



CITY OF TACOMA OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL ISSUE BRIEF

TO: Mayor Anders Ibsen
FROM: Bucoda Warren, Chief Policy Analyst to the Mayor
COPIES TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager; Allyson Griffith, Deputy City Manager
SUBJECT: Briefing on CCR and CAMs and options for modernization
DATE: March 10, 2026

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTION:

Mayor Ibsen has shared an interest in reviewing the Council Consideration Request (CCR) and Council Action Memorandum (CAM) documents used by Council and staff to bring forward policy to ensure they include the right information to understand the goals and end state, and the measures and follow up required to maintain accountability for delivering on the goal.

This memo focuses on the CCR, because the documents are similar but the CCRs are only utilized by the Council and Council staff whereas the CAM is utilized by all staff. Parallel efforts will ensure the CAMs are adjusted to match conversations regarding the CCR.

BACKGROUND:

The City utilizes two documents for bringing forward items to the City Council, the Council Consideration Requests (CCR) and the Council Action Memorandums (CAM). All items that go before the Council for formal adoption during the business meeting utilize the CAM to present information to the Council and the public.

The CCRs however are only utilized by Council and Council staff. These are similar documents that are more focused on policy objectives and Council Contingency Fund requests, and historically have been used as a first introduction of a policy objective or funding request by Council, which opens up discussion and changes, further research, or whatever may be needed, prior to the final policy coming forward via the CAM. Below are overviews of each document and the current headings on each document.

Council Consideration Requests (CCRs)

Council Consideration Requests are the formal mechanism used by policy staff and Council once the Mayor or Council Members have identified a preferred policy direction and secured initial support from two to three Council colleagues. A CCR places the issue on a study session agenda and initiates the first public, Council-level conversation about the proposed direction.

At this stage, the goal is not adoption, but alignment and refinement. CCRs typically outline the proposed concept, key questions for Council discussion, preliminary impacts, and known gaps in information. Council feedback often results in additional research, community or stakeholder outreach, fiscal analysis, and coordination with the City Manager and departments to develop more complete recommendations. Council's role with CCRs is to frame the issue, facilitate constructive discussion, and help assess whether there is sufficient consensus to move toward formal action.

Council Action Memorandums (CAMs)

Council Action Memorandums are a document intended to communicate a recommendation to the City Council on a proposal, policy, service, program, project, or purchase before the full Council for consideration and adoption. These memorandums present the recommended action in its final form, whether as an ordinance, resolution, formal direction to staff, or statement of policy. They are brought forward both by policy staff, and staff across the general government and utilities.

CAMs contain relevant information that could include comprehensive background information, a summary of the policy development process, results of community and stakeholder outreach, detailed fiscal and staffing impacts, risk analysis, legal considerations, and a discussion of alternatives that were considered but not advanced. This stage reflects extensive coordination with the City Manager, department directors, legal counsel, and finance staff to ensure the proposal is implementable and aligned with organizational capacity. The expectation at this point is that the Mayor and Council are prepared to take formal action based on the completed analysis and public process.

Current CCR Headings:

- LEGISLATIVE INTENT:
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ (CUSTOMER RESEARCH):
- 2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:
- ALTERNATIVES:
- EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:
- SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:
- FISCAL IMPACT:

Current CAM Headings:

- SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:
- COUNCIL SPONSORS:
- BACKGROUND:
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:
- 2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:
- ALTERNATIVES:
- EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:
- STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:
- FISCAL IMPACT:

STATUS OF THE ISSUE:

Staff is currently in the process of updating both documents as part of a regular review to ensure they align with the Tacoma 2035 Strategic Plan and reflect feedback from departments and regular users of the CAMs. As part of this work, staff are reviewing the structure and content of these documents to ensure they clearly communicate the purpose of the proposal, relevant background information, potential impacts, and expectations for follow-up or evaluation. To focus this conversation on Council updates to these documents the review will focus on the CCRs which the Council has the most direct control over.

Staff will incorporate feedback on the CCRs in the updates to the CAMs as well. Because CAMs and CCRs share similar structures, any adjustments to the information Council identifies as helpful in the CCR process should also be reflected in future updates to the CAM template.

