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#PolicyTalk Summary Report



**DEFINING
SHARED
GOALS**

Pillar #PolicyTalk Report, August 10, 2023: Defining Shared Goals

Pillar members, staff, and community members met August 10, 2023 to continue building capacity for advocacy and policy work as individual organizations and a unified nonprofit sector and to further our project to have a positive influence on the City of London's Multi-Year Budget.

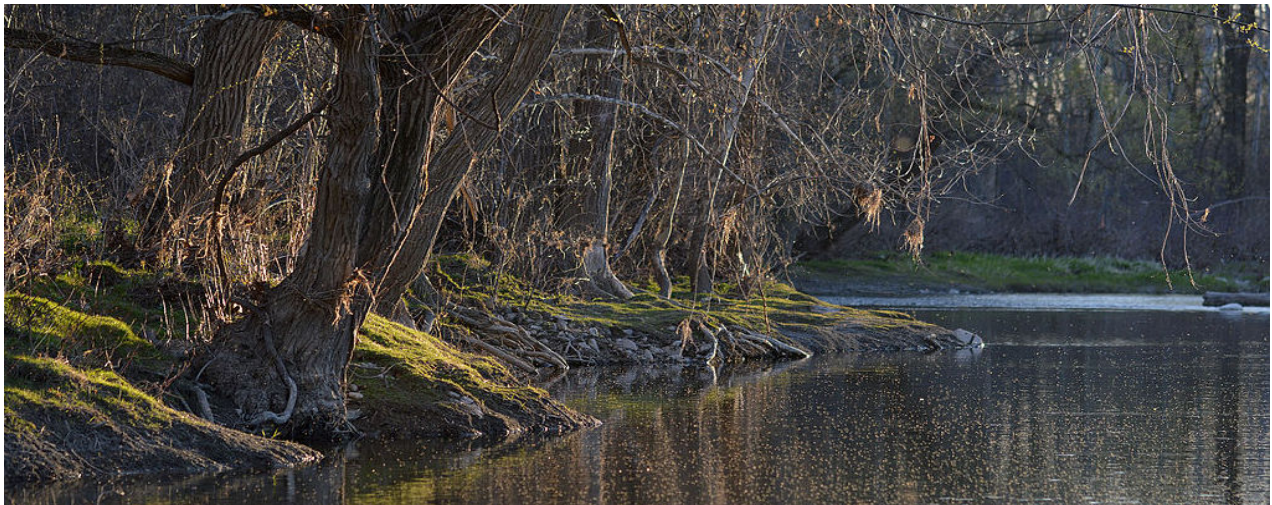
The focus of the event was to **define our shared goals**. We did this work in breakout groups, full group discussions, informal polling, a review of the June #PolcicyTalk event, and in some pre-meeting work, identifying how organizational missions aligned with the City's Strategic Plan and with each other.

Across all the work and activities, two clear themes emerged:

First, a strong desire to build our capacity for collaboration and collective action across causes; and

Second, greater clarity about the specific knowledge and resources needed to strengthen our advocacy to decision-makers and future partners.

This report explores those themes and accounts for our next steps, including a third #PolicyTalk event: [Doing Things Together, September 21, 2023](#).



The conversation began with an acknowledgment that we are discussing the stewardship of lands and waters long and successfully cared for by Indigenous peoples before there was a strategic plan or a multi-year budget or a City of London, processes and institutions that have largely excluded Indigenous people and communities. Pillar's land acknowledgement is printed on our website, but attendees of #PolicyTalk were encouraged to recognize that, though we often acknowledge traditional stewards and then our contemporary neighbours, we often fail to highlight the continuity of Indigenous governance in our region: that the Oneida Nation of the Thames is the Haudenosaunee; that the Chippewa Nation of the Thames are the Anishinaabek; and that the Munsee-Delaware Nation are the Lūnaapéewak. Our advocacy must continue to seek harmony with Indigenous governance, led by the long-successful stewards of this land.

