**Session**

**9**

 Policy Briefs

Introduction

This session focuses on Policy Briefs, which you were introduced to at the end of the first session of this module. Policy briefs are short concise documents, usually written for a variety of policy actors, providing information on critical topics and frequently suggesting policy options, advice and recommendations. They are increasingly used for policy advocacy within government and by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). They are key tools in bridging the gap between research findings and policy implementation and are valued by policy makers in both developed and LMICs.

In this session you will learn more about the unique features of policy briefs as communication tools and what is involved in planning, writing and disseminating policy briefs. Working through this session and the activity will provide you with good preparation for Assignment 2, which will require you to write a policy brief on a topic you have identified during the course of this module.

Session Contents

1. Introduction to policy briefs
2. Planning a Policy Brief
3. Writing a Policy Brief
4. Dissemination of Policy Briefs.
5. Session summary
6. References

Timing of this Session

There are two core readings, x additional (optional) readings, a number of reflection points and one activity. This is a fairly short session and should take you about four hours.

Learning Outcomes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Public Health Outcomes*** By the end of this session, you should be able to:* Understand the purpose and role of policy briefs in policy decision-making
* Identify appropriate structure, format and language for policy briefs
* Plan and write a policy brief
* Critique sample policy briefs
* Disseminate policy briefs
 | ***Academic Learning Skills***In the session, you will practise these skills:* Reading critically
* Reading with questions in mind
* Identifying effective structure of a text
* Reflecting on concepts, based on your own experience
* Using samples as models for writing in appropriate format and language
* Improve writing using a checklist of effective writing criteria
 |

Readings

Jones, N. and Walsh, C. (2008). *Policy briefs as a communication tool for development research, ODI Background Notes.* Overseas Development Institute

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/594.pdf>

Young, E. and Quinn, L. (2017). *An essential guide to writing policy briefs*. International Centre for Policy Advocacy: Berlin, Germany

<https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/icpa_policy_briefs_essential_guide.pdf>

Malich, E. and Marion, S. *Policy brief: Brazilian Access to Medicines case study.*

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WHO. *Policy brief: Responding to industry Initiatives to increase access to essential medicines*

<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/documents/s23358en/s23358en.pdf>

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). *Policy brief: Alternative supply chain models.*

<https://www.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=17532&lid=3>

**1. Introduction to Policy Briefs**

**1.1 What are they?**

Policy briefs are communication tools used to inform or advise actors about an important issue which requires new a policy or policy change. They are thoroughly researched and present a synthesis of relevant information on a complex issue in such a way that the readers (usually policy-makers) can understand the key points and take from the brief what they need in order to make policy decisions.

Policy briefs use evidence-based research findings and make recommendations. They are shorter, more accessible forms of communication to engage informed, non-specialist actors than policy research papers or reports, which are often lengthy and expert-oriented. Policy briefs have increased in popularity over the past few years, which likely points to their value.

Here are two definitions of policy briefs.

*A policy brief presents a concise summary of information that can help readers understand, and likely make decisions about, government policies*.

University of North Carolina, nd: 1.

*Policy briefs present research or policy findings to policy actors highlighting the relevance of specific research to policy and offering recommendations for change.*

ffrench-Constant, L. (2014): 4

So, key features of policy briefs are that they are:

* Short
* Advocacy-oriented
* Jargon free
* For non-specialists.

Many different names are used for policy papers that essentially fall into the category of policy briefs, such as briefing, policy memo, position paper, position briefing, fact sheet.

Jones and Walsh (2008) wrote a set of background notes in a study on communication needs related to effective policy briefs. Read this important paper which explores the issues around research for and uptake of policy briefs.

**Reading**

Jones, N. and Walsh, C. (2008).*Policy briefs as a communication tool for development research, ODI Background Notes.*

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/594.pdf>

To read effectively, you should read with some questions in mind – information you are looking for. As you read these notes, look for answers to the following questions:

1. Jones and Walsh describe two approaches to research in relation to the policy-making process. What are the differences they highlight between ‘strictly objective’ researchers and ‘citizen researchers’?

2. What are the differences between the interests of researchers (who write policy briefs) and policy-makers (for whom they are written) in the policy-making process?

3. In Figure 2, look at the graph depicting the uptake of research in policy-making. What are the biggest obstacles?

4. Read the Conclusion. What are some of the key messages emerging from the study reported in the article?

**1.2 Who are they for?**

Policy briefs are written for informed non-specialists.These are people who have an interest in the issue/s of the policy brief but are not experts in this area and do not conduct policy research or read expert publications like journal articles or research reports. Some policy makers may be experts in the area, but this is not usually the case.