The CCRs are the Council’s primary tool for introducing policy ideas for initial discussion. While they mirror CAMs in many ways, CCRs currently do not have a formalized review process when submitted and are typically placed directly on a Study Session agenda once sponsors bring it forward. This structure supports flexibility and timely introduction of policy ideas but can result in variation in the level of detail provided across CCRs. CAMs however undergo a structured review process that includes fiscal, legal, and departmental review to ensure the proposal is accurate, implementable, and in the appropriate form prior to Council consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES:

Based on the question raised regarding ensuring Council documents clearly communicate the intended goals, end state, and accountability for follow-up, several potential adjustments to the CCR structure could help improve clarity and consistency while maintaining the document’s role as an early policy discussion tool.

Clarify the Desired Outcome

While the current Legislative Intent section outlines the purpose of a proposal, Council may benefit from a clearer articulation of the intended outcome. Adding a short “Desired Outcome or End State” section could help describe the condition or change the proposal is intended to achieve if the policy direction moves forward. The end state should also indicate an estimated completion date for when the objective is met and a statement summarizing how the Council would know the objective was met or not. This end state should be shaped by staff perspective as much as possible especially when estimating the “what” and “when”. This would provide a clearer reference point for future implementation and evaluation.

Connect to Tacoma 2035 and Other Plans

The CCRs and CAMs need to be updated in some manner regardless to match the strategic priorities to the new 10-year plan adopted by Council, which will include new goals, measures, and metrics connected to the new plan. Council could also add to this section an expectation, drop down, or other form of list of all of the strategic plans under Tacoma 2035 and have CCRs reference other plans and the measures their policy hopes to impact. This would help create clearer connections to the City’s many strategic plans and support the desired outcome identified in that section. This section could also be expanded to include a brief description of how success would be measured if the proposal is implemented. Including key metrics or indicators of success, where appropriate, would help establish a shared understanding of how Council and staff will know whether the policy objective has been achieved.

Provide Early Implementation Context

Because CCRs introduce policy concepts before a final proposal is developed, Council may benefit from a brief overview of how the proposal could be implemented. Adding an “Implementation Approach” section could outline potential lead departments, anticipated coordination needs, or whether additional research or analysis would be required before returning with a formal action.

Improve Early Investment Context

The Fiscal Impact section could be restructured to allow for preliminary or order-of-magnitude cost information when exact figures are not yet available. This may include identifying whether the proposal is expected to require minimal resources, potential budget consideration, or a significant funding commitment. Additionally, an order-of-magnitude staff time and capacity estimate could be provided that would give Council insight into the trade-offs for existing work if they pursue new objectives and goals. Providing this early context can help inform Council discussion of feasibility.

Strengthen Follow-Up Expectations

The Evaluation and Follow Up section could include an expected timeline for returning to Council with additional information, a study session update, or a formal Council Action Memorandum. Establishing this expectation can help maintain continuity and accountability as proposals move through the policy development process.

Frame Discussion for Council

CCRs are designed to initiate discussion and alignment among Council Members. Including a “Council Discussion Questions or Decision Points” section could help clarify what feedback the sponsors are seeking during the study session, such as whether Council supports the general direction, requests additional analysis, or wishes to advance the concept toward formal action.

Together, these adjustments could help ensure CCRs continue to serve their purpose as an early policy discussion tool while providing Council and the public with clearer information regarding the intended goals, potential implementation considerations, and how progress will ultimately be evaluated. Below is a draft of what new headings could look like.

Revised CCR Headings:

- Legislative Intent
- Desired Outcome / End State (**new**)
- Strategic Plan Alignment (**expanded**)
 - [Subheading] Key Metrics for Success (**new**)
- Community Engagement / Customer Research
- Implementation Approach (**new**)
- Preliminary Investment Impact (**expanded**)
- Alternatives
- Evaluation and Follow-Up Timeline (**expanded**)
- Council Discussion Questions / Decision Points (**new**)
- Sponsor Recommendation