A performance monitoring framework for conservation advocacy

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The performance monitoring framework

Abstract

This report sets out a framework for monitoring the effectiveness of conservation advocacy programmes in increasing public awareness about, and involvement in conservation. This framework is not intended to be used to assess the effectiveness of advocacy in achieving species recovery and protection objectives.

The framework provides a model that DOC can apply to different advocacy programmes. Performance indicators and measures specific to any one advocacy programme are not developed here, although examples of specific measures are given.

1. Introduction

As part of its responsibilities, the Department of Conservation (DOC) is charged with advocating for conservation. Informing, educating and involving individuals, communities, organisations and iwi in conservation is a fundamental component of DOC's work. To do its work successfully, DOC is seeking to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy activities. Although information on advocacy is collected in DOC at present, it is not always collected in a form that can be easily used to monitor and evaluate performance. This report presents a performance monitoring framework for advocacy that will assist DOC to:

- plan, manage and target its advocacy activities;
- · measure the extent to which advocacy activities are effective; and
- improve advocacy efforts.

The framework is solely concerned with monitoring the effectiveness of advocacy in increasing public awareness about and involvement in conservation. It cannot monitor the effectiveness of advocacy in achieving biodiversity and species recovery or protection objectives. Those objectives constitute wider outcomes desired by DOC and are influenced by a range of biological, physical, scientific and management factors as well as advocacy efforts. There should, however, be a close link between advocacy objectives and species objectives, so that it is clear how and where conservation advocacy is intended to contribute to the achievement of desired species outcomes.

The framework should be seen as a management tool that helps enhance advocacy efforts. Performance monitoring should not become an end in itself. As such, this framework provides a simple and practical way of monitoring that can be added to in the future, once baseline information on advocacy performance has been collected.

2. Method for framework development

This framework has been developed in the context of evaluating advocacy associated with two biodiversity recovery programmes – the Kiwi Recovery Programme (KRP) in Northland and Coromandel, and the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project (RNRP) at St Arnaud. Although staff were involved in two separate programmes being carried out in three conservancies, their performance monitoring needs were broadly similar. The framework reflects those broad needs. In addition, examples show how generic measures can be tailored to monitor particular advocacy initiatives.

Some generic indicators and measures used in business, such as those concerning timeliness, adequacy of documentation, and public satisfaction have a general applicability to conservation advocacy. However, there is no widely accepted set of indicators and measures specifically associated with monitoring the effectiveness of conservation advocacy. Consequently, an important part of developing the framework was to ask DOC staff involved in advocacy for the KRP and the RNRP what sort of information would help them to tell if their advocacy was working (see Appendix 1).

3. The performance monitoring framework

This framework is concerned with monitoring, not evaluation. Monitoring is an important precursor to evaluation. Its purpose is to collect information that identifies and describes trends, issues and impacts over time. This information can then be used in evaluations, as well as in planning for advocacy.

To be effective, the performance monitoring framework must be:

- timely—implemented as early as possible, preferably when advocacy is planned,
- · practical,
- · relevant—closely linked with advocacy objectives, and
- on-going—so that changes can be identified over time.

The performance monitoring framework consists of performance indicators and measures linked to stages of the advocacy cycle.

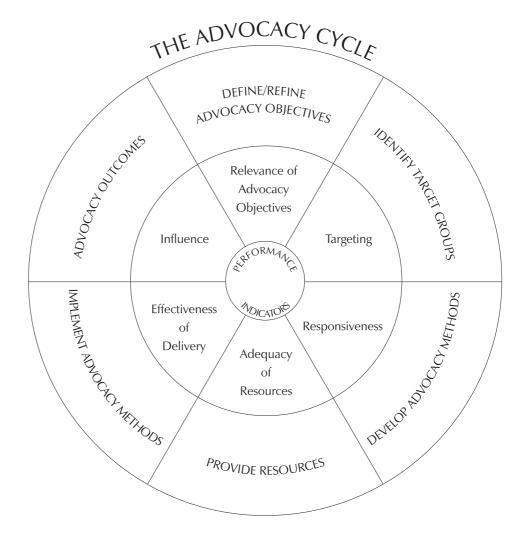
Performance indicators are signs of achievement. They identify the key factors that make advocacy efforts successful. For example, **targeting** the right audience is critical to the success of advocacy. Therefore, targeting is a performance indicator area that is used in this framework.