Theme 1: Collaborating and advocating across causes

- ~ “I want to avoid doing this work alone, in isolation, in silos.”
- ~ “How do we come together, more efficiently, to undo organizational and collective struggles?”
- ~ “We can’t deeply collaborate, if we don’t start doing things together.”
- ~ “Do two things, or I’m not in”

Whether addressing their reasons for coming to #PolicyTalk or describing their organizations’ next steps, participants showed a strong desire to collaborate as a unified nonprofit voice for greater community impact.

Partly this emerged in the idea of breaking down silos and being more efficient; even more persistently, though, it involved reaching across cause areas and supporting each other’s priorities or broader sector priorities. One participant pointed out, for example, that there is “power in linkage,” another that we should be able to advocate for at least one cause that does not affect us directly, and yet another who pointed out that our challenges are too complex and too deep to just tackle them one at a time.

In breakout discussions of “next steps”, many participants pointed to outreach to other organizations and “asking questions” to identify potential allies from other cause areas. There was also recognition that this requires a process of building connection, beginning by “doing things together,” even if they are small steps, and even if they are not perfect at the beginning.

We asked attendees why they came to #PolicyTalk	#
Direct Funding: Seeking to financial resources directly from the MYB.	12
Increase capacity: Affecting the MYB’s inclusion of items from the City Strat Plan.	13
Advocacy: Specific needs for my organization or the sector as a whole.	20
Communicating/Reporting: Learning and/or developing resources to inform and engage our membership and staff around the ways we connect to items in the London Strategic Plan.	10
Partnerships: To find partners, within and outside the sector.	14
<p>People also mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure fund stability “to avoid compromise of programs and services” and ensure “long term support for major projects;” • To increase funding in Community Grants; • To work together in this arena as a sector, ... to learn how to take small steps;” and • To seek more transparency in (municipal) processes. 	

We are not surprised that participants felt they could share priorities and, indeed, the event was designed in part to surface connections, to “define shared goals.” In one of the breakout groups, we asked how each participant sees alignment with the City’s Strategic Plan but, of course, it also revealed many points of connection among the organizations and people in the room.

“How does my organization align with London’s Strat Plan (& other orgs?)”	#
Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion	6
Housing and Homelessness	3
Wellbeing and Safety	6
Safe London for Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse and Trans People	1
Economic growth culture and prosperity:	4
Climate Action and Sustainable Growth	5

Our own next steps will honour this desire to build collaborative capacity and reach across cause areas in the local social purpose sector.

Theme 2: Knowledge and resources needed to strengthen our advocacy

Just as often as we heard about the desire to build our collective voice, we heard about the barriers to effective advocacy and meaningful collaboration with potential partners, including policy makers.

Arising from the discussion of next steps and the brief history of sector advocacy in the report on #PolicyTalk 1, we heard that there is still a “chill” on advocacy within the sector, with boards members especially likely to be unaware of what’s allowable.

We also heard that, despite pooling our knowledge and experiences, there are still gaps in our collective understanding of the City’s processes, especially in the development of the Multi-Year Budget where many steps happen out of public view. It was noted that the Urban League had assembled and published a toolkit for municipal advocacy during the pandemic, but that some of the information was outdated and the MYB is not addressed at all.

Organizations who had enlisted Pillar’s help with strategic mapping were grateful for the assistance, but participants also felt it would be useful if: 1) there were mapping templates so organizations could more easily undertake this work on their own; and 2) there was a way to represent this sort of mapping in digestible, likely graphic form.

Again, we want to honour these observations and, together with our network, address these barriers to increase our collective capacity to have a positive influence on the Multi-Year Budget *and* continue to build our “policy muscle” for future impact. We began the 2023 series of #PolicyTalk events with the metaphor of “building the plane while we’re on the runway,” allowing us room to fail and learn without crashing and burning. We’ve done much already, but we’ve also learned that it’s time to order the missing parts and fashion the tools we are missing to really get off the ground.

