

Guide to Communicating Policy Briefs in Public Health



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Prepared with technical assistance from Vital Strategies with support from the **Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative**

This document was supported by **National Health Observatory** technical team

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Guide to Communicating Policy Briefs in Public Health



Convince a specific audience that your issue matters.



Clearly present a set of available and feasible options to address the issue.



Make a convincing and evidenced based case for your policy options.



Provide specific recommendations to encourage further action to address the issue.





Guide to Communicating Policy Briefs in Public Health

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Introduction

About this guide

The *Guide to Communicating Policy Briefs in Public Health* is a resource designed for technical teams responsible for policy development. This Guide provides them with basic tools for communicating information about their ideas, findings, and recommendations.

This 6-step guide outlines a structure to develop a plan for presenting policy briefs so they can be accessible, brief, engaging and persuasive to different audiences, including decision-makers and the general public.

By following these steps, technical teams will be able to develop practical and applicable strategies that can transform the way policy briefs are presented, enhancing their impact and usefulness.



Who is this handbook intended for?

This handbook is designed for professionals working in public health. They may or may not have experience in communication or policymaker/policymaking, but they want to learn basic communication tools for decision-making.

What will you learn from this handbook?

The implementation of a handbook serves as a strategic tool to optimize information communication to both decision-makers and to the community in general. This resource will allow policymaker/policymaking to effectively present objectives, benefits, and scope of proposed policies, using clear and accessible language to all audiences.



How to use this handbook?

The handbook is a digital publication in **interactive PDF** format with several functions for easy navigation, as well as direct links to external sites with complementary information.



STEP 1 | Know your audience

13. Feedback mechanisms:

a. Preferred channels for comments or questions

b. Statistics or case studies as evidence

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

14. Potential allies or advocates:

a. Identify potential allies that could support the policy.

b. Networks or affiliations that influence your perspectives

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Checklist STEP 1 Page 13 to 20

Print



Write in paragraphs



Select the identified option(s)



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<https://get.adobe.com/es/reader/>



Do not forget to save your progress



Print the checklist sections

What is a public policy?

A public policy is a State's action guided by a government that attempts to respond to social demands and develop constitutional and legal mandates. A public policy is a set of principles, purposes and coordinated strategies aimed at fostering adequate living conditions for society as a whole (Cuervo, 2007).

In addition, types of policies that can be implemented include laws, regulations created by ministries or other government executive branch agencies, guidelines describing an approved standard of practice, financial or non-financial incentives, and resource allocation.

What is a policy brief?

A policy brief is a succinct document containing analyses of relevant data, assessments of different policy options, and analysis conclusions. It is usually addressed to non-technical audiences since most policymaker/policymaking are not scientists. A policy brief usually includes the background, scope and impact of the health issue. In other words: Where and which population are you focusing on?

How common is it and how is it affecting the population? It also presents feasible solutions to the health issue as policy options and the rationale for why we should change or implement what the policy brief proposes. Evidence should be provided to support the policy change.

Why is effective communication important?

Effective communication between technical professionals developing policy analysis and policy intervention proposals and policymaker/policymaking or stakeholders is critical to bridge the gap between technical knowledge and decision making by communicating messages clearly and accessibly.

In addition, when decisions must be made in a complex political and bureaucratic environment, considering multiple interests and budgetary constraints, the presentation of solid proposals based on evidence becomes a determining factor.

What is the approach of this handbook?

The approach focuses on simplicity and clarity. Throughout this handbook, you will find examples that illustrate how to apply each step. These examples are based on common healthcare situations and challenges, making them easy to understand and implement.

We will explore in the following pages, step-by-step, how to identify and understand the audience, develop robust proposals, present them effectively, support them with evidence, prepare in advance and answer questions. Each step will be illustrated with hands-on examples to help you understand how to apply these principles. It is suggested that these steps be carried out sequentially as the outputs of one step will be the inputs to the next step.

Involve the communications department in the policy brief work team.

