

Advocacy and lobbying

A Youthline Position Paper

Introduction: What is advocacy?

Generally defined, advocacy is action that is intended to gain political, policy, social, and systems support and movement in response to a particular issue [1]. This can be accomplished by drawing attention to issues, creating persuasive arguments, and building consensus to sway public opinion and decision-makers [2]. Often, this may involve political organisation and activism, overcoming bureaucratic inaction, identifying cause-champions, empowering community leaders, and managing conflict [3]. Advocacy emerged as a key health promotional strategy during the 1980s and 1990s, and became a crucial strategy for health promotion with the release of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion [4]. Advocacy is still a popular contemporary vehicle for political change. Advocacy is generally targeted at existing laws, policies, regulations, and practices of government or organisations whose actions affect people's lives. Common vehicles of advocacy include mass media, multi-media, direct political lobbying, community mobilisation, and support from health professionals.

Submissions

Submissions are one of the most common advocacy vehicles through which organisations and individuals can provide guidance, direction, reasoning, and proposed changes to government and other relevant organisations in encouraging change. These are typically written statements that present the views or opinions on issues that are under consideration by government or other relevant organisations. Such statements could be reinforced through oral presentations. Submissions are usually created in response to a 'call for submissions'.

Local authorities are required under the Local Government Act 2001 to consult with their communities at several different points in the planning cycle. When the government or organisation chooses to seek guidance, they will advertise the fact; letting the public know what policy they would like guidance on, the deadline, and the appropriate place to submit submissions. Advertisements for submissions might be found in local or national newspapers, or on an organisation's website. Some organisations might contact relevant people or agencies directly, depending on their relevant area of expertise. Sometimes it is possible to request that your name/agency be added to databases of consultation stakeholders to receive calls for submissions when they arise.

Writing a submission

There is no standard format to submissions. Some organisations will set out a template, while others may leave the format open. Whatever the format, it is important that submissions be presented orderly and easy to read, and also include the following information:

- *Heading* – Head your submission with the name of the organisation to which it is addressed and the full title of the bill, act, policy, or plan

- *Who is it from?* – Clearly state who the submission is from. State your name and designation, and give the name of the organisation you are representing. Include a contact address, email and daytime telephone number
- *Whether you wish to appear before a committee* – Clearly indicate whether you would like the opportunity to speak to the organisation in person. If others wish to appear with you, include their names, organisations, and designations.
- *Your organisation* – If you are writing for an organisation, give brief details of the organisation's aims, membership and structure. Make sure that you have the authority to do so and note the position within your organisation

When writing the content for a submission, state your general position on the policy, whether you support or oppose the proposal, and state your reasons. It is helpful to have a copy of the policy or plan available when writing a submission, so you know what is being proposed and can refer back to this when needed. When writing the content of the submission to keep your material relevant, clear, concise, and accurate. Also remember to add a conclusion to the submission which restates your recommendations at the end of the submission, or in an executive summary at the beginning. You could consider listing your submission's recommendations or summing up its main points.

Submission cycles

Councils operate on a yearly planning cycle within a three-year cycle. The public are invited to have input in the Long Term Council Community Plan and Community Outcomes, at regular intervals.

Long-Term Council Community Plan

Under section 93 of the Local Government Act 2001, local authorities are required to produce a Long-Term Community Council Plan once every three years. This plan covers the next 10 years (three years in detail, seven years in overview). The purpose of the Long-Term Council Community Plan is to:

- Describe the activities of the local authority,
- Describe the community outcomes of the local authority's district or region,
- Provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of local authority resources,
- Provide a long-term focus for the decisions and activities of local authority,
- Provide a basis for accountability of the local authority of the community, and
- Provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities undertaken by the local authority.

Community Outcomes

Community outcomes are a reflection of what is important to a local community within a city, district, or region. The purposes of community outcomes and the processes for identifying them are addressed in section 91 of the Local government Act 2001:

- A local authority must, not less than once every six years, carry out a process to identify community outcomes for the most intermediate and long-term future of its district or region,
- The purposes of the identification of community outcomes are:

- To provide opportunities for communities to discuss their desired outcomes in terms of the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community,
- To allow communities to discuss the relative importance and priorities of identified outcomes to the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community,
- To provide scope to measure progress towards the achievement of community outcomes,
- To provide the better co-ordination and application of community resources, and
- To inform and guide the setting of priorities in relation to the activities of the local authority and other organisations.