And so, in #PolicyTalk 3, we propose to “do two things:”

1. We will be “Doing Things Together.” To continue building our sense of collective action, the next event will be an interactive workshop where . . .
2. We will be working on the tools and resources we’ve identified as necessary to further our short-term goals and longer-term outcomes.

How can “strategic mapping” help?

In preparation for this event, we invited member organizations to examine their missions and activities, as well as London’s 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, for possible areas of alignment between their organization’s priorities and the City’s priorities. This exercise could also point to potential areas of partnership and collaboration across sectors and better channeled/targeted advocacy actions to the City, including collective action as a sector.

To support members in this activity, Pillar offered to do Strategic Plan mappings to any organization that would find this helpful. Member organizations who preferred to do their mapping themselves were also welcomed to share their findings with members during the August 2023 #PolicyTalk.

Pillar will be offering templates for strategic mapping at the September 21 #PolicyTalk. Together we can take refine the resource to make the process manageable and worthwhile for organizations.

For an example of possible uses, you can look at Pillar’s mapping of Forest City Gallery’s mission, priorities, and activities to the City’s Strategic Plan [here](#).

You can also see a less formal version of identifying strategic alignment in this London Cycle Link [letter to Councillors](#) after the adoption of the City Strat Plan.

Pillar staff will prepare draft documents and resources – the “Things” we’ll “do together” – so that breakout groups can refine them or redesign them, including:

- A one-pager with board directors as the audience that explains what sorts of advocacy are allowed and may indeed be necessary for organizations to succeed in their missions.
- A diagram showing the development of the City’s Multi-Year Budget including critical pathways and timelines for influence and intervention that can be added to a toolkit for municipal advocacy.
- Other additions and changes to the “Making Local Change” toolkit assembled by the Urban League of London.
- Templates for Strategic Mapping that can help organizations define and refine their advocacy plans, including a template for alternate, simple explainers to staff, volunteers, boards, and potential supporters.
- A plan for sharing all these resources with each other, our communities, and the network at large and then maintaining them so that we are more ready for future advocacy.

One way to “do two things at once:” Why Pillar Uses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were designed as a network of targets. The SDG framework enables us to understand the interconnections among social, environmental, and economic challenges and how tackling one of them keeping in mind the relationship to the other two is a more effective way of achieving our goals. The City of London Strategic Plan and Multi-Year Budget is a comprehensive plan addressing issues such as Reconciliation, homelessness, climate change, economic prosperity, cultural development, gender equality, and many others with limited resources and, therefore is a perfect application for the SDGs.

To learn more about the SDGs, check out SDGs 101 from SDG Cities Academy, a 4-module, self-paced online course that will introduce you to the SDGs and why the SDGs matter locally. SDGs 101 is a great place to start if you would like to dive deeper into other courses.

[Learn more and sign up for the course.](#)



More feedback and next steps from #PolicyTalk: Defining Shared Goals

Pillar launched the 2023 #PolicyTalk series as to help grow the local sector’s policy capacity and our ability to anticipate, make, and manage change. We are encouraged by the response from participants to date and we hope, as we make progress, to attract even more participants and spark more action. We also hope to learn as we go and incorporate feedback from participants and the network.

- ~ “Very informative. Eye-opening. Got me thinking outside the box. Challenged us to see the big picture and the opportunities that MYB affords.”
- ~ “Nice to collaborate. A kickstart motivator for city planning and sector community building. Loved the break-out sessions.”
- ~ “Making complex steps ... clearer”.

This includes considerations for future events that we will bear in mind:

- More simplified language
- More “get-togethers” to develop streamline best practices, and ways to communicate w/ the City.
- Perhaps mix us in small groups a little more.
- To figure out a concrete plan, perhaps to talk to City Staff and Councillors to push their proposals.

As a final activity, we asked participants about their own next steps. It makes us hopeful.

Don’t forget to [register for #PolicyTalk 3: Doing Things Together](#) as we prepare to shift from Policy Talk to Policy Action.





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