Engaging the People
Nonprofits Seek to Impact in Policy Advocacy

December 2020
Introduction

Listening to and including different voices and perspectives has long been part of how many nonprofits work to better support the people their work impacts. The slogan “nothing about us without us,” most commonly used in efforts to ensure equitable treatment for people with disabilities, conveys the ethos behind including the voices of those directly impacted in efforts to achieve equitable outcomes. Moreover, the growing focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the nonprofit sector, along with the inequities further exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent uprisings in response to police brutality, have further elevated the call to action for meaningful engagement between nonprofits and the people their work impacts in the struggle for equity and justice.

In the last few years, a few nonprofits, infrastructure organizations that support nonprofits, individual foundations, and Fund for Shared Insight—a U.S. based funder collaborative working to improve philanthropy by elevating the voices of those least heard—have spearheaded efforts to increase this meaningful engagement through high-quality feedback¹, mostly among direct-service nonprofits. Following this work, the Organizational Effectiveness (OE) team at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (the Foundation) was interested in further exploring how advocacy organizations can build their own ability to meaningfully connect with the people their work impacts.

In 2018, the OE team supported an experimental fund (the Fund) to: 1) Encourage a range of advocacy-focused organizations to explore ways to listen to, empathize with, or meaningfully engage the people and communities their work impacts, and 2) identify promising practices for

¹ Fund for Shared Insight defines high-quality feedback as feedback that employs simple yet flexible data collection approaches, captures a large number of representative client voices and gathers credible, candid feedback, identifies areas for celebration and areas for improvement, while shedding light on differential experiences across specific client groups, engages organizational decision-makers (and external stakeholders, such as funders) to learn from client feedback and implement changes based on what is learned, and closes the loop by sharing back with clients what was learned from listening to them and the specific ways that an organization is responding to their feedback.
how advocacy organizations can better listen to those at the heart of their work. The Fund ultimately supported 10 organizations with $50,000 USD grants and the flexibility to pursue these goals in ways that best supported their work.

ORS Impact worked to document learnings from the Fund’s grants, including what it looks like and what it takes for advocacy organizations to meaningfully connect with the people their work impacts. This report summarizes findings from interviews with the 10 organizations that participated in the Fund (Figure 1). The report specifically attempts to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. To what end do advocacy organizations engage the people their work impacts? What are they hoping to accomplish?
2. What methods do advocates use to engage the people their work impacts? How and to what extent are they developing new practices through this Fund?
3. What challenges do advocates encounter in the process?
4. What changes result from engagement efforts among the different stakeholders involved?

For this report, we closely considered how advocacy organizations refer to and interact with the people their work impacts. We came across different terms used to describe these people including clients, constituents, and beneficiaries. In this report, we tried to honor the relationship as best as possible by referring to them as “the people/communities impacted by advocates’ work,” but in some cases, we use the term “constituents” for readability.

Sample & Methods

The Packard Foundation invited a set of grantee partners from across the Foundation’s program areas to apply to participate in the Fund, and the selected organizations represented different focus areas and geographies of the Foundation’s work. Organizations included one from Conservation and Science (C&S), four from Reproductive Health (RH), and five from Children, Families, and Communities (CFC). To conduct our evaluation, we reviewed each organization’s application at the beginning of their engagement with the Fund and conducted one interview with representatives from each organization at the end of the grant. About half of the organizations requested no-cost extensions for their work for different amounts of time, so our interviews did not happen at the same time with all organizations. In addition, to be responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic, we offered flexibility for organizations who had not concluded their work by March of 2020, and they opted to further delay the interviews. Altogether, interviews occurred between November 2019 and August 2020.
To analyze the data, we used thematic coding, searching for similarities, differences, confirmations, and contradictions across grantees. It is worth noting that we did not find notable differences by program area. Throughout the report, we include counts of the number of organizations reporting a given concept, idea, or finding. These counts are presented as a number in parenthesis (#).

Figure 1 | Participating organizations by country and Foundation area of work.
Summary of Key Findings

This summary highlights the key findings in relation to the evaluation’s guiding questions (table 1) and summarizes the evaluator’s conclusions based on those findings. The rest of the report provides more details, including data and examples supporting these findings.