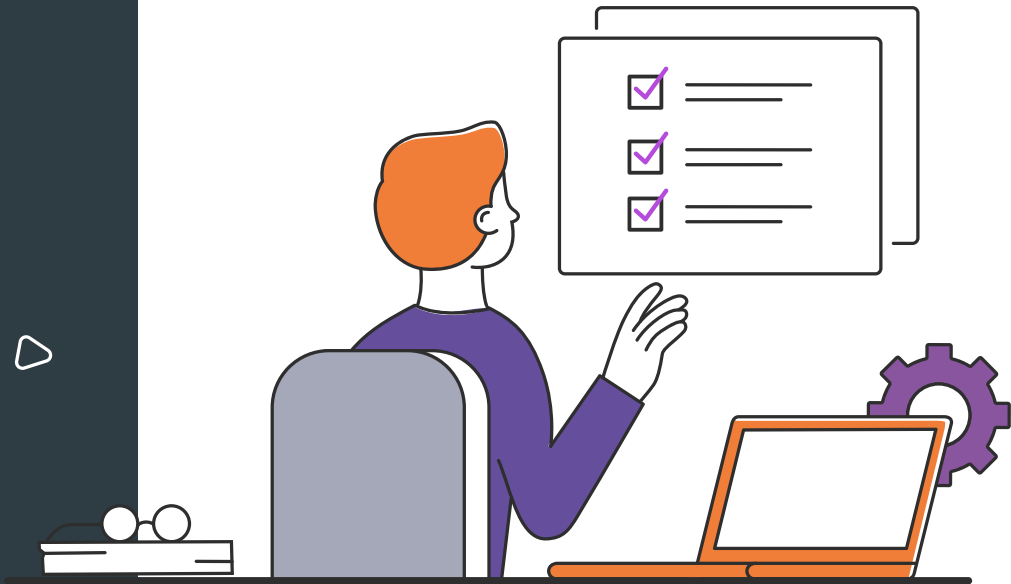
Involving the communications department from the beginning is vital to ensure effective dissemination and understanding by all target audiences. By engaging these professionals from the beginning, it enables the establishment of communication strategies tailored to the specific needs of each stakeholder group, thus allowing the message to be clear, accessible and appealing to different audiences.



The ability to communicate effectively is what turns an idea into a policy that can change lives.

STEP 1

Know your audience



Know your audience

To communicate effectively, the audience must first be identified, including policymaker/policymaking who can influence the proposed health policy or stakeholders such as academia, civil society organizations, and community leaders. Their background, priorities and concerns, among others, should be explored.

Example: If the proposal focuses on primary care, identify policymakers who are involved in health committees, user associations, former municipal or departmental health secretaries, or even have been teachers or public officials in the health sector and have shown interest in improving primary care in the past.

By getting to know the policymakers or stakeholders concerned with your area of interest, you will be able to tailor messages more effectively and increase the chances that the proposal will be well accepted.

Why is knowing the audience a fundamental step?

Policymakers or health stakeholders may have a wide range of experience, knowledge and priorities. Some may have a strong background in health issues, while others may be relatively new to the field.

STEP 1 | Know your audience

Some may be more focused on financing, while others may be committed to improving the quality of insurance, delivery of services, or of prevention and promotion activities.

Some important considerations include:

- **Health background:** An investigation should be made to find out if policymakers or stakeholders have experience in health issues. For example, some legislators may have worked in the industry, be trained health professionals, or have served as secretaries of health or managers of public hospitals.
- **Current priorities:** The current priorities of health policymaker/policymaking or public health stakeholders should be determined: Are they focused on mental health issues, access, cost reduction, emergency preparedness? Understanding their priorities can emphasize how the proposal aligns with their interests.
- **Support history:** The policy support background related to the policy proposal to be submitted should be studied. For example, if they have shown an interest in improving health matters in the past, this can be a solid starting point for establishing a communication strategy.
- **Networking:** You should identify whether you have connections or contacts in common with policymakers. These connections can be useful to establish a relationship and increase the responsiveness of the proposal.



To increase acceptability of the policy brief among various audiences, ensure that the message is tailored to their specific interests and use specific data to highlight the benefits of the policy. It is also essential to simplify information, avoid technical jargon and use visual formats to facilitate understanding. Establishing two-way communication channels and encouraging engagement are key strategies to increase transparency, receive feedback and build support for public policies.



Additional resources

More information on this step and additional tips can be found in the following resources.

<p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health Communication, Playbook, Resources to Help You Create Effective Materials.</p>	<p>Communicating with Data - A Toolkit for Supporting Countries in the Dissemination of Public Health Reports</p>	<p>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Food security Communications Toolkit.</p>	<p>United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Pace Project.</p>
<p>See</p>	<p>See</p>	<p>See</p>	<p>See</p>



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fundamentals to identify your audience:

1. Define the communication objective: the objective to be achieved through the presentation of the policy brief should be clearly established and, once this is clear, it will be easier to define the audience.

Guiding questions:

What is the main objective of my policy brief?

What is the purpose of the policy brief presentation; is it intended to inform, advocate, raise awareness or influence decision-making?

2. Analyze the content: review the content of the policy brief in detail, understand the key aspects, impact and context which will help determine who might be interested and be directly affected by it.

Guiding questions:

What key aspects of the policy are relevant to the audience?

What is the context in which this policy is developed and how does it affect people?

3. Identify stakeholders: Identify stakeholders and interested parties involved in the policy. This may include legislators, government officials, civil society groups, businesses, academia, and citizens in general.

Guiding questions:

Who are the key stakeholders involved in or affected by this policy?

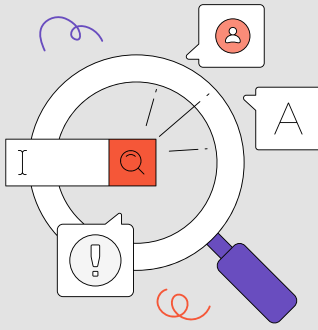
What are your specific interests and concerns?

4. Segment the audience: divide the audience into segments based on relevant criteria: level of knowledge, roles, interests or even by decision-making position.

