

Guidelines to Writing an Effective Policy Statement

What's the overall purpose of a policy statement or memorandum? The purpose of a policy statement is to provide an analysis of a particular situation or problem and recommend *specific* solutions that can address said problem. Well-written policy statements are able to clearly and concisely communicate a sound argument for why the chosen situation/problem is in need of attention and substantiate the viability of proposed solutions. A key piece of ensuring effective communication is being mindful of the audience that is addressed (i.e. is the chosen audience in a position to enact proposed reforms?).

What is the appropriate style and tone of a policy statement? A Policy statement is designed to be a short document that convinces a decision-maker to enact/adopt recommended policies. Consequently, the following style and tones are suggested:

- 1) **Brevity:** Decision-makers do not have a lot of time; therefore, an effective statement is direct and quickly convinces the reader that the problem needs addressing and that the proposed solutions are worthy of adoption.
- 2) **Avoid jargon or overly technical language:** While you may be an expert within your issue area, the person reading your statement may not be. Use language that is accessible, but is still able to convey the specific information.
- 3) **Persuasion:** The ultimate goal is to convince someone to take particular actions – the reader should understand, and be convinced of, what it is they must *do* as a result of this statement. Effective statements are well-researched, supported by multiple data points, and address the viability of the proposed reforms as a means to execute this persuasion.

How should a policy statement be structured? The following categories are recommended:

- 1) Header (to, from, date, subject)
- 2) Summary of the statement
- 3) Background to the situation or problem
- 4) Proposed recommendations
- 5) Conclusion with a clear call-to-action

Below are a series of questions to consider when writing your statement:

- 1) Is the audience of this statement in a position to enact the proposed reforms?
- 2) Has this statement effectively conveyed why the topic at hand is important?
- 3) Who will this reform impact? A targeted, overlooked community or broader populations?
- 4) Why is this proposal better than other solutions being proposed or what has been done in the past?
- 5) Have potential drawbacks of the proposal been addressed?

- 6) How would one know if this policy statement is effective? In other words, what are the specific action items this statement calls for?
- 7) Can anyone, with minimal exposure to the issue, read the statement and understand what it is trying to achieve?

How to prepare for writing the policy statements?

- 1) Take time to look at examples of policy statements written by others to get an understanding of how they are traditionally done. See one written by [Brookings here](#). (Please note that citations used in this example are NOT in line what is required for the Archer Fellowship Program application)
- 2) Determine what the situation or problem is you want to address.
- 3) Begin researching potential recommendations. What have others done? Why aren't those solutions working? If this issue hasn't gotten attention or been addressed previously, why? What is it about your potential solution that makes it the ideal choice?
- 4) Write a draft.
- 5) Share with others to receive as much feedback as possible. Including: friends, advisors, Archer Fellow alumni, and Archer Center staff.

How to include citations in your policy statement?

- 1) Candidates should follow MLA or APA citation guidelines for their paper. There are helpful online resources that assist with creating citations with some even generating the correct citation for you.
- 2) Keep in mind that both the MLA and APA guidelines ask for in text citations along with a summary list of expanded citations.
- 3) Citations are not included in the 750 word limit for the policy paper. An additional page may be used for citations.