Table 1 | Evaluation questions and corresponding findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To what end do advocacy organizations engage the people their work impacts? What are they hoping to accomplish?</td>
<td>• Most organizations were motivated to participate in this Fund by a common belief that listening to the people their work impacts is the right and equitable thing to do. The organizations sought increased community input, capacity building, and co-creation of policies with the people their work impacts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What methods do advocates use to engage the people their work impacts? How and to what extent are they developing new practices through this Fund?</td>
<td>• To accomplish their goals, organizations used an array of methods and leveraged partnerships, which allowed them to connect more meaningfully than ever before. Methods included focus groups, listening sessions, advisory councils, advocacy trainings, and meetings with decision-makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What changes result from engagement efforts among the different stakeholders involved?</td>
<td>• Engaging the people their work impacts led to tangible changes in advocacy practices and internal culture and staffing; organizations also reported perceived changes among their partners, constituents, and decision-makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What challenges do advocates encounter in the process?</td>
<td>• Organizations reported a variety of challenges when meaningfully engaging the people their work impacts, including logistical challenges, a lack of trust with their constituents, and cultural norms, among others.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Evaluator’s Conclusions

- **Meaningful engagement has moral and pragmatic value for shaping how organizations work, but in theory, this engagement should ultimately have more impact on what they work towards as well.** Organizations in this study reported that they meaningfully engaged with their constituents in ways that shifted practice, capacities, or values for the grantee organization. Most of these changes relate to how organizations implement their advocacy work. We also found sparse instances where this work affected what advocates are working towards. Further research can elucidate if the how impacts the what, namely if changes in practices impact policy goals and agendas that the organizations are working towards.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic raises questions about the sustainability of these engagement efforts; more innovation will be needed.** Physical isolation, like that brought on by the pandemic, makes it more difficult to create space for meaningful connections between advocates, the people their work impacts, and policy makers. This new reality presents a considerable challenge for advocacy organizations and will require creative approaches to engage the people impacted by their work going forward. However, the pandemic has also exacerbated inequities, and input from those directly affected can play a pivotal role in ensuring support for communities in need.

- **There are opportunities for further inquiry and support around engaging the people impacted by advocacy work.** Through our inquiry, we surfaced additional questions that were outside of our scope but which we believe would be fruitful areas for future research to build support for engaging those impacted by the work of advocacy organizations. For example, we wonder about standards of practice for meaningful engagement: are there key practices organizations should strive to include to ensure meaningful, high-quality engagement? Knowing that there is uptake and moral and practical value in engaging constituents in advocacy, is there a place for a more structured support system that develops and shares best practices, builds capacity and knowledge, and builds the field further for advocacy nonprofits?
Engaging the People Nonprofits Seek to Impact in Policy Advocacy

Advocacy Organizations’ Motivations, Goals & Engagement Methods

Most organizations were motivated to participate in this Fund by a common belief that listening to the people their work impacts is the right and equitable thing to do.

An important part of our quest to explore advocates’ efforts to engage the people their work impacts was understanding the motivations and goals that drive that engagement. Through our interviews, we found that, at a high level, advocates’ motivations are mostly value-driven: engaging people their work impacts are aligned with organizational values around inclusion and equity. Specifically, seven grantees mentioned that this effort was aligned to their internal strategic plans and vision of being more directly engaged with community and complemented their organization’s internal work around equity. Additionally, three other organizations mentioned that they wanted to participate because they believe in the “nothing about us without us” philosophy whereby those affected by a particular issue should be actively involved in developing appropriate solutions. In addition to those motivations, two organizations found the Fund’s flexibility important, because it allowed them to be open-minded, nimble, and innovative in how they approached this work.

Building on those high-level motivational factors, organizations reported having a specific vision for how engaging the people their work impacts could support their advocacy work. The specific goals they mentioned included increased community input, capacity building, and co-creating policies with the people their work impacts. These goals closely resemble what other advocacy organizations have reported, as described by the Aspen Institute in its landscape study, a resource we referenced when designing this evaluation. This landscape study explores whether and how advocacy organizations meaningfully connect with the people their work is intended to benefit and provided a useful framework for our assessment of how this set of 10 organizations engaged their constituents.