Guiding questions:

What is the audience's experience in terms of working or participating in the health sector?

What are your most urgent concerns?

**Example:**

Congress of the Republic (Seventh Commission), Ministry of Health and Social Protection, health service provider institutions, benefit plan insurance companies, NGOs, Pan American Health Organization, patients' leagues, health professional associations, advocates, among others.

Where is the audience geographically located?

Are there regional differences in health needs?

What is the age, gender and demographic profile of the audience?

5. Explore communication preferences:

each audience segment may have different preferences for policy brief presentation formats. Some may prefer to receive information in written format, while others may respond better to visual presentations, in-person discussions, academic or technical exchange meetings, messages through social media, among others.

Guiding questions

Do they have any specific preferences in terms of devices, such as computers, tablets or mobile phones or printed information to access information?

Do they prefer detailed reports, executive summaries, infographics, visual presentations, or interactive graphics to consult policy-related information?

Do they have specific preferences in terms of tone and style of communication, such as technical language or more accessible language?

When are they most available and receptive to receiving information?

Do they prefer scheduled meetings, regular update sessions?

Do they have a preference for the length of communication, such as short, concise meetings or longer sessions to discuss in detail?

Checklist

This checklist will help you identify your audience and not forget any important aspects when preparing to communicate your policy brief.

1. Audience demographics

a.	Age range	
	Children: 0–11 years old	
	Adolescents: 12–18 years old	
	Youth: 19–30 years old	
	Adults: 30–60 years old	
	Seniors: 60+	

b.	Gender distribution	
	Female	
	Male	
	Other	

c.	Education background	
	Elementary / Middle	
	High School	
	Undergraduate	
	Graduate	

d.	Professional roles and responsibilities	
	Leaders: strategic leaders who make key decisions	
	Management Level: Responsible for specific areas leading the implementation of key decisions	
	Intermediate Level: Staff from specific areas supervising the implementation of key decisions	
	Operational Level: those in charge of performing daily tasks	

2. Experience level of the audience:


a.	Experience in the field	
	High	
	Medium	
	Low	

b.	How familiar with policy issues	
	High	
	Medium	
	Low	

c.	Technical knowledge related to the policy area	
	High	
	Medium	
	Low	

3. Interests and Values:

a.	Key interests related to the policy topic	





b.	Key values related to the policy topic	




4. Organizational affiliation of the audience:

a. Government agencies	
	Ministries
	Administrative departments
	Governorships
	Mayors' Offices
	Other

b. Non-profit organizations	
	Yes
	No
	Which organization(s)? 

c. Private business sector	
	Yes
	No
	Which organization(s)? 

d. Academic institutions	
	Yes
	No
	Which organization(s)? 


e. Decision-makers who can influence policies	
	Yes
	No
	Who?


f. Individuals responsible for policy implementation	
	Yes
	No
	If YES, leave a space to write their name, position and special characteristics of those responsible for policy implementation.

5. Decision-making authority:

a.	Decision-makers who can influence policies	
	Yes	
	No	
	Who?	

6. Audience communication preferences:


b.	Preferred communication channels	
	E-mail	
	Meetings	
	Reports	
	Phone calls	
	Other:	

c.	Frequency of updates or communications they consider most effective	
	Daily	
	Weekly	
	Monthly	
	Other:	

d.	Language preferences and readability level	



7. Political context:

a.	Previous engagement or knowledge of similar policies	
	Yes	
	No	
	Which policy(ies)?	

b.	Political affiliations that may influence their stance



c.	Existing policies that they have supported or disapproved of



8. Potential concerns or opposition:

a.	Anticipated concerns or drawbacks to the policy



b. Past opposition to similar initiatives

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**c. Key stakeholders who may be reluctant to engage**

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**9. Preferred data presentation:****a. Level of detail required in data presentation**

	Simple description: information is presented in a clear and concise manner, using simple and accessible language for the general audience. It focuses on the key points without including technical details or complexities.	
	Detailed description: a longer description is provided and includes additional details on the objectives, benefits and potential impacts of the policy. Although still understandable to most, it may include some field-specific terminology.	
	In-depth description: the presentation of information reaches a more technical and detailed level, aimed at audiences with specialized knowledge in the policy area in question. It includes in-depth analysis, statistics and technical arguments to support the effectiveness and necessity of the proposed policy.	

b. Visual aids or infographics are preferred

	Yes	
	No	

STEP 1 | Know your audience


c. Statistics or case studies as evidence	
Yes	
No	

10. Timeline considerations:


a. Statistics or case studies as evidence	
Urgent and important	
Important but not urgent	
Urgent but not important	
Neither urgent nor important	

b. Deadlines for decisions or policy implementation	
Weekly	
Monthly	
Biannually	
Annually	

11. Accessibility requirements:

a. Accessibility considerations for various audiences	
Yes	
No	
Which?	

12. Accommodations for people with disabilities:

a. Accessibility considerations for various audiences	
Yes	
No	
Which?	

