

**Contribution Analysis in Policy Work:
Assessing Advocacy's Influence**

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The Aspen Institute - Aspen Planning & Evaluation Program breakfast series

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Contribution analysis is a theory-based approach to causal analysis introduced in 2001 by John Mayne, a Canadian public-sector evaluator concerned with arriving at credible causal claims using program monitoring data. It is a non-experimental impact evaluation approach that holds promise for evaluation of advocacy and policy change efforts. The purpose is to answer the following question:

In light of the multiple factors influencing a result, has the intervention (initiative) made a noticeable contribution to an observed result and in what way? (Mayne, 2012, p.273)

Contribution analysis utilizes an explicit theory of change, proceeding through a **six-step process** designed to test the theory against logic and evidence to confirm that an intervention or initiative has contributed to an observed result. In our work, we added a seventh step.

1. Set out the cause-effect issue to be addressed.
2. Develop the theory of change and the risks to it, including rival (alternative) explanations.
3. Gather the existing evidence on the theory of change.
4. Assemble and assess the contribution claim, and challenges to it.
5. Seek out additional evidence.
6. Revise and strengthen the contribution story.
7. *Use the contribution claims to review, learn, and make improvements.*

In our view, **contribution analysis is philosophically aligned with how policy evaluators generally approach their work, and is useful in systematizing good evaluation practices.** Specifically, we find that it provides rigor in thinking critically about the interaction and relationship between central actors and activities and other influences within a complex multi-actor environment. It also facilitates a more purposeful, deeper, and systematic consideration of the myriad influences on policy outcomes.

In collaboration with the Center for Evaluation Innovation, today's presenters have written a brief: **"Contribution Analysis in Policy Work: Assessing Advocacy's Influence"** available at:

www.evaluationinnovation.org/publications/contribution-analysis and at their own websites, below.

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