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2 Landscape Scan: Meaningfully Connecting with Communities in Advocacy and Policy Work
Specifically, six organizations hoped to get direct input on their advocacy work from their communities, particularly from the least-heard communities/people/groups, such as those who are underserved, communities of color, immigrant communities, and young people to gain a better understanding of their needs. Meanwhile, three others hoped to empower the people they engaged by equipping them with the necessary advocacy tools; for example, one organization equipped young people with stronger public speaking abilities to advocate and be champions of their own rights. Finally, one organization sought to co-create policies with the people they engaged, giving them access to decision-making roles to directly shape issues affecting them. Figure 2 shows how these 10 organizations’ goals correspond with the informing/listening/co-creating categories in the typology created by the Aspen Institute.

Figure 2 | How advocacy organizations meaningfully connected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>INFORMING</th>
<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>CO-CREATING</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing information,</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouraging action</td>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Help the community understand an issue and take individual action.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Understand community priorities, perspectives, and experiences.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Relationships</th>
<th>INFORMING</th>
<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>CO-CREATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Providing information, encouraging action</strong></td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>6 Organizations</td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Help the community understand an issue and take individual action.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seeking to understand</strong></td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>6 Organizations</td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Understand community priorities, perspectives, and experiences.</td>
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<th>CO-CREATING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seeking feedback</strong></td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Listen to what community think about an idea, strategy, proposal, policy, etc.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS</th>
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<th>LISTENING</th>
<th>CO-CREATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training, building policy work capacity</strong></td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Equip community with capacities to lead / co-lead advocacy.</td>
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<th>CO-CREATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-creating, co-deciding</strong></td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
<td>0 Organizations</td>
<td>2 Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Give communities decision-making roles in advocacy and policy work and execute advocacy activities.</td>
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Figure adapted from Aspen Institute, *Meaningfully Connecting with Communities in Advocacy and Policy Work*

To accomplish their goals, organizations used an array of methods and leveraged partnerships, which allowed them to connect more meaningfully than ever before.

While our data suggests that all organizations were already engaging the people their work impacts in some way, all organizations indicated that this grant served as a launching pad to try different methods and shift how they engaged. Organizations reported using an array of methods
to engage people their work impacts, and the selected methods correspond to the engagement goals identified in Figure 2. Table 2 presents the crosswalk of methods and goals.

Table 2 | Methods of engagement by engagement goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Goal</th>
<th>Input: Seeking to Understand (n=6)</th>
<th>Co-creation: Capacity Building/Training (n=2)</th>
<th>Co-creation: Co-advocacy (n=2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Focus groups/listening sessions (3)</td>
<td>Training constituents to be advocates (2)</td>
<td>Convened and facilitated meetings between constituents and decision-makers (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methods</td>
<td>Advisory councils/boards (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advisory council (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data co-interpretation sessions (1)</td>
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Engagement Approaches

Advisory Council

Having committed to doing community advocacy as part of their strategic plan, one organization created a community advisory board that consisted primarily of community members who were active advocates within their communities. The role of this board was to advise and directly influence the organization’s advocacy agenda by directing them on what advocacy issues to focus on.

Co-interpretation of Data

In an effort to create a policy agenda informed by quantitative and qualitative data, one organization held a series of events where they gathered leaders from communities of color to discuss data the organization had previously collected. They explored & interpreted the data together and identify policy implications. The organization used learnings from the sessions in identifying their policy priorities.

Co-creation

A broader approach was to engage people from the groups an organization sought to impact to participate directly in stakeholder/legislative meetings to help advance the organization’s healthcare advocacy work. For example, they invited promotores to their day of capitol advocacy to discuss healthcare needs directly with decision makers and to give input on what was being proposed in the state’s healthcare budget.
When reflecting on the differences with their past engagement work:

- Five organizations shifted from having their organizational staff represent the needs of constituents to decision-makers to supporting their constituents to represent themselves. This included empowering and supporting people with whom they work to speak at advocacy meetings and influence decisions around strategies and solutions that directly affect them.

