

IFLA Advocacy Capacities Grid

A core part of IFLA's mission is to strengthen the voice of the global library field. In particular through our work around the Sustainable Development Goals, we have worked to build capacity throughout the field, both internally in terms of skills and coordination, and externally in terms of new contacts and networks. The SDGs have also proved to be a great way for libraries to structure their own communications, and provided an opportunity to make new connections both with government and with partners.

This experience will set up libraries and library associations well as they prepare for a post-COVID-19 world. Faced with a combination of debts to repay and/or falls in revenue, governments at all levels are likely to want to make savings. As we have seen – sadly – in aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, libraries can see pressure on their own funding.

To respond, libraries will need to strengthen their advocacy. We define this as the work to convince those outside of the library field who are taking decisions – either directly or via those who influence them, from the grass-roots up – of the importance of effective libraries for a strong recovery, and to encourage them to act accordingly. This will require an effort at all levels, from building general public support for libraries (which can in turn shape politicians' calculations), to focused work with ministers or equivalents and elected officials. As such, lobbying is only one element of advocacy.

How to do this will vary from country to country, and so it is not possible to devise a single global strategy. However, a number of key capacities will be relevant everywhere – understanding the landscape, coordinating your work, mobilising the field, gathering evidence, communications, building relations with decision-makers, building partnerships, and evaluating your advocacy. Clearly, advocacy activities are built on top of real-world successes – excellent library and information services, including through partnerships with others, are essential.

The below therefore matrix aims to provide a framework for library associations and libraries to think about where they stand currently on each of the capacities, going from 'starter' to 'advanced' levels. This can be done either on your own, or through a group discussion. The next step will be to discuss how to move one box to the right in each area, and how to do this. IFLA will be providing materials to help in this

To take communication as an example, a library association may currently be able to define and share key messages – for example that libraries contribute to employment and innovation (box 5B). The goal then is to be able to explain these in more depth, for example by preparing a short brochure on how libraries do this, drawing on evidence and attractive images, and to use targeted e-mails and social media to promote it (5C).

	A. STARTER	B. BASIC	C. INTERMEDIATE	D. ADVANCED
1. UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE	We are not aware of how decisions are made about how libraries are supported.	We are aware in broad terms of how decisions on core library funding and support are made.	We have a strong knowledge of the process for core library support decisions and are aware of how other relevant processes work.	We have a detailed understanding of how all potential significant sources of support for libraries operate (core and additional), and the process for decision-making.
2. COORDINATING YOUR WORK	We do not have anyone responsible for advocacy in our core team.	We have a person focused on advocacy in our core team.	We have someone focused on advocacy, who also coordinates the work of others.	We have a team working on advocacy who can share responsibilities amongst them, according to availability and skills.
3. MOBILISING THE FIELD	There is a passive attitude to influencing decisions, and no-one is engaged in advocacy.	There is an awareness of the need for advocacy, with one responsible person ready to act when necessary.	There is an active group of people with a variety of skills ready to get involved in basic advocacy when needed.	There is a large and well-organised group (with well-mapped out skills and strengths) with whom you can work on advocacy, in all parts of the country.
4. GATHERING EVIDENCE	We do not have any stories or data we can use to back up our advocacy by showing the value of libraries.	We have a limited set of examples and stories we can use to support our advocacy by showing the value of libraries..	We have a good collection of stories and data we use in our advocacy to show value, for example via the IFLA Library Map of the World.	We can share well-evaluated evidence of library value, and use examples from home and abroad, for example via the IFLA Library Map of the World.
5. COMMUNICATIONS	We do not have any capacity to communicate either with specific target groups or the general public as part of our advocacy.	We have can define and share basic messages with contacts and the general public, and define broad target audiences.	We can explain messages and asks clearly, in depth and attractively, and communicate using more than one channel with relatively well-defined target audiences.	We can use a variety of channels and tools in order to get our message across most effectively to well-defined audiences and engage them in our efforts.
6. BUILDING RELATIONS WITH DECISION-MAKERS	We don't know who is taking decisions about library funding, support or other related issues.	We know which person or team is leading on decisions about library funding, support or other related issues	We have a relationship with the person leading on library funding support or other related issues, and who else is involved in decisions.	We have a strong, regular relationship with the lead decision-maker on library funding, support or other related issues, and others involved in the process.
7. BUILDING ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIPS	We do not work with any other communications professionals or others working on library advocacy.	We are aware of communications professionals, and others working on library-related issues who could strengthen our advocacy	We have a relationship with communications professionals and others working on library-related issues to plan advocacy actions.	We have strong relationships and successful cooperation with a number of communications professionals and others working on library-related issues
8. EVALUATION OF ADVOCACY	We do not evaluate the effectiveness of our library advocacy.	When planning ahead, we think about what did and didn't work in the past.	For each major action, we carry out an assessment of what did and didn't work.	We pre-define indicators of success and metrics for all major actions, and then evaluate against these at the end.