Performance measures identify and define the actual behaviour to be measured. Performance measure statements define what is to be measured, either quantitatively (numeric - how much or how many) or qualitatively (descriptive—who, what, when, where, and why).

The advocacy cycle describes the processes that are involved in establishing, implementing and reviewing an advocacy programme. The first step in developing advocacy is to define advocacy objectives. The next step is to identify the target audiences for advocacy. The third step is to develop advocacy methods appropriate to those groups. In the fourth step, resources must then be provided, so that implementation (the fifth step) can occur. At the sixth step, the outcomes of advocacy become apparent. Finally, the original objectives are refined in light of whether advocacy has been effective, business planning requirements, and other factors. Then the cycle starts again.

To identify and define the most appropriate performance indicators and measures, the framework matches performance monitoring with advocacy processes. In this way, performance indicators and measures can be developed for each stage of the advocacy cycle. This ensures that the effectiveness of processes as well as outputs can be evaluated. The relationship between advocacy processes and performance indicators is shown in Figure 1. Appendix 2 summarises the performance monitoring framework, which is described in detail below.

FIGURE 1: THE ADVOCACY CYCLE



4. Performance indicators

Figure 1 presents six indicator areas aligned with the six advocacy stages. Those indicator areas are described in more detail below.

Advocacy Stage 1: Define/Refine Advocacy Objectives

Performance Indicator: Relevance of advocacy objectives

Objectives are relevant, feasible and measurable

Relevant

The advocacy objectives need to be relevant to:

- target communities
- · wider DOC conservation advocacy objectives
- · biodiversity objectives

Feasible

The advocacy objectives need to present a challenge, without losing sight of what is practically achievable.

Measurable

The effectiveness of advocacy cannot be measured if the advocacy objectives are too broad in scope or unclear. The advocacy objectives need to:

- refer to desired advocacy outcomes (not biodiversity outcomes); and
- enable meaningful measures to be developed. Section 7 discusses the development of measures that:
 - clearly identify target audiences or key stakeholders
 - specify the nature and extent of change sought
 - indicate the location where change is sought
 - indicate a timeframe for achievement.

Advocacy Stage 2: Identify Target Groups

Performance Indicator: Targeting

Target groups are relevant and coverage is sufficient

A critical factor for successful advocacy is that appropriate audiences are identified. Effective advocacy will require that information and education are delivered to key audiences and that key stakeholders are involved in conservation in a variety of ways.

Advocacy Stage 3: Develop Advocacy Methods

Performance Indicator: Responsiveness

Methods are appropriate for and acceptable to target groups

Effective advocacy will depend on whether the advocacy tools are flexible and appropriate. Different audiences will require different advocacy approaches, and different tools may need to be used at different times, or in response to changing circumstances.

Advocacy Stage 4: Provide Resources

Performance Indicator: Adequacy of resources

Skills, information, budget and systems support advocacy delivery

The effectiveness of advocacy will be severely compromised if resources are inadequate. Resources include staff, funding, information, equipment and infrastructure.

Advocacy Stage 5: Implement Advocacy Methods

Performance Indicator: Effectiveness of delivery

Advocacy is delivered to target groups

Advocacy impact is maximised for allocated budget

This indicator has two key aspects to do with the successful implementation of advocacy. The effectiveness of advocacy will depend on how it is delivered, and whether the best advocacy mix has been obtained within the budget.

Advocacy Stage 6: Advocacy Outcomes

Performance Indicator: Influence

Public awareness is increased

Public involvement is increased

Desired conservation behaviours are achieved

The broad aims of advocacy are to change attitudes and behaviour. If advocacy approaches are not achieving desired changes, they will need to be altered or dispensed with. This indicator focuses on identifying the extent to which desired changes have been achieved.