- Four organizations involved the people their work impacts more closely and more intentionally sought ways to engage them.

- One organization mentioned that working with local partners to engage the people their work impacts was the main difference in how they did their advocacy work while another commented that they were able to get a deeper understanding of community needs through more direct dialogues with the people their work impacts.

In addition to working directly with community members, nine organizations shared that they also worked with partners on their advocacy work. These partners were mostly other organizations that: already had a pre-existing trusted relationship with the organization (3), were network/member organizations who were already doing work within the communities they were trying to reach (2), had deep connections within communities they were trying to reach (1), were led by the constituents impacted by their advocacy work (1), or were a diverse array of organizations located in places where trained constituents could actively engage more people (1).³ This data suggests that overall, organizations sought partners with deeper community ties to facilitate meaningful engagement. Nevertheless, four organizations mentioned challenges with these partnerships, specifically around limited bandwidth and availability of partners to fully engage in their work.

³ One grantee did not provide information on how they selected their partner.
Engaging the people their work impacts led to tangible changes across organizations, who also reported changes among their partners, constituents, and decision-makers.

While organizations were mostly driven by a moral imperative—engaging the people their work impacts is the right thing to do—another underlying assumption behind this work is that engaging the people their work impacts will make their organizations more effective in their advocacy. In other words, it is also a “smart” approach for organizations seeking a different, more effective way to work. Therefore, one of the key questions about the Fund is the extent to which engaging constituents leads to changes in the advocacy organization’s work, what those changes entail, and among whom they occur.

Interview data shows that these 10 organizations reported tangible changes as a result of their engagement efforts. Figure 3 describes the types of changes organizations reported within their organization and externally among partners, the people their work impacts, and decision-makers. Organizational changes included expanding inclusion opportunities to other areas of work (3), for example, by applying what they learned to similar work in other regions. Internal changes also included changes in culture and staffing, which refer to changes in staff’s perceptions around the importance of including constituents’ voices in their advocacy work or adding constituents to their staff as a way to better connect with the population they were trying to reach. Finally, another organization reported previously debating the value of having an advisory board; now there is more consensus among staff and involving community is now an essential way of doing their work. Figure 3 also summarizes types of changes among external stakeholders. While we were not able to verify with partners, constituents, and decision-makers the extent to which these changes happened, they are worth noting as organizations lifted them as benefits and could be potential areas for further research.

This variety in reported changes is an encouraging sign about the potential effects of meaningfully engaging the people directly impacted by advocacy work. For organizations, the cultural and staffing changes reflect increased buy-in and understanding of what it means and what it takes to engage the people their work impacts, while advocacy practice changes reflect
ways in which organizations transformed their work to more closely reflect the needs and experiences of those they seek to help. Additionally, organizations commented on some external changes they witnessed among partners, constituents, and decision-makers.

Figure 3 | Types of changes reported by organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Changes</th>
<th>External Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy Practices</strong></td>
<td><strong>Culture and Staffing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased opportunities for constituent inclusion in advocacy and other areas of work (3)</td>
<td>- Increased understanding of the importance of including voice and what it takes to do so (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Changes in the advocacy agenda (more issues, improved representation of needs) (2)</td>
<td>- Change in how advocates do and talk about their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased partnerships and alignment with community partners (2)</td>
<td>- Addition of constituents (youth) to staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased use of data gathered from constituents and efforts to communicate findings (2)</td>
<td>- Increased confidence among staff in speaking with decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased support for partners to include constituents in advocacy</td>
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</table>

*Where there is no number, the outcome was true for only one organization.*
Organizations reported a variety of the challenges when meaningfully engaging the people their work impacts.

In considering their advocacy work, organizations identified general challenges they encountered along their engagement efforts. These challenges are insights into what it takes for organizations to meaningfully engage the people their work impacts:

- **Logistical and scheduling challenges (2):** For example, one organization expressed challenges getting participants to travel to speak with state legislators since it required them to take time off from work, which was not always possible. In this case, the organization pivoted and instead connected the people their work impacts to local legislators who were much easier to access.

- **Cultural norms that limited constituents’ active participation (2):** For example, one organization who engaged youth found that they faced resistance from their parents who did not allow them to freely engage in outreach advocacy activities.