13. Feedback mechanisms:**a. Preferred channels for comments or questions**

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**b. Statistics or case studies as evidence**

	Yes	
	No	

14. Potential allies or advocates:**a. Identify potential allies that could support the policy**

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**b. Networks or affiliations that influence your perspectives**

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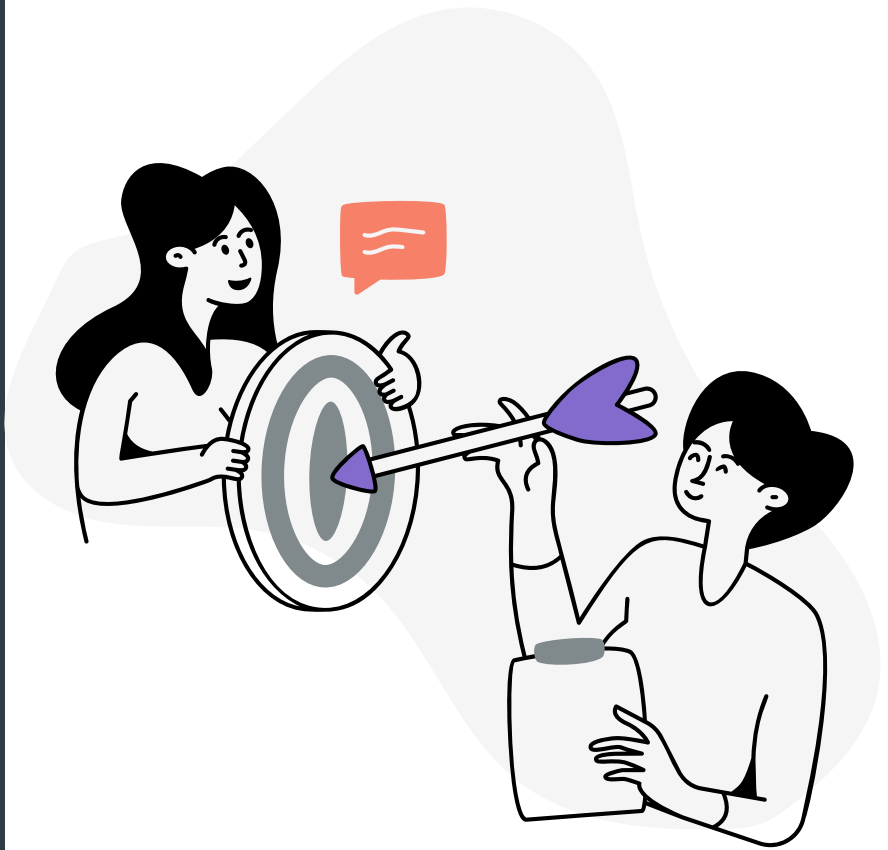
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**Checklist
STEP 1**

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STEP 2

Choose the right time



Choose the right time

Take advantage of or create key political, technical or academic opportunities or events that are aligned with the proposal or policy brief, considering the political agenda. In this step, the communications team is key to choosing the right time and place for the presentation of a policy brief, given their knowledge of important spokespersons, relevant opportunities and appropriate events. Their understanding of the media and political environment helps them identify opportunities to maximize the impact of the policy brief, aligning it with current issues and meaningful discussions.

Example: if an initiative is designed to improve child health care, the national vaccination plan schedule could be considered as a timely moment.

During this period there is a higher focus on children's health, which could increase acceptance of the proposal by legislators and the community at large.

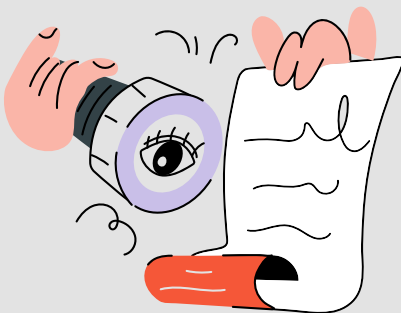


It is important to include an executive summary that highlights the most important aspects of the policy brief, structuring the presentation logically with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. The use of visual tools such as PowerPoint presentations, as well as infographics, fact sheets or others is recommended to improve the understanding of the data. Supplementary materials such as brochures or digital versions of the brief may be useful for attendees.

Why should you choose the right time?

A policy brief presented at the right time is more likely to be heard and supported. When considering when and where to present your policy brief, the following aspects may be considered:

- **Political events:** Stay informed about key political events that are related to the policy brief, usually ministries or secretariats of health have public relations liaisons who are aware of the key agendas. These may include legislative hearings, health committee sessions, health panels or public debates on health issues.
- **Political agenda:** closely monitor the political agenda related to the policy brief's area of interest, since if it addresses an issue that is already on the political agenda, it is more likely to attract attention and support.
- **Audiences and target audiences:** Choosing the audiences and target audiences for policy proposals depends largely on the specific focus of the policy and the objectives it wishes to achieve.





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fundamentals to choose the right time

1. Context analysis and priorities: this involves assessment of health conditions, resource allocation and needs or target population, which may vary depending on whether they are legislators, health professionals or the community in general.

