

GENERIC COMPONENTS OF BRIEFING BOOKS

Before writing your briefing book, consider the “hub and spokes” analogy regarding organization--the hub of the wheel representing the key theme and the spokes representing individual findings or recommendations. This type of organization will ensure that:

- Each finding or recommendation emanates from the central theme
- therefore, if a finding or recommendation is rejected by a briefee, the central theme is still valid.

Note that among the following generic components only the Title Page, Executive Summary, and Table of Contents are required for this exercise. The other components are optional, depending upon the contents of your briefing and your decisions about priorities, given your page limit.

Possible Components

Title Page

Executive Summary (2-5 pages)

The equivalent of a cover memo, personalized to the recipient(s). Summarizes the main components of your briefing book, including key findings or recommendations.

Table of Contents with page numbers

The challenge here is to break up your analysis into meaningful sections that display the framework of your thought. The T of C serves as another kind of Executive Summary.

(The Executive Summary and Table of Contents are usually at the beginning of a briefing book, and the Index at the end. Other components should be in an order appropriate and most helpful for your particular briefees.)

Background

Problem statement
Key facts and figures
Previous studies or experiences, in the U. S. or elsewhere

Option(s) for Change

Most likely alternatives
Pros and cons re: economic, political, and management feasibility

Interest Groups

Synopses of their views
What are their priorities?
Which alternatives do they and don't they support?

Key Legislation

Existing legislation that affects options or recommendations
Proposed legislation that would affect options or recommendations

Findings or Recommendations (*if appropriate*)

The challenges are to link findings or recommendations:

Clearly and explicitly to the problem definition

Clearly and explicitly to the analysis

Implementation

Economic, political, and management feasibility

Short- and long-term goals

Graphics: Potential Uses

Summarize background info

Illustrate key facts

Emphasize key contrasts

Illustrate an old or new process (flow chart)

Illustrate the make-up of an organization

Lay out a timetable

Appendices

Additional facts & figures (in graphic format?)

Details of formulas, regression analyses, etc.

Discussions of methodologies

Index

Helps briefee quickly locate key information

Includes alphabetized subjects the briefers consider important

Also includes subjects the briefees might consider important

Marie A. Danziger

Lecturer in Public Policy

marie_danziger@harvard.edu

617-495-2686

HKS Communications Program

www.hkscommunicationsprogram.org

Twitter: @hkscommprog