- **Varying levels of experience among community members (2):** For example, one organization who engaged parents found that some of them had experience with advocacy activities and were more confident engaging compared to those who did not have this experience.

- **Lack of adequate time to build trust with communities (2):** For example, one organization expressed that more time to build trust was essential due to the sensitivity of the issue they were working on.

- **Finding the right partner to connect with constituents (1):** One organization experienced a delay in finding the right partner who understood the people their work impacts and their context well enough to engage them appropriately.
• **Adequately representing diverse perspectives (1):** One organization found it challenging to deeply engage the diverse array of communities they worked with and represent them in the policy recommendations they were working on.

• **Balancing lived experience and organization expertise (1):** This organization was more concerned about how to balance the expertise they brought around data collection and analysis while also providing the space to listen to community members’ lived experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented additional challenges for organizations whose work continued into 2020. Two organizations were directly impacted by COVID-19 and the restrictions that were in place. Of these, one organization was unable to gather community members as originally planned and as a result did not conduct all the intended in-person focus groups. Instead, they decided to conduct a few interviews with the people their work impacts, which limited who they could engage. Similarly, another organization had planned to gather community members to report back to the community the work they had done but were unable to do so due to the restrictions of COVID-19.

Organizations shared some advice for other advocacy organizations and funders interested in this work.

Upon reflecting on lessons learned from this process, most organizations shared at least one thing they would do differently in future efforts to elevate constituent voices in their work:

• Building and strengthening community relationships first.

• Getting buy-in from community partners early in the engagement process, for example, to determine whether they had the bandwidth to engage in this way and whether they would offer any recommendations on how to go about the work.

• Narrowing the number of communities engaged with and having more than one interaction with them to allow for deeper conversations.

• Paving the way for community members to speak with decision-makers.

• Partnering directly with the people their work impacts rather than through a local NGO.

• Bringing other partners on board in order to scale their advocacy work within their communities.

• Focusing advocacy work on local offices where it is easier for the people their work impacts to engage rather than on a state level or more geographically removed offices.
• Better integrating/including advisory councils in their different areas of work (e.g., other program areas, specific projects, or initiatives).

• Having a long-term sustainability plan (e.g., for funding sources to continue the work).

Organizations also had some advice to share with other organizations that are interested in doing this work. Three organizations mentioned that it is important for the whole organization to be committed to this work, which ensures accountability and therefore has a greater chance of success. Two advised that building trusted relationships with the people their work impacts is critical. Another two stated the importance of valuing and showing appreciation for the people their work impacts and the time they contribute, for example, by paying for their lunches, childcare, travel, hotel accommodations, offering a stipend to participants, and giving partner organizations an honorarium for their contribution to this effort. Additional advice from at least one organization highlights the significance of the following practices:

• Including constituent voices in every stage of the work while also trusting that the people their work impacts, regardless of age, know their needs and can advocate for themselves if given adequate support.

• Preparing the people their work impacts for their conversations with decision-makers and understanding different cultural dynamics that could affect whose voices within the community gets heard. This organization had to disaggregate focus group discussions by gender to hear openly from women who would otherwise not speak up when men were present.

• Working in partnership with the people their work impacts whereby the organization brings their expertise around policy and decision-making and the constituent brings lived experience, both of which have proven to be critical contributions to their advocacy work.

Finally, organizations generally appreciated funders who support this kind of engagement but noted that doing this work well requires significant time and resources. Important resources identified by organizations included funding (7), peer learning (2), training opportunities (1), and thought partnership with others involved in this work (1).
Based on our interviews and experience in other advocacy, feedback, and capacity building work, we offer the following observations for those considering similar work going forward.

1. **Meaningful engagement has moral and pragmatic value for shaping how organizations work, but in theory, this engagement should ultimately have more impact on what they work towards as well.**

   The findings from our interviews with participating organizations show that all of them reported changes either within their organization or among external stakeholders as related to their engagement work: they meaningfully engaged in ways that shifted practice, capacities, or values for the organization. Most of these changes relate to how organizations implement their advocacy work—who advocates, what avenues they use, how and to what extent they engage the people their work impacts. We also found sparse instances where this work affected what advocates are working towards, namely their policy goals or agendas. Both of these areas are important, and the assumption is that they are related to each other: the how impacts the what. Further research can help elucidate whether a longer timeframe or shifting conditions help organizations connect both of those areas in their efforts to advance equity and develop policy solutions and supports that positively impact the people at the heart of their work.

