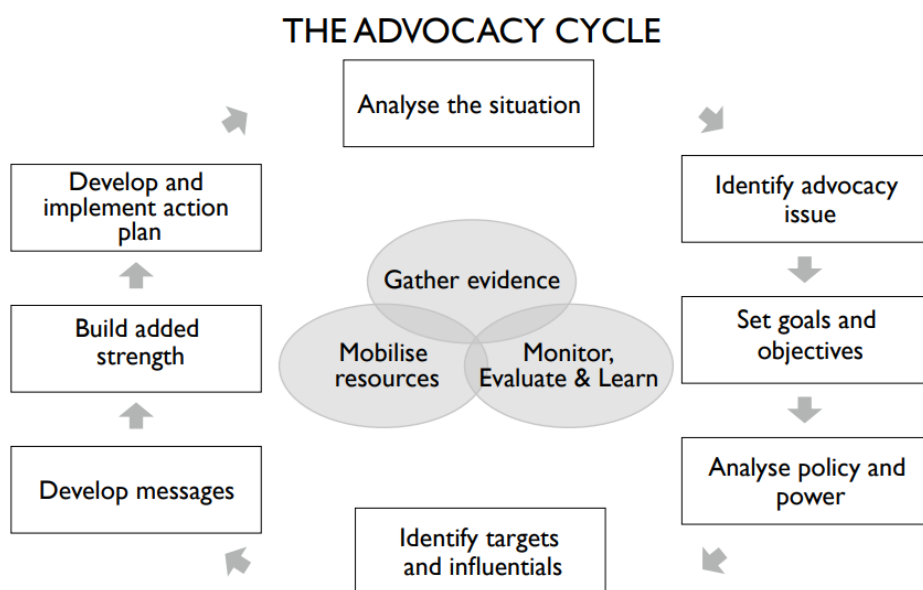## Advocacy

The QCWA has roots in advocacy in the support of improving the lives of women and children in regional, rural and remote Queensland. One of the reasons Queensland Health chose to partner with the QCWA in 2015 was to utilize their skills in advocacy, to promote health through community activities focused on healthy eating and lifestyle initiatives. Often you may look at your community and see the need for larger environmental and structural changes to promote health. These changes could include better walking paths, more green space, community gardens, healthier tuck shops and more. Creating change in these areas can seem daunting, but by following the Country Kitchens PATHway, we can support you to build skills overtime in advocating on behalf of your communities to government, private organisations, councils and more.

The advocacy cycle is a useful way of visualizing what needs to be done in our advocacy work. The advocacy cycle can be divided into stages, with the time it takes to complete each stage varying greatly depending on the complexity of the issue. The reason it is referred to as a cycle is because developing, planning, implementing and reviewing an advocacy strategy is a repetitive and flexible process. Throughout the process, advocates are continuously gathering evidence, evaluating, learning and mobilizing resources. The basic advocacy cycle can be seen below:

THE ADVOCACY CYCLE

Let's work through a simplified example of the advocacy cycle. In this instance, we want to advocate for better walking paths in our community.

- **Identify advocacy issue:** You have formed a walking group with your QCWA branch and realized there were not any safe, flat or enjoyable walking trails nearby. This created a barrier to performing the group exercise.

- **Set goals and objectives:** Research as much as you can about your issue before setting goals and objectives.

  - *Goal:* Increase physical activity in the community by developing safe and desirable walking spaces
  - *Objectives:* Council to approve funding for riverside walking path within the year, with construction complete within 2 years.

Advocacy continued...

- **Analyse policy and power:** Identify which members of council you need to get on side. Who approves funding? Who approves infrastructure? Which local companies in town could take on the project? What influence do state and federal government have? Are there any grants available?

- **Identify targets and influencers:**
    - *Targets:* the walking path targets all members of the community who would use it.
    - *Influencers:* People with influence who can help you meet goals and objectives. This may include local businesses and health professionals in your community who can help develop your message.

- **Develop message:** Write statements tailored to different target audiences. Statements should define the issue, state proposed solutions, and describe actions that need to be taken. Communicate the message and influence the target audiences, in whatever way is most appropriate. For example, I may advertise a community focus group at the QCWA hall for community members to give feedback on where a walking path would be best placed.

- **Build added strength:** Write letters, get on the phone, and visit people who can help support the need for a walking path in your community. These may include experts in environmental health, town planners, urban designers, community influencers and more.

- **Develop and implement action plan:** Finalise an action plan with your advocacy committee. This committee should be made of your target group, experts, influencers, and key decision makers.

- **Analyse the situation:** Continuously monitor and analyse progress, you may need to review and re-work planning after advice from experts, research or other information comes to light.

Advocacy is the last step on the Country Kitchens training PATHway and is something we build our facilitators up to over time. The team is always here to support you in all your efforts for healthier communities so don't hesitate to get in touch with your CK buddy.