

Writing Effective Briefing Notes Workshop

Course Summary

Description

Participants in this course learn and practice practical the essential skills for writing effective briefing notes. Well written briefing notes are short, typically one-page, notes used to quickly and effectively provide decision and policy-makers with knowledge about an issue or a topic. A well written briefing note puts forward well thought-out and researched options and recommendations that a decision or policy-maker can rely on and trust. You will learn techniques for summarizing complex information, and how to write your background and recommendations concisely and persuasively. This is an interactive workshop that will encourage you to do your best work. Participants are encouraged to bring samples they are working on for review and feedback by the instructor.

Objectives

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the purpose and function of a briefing note as an aid to decision and policy-making
- Create a structured writing plan with clear communication objectives
- Demonstrate skills in planning research and the collection of information needed to write a briefing note
- Demonstrate skills in writing the first draft of a briefing note
- Demonstrate the skills in summarizing complex information
- Demonstrate skills in editing and proofreading their own and others' work.

Topics

- Introduction to the Course
- The Purpose of Briefing Notes
- Briefing Note Structure
- Planning & Research
- Effective Writing
- Writing the First Draft
- Writing a Summary
- Editing and Proof Reading
- Application Assignment

Duration

Two Days

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Course Outline

I. *Introduction to the Course*

- A. Lecture and Interactive Group Discussion
- B. Participants are introduced to the topic and discuss their objectives for attending the course.

II. *The Purpose of Briefing Notes*

- A. Lecture and Interactive Group Discussion
- B. Participants explore the different types of briefing notes, define the purpose of briefing notes, and the role briefing notes play in the formulation of policy and decision-making. The context of how briefing notes are used is also reviewed.

III. *Briefing Note Structure*

- A. Lecture and Interactive Group Discussion
- B. Participants review and discuss examples of briefing note structure, including any templates in use in their organization. Each section of the briefing note is reviewed including the Summary, Background/History/Context, Considerations/Options, Recommendations and Next Steps.
- C. The discussion also includes how to analyze and identify the note's receiver's needs and interests using a simple reader analysis focused mind-mapping technique.

IV. *Planning & Research*

- A. Lecture and Interactive Group Discussion
- B. Participants review and gain appreciation for the importance of proper planning and research in writing briefing notes. Includes a review of the key stages of preparation including review and research strategies, fact-checking, and applying a critical-thinking approach.

V. *Effective Writing*

- A. Lecture and Interactive Group Discussion with Exercises
- B. Participants develop a structure for their writing that follows briefing note guidelines and supports developing an outline for their information. Included in the discussion is the importance of using proper grammar, writing concise sentences, and ensuring paragraph coherence and unity.

VI. *Writing the First Draft*

- A. Interactive Discussion, Practical Application
- B. Participants write the first draft of their briefing note drawn from a case-study. The first draft is then edited and polished in the rest of the class.

VII. *Writing a Summary*

- A. After writing the first draft, participants practice writing the summary for their briefing note following the case-study.

VIII. *Editing and Proof Reading*

- A. Participants practice editing and proof-reading their briefing note, and also practice on the work of another participant.

IX. *Application Assignment*

- B. Participants complete a case-study application assignment for critique and feedback by the instructor.