2. **The COVID-19 pandemic raises questions about the sustainability of these engagement efforts; more innovation will be needed.**

   Engaging constituents in advocacy involves close interaction. As observed, most organizations typically went out into the communities to gather community member input through in-person conversations or to train and advocate with the people their work impacts. Given the restrictions on in-person gatherings due to COVID-19, some organizations had to rethink their engagement strategies. For example, phone interviews...
were used as an alternative to in-person gatherings but may not be as appropriate a method to gather information from all the people their work impacts. In addition, advocacy tactics are changing as advocates are no longer able to reach policy makers in person. Physical isolation makes it more difficult to create space for meaningful connections between the people their work impacts, advocates, and policy makers. This new reality presents a considerable challenge for these organizations and for constituent engagement at large. However, the pandemic has also exacerbated inequities, and input from those directly affected can play a pivotal role in ensuring support for communities in need.

There are opportunities for further inquiry and support around engaging the people impacted by advocacy work.

The main purpose of these 10 grants was to learn from the experience of the organizations to understand what went well and which challenges they faced in doing this work. Through our inquiry, we surfaced additional questions that were outside of our scope, but which we believe would be fruitful areas of future inquiry to help build more knowledge in the field about this topic. For example, we learned about organizations mostly changing how they work, but there is more to learn about the extent to which organizations also changed what they worked toward, as mentioned in our first observation. We also learned that organizations used this opportunity to engage in a deeper way. We wonder what the standards of practice are or should be around constituent engagement in advocacy. What does meaningful engagement entail, and are there key practices organizations should strive to include to ensure meaningful, high-quality engagement?

Finally, we wonder about supports for constituent engagement. If there is a moral imperative and there are tangible changes that result from constituent engagement, what types of supports do organizations need to continue this work, particularly in the midst of COVID-19? And to what extent are funders willing to partner with nonprofits to develop this different way of conducting advocacy work? The Fund served as an initial foray to build knowledge and experience among advocacy organizations, which is different than the guided capacity-building tools that feedback support organizations like Listen4Good, 60 Decibels, or Feedback Labs currently offer to direct service nonprofits. Nevertheless, it is the beginning of a support system for advocacy organizations exploring this new way of working. Knowing that there is uptake and moral and practical value in engaging constituents in advocacy, is there a place for a more structured support system that develops and shares best practices, builds capacity and knowledge, and builds the field further for advocacy nonprofits? If so, what could that structure look like, and who
might be the key players in developing and managing it? These are important follow-up questions if the goal is to increase uptake and use of high-quality constituent engagement among advocacy organizations.

Ultimately, the advocacy-focused organizations involved in this project perceived elevating the voices of those at the heart of their work as an important and valuable aspect of their work. They saw it as a way to greatly impact the lives of the people they seek to serve and to make them agents of change in their own communities. Participating organizations started seeing some shifts in their culture and practices as a result of their deeper constituent engagement and reported some promising potential changes among other stakeholders. As an experimental grant strategy, the Fund fulfilled its short-term goal of supporting nonprofits’ advocacy practices and learning from these organizations’ experiences. Partnering with nonprofits to explore what it looks like to engage their constituents amidst COVID-19 and beyond can ensure that the people their work impacts have a seat at the table in defining and shaping a more equitable world.

We want to extend our deepest appreciation to all organizations that participated in this Fund for taking time to share learnings from engaging the people their work impacts in advocacy efforts.
Appendix A | List of Participating Organizations

- California Coverage and Health Initiatives
- Child and Family Policy Center
- Health Development Initiative Rwanda
- Meridian Institute, on behalf of Mexico’s Sustainable Fisheries Collective Impact Initiative.
- National Immigration Law Center
- NC Child
- Population Action International
- Population Foundation of India
- Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- Teen Health Mississippi