The most common audience for policy briefs are policy actors – individuals at international, regional, national or provincial/local levels who make or change government legislation. However, many policy briefs target wider but knowledgeable audiences including decision makers, politicians, civil servants, researchers, NGO advocates and journalists. It is critical that the policy briefs target the right policy actor/s and this depends on the issue of the policy brief and the level of its application.

**Reflection**

*Think of some national, regional and international policy actors that are involved with, or have an interest in, pharmaceutical or public health policy?*

**Feedback**

* National government policy actors Minister of Health, Minister of Finance
* Regional & International policy actors: Southern African Development Community (SADC) & African Union (AU) health representatives, World Health Organisation,
* Other policy actors with interests: International NGOs, USAID/PEPFAR, trade unions, activists, media, academics

**1.3 Why are they written?**

There can be many reasons for writing policy briefs: policy actors generally like policy briefs; and they can help change policy for the better! Policy briefs present important information or research findings in a short and appealing way, as opposed to policy research studies which are often too long and expert-orientated for most policy actors.

In their background notes on policy briefs, Jones and Walsh (2008) quote an Indian sub-national level policy-maker (therefore an informed non-specialist) on the importance of policy briefs for him: ‘*I often read policy briefs for both my official and non-official needs. I cannot think of going forward without consulting policy briefs. It expands my knowledge as I get an opportunity to understand what is happening around me*’. (Jones and Walsh, 2008:3)

Young and Quinn (2017) comment as follows on the purpose of policy briefs:

 *“The purpose of the policy brief is to convince the target audience of the urgency of the current problem and the need to adopt the preferred alternative or course of action outlined and therefore, serve as an impetus for action”*

Recent studies have found that policy briefs are the preferred starting points for civil servants when commencing work in a new area (Young & Quinn, 2017).

Policy actors frequently consult experts and utilise existing relationships with academics around 50% of time when starting to research an issue (Talbot & Talbot, 2014). Policy briefs can also be a first step for researchers or experts in establishing a good reputation and repeat consultations with policy actors.

**1.4 Who writes them?**

Look at page 7 of the reader-friendly document below by Young and Quinn (2017) to see who their policy brief writing guide is intended for – i.e. who generally writes policy briefs. When you have found this information, read the document critically, using the questions below as a guide.

**Reading**

Young, E. and Quinn, L. (2017). *An essential guide to writing policy briefs*. International Centre for Policy Advocacy: Berlin, Germany

<https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/icpa_policy_briefs_essential_guide.pdf>

Questions:

1. Do you think this guide is appropriately written and presented for the intended audience?

2. Does it include helpful information and focus on appropriate aspects of writing policy briefs, and is there anything missing – in other words do you think it answers the questions you might have if you had to write a policy brief?

Policy briefs are based on research, similar to a research paper, but with a practical, decision-making audience in mind, as opposed to a mainly academic audience. So the policy brief writer is essentially a researcher, writing for a different, specific purpose and therefore using a different, specific style and format appropriate for persuading policy-makers by presenting convincing evidence on an issue.

**1.5 Key features of policy briefs**

Several key features of policy briefs have been identified and are important to know. Young and Quinn, in the guide you read above, outlined the following points as common features of effective policy briefs:

*Engaging – lead with striking facts*

Start with something challenging or surprising so that your audience will want to read further.

*Policy relevant and focussed – linked to current discussions*

Frame the policy brief in line with target audience’s current discussions.

*Professional, not academic – focus on the practical*

Focus on new insights to problem and potential evidence-based solutions.

*Succinct – keep it short and easy to read*

It should be written in clear, short sentences and not be more than 6-8 pages in length (3,000 words).

*Limited – don’t include analysis of the whole issue*

Provide a comprehensive but targeted argument with a limited space, the focus of the brief needs to be limited to a particular aspect of a broader problem.

*Understandable – use simple language and avoid jargon*

Keep the language clear and simple, avoid jargon and academic language, whilst ensuring argument is well explained.

*Accessible - make message stand out*

Use layout, sub-titles and visuals to ensure that key message stands out.

*Branded and promotional – make it your own*

Use promotional and marketing features to enhance access, give a professional look and also brand them. (Look at Page 17 of the reading above for clarification of this point.)

*Practical and feasible – tackle real issues*

Provide arguments based on current practice and propose realistic and feasible recommendations.

