

As technology disrupts equity, advocates take action: Where do evaluators fit in?

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Abstract

Advocacy is rapidly evolving for many different reasons, ranging from increasing polarization and existential threats reaching crisis points to shifts in whose voices are heard and how much advocates focus on building power. One of the seismic changes in advocacy that cuts across all of these issues, and influences governance practices more broadly, is the rate of technological advance, which is faster than ever before. Some advocates are shifting their practices, staying abreast of technological advances, attending to how they are influencing equity, and even using emerging technologies as part of their strategies. If evaluation is to remain relevant and useful as advocates are increasingly responding to technological advances, evaluators must be aware of these shifts, understand how to think differently about measurement, have the skills to use some of the emerging technologies themselves, and be ready to help advocates learn, adapt, and iterate their strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Advocacy is rapidly evolving for many different reasons, ranging from increasing polarization and existential threats reaching crisis points to shifts in whose voices are heard and how much advocates focus on building power.¹ One of the seismic changes in advocacy that cuts across all of these issues is the rate of technological advance, which is faster than ever before (Kurzweil, 2005). Signals indicate imminent shifts in how society functions—including how governance functions. Yet even as technology changes society's fabric, it does not shift underlying dynamics that drive inequities and may make them worse (Allen, 2015; Rotman, 2014).

Advocates will need to be prepared to evolve as governance practice changes and be equipped to advocate for more inclusive uses of technology in all spheres of life. In parallel, evaluators will also need to change their practices. Suppose they are to remain relevant

and meaningful to advocates and their funders. In that case, evaluators need to be aware of these shifts—even be ahead of them, ready to help advocates learn, adapt, and iterate their strategies as technology transforms governance society.

THE REACH OF TECHNOLOGY

There are two critical areas for advocates and evaluators to consider concerning how technology influences advocacy. The first is how technology is shifting policy-making and governance, while the second is how technology is changing society, including introducing new equity challenges.

When big data intersects with policy-making and implementation

The skyrocketing economic insecurity of the last decade has been accompanied by an equally rapid rise of sophisticated data-based technologies in the public services: predictive algorithms, risk models, and automated eligibility systems. Massive investments in data-driven administration of public programs are rationalized by a call for efficiency... but the technologies of poverty management are not neutral. The rarely acknowledge the impacts of digital decision-making on poor and working-class people. (Eubanks, 2018, p. 9)

Futurists predicted that we would soon see big data make information more immediately available to government, policy-makers, and the public (e.g., King et al., 2013), enabling more rapid cycles of policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and reformulation, with adaptations in how policies are implemented occurring more frequently at the administrative level as data about impact is more readily and rapidly available (Höchtel et al., 2016). This is not the future anymore—this is today. “Digital tracking and decision-making systems have become routine in policing, political forecasting, marketing, credit reporting, criminal sentencing, business management, finance, and the administration of public programs” (Eubanks, 2018, p. 9). With that data, algorithms are driving decisions that directly affect individuals’ lives and, disproportionately, of low-income families (Eubanks, 2018). With declining costs for data storage and increasing use of electronic systems for a wide variety of historically manual tasks, substantially more data is available to the government and the private sector than ever before (Höchtel et al., 2016).

The global coronavirus pandemic provides timely examples of big data being gathered, processed, and used rapidly to inform public decisions. Notably, it also demonstrates how big data does not eliminate the politics of policy-making. Policy decisions are not often based primarily on data, but data is often used to explain and justify policy decisions (Kogan, 1999). Yet, it does help us to see how data can shift policy-making processes at both the legislative and administrative levels.

Advances in big data, analytics, and machine learning are not just embedded in the implementation of policies; they are also beginning to change how we explore policy solutions, with computing power and data availability making it possible to unpack and understand problems in new ways:

Whether it is the estimation of public opinion by analyzing social media, the production of daily census data, or the use of algorithms to estimate the effects of and connections between different policies, all these possibilities change the way policy making is perceived and executed. (Höchtel et al., 2016, p. 148)

We can also predict shifts in how legislative options are valued and assessed using predictive data, including using data for analysis of “scenarios in legislation, trend analysis, complex impact assessment in real-time, [and] new forms of e-participation” (Mills et al., 2012).