Guiding questions:

What political factors or recent events may influence the acceptance of the proposal?

What is the current political agenda and how does it relate to the proposal?

What specific community or country needs and priorities should the policy address?

2. Stakeholder identification: this activity is performed in step 1, at this point the potential engagement of stakeholders that may influence the acceptance of the proposed policy intervention should be identified, as well as the barriers that may arise with potential opponents.

Guiding questions:

Who are the key players in the public policy environment related to the proposal?

What groups or individuals may support or influence the acceptance of the proposal?

How can these stakeholders be involved and engaged in the presentation process?

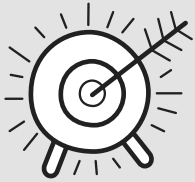
3. Timeline and schedule assessment: planning and determining the specific times at which the policy brief will be presented, as well as creating a detailed timeline that establishes the key dates and milestones expected to be achieved.

Guiding questions:

Are there any deadlines or scheduled events that may affect the timing of the presentation?

What is the relevant legislative or policy cycle that could influence the timing of the proposal?

When are specific decisions or actions needed to address specific problems?



A proposal with no evidence is less likely to be implemented.



STEP 2 | Choose the right time

4. Resource assessment and implementation capacity: analyze in depth the available resources and operational capacity to carry out the proposed options, as well as assess the capacity of government institutions to implement the proposed options.

Guiding questions:

Are the necessary budget and human resources available to carry out the proposed policy?

Are management and technical capacity prepared to implement the policy effectively?

Have any barriers been identified that could delay implementation?

5. Advance planning and coordination: It is essential to carefully plan and coordinate all logistics necessary for the presentation of the policy brief once the timing is right.

Guiding questions:

Have we coordinated with the event organizers to ensure that our presentation aligns with the event's schedule and logistics?

Have we considered and addressed any potential barriers that may arise during the presentation?

Do we have a backup plan in case unexpected circumstances arise?

Checklist

This checklist will help you plan your presentation at the right moment and not forget any aspect of your policy brief presentation.

a.	Is the policy brief ready?	
	Yes	
	No	

b.	Have key stakeholders been involved early in the policy development process to gather initial ideas and feedback?	
	Yes	
	No	

c.	Was the presentation aligned with stakeholder decision-making timelines, making sure it complements their timelines?	
	Yes	
	No	

d.	Did you plan to present the policy brief at critical decision points in the policy development or approval process?	
	Yes	
	No	

e.	Was the current political environment considered and did you make sure that the presentation aligns with broader policy priorities?	
	Yes	
	No	

f.	Did you choose a time when the policy is particularly relevant to current social problems, maximizing its impact?	
	Yes	
	No	

g.	Did you avoid making presentations during periods of major events or initiatives that might distract attention from the policy brief?	
	Yes	
	No	

h.	Did you identify any external agendas or initiatives that could complement or benefit from the policy brief?	
	Yes	
	No	

i.	Did you assess the availability of stakeholders in their schedules?	
	Yes	
	No	

j.	Was the presentation aligned with budget and tax periods to improve the probability of resource allocation?	
	Yes	
	No	

k.	Did you assess the current availability of resources and the willingness of stakeholders to implement policy recommendations?	
	Yes	
	No	

STEP 2 | Choose the right time

I.	Did you design a strategy for the presentation to address the concerns of decision-makers or the community?	
	Yes	
	No	



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**Checklist
STEP 2**

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STEP 3

Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy



Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief

It is crucial to develop ideas in a sound and evidence-based manner. This involves thorough research, the collection of relevant data and the building of solid arguments to support the proposal. This step is essentially the development of a policy brief, but the key aspects to be presented should be prioritized in a presentation.

Example: If a reform in primary care is proposed, it should be investigated how many people per area have access to a community or family physician and how much it would cost to implement such a proposal, and the problem and the causes that need to be addressed should be detailed in advance.

It is important to address some aspects in your policy brief:

- **Research:** you must research in depth the problem to be solved.
- **Data collection:** selecting relevant data to support the proposal, including statistics, is essential.
- **Economic assessment:** shows the costs associated with the proposed policy intervention and the estimated expected benefits.

STEP 3 | Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief

- **Solid argument building:** the data and evidence collected should be used to build solid arguments to support the proposal. Explain clearly and convincingly how the policy will address the identified problems and why it is the best solution.



Graphic resources:

Presentations:	
Microsoft PowerPoint: Standard software to create presentations.	Google Slides: Free online tool to create presentations.
See	See
Prezi: Platform to create non-linear and dynamic presentations.	Canva: Provides templates and design tools for presentations.
See	See
Infographics:	
Canva: Allows you to create infographics using templates and design tools.	
See	
Adobe Spark: Allows you to create infographics fast and easily.	
See	

If you decide to use social media such as X or Facebook to present the policy brief, it is powerful to include elements of storytelling in addition to being concise and clear. Start with a brief introduction that engages the audience by presenting the problem. Then, a thread should be structured so that each post represents a chapter, using relevant data or stories to support your arguments. The format can be used to build empathy, showing how the proposed policies can positively affect people's lives. A final conclusion should always be published to reinforce the importance of the policy brief and the action that needs to be taken.