**1.6 Difference between policy brief and policy study**

Policy briefs are one type of policy paper. Longer, research-driven policy papers that target expert audiences are called policy studies or policy research, policy report and research paper. Table 1 is adapted from the reading by Young & Quinn and highlights the key differences between policy papers and policy briefs. It may be helpful to refer to this table when you are critiquing or preparing a policy brief.

**Table 1: Differences between policy study and policy brief (adapted from Young & Quinn (2017: 13)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Areas of difference** | **Type of policy papers** |
| **Policy study** | **Policy brief** |
| **Target audience** | Other policy specialists or experts | Informed non-specialists (decision-makers, advocates, journalists) |
| **Focus** | Issue-driven: in-depth analysis based on research | Audience driven: specific policy message to engage key stakeholders |
| **Context of Use**  | Focussed on influencing current expert thinking | Used as a tool to support advocacy activities |
| **Methodology** | Lots of evidence based on primary research  | Only key findings from primary research |
| **Ideas/Language**  | Discipline specific and technical  | Clear and simple, no jargon |
| **Length**  | 35-60 pages | 4-8 pages |

Recently there has been an emergence of hybrid policy papers which are between a policy study and a policy brief and are about 20 pages long. They often look like a policy brief in terms of format and layout but comprise shorter studies often conducted with short turn-around time and with a relatively small budget.

**2. Planning a policy brief**

Two key questions to consider as you plan your policy brief are:

* **What is the purpose of a policy brief?**

The purpose can range from changing policy to raising awareness. The purpose of the policy brief will determine the target audience.

* **What does a policy actor want from a policy brief?**

Policy actors want relevant solutions to policy problems. A policy brief should lay out realistic, evidence- informed solutions.

**3. Structure and content of a policy brief**

The structure and format of a policy brief is important to ensure that it is easy to read and understand.

The sections below describe what should be considered when writing a policy brief. We begin by laying out some considerations for the format of policy briefs such as the title, executive summary, context, policy alternatives, recommendations, references, appendices and acknowledgements. Then we provide some input on the length, language and design elements for a policy brief.

Remember that the structure and format of a policy brief is shaped by what the aim is, the target audience, and the information to be presented. Therefore, consider the two points in section 2 above as you go through this section (3).

We have provided three policy briefs for you to engage with as we explain the structure and format of a policy brief in section 3 of the session. We refer to them as policy brief 1, 2 and 3 and suggest you use the links below to open the three policy briefs so you can easily refer to them.

*Policy brief 1: Brazilian Access to Medicines case study.*

This policy brief provides lessons on increasing access to medicines using the Brazilian experience and is authored by Erika Malich and Sarah Marion.

<https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/graduate_fellows_pb_no.2_0.pdf>

*Policy brief 2: Responding to industry Initiatives to increase access to essential medicines*

The brief is centred on industry-based initiatives taking place in countries to increase essential medicines and the impact for the health system and is from the World Health Organization’s Department of Essential Medicines and Health products.

<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/documents/s23358en/s23358en.pdf>

*Policy brief 3: Alternative supply chain models*

This case describes alternative supply chain models for getting products to people without a traditional central medical score and is authored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

**3.1. Format**

*3.1.1 Title*

The title is usually the first visible part in the policy brief and it acts as an introduction to the contents of the brief.

**Activity: Analyse titles**

Look at the three policy briefs provided in the supplementary materials for the module, and think about the titles of each of the three briefs. Reflect on which titles stand out or are noticeable. Also think about what kind of information regarding the contents of the policy brief you can get just from looking at the title.

When one looks at the policy briefs the first thing that the reader engages with is the title, it should therefore be short (less than 12 words), catchy and to the point. However, the title should not be too short and cryptic, or the target audience will fail to understand the message. One can consider using a question as a title to attract the readers’ attention or using sub titles if the title is too long. In addition, relevant key words can be used to give the reader an idea of what to expect from reading the brief. The title of the first policy brief for example already informs the reader that the context of the information in the brief is Brazil.

*3.1.2 Executive summary*

If you look at most policy briefs, they will usually have a summary paragraph or sentences at the beginning of the brief. The idea of the executive summary is to present the main or key points of the policy brief.

The executive summary should ideally grab the reader’s attention, and prompt them to continue reading. The summary should be designed in a way such that the reader remembers it even if they read nothing else.

**Activity: Presentation of the executive summary**

Look at the three briefs provided and identify the executive summary. Notice that most briefs will highlight the summary using a box or different font.