When AI changes society and introduces equity challenges

Deeply related to big data is the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Machine learning, a type of AI, drives hyper-targeted algorithms fed by big data in private and public contexts. As a result, AI has already begun to influence all realms of day-to-day life. With technologies designed to create a more personalized experience for them, users have little input or transparency into what type of data is collected from their online experiences or how it is collected (Engler, 2020). Technologies such as facial recognition, location data, and other tracking data are collected from innocuous online interactions and actions, leaving people with little control over how and where their personally identifiable information is used and for what purposes.

Proponents of big data cite the potential societal advantages that come from large public data sets that can be trained, yet AI also raises social, racial, and economic equity issues. “The privileged are processed more by people, the masses by machines ... verdicts land like dicots from the algorithmic gods. The model itself is a black box, its contents a fiercely guarded corporate secret” (O’Neil, 2016).

Under the guise of improved data-driven decision-making, AI technologies can also be used for nefarious purposes. Data collection and the algorithms that drive AI are currently largely unregulated (G. Gebhart, personal communication, September 1, 2020), including the ethics of the data collection, analysis, and use. This leads to new challenges and problems:

The concern for a world where AI systems are deployed unchecked has raised burning questions about the impact, governance, and accountability of these technologies. In order to ensure that AI policies and systems serve humanity and are developed in an ethical way, governments, intergovernmental organizations, companies, and advocacy groups have developed over 160 sets of AI principles ... While there is a growing consensus around what the principles require, far less is known about how to effectively apply them. (Dignum et al., 2020, p. 8)

As we consider how to maximize AI’s shared benefits, the next big challenge is to integrate human rights into the actual AI systems—most of which are developed by corporations in pursuit of private interests rather than the public good. As AI rapidly evolves in its capabilities and influence across borders, advocates often find themselves playing catch-up. Instead of working hand in hand to develop responsible technologies with a “do no harm” mindset, advocates often find themselves reacting by advocating for band-aid solutions to protect citizens. Ideally, to have the greatest impact, advocates would not only advocate for better technologies (and better algorithms), but they would also investigate and interrogate the accuracy and ethical nature of the data collection processes that feed into those algorithms (O’Neil, 2016).

The advocacy response to the emergence of AI-enabled gig work demonstrates the complexity in responding to how technology changes society. Advances in automation were the foundation for a new, on-demand labor structure that resulted in gig workers taking on jobs that employees used to do. The negative impacts of this technology are clearly related

to employment practices and protections. Yet, many negative impacts on gig workers are also directly related to the platform-based algorithmic controls that technology companies deploy (Wood et al., 2019), an area in which advocates are less likely to intervene.

HOW ADVOCATES RESPOND

As the public sector's capacity to collect, analyze, and use big data, deploy algorithms in policy implementation, and utilize AI increases, there will be a need for advocates to expand their awareness, understanding, and involvement with the interpretation of this data, particularly as data is used to adapt the implementation of policies or signal the need for new policies. There may also be an increasing need for advocates to serve as part of a system of checks and balances to ensure government and the private sector are using data in ways that respect citizens' privacy as increasing access to information also enables increasing violations of privacy (Höchtel et al., 2016).

Additionally, delays in advocacy response to emerging technologies that are changing society may risk allowing these technology disruptions to become institutionalized in ways that contribute to inequities in public benefit programs, employment models, housing programs, and more. Identifying a trend enabled by emerging technologies before it becomes an established part of our societal structures requires monitoring how technology is influencing society. The emergence of a gig economy supported by algorithmic controls is a powerful example of technology becoming embedded in society before advocacy had shaped its development. This may be at a level that many advocates do not currently see as their role. Beyond simply identifying the trends, advocates may also need to better understand how the technology is contributing to inequities.

Ultimately, it is the advocates who need to decide what the changes in technology mean for advocacy. They will need to assess the risks and opportunities that technologies pose before they become institutionalized in the public or private sector and thus more difficult to disrupt. They will need to consider how their advocacy may need to adapt as governance processes change in response to technology. Advocates even have the opportunity to use emerging technologies to their benefit, changing how they advocate, who they can reach, and which channels they can use. Some advocates already on the cutting edge are making all these changes, demonstrating what is possible and identifying what is needed.

When advocates participate in using data to influence governance

In the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, advocates who were effective at interpreting data alongside public health experts were able to influence policy-making in the realms of public health and economic policy. Public health advocates, epidemiologists, and journalists dug through archives of historical public health records to understand the last great pandemic in the United States. Their work helped normalize the idea of "flattening the curve" for a population with no living memory of how to handle a global pandemic. Additionally, through data-driven examples of city responses to the 1918 Spanish flu, journalists at Vox translated historical public health data to show the impact of social distancing for preventing hospital surges across major cities in the United States (Lopez, 2020).

