

Introduction to the Advocacy Core Capacity Assessment Tool

As nonprofits/NGOs increasingly recognize the value of advocacy (or are pushed toward advocacy by external stakeholders), building advocacy capacity is critical. From a process perspective, building advocacy capacity isn't rocket science. However, understanding what capacity to build and how to measure it is important.

What is Advocacy Capacity?

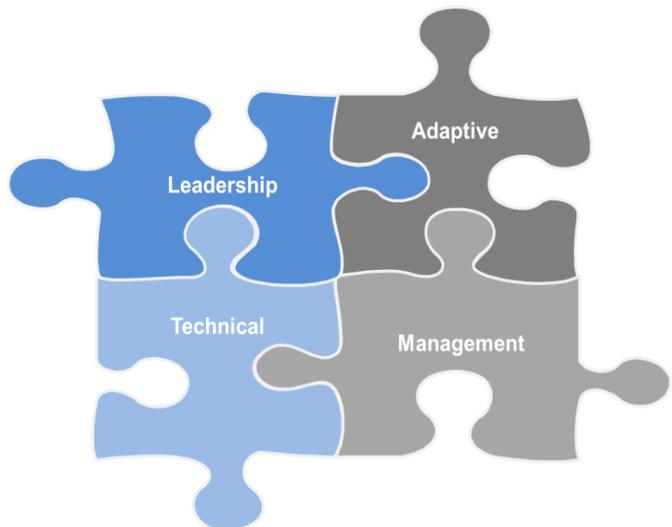
Advocacy organizations come in all shapes and sizes. They have unique program mixes, with some organizations doing only advocacy work, while others conduct advocacy and policy work as an additional activity, building on their primary business of providing direct services to the community. Notwithstanding their differences, there appear to be organizational capacities that span all of these organizations, though the relative mix of the capacities may vary. There are two fundamental premises upon which a framework of organizational capacities for advocacy organizations is based:

1. Advocacy organizations and those doing advocacy programs are nonprofits/NGOs. As such, general capacities related to the nonprofit sector are applicable.
2. Advocacy organizations are engaged in a process leading to outcomes around framing issues, providing visibility for those issues and affecting public policy decisions on those issues. As such, there are capacities unique to advocacy organizations to effectively engage in strategies that affect those outcomes.

How do you Evaluate Advocacy Capacity Development?

As with all good capacity evaluation, advocacy capacity evaluation follows a few simple steps:

1. **Define what constitutes capacity.** TCC has leveraged its widely used Core Capacity Model of organizational effectiveness to frame capacity specifically relevant to doing advocacy work. This framework, consisting of leadership, adaptive, management and technical capacities, along with a capacity-building framing of organizational life-cycle, can be found in the briefing paper, "[What Makes an Effective Advocacy Organization: A Framework for Determining Advocacy Capacity.](#)"
2. **Design valid and reliable data collection tools.** TCC Group has developed a comprehensive tool for assessing policy and advocacy organizational capacity—the Advocacy Core Capacity Assessment Tool (A-CCAT). The tool builds on TCC's widely used and statistically validated CCAT organizational effectiveness assessment, which is an assessment of nonprofit organizational capacity in general.¹ There are several important aspects of the A-CCAT:
 - It is a survey instrument designed to provide quantitative data.



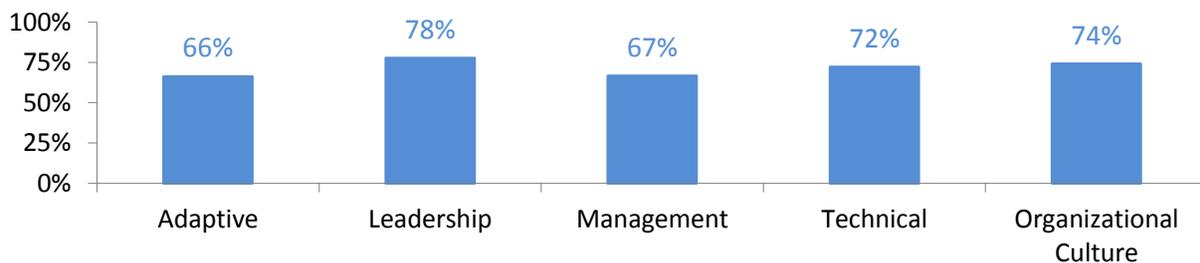
¹ More information can be found at: www.tccCCAT.com

- It uses statistically validated scales.
- It collects data from multiple viewpoints (180 degree assessment)
- It uses concrete behaviorally based items and a standard reporting scale
- It aggregates findings across respondents into overall scores

The A-CCAT has been used in multiple evaluations and capacity building projects and provides organizations with a view of strengths and weaknesses within a concrete framework.

3. **Collect data at the source.** Capacity-building evaluation should gather data independently from those most directly impacted by the capacity-building activities and should generally include senior leaders. Group-based data collection can be problematic as data can be skewed by power dynamics in the room and by blind spots of participants. Further, contextualizing capacity improvements within a broader framework of capacity can help reduce bias associated with capacity self-report data.
4. **Analyze and report relevant findings with limited bias.** Narrative reports can provide important feedback on outcomes from capacity building. Adding quantitative graphics can help tell a concise story of progress. Findings for capacity building evaluations should also be developmental—provide guidance on what to do next. Reporting templates with well-established criteria for recommendations can effectively present information and limit evaluator bias into the process. Below is a sample summary graph from an A-CCAT.

Advocacy Core Capacity Ratings



About TCC Group

TCC Group provides strategy, program and grants management, capacity building, and evaluation services to philanthropies and nonprofits/NGOs of all types and sizes. Our unique strength lies in the ability to leverage knowledge from our complementary practices, which build on and inform one another. This holistic view influences every project, as we help clients devise strategies, implement plans and programs (especially those related to capacity building), evaluate progress and outcomes, and make ongoing improvements. We do so while fostering strong, collaborative relationships with our clients as well as facilitating, where possible, stronger relationships between funders and their nonprofit partners.

Some additional capacity-building resources available from TCC Group include:

- [Success by Design: How R&D Activates Program Innovation and Improvement in the Nonprofit Sector](#)
- [Building the Capacity of Capacity Builders](#)
- [Building to Last: A Grantmaker's Guide to Strengthening Nonprofit Organizations](#)
- [Navigating the Organizational Lifecycle: A Capacity Building Guide for Nonprofit Leaders](#)
- [Building Nonprofit Capacity: A Guide to Managing Change Through Organizational Lifecycles](#)
- [What Makes an Effective Coalition: Evidence Based Indicators of Success](#)

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