

HOW TO STRUCTURE A POLICY ANALYSIS PAPER

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE: Your goal is to inform decision-makers, so be clear about who you are writing for – who you are trying to inform. If you are looking at national policy, is your audience a national coalition or organization or a Congressional Committee? If you are looking at state or local policy, are you addressing a state or local government body or a community organization? This will help ground your problem statement in a specific perspective.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: Describe the issue facing the above decision-makers and provide a clear understanding of how and why this is an issue for them at this particular time. This section basically states the problem from the perspective of the decision-makers.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM: In this section you will provide objective data regarding the scale and scope of the problem, who is impacted by it, how they are impacted, and refer to studies and reports about the issue. Here you are basically backing up your problem statement with facts.

SURVEY OF SOLUTIONS: This section provides a survey of two or three examples of how other jurisdictions or organizations have addressed the problem. For example, if you are investigating affordable housing solutions for an organization in East L.A., this section would describe how other organizations in the country with similar circumstances successfully addressed this problem. Or, if you are investigating strategies of how public investment can improve jobs and income the City of Los Angeles, you would look at model programs from other cities.

It is often useful here to develop a matrix or chart that lays out the elements of the problem you have identified and how your solutions address those elements. This can help you build an analytical and comparative framework for the next section that consists of your recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS: This section consists of your recommendations for action. The recommendations should take into account the perspective and concerns of your audience as presented in your problem statement; the objective conditions of the problem; and what can be borrowed from the experience of others (from your survey of solutions). Finally, this section should include initial steps that your audience of decision-makers might take to implement your recommendations.