COVID-19 pandemic prevalence rates in American public schools is another example of how technology has facilitated advocacy, in this case via crowd-sourced data filling a gap where there was no information available at the federal level. Kansas high school teacher

Alisha Morris started tracking schools impacted by COVID-19 cases by inputting articles she found online into a Google spreadsheet. After sharing it with colleagues and fellow teachers on social media, the data on school cases across the country filled in quickly. Within 10 days, this tracker had more than 700 entries based on articles, Facebook posts from schools, and other formal and informal sources, and it continues to grow to include data across nearly all 50 states as of August 2020. To date, this tracker has become the first and only publicly available database of schools with COVID-19 cases. Morris's efforts were picked up by major news channels, including the *Washington Post*, further increasing the visibility and daily usage of the information to help educators, parents, and even policy-makers to make decisions on how to safely send children back to school this fall. Morris shared, "My goal is to keep people healthy and save lives and to provide data that can hopefully help people make data-informed decisions for the future of their schools" (Peiser, 2020).

Community-led movements like those organized by United for Respect have harnessed crowd-sourced data at the grassroots level to build compelling narratives around the need for better labor rights. Through privacy and accurate information-oriented services that enable crowd-sourcing of worker experiences, advocates have empowered individual workers to share their experiences and become part of the larger national labor-organizing movement that has successfully won improvements in labor rights, protection, and wage standards from corporations and governments (A. Dehlendorf, personal communication, September 28, 2020).

When advocates protect against the misuse of data

As technology increases the availability of big data to corporations, researchers, and the public, it is critical to consider the implications of personal privacy, data security, and civil liberties in the digital world. Gennie Gebhart, director of activism at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, shared the difficulties of advocating in this space where accountability of stakeholders is increasingly murky. While traditional advocacy campaigns are targeted toward government officials who are held accountable to their constituents, she acknowledges that advocacy is fundamentally different when trying to influence private corporations that do not answer the public. Mechanisms for reaching decision-makers are different, and private-sector leaders are motivated to act for different reasons than their public counterparts (G. Gebhart, personal communication, September 1, 2020).

When advocates protect against negative impacts of emerging technologies

When the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly shut down workplaces, schools, and public spaces for convening, the world went virtual. All of a sudden, everything from government services to education to private meetings transitioned to online platforms like Zoom. Zoom's growing international user base helped it become an overnight pandemic success. However, the lack of encryption and protection against "Zoom bombers" created headlines as young school children, prayer groups, and others were exposed to nudity, profanity, and hate speech. The company moved quickly to remedy the situation after growing public frustration and announced that they would provide encryption for users in their paid subscriber tiers. Organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, and Fight for the Future banded together to successfully advocate for the secure encryption

for all users, including unpaid accounts. Instead of advocating governments, technology advocates realized the most effective and immediate change would happen by advocating directly to large global corporations. Gennie Gebhart noted,

We saw so much positive change from Zoom because they are still in the battle for consumers for videoconference services. If we are to see more successful strategies for change, there needs to be competition. Otherwise, companies have no reason to listen to us. American users are not the largest user bases. (personal communication, September 1, 2020)

When advocates use technology as one of their tools

In response to the rapidly changing technology environment, many advocates have already embraced technology tools for communication. At the most basic level, social media is widely used and can change how advocates share information. For example, whereas generating compelling stories has often been a major tactical function of advocacy, interpreting and making information meaningful, and shaping which stories go where, might be more important than adding new information to an environment where information overflow is common (Chukwu, 2018).

Organizations like the National Domestic Workers Alliance have gone beyond posting on social media and using analytics to improve reach. Through their innovation arm, NDWA Labs, they developed chatbots that research working conditions. They also offer portable benefits platforms for workers and deploy other tools that “leverage tech to disrupt power and fundamentally change how work is organized and paid for the millions of women and immigrants in the domestic work industry” (NDWA Labs, 2020). United for Respect has also deployed technology for labor organizing with the use of bots. Their flagship project, OUR Walmart, creates technology-based platforms to promote online and offline activism. Their chatbot uses AI technology to answer Walmart’s employees about their workplace rights and helps organize workers to protect those rights (Wiggin, 2018). The app also provides space for workers to connect and share stories and advice, peer-to-peer, which was once considered impossible across fragmented geographies (Kubzansky & Williams, 2019).

