

Advocacy Strategy Document Review

This scoping report examines other Local Government advocacy strategy documents to identify best practise in structure and content, and learnings from gaps in documents.

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Summary

As part of the preparation of the Council report responding to the Notice of Motion calling for the Development of an Advocacy Strategy for Council (D08965823), Council officers conducted a review of best practice and common practice documentation relating to public sector advocacy, with a particular focus on Local Government advocacy. Fourteen (14) strategic advocacy documents (see Table 1) were reviewed, and the main findings of that review were as follows:

- Dedicated advocacy documents are increasing in popularity, with Local Governments within NSW, as well as other bodies including Local Government Association of Queensland, Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and Local Government NSW all having dedicated advocacy plans and/or strategies that outline their aspirations and priorities for the future.
- There is no consensus on how an organisation's advocacy is shared. This is evident in the range of titles of documents available for review, including: Advocacy Priorities; Advocacy Framework; Advocacy Toolkit; Advocacy Strategy. All have varying target audiences and the language used to communicate the organisation's work and 'ask' differs across the cohort of documents reviewed.
- The content included varied depending on the title of the document. Five out of fourteen (28%) documents framed advocacy well, defining and articulating their advocacy principles. Best practice examples included:
 - City of Logan Advocacy Strategy 2021 to 2024, and
 - Art Council of New Zealand Advocacy Strategy.

- Some advocacy documents simply listed key projects, with little framing on the broader advocacy picture. There was variation in the asks put forward by authors, whether they were transformative, or more short-term. There was also variation in documents that outlined the resourcing to achieve their asks (43%), and how success will be measured (50%). Out of seven documents that included measurement of success only one presented a clear and improvement-oriented framework (Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy Framework 2021).
- Out of the seven document that explored monitoring and evaluation, Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy Framework 2021 articulated the goals of an annual review, including barriers to success and reassessing priorities. While the remaining six documents, measurement of success was limited to whether the author achieved the asks put forward.
- Three of fourteen reviewed documents (21%) included a prioritisation framework for their advocacy. These included:
 - Hobsons Bay City Council 2021 -25 Advocacy Strategy
 - Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy Framework 2021, and
 - Penrith City Council Advocacy Strategy 2018.
- Some documents articulated alignment with broader Council strategies, and some mentioned collaboration with the community to form the advocacy document. In terms of the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy initiatives, not all documents outlined how this would be undertaken.

Learnings from gap analysis of public domain documents

- Do not limit the strategy to being an extensive list over 20 advocacy areas. While this is useful before an election, it does not provide enough strategic direction for coherent advocacy processes across Council nor long-term and fruitful outcomes.
- Best practice documents include a substantial amount content that supports the development of institutional capacity to carry out advocacy and generate the best possible community outcomes. While simultaneously provide a clear structure that facilitates ease-of-access for external parties seeking to find relevant information.

Table 1: Common Practice and Best Practice

Advocacy Document Components	Common Practice	Best Practice
Advocacy Definition	x	x
List of Key Advocacy Issues	x	x
Prioritisation Framework		x
Contextualised Advocacy Purpose	x	x
Partnerships	x	x
Advocacy Principles		x
Resourcing		x
Measurement of Success		x

Exemplar documents

The following four (4) documents had clear and coherent structures and painted a holistic picture of different elements of advocacy in combination with strong theoretical frameworks. These elements, including a prioritisation framework, partnership communication matrix, measurement of success, and monitoring and evaluation, support institutional capacity to carry out advocacy.

- **Hobsons bay City Council 2021 -25 Advocacy Strategy.** The document included a strong framework on the why and how of their advocacy work, as well as a prioritisation framework of advocacy priorities.
- **City of Logan Advocacy Strategy 2021 to 2024.** The City of Logan draws parallels with our own LGA and is experienced notable population growth. The document has a well-articulate and contextualised definition of advocacy; how success is measured; the approach, and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
- **Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy Framework 2021.** This document provided strong theoretical frameworks for prioritisation and evaluation. It provided a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework that articulates the goals of an annual review, including barriers to success and reassessing priorities. In addition, the document illustrates a practical prioritisation framework for advocacy items across three tiers.
 - Tier 1 - high impact issue/opportunity with a clearly defined ask;
 - Tier 2 - high level impact issue / opportunity with a broadly defined ask;
 - Tier 3 -moderate level impact issue / opportunity.

Advocacy items are also considered in relation to stakeholder mapping, revealing key roles of interest at various levels of government.

- **Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Advocacy Strategy 2017-2021.** This document was one of few document that included a well-articulated partnership communication matrix that outlines what (framing of a certain ask) should be communicated to whom.

Recommendations

Based on the advocacy document review, the following aspects should be considered when creating an Advocacy Strategy for the City of Parramatta:

- A strong theoretical framework for advocacy that defines advocacy, advocacy principles, the purpose of advocacy within Council, and guides how Council carries out advocacy to both be transparent to the Community and potential partners or collaborators.
- Advocacy asks should link back to Council's strategic documents and broader vision to gain more long-term and fruitful outcomes.
- Establish a clear section that outline resources for advocacy processes that considers both financial capital and human resources.
- Prioritisation of advocacy issues is crucial to enable successful advocacy within Council's capacity and should consider the following aspects:
 1. Resourcing – what capacity does Council have to carry out different advocacy priorities?
 2. Alignment with strategic document – might include a scoring matrix that allocates points based on alignment with strategic documents.
 3. Community Impact
 4. Urgency/Political momentum
 5. Consideration and mapping of where advocacy collaboration and targeted messages would gain more traction on different political levels:
 - Local
 - Regional
 - State
 - Federal
 - Global
- Encourage collaboration throughout the whole advocacy process, from planning to execution through appropriate mediums and with relevant audiences, e.g., community consultation, current partnerships, and potential partner/allies.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation process to enhance accountability and effectiveness of advocacy work.

Following the best practice review of available Advocacy documents, the following structure is recommended for consideration:

- Acknowledgement of country
- Lord Mayor/CEO introductory letter
- Table of contents

- Community context, including a map/ infographic.
- Connection to key council documents e.g., CSP (Community Strategic Plan)
- Advocacy definition
- Advocacy principles
- Objectives/outcomes sought/ vision for the future.
- Advocacy process
- Matrix for prioritising flagship advocacy areas (1st 2nd 3rd tier priorities)
- Action plan/ roles and responsibilities/resourcing.
- How success is measured
- Partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluation – with timeframe for reviews e.g., annual

Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy Framework	X	X		X	X	X		X
Moreton Bay Regional Council Advocacy Plan 2021 - 2024	X	X	X		X			
Glen Eira Advocacy Strategy 2018-2020	X	X	X	X		X	X	X