

POLICY BRIEF TEMPLATE

It is challenging to figure out the correct framing, structure, and style when writing a policy brief. We want to make this process as painless as possible for you, so we have created a template with our best practices to write effective and clear policy briefs and examples from The Brookings Institution and The Stanley Foundation for reference.

STRUCTURE

Executive Summary: Begin every policy brief with a summary or Bottom Line Up Front (“BLUF”) statement of the problem you are addressing and your recommendation on how best to solve it.

TIP: Avoid summarizing any background information here. Your introduction should be concise and focused exclusively on the problem and solution - you will be able to go into your research in the following section.

Background: Provide a concise summary of the issue with relevant historical and/or technical context. What is the current policy, how well is it working, what are the alternative solutions, and how does each option compare with the others?

TIP: If you are using technical data, do not walk the reader through your calculations or process. Instead, include just the findings in your writing or in a table if you want to present a large set of numbers.

Recommendations: Use your qualitative and quantitative findings to explain which of the above options is the best solution to the problem.

Implementation: Share execution steps of your recommended policy. Outline any significant risks, costs, timing barriers, and political implications.

TIP: You can share a timeline on the general implementation of each phase of your recommendation to help your reader quickly and easily understand how long it will take to see results.

Conclusion: What is the big picture? Reinforce the importance, urgency, and stakes of your policy. Explain consequences if your reader does or does not implement your policy or recommend it to their boss.

STYLE GUIDELINES

Concision, concision, concision. Use simple words, the active voice, and avoid jargon. Remember, you are writing for an intelligent, but uninformed, reader rather than a policy wonk.

Be objective. Consider different perspectives and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each potential solution.

Memos should be typed on 8.5x11 paper with one-inch margins on each side

Paragraphs should be single spaced with a double space separating each paragraph.

POLICY BRIEF EXAMPLES

[The Brookings Institution, “Memo to the President: Reform Health Care”](#)

[The Stanley Foundation, Center for a New American Security, “Policy Memo”](#)