The changes in the information environment are not just shifting how advocates generate and disseminate content to key constituents; they are also changing how the general public engages with advocates and each other. The growing ability of the public to articulate their collective demands through technology is disrupting the historical processes of more top-down governance (Höchtel et al., 2016). It has influenced how everything from running political campaigns to issue-specific advocacy.

This bold new world of communication through technology platforms has implications for what movement building may look like in the future. Organizations like Coworker.org are supporting this change. Coworker.org creates digital tools and enables virtual communities of workers to form collectives and advocate for change—regardless of geography. It is designed to enable workers in similar sectors across the country to connect, share ideas, and jointly coalesce to protect labor rights despite increasing employer surveillance, data mining, and fragmented workplaces (Caplan-Bricker, 2020). As Michelle Miller, one of the organization’s founders, explains, “We saw the internet and the infrastructure of technology as critical to the ability of workers to engage in freedom of association. It felt important that the tech companies be accountable to people like the users on our platform,” who are mostly women, people of color, and low-wage workers (Caplan-Bricker, 2020).

When advocates keep people at the center, even when the issue at hand is technology

Emerging technologies are tools in an advocate's toolbox. It is important to note that these technologies—no matter how advanced—cannot and do not replace the human element of organizing and bringing people together under a common cause (G. Gebhart, personal communication, September 1, 2020). Emerging technologies can create barriers to equity at multiple points. From the development of the technology to deployment, considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical principles and values that must be translated to action. Yet, advocates who seek to use and influence technology can also continue to center the voices of the people involved, including centering their ability to build cultural power. Some advocates, particularly those in the social movement space, see technology as something that we need to pay attention to, be savvy with, but not redesign advocacy to attend to (J. Raynor, personal communication, September 16, 2020).

This may also include movements that seek to drive change at a global scale. Some advocates have begun to recognize that technology advocacy also requires advocates to work beyond their own communities. Technologies are often multi-geography in their implementation and developed well outside the local or state region an advocate may work in (G. Gebhart, personal communication, September 1, 2020). Technologies can also be a threat to the very movement work that needs to happen to influence these increasingly global scales. Advocates need to participate in advocating for free and open communication and responsible technologies. Global discourse is becoming increasingly virtual, and social issues are becoming digital. Cross-cutting all of the issues that advocates seek to advance is the ubiquitous presence and use of the internet. To enable advocates to advance global movements and promote an equity-centered policy, free and open internet will be a critical component of the fight (G. Gebhart, personal communication, September 1, 2020).

When advocates are at the cutting edge of technology as users and influencers

At the leading edge of this technology-focused advocacy environment are advocates who are both utilizing technology to strengthen their advocacy and actively seeking to influence governance and policy-making related to technology. For example, Color of Change operates across many geographies, tapping into the latest technology to deploy online campaigns. In addition to many other issues they prioritize, their technology justice focus includes net neutrality, misinformation on social media platforms, and government surveillance of Black activists. They do this work with explicit recognition of our new technology reality, describing their purpose as "Strengthening the political voice of Black America" using the power of technology." Yet, technology is not the center of Color of Change's work—engaging people is the center (Color of Change, 2020). As Rashad Robinson describes it, "We cannot mistake cultural presence for cultural power; what we have to do every single day is translate the presence people have in the world on our issues into the cultural power that makes change" (Color of Change, 2015). Technology offers opportunities for presence, but the organizing they do builds power and helps them leverage this power to achieve wins.

The many examples of advocates working with and influencing policies related to technology highlight that advocates will need to continuously adapt to both the policy-making environment and the evolution of technology in parallel. While technology may change how the game is played, the human element of pulling a thread through all the pieces of the

process is a universal skill that has always been valued and will continue to be valued. The field of advocacy, much like any other highly-technical issue area, is likely to continue to include some advocates who are specialized in the skills and advocacy related to technology; other advocates who are expert in using technology to advance their aims but do not focus on the technologies themselves; and yet others who continue to use low-technology strategies to achieve their goals. All three of these directions will be deeply influenced by what funders and their evaluators prioritize and pay attention to in their relationships with advocates.

WHAT EVALUATORS CAN DO

If the future of advocacy moves in the directions explored above, some advocates would need new capacities, including understanding and effectively using big data and the analytics that go with it. These advocates will also need to develop the ability to understand technological changes and predict where they might contribute to inequities. Other advocates may actively choose not to get into the weeds of how data and technology influence equity and focus instead on changing who has power over these technologies, continuing the work of social movements that seek to drive changes in ways that push beyond any one issue area.

