

Training PhD students

Session: Policy engagement and briefs

Skills and competencies

knowledge translation

Duration and scheduling

Between two and four hours

Mode of delivery

In person or virtual

Outline

Through input, discussion and practical activities, students learn what policy briefs are and how researchers and advocacy groups use them to influence the setting and implementation of policies.

Objectives

- To understand the why and how of knowledge translation, policy influence and effective communication with non-scientific audiences
- To develop a case study

Preparation

Facilitators

Make and practise a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the topic

Share a number of policy briefs with students

Find or design a set of practical tips on writing a policy brief

View and prepare to screen the suggested video case study (or find an alternative), design guiding questions for group discussions and line up screening logistics, such as the projector and speakers for an in-person session

Select two or three other case studies (in document or video format)

Identify and invite a guest speaker to present on experience in knowledge translation

Steps

1. What is a policy brief?

As the facilitator, you present an introduction and overview, including examples, types, components, purpose and potential impact of policy briefs.

2. Video screening: context and audience

Introduce, screen and discuss the suggested video case study (or an alternative).

You could ask questions such as:

What is the problem?

Who are the actors? What are their interests in the outcome?

Who is the audience for a policy brief in this example?

What is the desired result of a policy brief in this case?

What evidence from research would you include in a policy brief?

3. Speaker and case study: knowledge translation

A guest speaker shares one or more examples of policy briefs.

They describe their experience of distilling research findings into core evidence and arguments that are clear, yet brief enough to capture the attention of targeted decision-makers.

Students have the opportunity to ask questions about the example/s and the process, skills and impact involved in knowledge translation.

The group discuss strengths and limitations: How effective is a policy brief as a mechanism for knowledge transfer?

4. Activity: develop a policy brief

The facilitator shares tips for writing a policy brief and/or screens a video with guidance.

Individually or in a group, students outline a policy brief, based on their own research project or an assigned example

5. Concluding the session

Students present their outlines in plenary and discuss insights and challenges.

The facilitator notes the main points arising from the discussion and shares them after the session

Outcomes

After this session, students should be able to:

1. Describe the key components of a policy brief
2. Explain the purpose of a policy brief for a particular context
3. Write a policy brief

Assessment

Essay assignment: the use of policy briefs to influence the tobacco industry

Group work: designing an infographic for a policy brief

Individual or group assignment: write a policy brief on your own research or an assigned study

Resources

Hofman, K. et al (2013). WHO Intersectoral Case Study: Successful Sodium Regulation in South Africa.

https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2018-02/19%20Dec%202013_Successful%20Sodium%20Regulation%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf

Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. *BMC Health Services Research*, 14(1), 2.

<https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1472-6963-14-2.pdf>

Lavis JN, Permanand G, Oxman AD, Lewin S & Fretheim A. (2009). SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking (STP) 13: Preparing and using policy briefs to support evidence-informed policymaking. *Health Research Policy and Systems* 2009, 7(Suppl 1):S13

<https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1478-4505-7-S1-S13.pdf>

Oliver, K., & Cairney, P. (2019). The dos and don'ts of influencing policy: a systematic review of advice to academics.

Palgrave Communications, 5(1), 1-11 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0232-y>