

Advocacy Strategy Group of EAUC

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The task is to develop an advocacy strategy for EAUC. The ASG will have about 10 members. The work is to commence in March, with a face-to-face meeting in March/April and then a series of virtual meetings, with the strategy to be complete for approval by the board in the autumn.

Before exploring the process required, we need clarity on what type of advocacy strategy is wanted and what elements need to be included.

Forms of advocacy strategy

There are lots of different types of advocacy strategy out there, but in broad terms you have a choice of a process-oriented strategy and an outcome-oriented strategy.

A **process-oriented advocacy strategy** sets out how you will do advocacy. It usually identifies the influencing approach(es) you will usually take (recognising your strengths and constraints) as well as the internal roles, responsibilities and procedures. It may set out broad goals and include some criteria for deciding on what specific issues you will advocate on or opportunities that you will respond to, but probably won't have detailed outcome objectives for these specific issues.

An issue-driven or **outcome-oriented advocacy strategy** would start from the specific changes you want to bring about (eg, policy & practice changes of government departments or industry bodies, or attitude & behaviour changes of named groups of people) and then set out a plan for how to achieve those changes.

Clearly, there is a lot of overlap between the two as well as some clear differences. Some large organisations will have both, with several issue-driven strategies nesting within a broader organisational or process-oriented strategy.

If you already have a clear vision of the specific changes you want to see, then the outcome-oriented strategy may be better – it is more focussed and task-oriented.

On the other hand, if you cannot identify concrete changes that you want to achieve and can mobilise around, but see yourself influencing on-going policy discussions and being more opportunistic, then a process-oriented strategy is probably better. From reading your papers and website, I think this is where you are at but would like your views.

Strategy development processes

The destination (form of strategy) will determine the road map needed to get there, and the details of that road map can be discussed over the next few weeks and fleshed out at the first meeting.

It seems to me that, given the nature of EAUC and the breadth of its membership, there needs to be a participatory process that encourages ownership and comes up with a realistic strategy. This will require focussed discussions and clarity in the choices to be made.

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Set out below are a few ideas for milestones that could be appropriate for developing a process-oriented strategy.

1) Scoping the strategy

The starting point needs to be a document and/or discussion that sets out the vision and goals for advocacy coming out of the EAUC strategy, what form of strategy is required and what it might look like. It can also confirm some 'givens' – compulsory elements and lines not to be crossed – to re-assure those involved and save time on fruitless discussion.

The goals may need elaborating at this stage, or that might be better addressed later in the process when more information has been gathered and discussed.

2) Situation analysis

This can explore both the internal and external context for EAUC advocacy, and will help to inform the choices to be made in developing the strategy.

This can include a mapping of external policy dialogues, processes and structures that could potentially be the venues for EAUC advocacy.

It can also map out the various structures and groups within EAUC that can contribute to the advocacy.

Some suitable tools to help focus the analysis are PESTLE (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental) and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats/constraints).

3) Advocacy approach/theory of change

Defining the preferred approach to advocacy will require discussing different options and relating them to the situation analysis. This then needs to be articulated into a theory of change that is easily communicated to your members and win their support and participation.

This can include identifying the groups that EAUC will engage with to promote its agenda.

4) Roles and Processes

With the approach agreed, discussion can turn to how the advocacy is resourced and supported – in particular what the roles are of the different internal actors and how their efforts are led and coordinated.

This will probably also need to set out how decisions are made, and possibly some standardised criteria to help with decision making.

5) Action plans – strategy into action

A rolling action plan can now be developed that looks ahead to the next 12 – 18 months, but with most focus and detail in the next 3 – 6 months.

These five milestones above can form the agenda for five ASG meetings, but it may be that some milestones require more than one meeting while others can be combined.

What is clear is that a good deal of work will be required between meetings to gather and share information and get feedback from ASG members.