Notice that the executive summary can also be presented as key points (as in Policy brief 1 and 2) or an abstract (Policy brief 3).

The executive summary normally includes clear statements on the following issues:

• The specific issue or problem addressed in the brief;

• The most striking policy failures or insights identified;

• The main recommendations.

NB: The executive summary is usually written after completing the other sections of the policy brief in order to provide an adequate summary after getting a sense of all the content that has been included in the brief.

*3.1.3 Context or scope of the problem*

This part of the brief serves as the introduction which tries to convince the target audience of a current problem which exists and requires action.

The description of the problem depends on the goal of the brief and the problem itself for example if you consider the policy process from session 2; during the policy formulation process, the problem description in a policy brief may be succinct as it will focus on the available policy options. However, if the brief is written during the policy evaluation process, a more extensive problem description may be needed as the policy would have been extensively evaluated.

As such, this section usually includes the following:

1. A clear statement of the problem or issue in focus based on the context (the local context where the problem is situated in).

2. A short overview of the root causes of the problem or what has led to the current problem.

3. A clear statement of the policy implications of the problem that clearly establishes the current importance and policy relevance of the issue and its impact.

One can also consider giving examples or evidence of the problems and the root causes in this section.

**Activity: Identify the context statement**

Look at the context statement in Policy Brief 2, entitled “What is the issue” at the bottom of page 1. Notice that this section is also referred to as the introduction or issue statement. See if you can pick out some of the main points of interest that the policy brief wants to address from this section.

*3.1.4 Policy alternatives*

The previous section focused on setting the context of the problem and the implications. This next section is used to describe the shortcomings of the current approach and to then illustrate the policy alternatives that can be used to change the situation.

This can be done in different ways; one can choose for example to present the research process that led to the consideration of the policy alternatives. Here one can explain how the research was conducted and the main findings. Alternatively some wanting to focus on suggesting a new solution may only mention the strategic options and then develop the recommendations section (3.1.5) in more detail

The main aim is to present a convincing argument for the option you have chosen. The element normally includes sections on the following:

• The options or alternatives considered;

• The principles and evaluation criteria you have used to weigh up the options;

• An argument on why you have chosen one option over the others available.

*3.1.5 Policy recommendations*

After presenting the argument for various policy alternatives, one can then suggest policy recommendations that can address the shortcomings highlighted in the sections above. This can include a breakdown of the specific steps required for implementation of the recommendations or simply a closing paragraph with the main recommendations. The recommendations can also be presented in bullet points.

Young and Quinn (2017) in their essential guide to writing policy briefs suggest the following for the recommendations section:

*“The issue of space in the brief is often a challenge in this section, i.e. how much detail to include? The balancing act lies in demonstrating the feasibility and fit of the option, but not presenting a full action plan. This section often features recommendations divided by actor (e.g. what local governments should do) and a synopsis of the series of actions presented using bullet points or numbers.”* Young & Quinn, 2017: 16.

Most importantly, the recommendation sections do not have to be at the end of the policy brief, there are various ways to present the recommendations in the policy brief. Some policy briefs also present the recommendations in different positions, sometimes in the introduction as part of the executive summary in the brief and techniques.

* They can be presented in the first page as part of the executive summary (3.1.2).
* One can place them at the end as a separate section.
* Recommendations can also be distributed throughout the policy brief depending on where they are relevant to the text and can be highlighted by a different font.

**Activity: Highlighting of recommendations**

Look at the examples of recommendations from two of the policy briefs provided: Policy brief 1 (pages 4 and 5), and Policy brief 2 (page 5). Notice how the two briefs highlight recommendations using bold fonts, different colours or boxes.

**Reflection:**

*What are some of the ways one can use the format to highlight the recommendations in the policy brief?*

***Feedback***

Highlighting the recommendations is crucial as they are the key message of the brief. Wherever they are placed, the recommendations should be:

* Clear and easy to understand.
* Easy to find. Consider writing them in boldface, in a different colour, or in a box labelled “Recommendations”.
* Short and succinct to avoid overwhelming the reader. If one has a long list of recommendations, others can be written or be the focus of a different brief.
* Make them realistic and feasible to the context.

*3.1.6 References*

References are added at the end of the policy brief to support and establish the credibility of the information included, similar to academic papers. References included should be minimal, only highlighting the key sources.

*3.1.7 Appendices or links to further information*

Although the brief is a short and targeted document, authors sometimes decide that their argument needs further support and so can include an appendix if necessary.