What does all of this mean for evaluators? Historically, the field of advocacy evaluation has focused heavily on advocates' capacities, the deployment of specific campaigns or strategies; interim outcomes on the way to different types of policy wins; and the wins themselves (e.g., Coffman, 2009). The capacities prioritized in evaluation tend to have little to do with technology or data knowledge and skills; simultaneously, the evaluation field has not yet developed a shared understanding of how to measure social movement work in meaningful ways.

In other words, whether a given advocate or field of advocates decides to directly tackle the technology-driven inequities or decides that these inequities are best addressed by changing power in the larger societal context, advocacy evaluation is not quite ready to be a strong partner.

Support the advocates who are directly tackling technology-driven inequities

Many advocacy evaluators use capacity assessment tools as part of their assessment of an advocacy organization's (or sometimes an advocacy field's) readiness to advance their goals. A review of some of the most widely-used tools, both within the United States and in international development work, shows that they largely do not:

- Measure the readiness of the advocates to fully utilize technology tools available to them for communication, base-building, storytelling, and so forth;
- Measure the skills and knowledge the advocates have related to big data, including whether it is ethical, how it is being used to drive decisions that impact individuals and communities, and how it is being used in the process of policy-making;
- Measure the skills, knowledge, and activities to engage in system-sensing to identify when emerging technologies are at risk of driving significant inequities;
- Measure the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to engage in advocacy at scale when intervening on technology-related issues, including knowing when and how to work with partners in other geographies;

- Measure the reach, position, and skills of advocates to influence nongovernmental decision-makers, particularly private sector technology companies whose innovations may negatively affect equity.

Among the other core tools that are part of the advocacy evaluation practice, many are likely to remain relevant, such as intense period debriefs, bellwether interviews, and policy-maker ratings. What may change is what counts as sufficient evidence. Can interviews with just four or five bellwethers be sufficient if the geographic scope of where change can be influenced is much greater than the local community where the advocate works? (J. Raynor, personal communication, September 16, 2020). Can policy-maker ratings of public servants be sufficient if the primary decision-makers regarding technology are in the private sector?

Support the advocates who are deploying social movements to shift power

While some advocates will go deep into technology advocacy, others will focus on changing who has power over technology and other policy issues, often via movement building or electoral advocacy. In fact, this is already happening. Color of Change, Coworking.org, and other advocates have responded to the complex new technology environment by maximizing their use of technology to support movement building. They have policy targets, but the bigger “wins” they seek are a movement shift and, potentially, changes in underlying narratives. Yet, at this point, the evaluation of social movements is much less defined than the evaluation of other forms of advocacy. While various frameworks have been shared for more than a decade, there are no widely adopted practices, and the existing evaluation approaches “don’t go far enough in helping us understand whether movements are making progress toward their goals and translating capacity and strategy into long-term power for the movement” (Innovation Network, 2018).

Some of the initial work in this area has attended to how different types of power are part of movements (e.g., individual, people, narrative, and influencer power, as documented in Innovation Network, 2018); how movements can lead to different types of transformation (e.g., cultural, community, institutional, as documented in Crossroads Fund & Pickens, n.d.); capacity assessment tools akin to how advocacy has been evaluated (e.g., Chen & Karbowska, 2018); and continued efforts to better define just what a social movement is (and is not) (Stachowiak et al., 2020). The evaluation work that does exist pays little attention to the role of technology as a supporting tool in movement building and may, in fact, risk misunderstanding what the available metrics from such technology can explain about the strength of a movement.

The evaluation work on movements is also missing another important dimension. Funders of social movements have been trying to figure out how to avoid disrupting organic movements when they infuse their power and resources (Mahomed & Sowa, 2020). The complexity of the funder-movement relationship suggests that developing a meaningful way to evaluate social movements depends, in part, on being able to account for the ways that funders and funding directly influence the dynamics and outcomes of movements.

Strengthen big data skills

Advocacy evaluators will need to strengthen their big data skills and deepen their understanding of decolonizing their methodologies. An evaluator who can use machine learning

to help an advocate make sense of massive amounts of social media data could be a powerful asset, able to tell a broad-reaching story that would otherwise be unavailable (Gienapp et al., 2017). As it currently stands, the field of advocacy evaluation is more a field of qualitative data and analysis, with limited quantitative data. Even where large quantitative data sets are available (e.g., public opinion polls), analysis is often bivariate and not tapped into the wide range of multivariate methods that could be used (S. Stachowiak, personal communication, September 23, 2020). When working with advocates who themselves understand, manipulate, and advocate for big data, will it be sufficient for their evaluators to observe, interview, and document how advocates are doing their work and its impact? Or will an evaluator also need the skills to make sense of big data and critically assess how advocates (and policy-makers) are analyzing, interpreting, and using data to inform and tell the advocates' stories?