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fundamentals to prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief

1. Define the purpose and objectives: clearly state why the policy brief was designed and the specific results expected to be achieved.

Guiding questions:

What is the problem, challenge or need that this presentation is intended to address or solve?

What is the motivation behind the presentation and why is it important in the current context?

What specific results are you looking to achieve?

2. Research and collect relevant information: involves the process of collecting data, analyzing existing research, consulting stakeholders, benchmarking policies, and obtaining quantitative and qualitative data to fully understand the problem being addressed.

Guiding questions:

What quantitative and qualitative information is essential to support the key points of the public policy?

What are the past events, trends or contextual factors that have led to the need for this policy?

What previous research, case studies or similar experiences can provide valuable insights?

3. Develop a coherent presentation structure and content: organize the proposal logically and present solid arguments. The structure should include an introduction with context and objectives, followed by a detailed description of the problem and causes, proposed policy interventions and specific actions.

Guiding questions:

What are the core elements of the policy that the audience should understand?

What information and data are essential to support the presentation?

What will be the order in which the topics or sections will be presented?

Should it follow a chronological, thematic or priority-based workflow?

Will specific examples, case studies or relevant statistics be included?

STEP 3 | Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief

How will you support and exemplify the key points?

What graphics or images will help convey the information effectively?

4. Define an implementation plan and resources needed:

specify how the proposal will be carried out and what resources will be needed. This step establishes a detailed roadmap to achieve the previously established objectives, including a timeline, assignment of responsible parties, identification of resources (financial, human, technological, etc.), communication strategies and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Guiding questions:

What is the sequence of actions necessary to carry out the policy?

What are the milestones and important stages?

Is any modification or adaptation of existing regulations required?

What is the estimated budget needed to implement the public policy?

Where will the funds come from?

How many staff and what specific skills are needed?

Are any additional tools or technology required?

What is the expected time period for implementing the policy?

Are there any critical time limits or deadlines?

Have potential barriers or challenges been identified in the implementation and how will they be addressed?

5. Review and refine the presentation:

this includes checking the clarity and consistency of the language used, organizing the information into a logical structure, accuracy of the data and arguments presented.

Guiding questions:

Are the arguments and key points presented in a clear and understandable manner?

Is there a logical structure that walks the audience through the proposal?

Have data and statistics been thoroughly reviewed to ensure accuracy and reliability?

Are sources adequately cited?

Are the arguments supported with examples, cases or concrete evidence?




Checklist

This checklist will help you remember important aspects when preparing the presentation of your policy brief.


a.	A clear set of objectives:	
	Clear: The objectives are presented clearly and are easily understandable.	
	Moderately clear: Although detailed information about the objectives is provided, there may be certain aspects that require further clarification or simplification.	
	Unclear: The presentation of the objectives lacks clarity and can be confusing for the audience.	

b.	Has the content been customized to the level of expertise and interests of each stakeholder group?	
	Yes	
	No	

c.	Executive summary:	
		
	Content and structure: include a concise and compelling executive summary highlighting key findings and recommendations. A maximum of one (1) page is recommended.	

STEP 3 | Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief


d.	Political context
<div style="text-align: right;"></div>	
<p>Provide a brief description of the political and social environment affecting the implementation of the policy. It includes cultural, social and economic factors that could influence the acceptance and effectiveness of the policy, emphasizing the problem or opportunity that the policy addresses.</p>	

e.	Have you used visual aids, such as infographics, graphics, presentations, images for social media to convey complex information?	
	Yes	
	No	
	Which ones?	

f.	Have you prepared a well-structured slide presentation with clear titles, visual elements and minimal text?	
	Yes	
	No	

g.	Were flyers produced to facilitate the stakeholders' access to supplementary information?	
	Yes	
	No	

h.	Have you used plain language?	
	Yes	
	No	

i.	Engagement techniques, such as Q&A sessions or interactive discussions, have been developed to keep stakeholders involved	
	Yes	
	No	
	Which ones?	


j.	Has the presentation been prepared with adequate time for each section, including Q&A?	
	Yes	
	No	

k.	Was there a consistent pace to ensure that stakeholders could follow and take in the information?	
	Yes	
	No	

l.	Have you identified any potential concerns that stakeholders may have?	
	Yes	
	No	

STEP 3 | Prepare the proposed presentation of the policy brief

m.	Preparing Q&A: Have you prepared answers to possible questions that stakeholders may ask during the presentation?	
	Yes	
	No	

n.	Is there a mechanism in place for stakeholders to provide comments after the presentation?	
	Yes	
	No	
	What mechanism?	



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**Checklist
Step 3**

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STEP 4

Support policy proposals with key evidence



Support policy proposals with key evidence

Supporting public health policy proposals with solid evidence is a critical component in gaining the confidence of policymakers or stakeholders and thus securing endorsement.

Why is supporting with evidence decisive in the presentation of the policy brief?

