Ministry of Planning to draft the national evaluation policy by 2015.

Specific: Watch out for jargon or rhetoric. Evaluation terminology can be technical. Say what you mean in the clearest terms possible. Watch out for words that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, for example: accountability, transparency, etc. If you use them, say what you mean.

Measurable: Be as exact as possible about who, what, where, when and how. For example, an interim outcome might state, “sensitize parliamentarians about the need for evaluation.” Whenever possible, estimate the number of legislators you are mobilizing, what they will be able to do as a result, and the geographic range of your effort.

Interim outcomes that refer to a state of mind and a process, like ‘sensitize’, are almost impossible to measure because they are subjective. So, when you use words that refer to a state of mind you should ask yourself: “What does a sensitized person do?” “Sensitize for what?” Use the answers to formulate your interim outcomes and goals more clearly.

Achievable: The clearer you are about who, what, where, when and how, the more achievable your goals and interim outcome will be.

Realistic, resourced and relevant: Changing attitudes and behaviour is a long-term endeavour. Try to be realistic when you decide how many people you plan to influence. Realistic objectives should be achievable in the planned time frame and reflect the limits of your funding and staff. Make sure that the interim outcomes, if achieved, will be sufficient to achieve your advocacy goal.

Time bound: A clear interim outcome should include a clear time-frame within which the change should be achieved (within 2-3 years, or longer if the interim outcome is more ambitious). Remember that the time-frame must also be realistic.

Change-oriented: Your interim outcome should be worded in terms of what you hope to achieve, not what you intend to do. Consider what change you want to bring about. For example, "Decision-makers x, y and z will clearly demonstrate their awareness on evidence based policy-making by supporting calls to adopt the national evaluation policy" is change-oriented, while "to raise awareness of decision-makers about evaluation" is activity-oriented.