

BRINGING JUSTICE HOME

EVALUATION: CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL ACCESS

Most nonprofit organizations have multiple stakeholder groups, including donors, community leaders, clients, staff, regulatory agencies, peer organizations, volunteers, the public, and other groups. Because different people view success in different ways, it's best to use multiple measures of success when evaluating a communications campaign.

As detailed in the communications strategy in this toolkit, we recommend that the evaluation process take place in the first one or two months after the end of your one-year campaign.

Here are some indicators you may wish to use in evaluating the Campaign for Equal Access in your area:

Benchmarks

Before the campaign begins, quantify the number of news stories on pertinent topics that appeared in your local media over the last year. (This can be easily done as part of your media audit and analysis.) Then, following the campaign kick-off, quantify the number of stories on the same topics that appear each quarter during the life of the campaign. If there is an increase in media coverage between the current and previous years, you will have an indication that your campaign is succeeding. If there is no increase, you may want to make some mid-course corrections in your implementation activities.

Impressions

At the end of each quarter, tally the circulation/audience figures for all of the media breaks that you secured during that period. This will give you an estimate of the number of impressions that your messages made on readers/viewers/listeners. At the end of the campaign, total the number of impressions. Compare that total to a baseline benchmark, which is calculated by adding audience figures for the entire "A" list media you identified in your initial media audit. (Use this aggregated impressions figure as the baseline benchmark for future communication initiatives.)

Stories in Target Outlets

While media coverage in any outlet is welcome, your primary objective is to place stories in the target media on your "A" list. By the end of the first year, at least two stories should have appeared in each of the target media on your "A" list.

Message Pick-up

All media coverage is not equal. Stories that accurately convey the campaign's key messages are more valuable than general stories or articles that frame your issues in a tangential way. Each quarter, analyze all of the media coverage to assess how well the stories communicate the key messages of the Campaign for Equal Access.

Public Speaking

Keep a tally of the number of people reached through speaking engagements and personal appearances of your spokesperson(s). Add a qualitative dimension to your measurement by assessing the "value" of the audience in terms of its demographic match with the target audiences identified for this campaign.

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Advertising

If possible, customize the ads contained in this toolkit with a unique telephone number, e-mail address, and/or postal address. That way, any responses you receive at the unique contact point can be attributed to the success of the ad in motivating people to support civil legal aid. Another, somewhat less effective, measure of successful advertising is the number of ads run by the media as a public service. You should also tally the total number of impressions achieved by the advertising, whether it is paid or public service.

Donations

It can be difficult to link an increase in donations to a particular public appearance, news story, or advertisement. However, you can gain some sense of how the Campaign for Equal Access impacted funding by benchmarking donations before and after the campaign, and by inserting a unique identifier in your various media materials, as described above.

Put It In Context

It's important to remember that no single measurement indicator tells the whole story about a campaign. View all of your measurement results in context. Recognize that one story placed in the right outlet that reaches the right target audience and communicates the right messages about civil legal aid is worth more than many general stories that reach diffuse audiences. Recognize too that a story placed in an obscure outlet that happens to be a favorite of one major donor might have more value in the long run than media breaks that appear in more popular outlets. Taken together, all of the various measurement indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, will give a more realistic picture of the impact of the campaign than will a single measurement standard.