5. Performance measures

A performance measure is a compact, concise description of an attribute, state, subject or behaviour. Performance measures must:

- measure factors relevant to the advocacy programme
- provide reliable and valid measures of performance
- be accepted as appropriate measures
- be practical
- be cost effective, i.e. not add significant costs to the delivery of advocacy.

Listed below are the types of performance measures that could be developed for each of the performance indicators. They are not expressed in a measurable way at this point—examples of specific measures are provided in Section 6.

Performance Indicator: Relevance of advocacy objectives

Objectives are relevant, feasible and measurable

Performance measures: Relevance of advocacy objectives

- Objectives clarify advocacy outcomes sought
- Objectives enable meaningful measures to be developed
- Objectives reflect actions desired of key stakeholders
- Key stakeholders are involved in developing advocacy objectives

Performance Indicator: Targeting

Target groups are relevant and coverage is sufficient

Performance measures: Targeting

- · Key stakeholders are identified
- New stakeholders are identified
- Advocacy activities cover the range of stakeholders

Performance Indicator: Responsiveness

Methods are appropriate for and acceptable to target groups

Performance measures: Responsiveness

- Number of methods used
- Type of methods used
- Consultation over advocacy methods occurs with stakeholders

Performance Indicator: Adequacy of resources

Skills, information, budget and systems support advocacy delivery

Performance measures: Adequacy of resources

- Staff have appropriate skills to undertake advocacy
- Staff have sufficient equipment and materials to undertake advocacy
- Information provided for advocacy is accurate, relevant and accessible
- Budget is sufficient to undertake advocacy

Performance Indicator: Effectiveness of delivery

Advocacy is delivered to target groups

Advocacy impact is maximised for allocated budget

Performance measures: Effectiveness of delivery

- Time spent on advocacy activity
- Number and characteristics of population reached by advocacy
- Changes in advocacy attributed to public feedback
- Public access to information is improved
- Operational costs are kept within budget

Performance Indicator: Influence

Public awareness is increased

Public involvement is increased

Desired conservation behaviours are achieved

Performance measures: Influence

- Range and frequency of positive comments is increased
- Range and frequency of negative comments is decreased
- DOC interaction with other organisations such as regional and district councils is increased
- Policies/plans/actions of other organisations reflect key advocacy messages
- Conservation initiatives are started by individuals/groups
- Opportunities for public involvement in decisionmaking are enhanced
- Sponsorship is maintained/increased
- Resources are provided by groups/individuals

6. Examples of advocacy performance measures

Table 1 provides examples of advocacy performance measures that could be used in the Kiwi Recovery Programme and the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

ADVOCACY INDICATOR	EXAMPLES OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Relevance of advocacy objectives • Objectives are relevant, feasible and measurable	 An advocacy strategy for RNRP is developed by [date]. Advocacy objectives fit with conservation programme objectives.
Targeting • Target groups are relevant and coverage is sufficient	 Coverage of wasp control campaign is achieved through all key press and radio outlets. Number of schools using the Kiwi Forever kit in key kiwi areas is identified. Key stakeholder use of the newsletter is monitored through annual survey of recipients by [date]. Number of scientific reports/papers on the RNRP that are requested annually.
Responsiveness • Methods are appropriate for and acceptable to target groups	 Positive feedback is obtained from key [named] stakeholders on [named] advocacy method. New advocacy methods are adopted in response to feedback.
Adequacy of resources • Skills, information, budget and systems are adequate for advocacy delivery	 A database is established to gather information about community-initiated kiwi conservation activities by [date]. Information and publicity brochures are reviewed and updated by [date].
Effectiveness of delivery Advocacy is delivered to target groups Advocacy impact is maximised for allocated budget	 Scouts are trained for the kiwi call survey by [date]. Number of summer programmes held annually. Total operational costs of [named] advocacy initiative are kept within budget. Number of requests to kiwi advocate for information about kiwi received within the kiwi target area/outside the kiwi target area, annually. A selected group of students from 4 schools in the kiwi target area complete section x in the Kiwi Forever kit two months before kiwi release.
Influence Public awareness is increased Public involvement is increased Desired conservation behaviours are achieved	 Negative public feedback on [RNRP/KRP] is reduced by x%. Community involvement in planning and running 2001 Revive Rotoiti Open Day is achieved. Council adopts x% of resource consent conditions concerning kiwi habitat and protection recommended by DOC. Number of kiwi protection initiatives started/ongoing in target area and outside of target area, annually. The number of landowners doing pest control is increased by at least 12 in the year.