One can also link or refer the reader to other additional sources if they need more information. Alternatively, for organisations which may have a series of existing policy briefs on the same topic, this section can link the other existing policy briefs by including a hyperlink for example.

*3.1.8 Acknowledgements*

This section acknowledges the funding agencies if relevant and individuals who made significant contributions to the content of the policy brief, as well as an address or hyperlink where readers can find more information. One can also include the publisher and date as well as information on the copyright (whether the material can be reproduced without permission).

*3.1.9 Contact details/Authors names*

Some authors print their names quite prominently under the main title, others place them at the end of the text or in a footnote. Including the names, affiliations and email addresses of the authors is crucial if readers would like to contact the authors for more information.

Most briefs will summarise contact details and links to further information as one statement. An example of the following statement from Policy brief 2 is shown below:

For more information contact:

World Health Organization

Department of Essential Medicines and Health Products

Avenue Appia 1211

Geneva 27 Switzerland

E-mail: empinfo@who.int

Web site: www.who.int/medicines/en/

**3.2 Length**

The length of a policy brief can vary depending on the discipline and content. The recommended length is between one to four pages (usually around 1500 words).

**Reflection:**

*Now that you have an understanding of the role that policy briefs play in disseminating information, why do you think the length of a policy brief is an important consideration when designing a policy brief? What could be the consequences of having a brief that is too long or too short?*

*Feedback*

The length of a policy brief may hinder particular target audiences. For example, the intended target audience may not be receptive to a long and in-depth document as opposed to a reasonable and summarised version of the information. At the same time, having a brief that is too short may not be adequate to convey all the key information required.

**3.3 Language**

The intended target audience may come from a wide range of backgrounds. Understanding the intended audience can assist in deciding how to structure the language of the policy brief. One needs to consider whether the target audience are specific professionals with in-depth knowledge regarding the discipline or a broader audience that may have limited knowledge in a specific area.

For example, the language used if the target audience is pharmacists, and the goal of the policy brief is to advocate for a change in procuring medication will be different to a target audience of manufacturers in a pharmaceutical company. One might include more information outlining and defining elements of the dispensing process if the audience is manufacturers but might not explain or define medication and dispensing terms for pharmacists who are knowledgeable in those aspects.

Other factors to pay attention to when writing a brief are:

* Try and make the language clear, simple and easy to understand.
* Avoid using academic terms or jargon that would be present in a project report or an academic paper.
* Provide a well explained and easy to follow argument.
* Use headings and sub headings to facilitate the logical flow of the argument.
* Keep the headings short and clear and keep the paragraphs short and linked to single idea.

**3.4 Design**

One can consider using the following to highlight sections of the text, reduce the number of words used or attract the audience to the brief:

* *Boxes and sidebars*: These can be used to present definitions or explanations, lists or examples. The reader should be able to understand them without reading the main text but they should be referred to in the text. Policy brief 2 uses boxes to highlight the key aim of the brief in page 1 and the main recommendations in page 5 for example.
* *Tables* are a good way to present certain types of information but should be kept simple and be used to help readers understand the content. See how policy brief 3 (page 3) uses tables to summarise case studies that provide the context for the information in the brief.
* *Graphics*, including diagrams (such as flow charts or schematic diagrams), graphs (such as bar charts, line graphs and pie charts) and maps are an important element in the design. Readers often look at them before reading the text. Remember to use the captions to explain the content for the reader. Policy brief 3 for example uses a graphic on page 4 (Figure 1) to illustrate alternative supply chain models for the reader which is the key message of the brief. This summarises information for the reader at first glance.
* *Photographs or pictograms* can also be used to attract the reader’s attention. The quality of the photograph is a key element to consider if one wants to include photographs.

**3.5. Check your brief**

After writing a brief, stand back and check whether the information in the brief is correct and is presented in a way that makes it easy for the reader to understand.

The table below provides a summary of what one needs to consider when writing and designing a brief based on the sections we have covered so far. Consider using the table as a way of checking your brief once it has been written. The elements in the table below have been framed with the questions that the target audience will have when reading the policy brief as a guide for one to consider when writing one.