Solid evidence is the basis for any effective health policy proposal. Policymakers and health experts require reliable data and scientific studies to support decisions involving public health.

The policy brief already prepared is the input for this step. However, assessing whether it complies with the structure and content to be communicated is crucial. The assessment should include the information listed below:

Local success stories: If relevant, highlight success stories that support the proposal and demonstrate its feasibility.

Provide access to sources and methodology: Providing access to the data sources used and describing the methodology used in any analysis ensures its replicability and strengthens the credibility of the proposal.



5

fundamentals to support policy proposals with key evidence

1. Identify sources of evidence:

Refer to academic research, government reports and relevant studies that have been conducted in the area of interest.

Guiding questions:

What are the reliable sources in health for data and evidence? (Example: PubMed, Cochrane Library, Embase, Scopus, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, scientific databases, administrative data, among others).

How do you verify the quality and credibility of sources?

Have you reviewed scientific research, government reports and systematic reviews related to the policy?

2. Have relevant data available:

obtain accurate information and process it to draw meaningful conclusions.

Guiding questions:

What specific health data support the policy proposal? (Example: mortality rates, disease incidence, health surveys)?

3. Present the evidence effectively:

plan how evidence could effectively and powerfully communicate findings, data and proposals included in the policy brief.

Guiding questions:

How will you present data and evidence in an accessible format? (Example: graphics, executive summaries)

How will you highlight the most relevant results and their impact on public health?

Will you use case examples to illustrate your findings?

4. Link evidence to policy objectives:

show how the evidence supports the policy objectives

Guiding questions:

How will you make a clear connection between the data and the desired health policy outcomes?

What studies or research support the the policy proposal? (Example: clinical trials, systematic reviews)

STEP 4 | Support policy proposals with key evidence

Have you evaluated benefits and potential risks based on scientific evidence?

5. Continuous updating and adjustment: keep the evidence up to date and adjust the policy brief as necessary.

Guiding questions:

Is there a plan to keep the evidence updated as new health data and findings emerge?

How will you use the evidence to adjust the policy based on the evolving public health situation?

Is an evidence-based feedback and review system in place for health policy?



Visualization techniques:

use appropriate data visualization techniques (charts, graphics, tables) to improve understanding.

Deviation	Correlation	Ranking	Distribution
<p>Divergent Bar</p> <p>A simple standard bar chart that can handle both negative and positive magnitude values.</p>	<p>Scatter Plot</p> <p>The standard way to show the relationship between two continuous variables, each having its own axis.</p>	<p>Ordered Bars</p> <p>This type of visualization allows for an easy display of value ranks when sorted.</p>	<p>Histogram</p> <p>The standard way to show a statistical distribution. It is recommended to keep the spaces between columns small to highlight the "shape" of the data.</p>
<p>Column Table</p> <p>Splits a single value into 2 contrasting components (e.g., male/female).</p>	<p>Timeline + Columns</p> <p>A good way to show the relationship between an amount (columns) and a ratio (line).</p>	<p>Dot Strip Plot</p> <p>The dots are arranged in a strip. This distribution saves space for designing ranges in multiple categories.</p>	<p>Candlestick (or Box) Plot</p> <p>Effective for visualizing multiple distributions by showing the median (center) and the range of the data.</p>
Changes Over Time	Magnitude	Part of a Whole	Spatial
<p>Line</p> <p>The standard way to show a changing time series. If the data is irregular, consider markers to represent data points.</p>	<p>Columns</p> <p>The standard way to show the relationship between two continuous variables, each having its own axis.</p>	<p>Pie Chart</p> <p>One of the most common charts to show partial or whole data. It is worth noting that comparing the sizes of different segments is not easy.</p>	<p>Choropleth Map</p> <p>The standard approach for placing data on a map.</p>
<p>Calendar Heatmap</p> <p>Used to show temporal patterns (daily, weekly, monthly). It is necessary to be very precise with the amount of data.</p>	<p>Marimekko Chart</p> <p>Ideal for showing both the size and proportion of data at the same time, as long as the data is not too complex.</p>	<p>Venn Diagram</p> <p>Limited to schematic representations that allow showing interrelations or coincidences.</p>	<p>Flow Map</p> <p>Used to show any type of movement within the same map. For example, it can be used to represent migratory movements.</p>

Source: Ministerio de Transformación Digital, Gobierno de España.