7. What is needed to implement the framework

Implementation of the framework has three components:

- Designing performance measures
- Setting up data collection processes
- · Analysis and reporting.

Designing performance measures

Before developing the measures, several questions need to be answered. The answers to these questions will affect how the measures are designed.

To start, consider what is to be measured and why is it being measured. Measurement of performance is very difficult if your team is unclear about what you are measuring and why (Table 2).

TABLE 2: SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

What is being measured?	
Why is it measured?	
Who chooses the measures?	
How many measures?	
What are the costs of measuring?	
Who is responsible for carrying out measurement?	
How and to whom will the measures be reported?	
Actual or surrogate measures?	
Output or outcome measures?	

Another fundamental question is who chooses the measures. It is important that the measures are relevant and specific, and these are compelling reasons to leave the choice of measures to the team carrying out the advocacy. However, if there is value in measures being comparable and consistent across different advocacy programmes, it helps to have input from other groups within the organisation. There are advantages in achieving a balance between the decentralised, local design of measures and some central involvement.

The team will need to consider how many measures should be used to assess the advocacy programme. There is no magic number, although in general the number of critical measures decreases as one moves from the corporate to unit level of an

organisation (Olve et al. 1999). Between five and ten measures should be sufficient for an advocacy programme. Otherwise there is a danger of shifting focus away from the measures that are truly critical for success.

The number of measures needs to be flexible. Measures may need to be adjusted from year to year so that they remain relevant and responsive. The number of measures should also recognise that there may be both routine and special advocacy activities undertaken in any one year.

Consider the costs involved in setting up the measures. How much of the budget can be realistically and reasonably spent on performance measurement? It may be that only a few measures, those deemed most important and those linked to the highest priority advocacy objectives, are set up first. Another way to contain the budget is to set up measures that are based as much as possible on information that is already collected for administrative or management purposes.

Who is responsible for the measures? Someone will need to ensure that the performance measurement process is carried out and reported on. There also needs to be consideration of how and to whom the measures will be reported. Who will use the information gained from the measures? Some measures may be for in-house use, while others may be reported to a wider audience, such as sponsors and other stakeholders. If that is the case, it is important that the measures are intelligible to a wider audience and that a common understanding of the measures is conveyed.

Finally, there are decisions to be made about the type of measures to be used. One distinction is between actual and surrogate measures (Table 3). In many cases, it is easier to use a surrogate measure, and in some cases this is the only possible measure. A surrogate measure is for inputs such as resources, activities and perceptions, rather than effects or outcomes. Sometimes this type of measure is called a performance driver. Surrogate measures are important and useful, because by understanding them and managing them well, broader outcomes and effects may be influenced.

TABLE 3: EXAMPLES OF SURROGATE MEASURES

Number of people attending guided walks in project area. (Desired outcome is to increase understanding of the RNRP.)

Number of requests for pest control advice. (Desired outcome is for landowners to control pests.)

The other distinction is between outputs and outcomes (Table 4). Usually, measures are based on outputs that measure direct products or results rather than wider outcomes. This is because an organisation may have insufficient control over outcomes that are influenced by many factors. For example, a desired outcome might be that dogs do not kill kiwi. This change in behaviour may be influenced not only by promotional material and advice about how to control dogs, but also by social, economic and cultural factors that are beyond the control of an organisation.