 **Table 2: Summary of policy brief contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key sections of the policy brief** | **Questions for consideration** | **Possible responses** |
| **Purpose** | What is the purpose of the policy brief? What aspect of the pharmaceutical policy or management is it aiming to address?  | To convince decision-makers that there should be a policy related to this issue, or that the existing policy needs to be changed. |
| **Audience** | Who will be the audience the policy brief will address?What will they need to know?Are they likely to be open to your recommendations on the issue or resistant?  | The audience is decision- or policy-makers who, are not necessarily experts on this issue. They will need scientific/technical as well as contextual information in order to understand the issue properly. They will probably need to be convinced about the issue, and might be resistant to a change in policy for various reasons. |
| **Content** | What information do you need to include, in order to get your message across convincingly to your audience? | We would need to include focused information about: purpose of the brief; background or context of the issue; description and scope of the issue; research done on it, including methods used; implications of the research; recommendations based on the research; summary of main points; statement of key message; references; contact details of the writers/experts. |
| **Structure** | How could you structure this information so it is clear and concise for the readers? | The briefing should have at least the following components, in this order:The title of the policy briefThe executive summary/ Summary of main points and statement of the key message – a ‘Call to action’; Introduction to/identification of the problem/ description of the background or context of the problem;Policy alternatives or the summary of key research done on the issue, methods used and relevant results. As well as the implications of the research for policy/ practicePolicy recommendations based on implications of the research;References for research, and contact details of writers/experts for follow-up. |
| **Language** | In what way should you write the brief, to convince your audience of the importance of the issue and action to be taken? | The issue should be clearly focused and written in clear, concise and direct language. Use active, not passive verbs; include questions to focus attention; use shorter sentences for impact; avoid jargon. |
| **Format** | How can you make the brief easy to read and interesting to look at? | Keep the brief short (about 1500 words, 4 pages); use strong headings, and bullet points or tables to clarify; highlight key points in boxes or sidebars; use graphics where possible; don’t crowd too much onto a page. |

After going through the sections involved in developing a brief, and the summary table above, the following activity will help you understand what the reader can pick up when looking at a brief. This can help you have a clear picture of what to consider when you write your policy brief later in the course.

**Activity:** **Critique a policy brief**

1. Read the policy brief on Measuring Supply Chain Costs.

2. Use the table provided in the supplementary materials to assess the policy brief. Fill in the response in the highlighted section of the table which will be guided by the questions presented.

*Note: The table provided is similar to Table 2 in section 3.5 although the questions have been changed to allow you to critique the policy brief.*

3. Submit the policy brief that you have selected to assess, together with your completed assessment table. You will be given a mark and feedback.

**4. Dissemination of policy briefs**

When you have written your policy brief, you need to disseminate it to the target audience, otherwise your policy brief will not be read or serve any useful purpose. In fact, you should think about this at the planning stages as it is likely to influence your policy brief.

Remember, a policy brief is a **stand-alone document**. It is not an academic product *per se,* so you would not expect it to be published in journals. It is rather an advocacy or support tool written for a target group of decision or policy makers.

Policy briefs can be disseminated in the following ways:

* paper copies at meetings, presentations, press conferences
* posted on websites
* distributed through email lists
* Distributed to individuals by email or post - sent to specific policy actors with an interest in the topic, rather than general departments or companies or unrelated policy actors who are unlikely to read it.
* Social media is becoming increasingly important and elements of policy brief such as visuals, key messages can be used in social media posts such as twitter and blogs or in social media tools such as infographics. These provide opportunities for two-way engagement which can be used to further delay policy brief.

**Other opportunities for engaging policy makers**

Recognise that whilst policy briefs are useful tools to engage your target audience, they can only achieve limited goals, so consider leveraging further opportunities to take issues further:

*Follow up*

* Take the opportunity to make personal contact with policy actors and ask if they require additional information or resources on the topic such as research reports.
* If they are not the most relevant actors then ask for names and contact details of the most appropriate.
* Policy makers within government are encouraged to include academia within networks of informal contacts.

*Be proactive*

* Consider holding a public seminar series designed for policy actors

*Seize opportunities*

* Hand out the policy brief at related events and seminars
* Capitalise on press coverage
* Link up with similar campaigns

**5 Session summary**

These are the take-home messages you should have got from this session. We hope you are clear about these key points:

* Policy briefs are communication tools used to inform actors about an important issue which requires new policy or policy change.
* They are written for informed- non specialists, often government decision makers.
* They focus on important policy issues of relevance to the audience.
* They are concise, clearly presented, easy to read documents that are 4-6 pages long.
* They require attention to the format, length and design to ensure readers relate to the content.
* They include key research findings and frequently make policy recommendations.
* Policy briefs need to be disseminated to the target audience which can be done in various ways.

**6 References**

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