

Advanced Policy Writing for Impact

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Why Do We Write Policy Papers?

To get a grade

To get something published

To have a significant sustainable positive impact on the state of the world and/or a specific community

Achieving this goal often requires being focused from the beginning

How Can We Have Impact?

Select and solve a problem

Communicate the solution in such a way that decision makers will act on the recommendations

This will almost always be an iterative process

What does it mean to solve the problem?

For Communication Purposes the solution can be thought of as being in three clunks (lots of variations)

1. Statement of the problems and the recommendations (e.g., early childhood education in X, lags national standards we recommend the following actions to close the gap)
2. The Current Situation: In X we lag national standards ...I
3. The Vision for the Future

In general a good solution will satisfy Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle

It must create public value

It must have legitimacy and support

It must be operationally feasible

What is a communications strategy?

Thinking about creating Legitimacy and Support from the beginning of the project

Who are the key decision makers?

What are their priorities/interests?

If your recommendations are not implemented, what is the decision makers best alternative (e.g., status quo)?

Who are the key stakeholders?

Over the course of the project how often will you meet with key stakeholders/decision makers to make sure they buy-in?

How will you test and confirm recommendations are operationally feasible?

How will you communicate with decision makers?

Decision makers are busy, time is the scarcest resource

Present information in as logical a manner as possible to make it easier to digest (e.g., Pyramid Principle)

Retention is improved by logical order using a pyramid structure

Ideas at any level in the pyramid must always be summaries of the ideas grouped below them

Ideas in each grouping must always be of the same kind of idea

Ideas in each grouping must always be logically ordered.

How will you persuade?

Good policy writing must persuade

Likeability

Reciprocity (Golden Rule)

Social Proof in What Others Do

Consistency of Word and Action

Authority from Expertise

Scarcity

Identifiable Target vs. Anonymous Statistics

Principles and Values

Case study New York City Economic Development Strategy

Discussion of developing policy papers for NYC

Media.NYC.2020

Fashion.NYC.2020

FinancialServices.NYC.2020

The problems we worked on

The communications strategy

Recommendations and impact

Applied Sciences NYC

Cornell University Engineering Campus

Expansion of NYU and Columbia's engineering programs

DPI821 Advanced Policy Writing

Module in Spring

Seminar Format Capped at 18 Students

Monday seminar discussion of a policy paper understanding why it did (or did not) have impact

Wednesday writing workshop for student assignments (each student to submit 2-3 assignments)

Monday discussion will make extensive use of guest speakers/practitioners to discuss policy papers they have been involved with, e.g.

Stian Westlake, leads Nesta's Policy and Research team, which develops new insights into how innovation works and influences policy and practice to make it happen, topic: "The Vital Six Per Cent", a survey of which UK businesses create jobs and the impact this paper has had on UK Government Policy

Jerry Hultin, currently Senior Presidential Fellow at NYU, was Under Secretary of the Navy in the Clinton administration, topic: Reshaping Naval Procurement