TABLE 4: EXAMPLES OF OUTCOME, OUTPUT AND SURROGATE MEASURES

Desired outcome	No dogs kill kiwi.
Output measure	Kiwi Avoidance Training programme is developed by [date].
Surrogate measure	Number attending Kiwi Avoidance Training for dogs.

The next step after making some decisions about fundamental questions is to design the wording of the measures themselves. "SMART" is a common acronym used to help design performance measures. There are several versions of what the letters stand for—one version is outlined below.

S Simple The measure is unambiguous and uncomplicated

Specific The measure is focused on a single issue

M Measurable Measurement can be quantitative or qualitative

A Accountable The measure identifies who is responsible for actions

undertaken

R Relevant The measure is relevant to those delivering the programme and

to those using the measure

Realistic The team can influence the achievement of the measure

T Timebound The measure specifies a timeframe for achievement

Finally, the team should review the set of performance measures that have been developed to ensure that the set is coherent, with no gaps. Check your completed set of performance measures against the list given in Table 5.

TABLE 5: CHECKLIST FOR GAINING THE RIGHT MIX OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Is each measure linked to an advocacy objective?

Are the highest priority advocacy objectives covered?

Do the measures measure an achievement?

Are the measures relevant—to DOC stakeholders; to community stakeholders?

Are the measures acceptable—to DOC stakeholders; to community stakeholders?

Do the measures adequately cover the range of advocacy undertaken?

Setting up data collection processes

Data collection processes are required so that information on performance can be obtained. The team will need to think about what collection methods to use, and how often to collect information. Frequency of collection will depend on:

what the measure is measuring

- how long it is expected before a result might emerge
- the availability of information
- reporting requirements.

As indicated earlier, costs must be considered as one of the fundamental questions in designing the performance measures. The costs of data collection may determine the number and type of measures that are developed. The team will need to consider what resources are available to collect information—staff, money and systems.

Several things can be done to keep the costs of data collection down:

- Do not collect information that is not directly connected to a performance measure.
- Review the current methods of collecting information on advocacy and adjust them to focus on key performance measures.
- Consider whether advocacy performance data can be collected as part of routine data collection in other areas, e.g. pest management, visitor services.
- If new collection methods need to be established, it may be possible to use them to collect data for two or more performance measures.

Analysis and reporting

Communicating the results of performance measurement so that people know how they are doing is essential. Reporting on performance measures should be regularly undertaken, part of the normal routine, and linked into business planning and reporting.

8. Conclusion

This report sets out a model for the development of a performance monitoring framework. It should be used as a working framework, rather than an imposed ready-made solution. The framework is a management tool to help plan, manage and enhance advocacy efforts. Ultimately, the framework should provide meaningful information that aids communication within DOC and with stakeholders about the effectiveness of advocacy.

The report has focused on the many practical questions that should be considered in designing and implementing the performance monitoring framework. Taking into account those practical considerations, it is inevitable that a performance monitoring framework will include only some of the vast range of possible measures. It is best to start off with a few simple measures that can be implemented well, and to refine and increase measures once a sound data base for monitoring advocacy is established.

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Appendix 1

STAFF VIEWS ON EVALUATING ADVOCACY

Fifteen DOC staff in Northland, Waikato and Nelson Conservancies were asked to respond to a set of questions about evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy programmes. Information from the nine who responded was used to help develop indicators and measures for the performance monitoring framework.

Staff were asked:

- what information they needed to manage and carry out their advocacy programmes,
- what were the signs that would tell them an advocacy programme was working, and
- to rank the importance of different performance indicator areas.