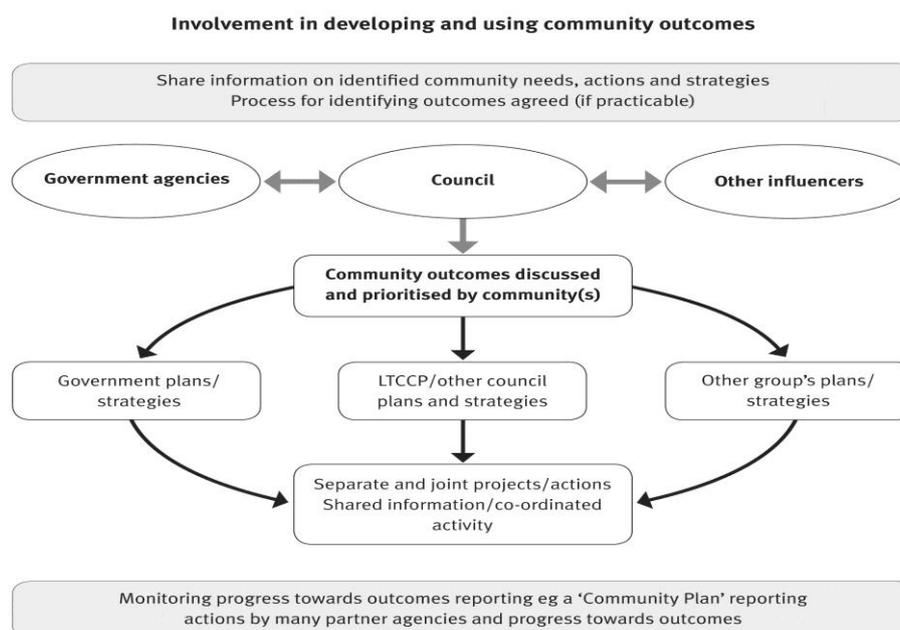
A local authority may decide for itself the process that it is to use facilitate the identification of community outcomes under subsection (1), but the local authority must, before finally deciding on that process, take steps to:

- Identify , so far as practicable, other organisations and groups capable of influencing either the identification or the promotion of community outcomes,
- Secure, if practicable, the agreement of those organisations and groups to the process and to the relationship of the process to any existing and related plans, and must ensure that that process encourages the public to contribute to the identification of community outcomes.

Community Outcomes framework

Community Outcomes provide a means for people and organisations in the region/district/city to help identify and prioritise the needs for that area. They can provide a structure for activities at a local level, and joint initiatives or resource use.

Figure 1. Community Outcomes Framework



Government organisations' websites

The following table identifies important and relevant government organisations' websites where documents for consultation are posted.

Organisation	Website address
Auckland City Council	http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/focus/2004/full.asp
Auckland Regional Council	http://www.arc.govt.nz/arc/index.cfm?9AC1B011-BCD4-1A24-95E8-CA9057D7F95CCAB35E63-88E4-4358-889C-043A012DF815
Manukau City Council	http://www.manukau.govt.nz/councilpubs.htm
North Shore City Council	http://www.northshorecity.govt.nz (under 'your council' and 'city plan')
Waitakere City Council	http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/abtcnl/pp/ltccp.asp
Auckland District Health Board	http://www.adhb.govt.nz/about/reports.htm
Counties Manukau District Health Board	http://www.cmdhb.org.nz/Counties/News_Publications/Planning-documents.htm
Waitemata District Health Board	http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/wh-portal/Resources.asp?CatID=55
New Zealand Parliament	http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz/Programme/Committees/Submissions/
New Zealand Government online	http://www.govt.nz/news/?ntype=CurrentConsulting
Ministry of Health	http://www.moh.govt.nz/forums.html
Ministry of Social Development	http://www.msd.govt.nz/index.html
Ministry of Youth Development	http://www.myd.govt.nz/index.aspx
Ministry of Justice	http://www.justice.govt.nz/

References

[1] Servaes, J. (1992). *Development communication in action: Report of the inter-agency meeting on advocacy strategies for health and development*. Ginebra: World Health Organisation.

[2] Nathan, S., Rotem, A., & Ritchie, J. (2002). Closing the gap: Building the capacity of non-government organisations as advocates for health equity. *Health Promotion International*, 17(1) , 69-79.

[3] World Health Organisation. (2000). Mexico ministerial statement for the promotion of health. *The Fifth Global Conference on Health Promotion: Bridging the equality gap*. Mexico City.

[4] McCubbin, M., Labonte, R., & Dallaire, B. (2001). *Advocacy for healthy public policy as a health promotion technology*. Toronto, Canada: Centre for Health Promotion.