

How to write a policy brief

What information is needed to successfully navigate the uncertainty of a changing Arctic?

The Center for Arctic Policy Studies (CAPS) at the University of Alaska serves the public, the Alaska State government, the Arctic Council and Working Groups, scholars, journalists, and industries seeking to understand Alaska and Arctic issues. We facilitate the sharing of expertise from research scientists, practitioners, Indigenous Knowledge holders, and educators with decision-makers in local, tribal, state, and federal governments. In times of rapid social and environmental change in the Arctic, our aim is to provide clear advice to policy leaders.

Why should you write a policy brief?

Because your research matters to decision makers! It provides you with a succinct and targeted hand-out you can use in a variety of venues, and for CAPS to advocate on your behalf.

Who is the audience?

The key is to consider what sorts of decisions need your research findings to inform them? We can help you target more directly the key audience (legislators, agency employees, tribal managers, the press etc.) and message. So, ask yourself, who do you think should take into consideration the observations you have made before a decision is made?

What will my policy brief contain?

Your 2-sided brief will text explaining your key findings and their policy-relevance on one side and a graphical abstract on the other side. We can help create the graphical abstract, or you can bring us a sketched out abstract and we can help you with text. In total, the policy brief will be approximately 1000 words. Jargon, abstractions, and acronyms should be minimized.

The general structure includes:

- Title
- 3-4 Key Findings
- The Problem Context
- Your research method and results
- How your data connects to the problem's solutions
- Policy options based on what your information explains
- References should be held to 2-4 touchstones.

While you retain ownership of your materials, we will disseminate the brief on your behalf.

Great, I'm writing one! Where do I start?

First, review the graphic on the other side and identify which area of the policy process your findings link to. Second, think of a short, evocative title. Now we are ready to work with you to shape it to your audience!

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Your research matters to decision makers

POLICY PROCESS

YOUR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Historical and Political Contexts
Political and Policy Circumstances
Environmental Conditions

Biogeophysical Processes
Indigenous Knowledge
Demographics and Social Trajectories

Public Attention
Ethics and Values
Agenda Setting

POLICY FORMULATION

New Innovative Programs
Incremental Changes to Old Programs
Agency Relationships

Regulatory Bridges and Barriers
Stability and Change of Conditions
Budgetary Evaluations

Scale of Governance
Scenarios and Modeling
Setting Objectives

POLICY ADOPTION

Solution Sets
Agency Priorities

Legislative Voting
Ballot Referendum

Executive Decisions
Legal Mandates

Citizen Education
Legitimation

IMPLEMENTATION

Developing Indicators
Establishing Procedures
Creating Guidance Documents

Issuing Grants
Seeking Funding
Organizing Agency Work-flows

Management of Government Resources
Legal Regimes

EVALUATION

Monitoring Change
Observing Systems

Analyzing Policy Fit
Listening to Stakeholders

Ethical Review
Surprising Results

Unexpected Changes
Negative Externalities