Lean into new ways of knowing

Advocates are leaning into new ways of doing their work and new ways of learning. Evaluators need to do the same, though perhaps for different reasons. The advocacy evaluation field developed its core set of practices and norms when Western ways of knowing were largely uncontested in the broader evaluation field in the United States. This is slowly changing and—at a moment when technology is creating local and global inequities, and data is underlying decisions not just about policies, but also about who benefits in real-time from policies—one could argue there is a great need to balance this focus on analytics with other ways of knowing.

For example, the narrative assessment methodology van Wessel and Ho (2015) recently proposed as an alternative for advocacy evaluations moves well outside the typical advocacy evaluation model, focused less on predicted outcomes and theories of change. Instead, it seeks to:

...do justice to the real world of advocacy, the real skills that come in, how you're in the middle of an ongoing story from past to future. You can have an idea of the change, not as a theory of the change, or even the narrative form of the model thinking, but rather going along with someone on the journey. (M. van Wessel, personal communication, September 17, 2020)

Evaluators could go further into democratizing the methods integrated into advocacy evaluation by tapping into decolonized methods like yarning, where knowledge is created not through the extraction of information via interviews and surveys or through interpretation of observation but through deep conversations in which knowledge is created together (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). These types of decolonized techniques can help us to understand how change happens in the context of a social movement's complexity, and they are equally relevant to the advocate who deploys a very technical, insider game strategy to influence the use of data or technology. Such an advocate's expert knowledge is likely to be one of the hard-to-capture capacities in an upfront assessment; understanding how they sense, make sense of, and act in the context they work might best be captured through deep stories and shared meaning-making instead of combining extracted facts and opinions.

All of these disconnects between where advocacy evaluation is today and where advocacy is headed in the future suggest two critical questions that need to be answered:

- First, if evaluators continue to rely on the same tools and processes relevant 10 or 20 years ago, with occasional methodological additions but no significant shifts in approach, will evaluation remain relevant to advocacy ten years from now?
- Building on that, will evaluation, in fact, become an impediment to advocacy as advocates shift toward becoming more sophisticated in how they integrate their data and technology skills with other critical capacities; transition to partnering at global scales to drive change; or otherwise shift their practices in light of technological change?

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION

If the field of advocacy and its evaluators believe these types of shifts in response to technology are likely to occur, then, alongside preparing advocates for changes in how they influence policy-makers and the public, the time is ripe for updating evaluation as well. Before that can be done, however, advocates need the space to figure out what technology shifts mean for them, so evaluators do not make the mistake of attempting to define it for them.

This work should not be done in isolation from the other ways advocacy is changing, including an increasing focus on power and changing underlying norms and narratives to achieve cultural and policy change. Now is the time for:

- Advocates to describe their vision for how advocacy will need to change to remain relevant and influential, including scenarios for what might emerge in the near future;
- Evaluators and movement builders to come together to strengthen their understanding of how to evaluate movements in meaningful, culturally relevant, nondisruptive ways that bring real value to advocates, including supporting real-time adaptation;
- Evaluators and technology-focused advocates to come together to redefine the methods and capacities that are relevant in this bold new world of data and technology;
- Funders to support all of the above, alongside supporting capacity building to help evaluators and advocates strengthen their understanding of technology and data; and
- Funders to directly fund the innovators who are experimenting with all of this, taking risks and trying new things, and sharing what they learn, including what they learn from failures.

Just as advocates, evaluators, and funders have partnered to create the practice of advocacy evaluation, so too can they come together to help advocacy and evaluation with this transition. Achieving equity comes from the strength of our movements and the power of our vision and the practical tools and skills we bring to the work, including the skills of our evaluators.

NOTE

¹ Before exploring how advocacy and governance may be changing in response to technology, it is critical to acknowledge that technology is only one of many drivers of how the world is changing, and policy making with it. We acknowledge these are critical issues to explore and we look forward to future articles that tackle these complexities for advocates and evaluators, even as we narrow our focus to how technology might influence advocacy and evaluation.

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