Information needed to manage and carry out advocacy programmes

The following information categories were identified:

- Advocacy
- Community
- · Conservation focus
- Capability

Advocacy

- Clarity in advocacy objectives and priorities
- Clear understanding of who are the target audiences
- How to locate target audiences
- Pros and cons of different advocacy approaches/tools
- Who advocacy is reaching
- · Means of identifying and measuring the effects of a particular advocacy effort
- What advocacy does not work
- · Gaps in advocacy

Community

- Characteristics of communities
- Public attitudes to wider DOC activities
- Changes in public attitudes to specific conservation initiatives

Conservation focus

- Research/information on kiwi, e.g. location, characteristics
- Information on protected and covenanted land
- Technical information, e.g. recovery techniques; predator control

Capability

- · Advocacy skills of staff
- Career development and training needs

Signs that would show an advocacy programme is working

Staff identified the following signs:

Amongst the general public:

- Increased public feedback and interest
- · Increased press and radio coverage
- Increase in public support for DOC
- Increased public understanding of DOC objectives and actions
- Reduced frequency of stray dogs in vulnerable habitat
- · Reporting of kiwi heard, seen, and kiwi kills
- Provision of financial or 'in kind' support
- More public requests for contact with DOC staff
- Promotion of kiwi souvenirs

Amongst key stakeholders:

- · Positive changes in landowners' attitudes and behaviour
- Improved attitudes and behaviour of councils
- Acknowledgement of conservation requirements in statutory plans, regulations, legislation
- Involvement of schools and other educational institutions
- Positive attitudes of iwi
- · Increased contact with dog owners, hunting organisations
- Involvement in predator control
- Development of community-based conservation initiatives
- Co-ordination amongst key stakeholders on conservation issues

Within DOC/government:

- Raised awareness amongst DOC staff
- Increased resourcing
- Increased awareness amongst politicians

Relative importance of different performance indicator areas

Staff identified the following as the most important performance indicator areas:

- Quality of information provided
- Achievement of tasks/milestones/objectives
- Evidence of nature and extent of behavioural change attributable to advocacy activity
- Type and number of initiatives started by groups/individuals
- Range and frequency of negative public and stakeholder comments
- Type and availability of resources
- Changes in policies/plans/actions of other organisations

Appendix 2

THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Advocacy Stage 1: Define/refine advocacy objectives

Performance Indicator: Relevance of advocacy objectives

Objectives are relevant, feasible and measurable

Performance measures

- · Objectives clarify advocacy outcomes sought
- Objectives enable meaningful measures to be developed
- Objectives reflect actions desired of key stakeholders
- Key stakeholders are involved in developing advocacy objectives

Advocacy Stage 2: Identify target groups

Performance Indicator: Targeting

Target groups are relevant and coverage is sufficient

Performance measures

- · Key stakeholders are identified
- New stakeholders are identified
- Advocacy activities cover the range of stakeholders

Advocacy Stage 3: Develop advocacy methods

Performance Indicator: Responsiveness

Methods are appropriate for and acceptable to target groups

Performance measures

- Number of methods used
- Type of methods used
- Consultation over advocacy methods occurs with stakeholders

Advocacy Stage 4: Provide resources

Performance Indicator: Adequacy of resources

Skills, information, budget and systems support advocacy delivery

Performance measures

- Staff have appropriate skills to undertake advocacy
- Staff have sufficient equipment and materials to undertake advocacy
- Information provided for advocacy is accurate, relevant and accessible
- Budget is sufficient to undertake advocacy

Advocacy Stage 5: Implement advocacy methods

Performance Indicator: Effectiveness of delivery

Advocacy is delivered to target groups

Advocacy impact is maximised for allocated budget

Performance measures

- Time spent on advocacy activity
- Number and characteristics of population reached by advocacy
- Changes in advocacy attributed to public feedback
- Public access to information is improved
- Operational costs are kept within budget

Advocacy Stage 6: Advocacy outcomes

Performance Indicator: Influence

Public awareness is increased

Public involvement is increased

Desired conservation behaviours are achieved

Performance measures

- Range and frequency of positive comments is increased
- Range and frequency of negative comments is decreased
- DOC interaction with other organisations such as regional and district councils is increased
- · Policies/plans/actions of other organisations reflect key advocacy messages
- Conservation initiatives are started by individuals/groups
- Opportunities for public involvement in decisionmaking are enhanced
- Sponsorship is maintained/increased
- Resources are provided by groups/individuals