

Writing Submissions: How to be effective?

Axel Wilke

Christchurch City Council

About the Speaker

- ▶ Cycling Advocates' Network (CAN)
 - Executive member
 - National interest group
- ▶ Transportation Group
 - Management committee member
 - National interest group
- ▶ Residents' group
 - Chairperson
- ▶ Christchurch City Council
 - Senior Traffic Engineer

Content

- ▶ Style of Written Submissions
- ▶ Structure of Submissions
- ▶ Content of Submissions
- ▶ Process of Submission Writing

Submission Style

▶ Typed

- Hand writing harder to read

▶ Proof-read

- Free of grammar and spelling mistakes

▶ Branding

- If your group has a logo, use it!

Key Messages on Style

- ▶ Don't detract from your message by style issues
- ▶ Give yourself the most professional appearance

Submissions - Basic Structure

- ▶ Letterhead
- ▶ Title (what you are submitting on)
- ▶ Introduction (who you are)
- ▶ Submission body
 - General comments
 - Specific feedback
- ▶ Signature

Structure cont'd

▶ Letterhead

- All the contact details
- Group logo (if available) for branding

▶ Title

- What you are submitting on
- List the recipient of the submission

Structure cont'd

► Introduction

- Who your group is
- Membership
- Make yourself relevant
- Possibly process used for preparing submission

Structure cont'd

► Submission body – general

- Thank for the opportunity to submit
- State your group's general impression of the consultation draft
- Focus on bigger issues
- **List what you like**
- State what you don't like
- Note what is missing

Structure cont'd

- ▶ Submission body – specific
 - Adopt structure of consultation document
 - Repeat section headings and sub headings

Structure cont'd

- ▶ Specific issues – disagreement
 - Repeat consultation document issue
 - Give reasons why you disagree
 - Discuss your point
 - Provide evidence
 - Give recommendation

Structure cont'd

▶ Signature

- State position of signatory
- Use senior person

▶ Good to have submission template

Content

- ▶ Specific to consultation document
- ▶ How to resolve diverging views?
- ▶ Agree on a process before you need it!
- ▶ Strive for consensus of issues rather than consensus of views

Content cont'd

► Provide the case for both opinions

“Generally the group feels option A is the best because of... However a number of our members would suggest that option A is not the best solution as it ... and Option B is better as it will...”

We feel you should consider and address these aspects in your decision.”

Process Issues

- ▶ Needs person responsible for co-ordinating submissions
- ▶ Should have process for developing a submission
- ▶ Process to suit size of organisation

Submissions Co-ordinator

- ▶ Identify matters to be submitted on
 - Scan websites, be on mailing lists
 - Often chair of organisation, but separate role for large organisations
- ▶ Liaise with other interest groups
 - Swap notes, gain their views
 - Consider joint submissions
- ▶ Controls timelines
 - Critical issue

Process – Small Organisation

- ▶ Identify a matter for submission
 - Usually role of chair or secretary
- ▶ Group to meet to discuss subject matter
 - Or use communication (e.g. e-mail)
- ▶ Produce draft submission
 - Very important step – do ASAP
 - Easier for members to comment of draft submission than on consultation document

Process – Small Organisation cont'd

- ▶ Circulate draft to membership
- ▶ Receive feedback and comments
- ▶ Work in feedback
 - may need to circulate again
- ▶ Finalise submission
 - May need committee ratification
 - Chair to sign
- ▶ Submit and publish to members

Process – Large Organisation

- ▶ Identify a matter for submission
 - Usually role of submissions co-ordinator
- ▶ Committee to discuss subject matter
 - Meet or use communication (e.g. e-mail)
- ▶ Appoint submission author
 - Usually a member with particular expertise
 - Helpful to be able to pay honorarium
 - Could be external to organisation
 - Technical role (not submissions co-ordinator)

Process – Large Organisation cont'd

- ▶ Produce draft submission
 - This step always on 'critical path'
- ▶ Make draft available to membership
 - Usually posted on website
 - Inform membership via newsletter or special communication
 - Set deadline for feedback
 - Emphasise contact details for submission author

Process – Large Organisation cont'd

- ▶ Receive feedback and comments
 - Should have documentation of feedback received
- ▶ Work in feedback
 - May need to circulate second draft, i.e. iterative process
 - Should circulate to members who provided feedback
 - Should have documentation of how feedback was incorporated

Process – Large Organisation cont'd

- ▶ Finalise submission
 - Will need committee ratification
 - Chair to sign
- ▶ Submit
- ▶ Publish to members
 - Place final version on website
 - The media will find it, too!
- ▶ Pay honorarium to submission author

Advanced Tips

- ▶ Personal follow up
 - Policy analysts often junior
 - They may not understand your point
- ▶ Find out processes of consulting organisation
 - You may run late – does it matter?
 - Develop relationships
 - The earlier you get in, the more effective you will be
- ▶ Always submit
 - It increases your profile

Conclusions

- ▶ Maintain a submission template
- ▶ Agree on a process for dealing with diverging views
- ▶ Submission process to suit size of organisation
- ▶ Time management is critical
- ▶ Earlier involvement equals increase effectiveness

Effective Submission Writing

Thank you

Questions & discussion