Checklist

This checklist will help you identify data and evidence when preparing to communicate your policy brief.

a.	Have you ensured that the data selected directly match objectives of the policy brief?	
Yes		
No		

b.	Have you verified the accuracy, reliability and validity of the chosen data sources?	
Yes		
No		

c.	Have you ensured that the presentation is accessible to people with diverse needs, including visual or cognitive impairments?	
Yes		
No		



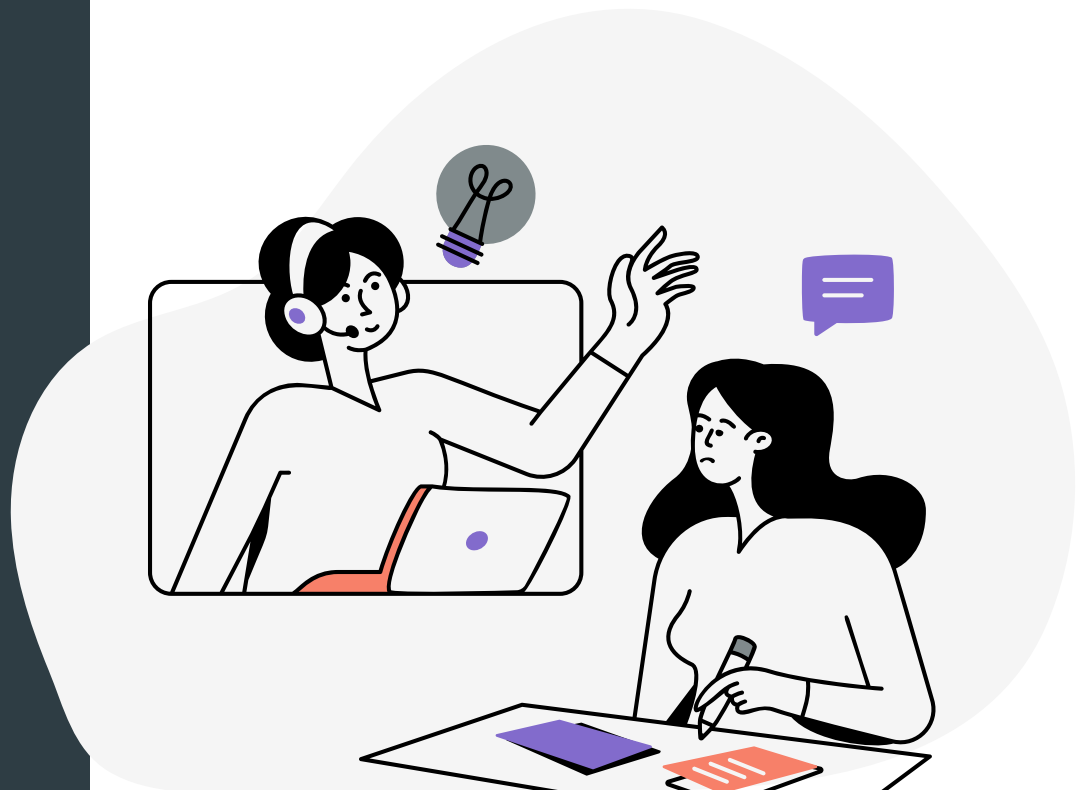
Printing instructions: print this checklist by clicking on the button

**Checklist
STEP 4**

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STEP 5

Rehearse your speech



Rehearse your speech

5.1 Why is effective communication important?

Effective communication is the bridge between the policy brief and policy decision-makers. Even if you have solid data and compelling evidence, if not communicated effectively, the message could be misstated or misinterpreted. Completion of the previous steps and the inputs from them will be used in this step.

1. Logical organization:

Clear structure: organize the presentation in a logical and structured manner. It is recommended to start with an introduction that states the problem and the solution, followed by arguments supported by evidence and, finally, a conclusion that summarizes the key points.

STEP 5 | Rehearse your speech

Example: If you are presenting a proposal to improve accessibility to mental health services, you could begin with an introduction highlighting the prevalence of mental health problems in Colombia and their impact. Then, present evidence-based arguments showing how the lack of access to adequate services aggravates the situation. Finally, you may conclude by highlighting how the proposal will address these issues.

Hierarchy of ideas: present ideas in order of importance, highlighting the most relevant points first.

Example: If you are proposing a strategy to reduce infant mortality, you should first highlight the current infant mortality rate in Colombia and its comparison with international standards. Then, highlight the most effective and evidence-based measures, such as promoting exclusive breastfeeding and quality prenatal care.

2. Clear data and visualizations:

Graphics and Infographics: using eye-catching, colorful and simple graphics, infographics and data visualizations can make information more accessible.

Example: If you present a proposal to improve access to prenatal care, you should show a graphic comparing prenatal care rates in different regions of Colombia before and after the implementation of similar policies.

Key figures: highlight key figures and statistics that support the proposal.

Example: Show how the cost of implementing the policy is compared to the projected benefits.

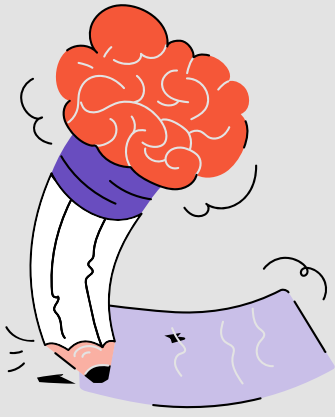
3. Clear and accessible language:

Avoid technical language: use clear language, avoid excessive use of technical terms since the audience may not be familiar with complicated medical or statistics terms.

Example: Instead of “optimal glycemic control in diabetic patients”, it may read “maintaining healthy blood sugar levels in people with diabetes”.

Summarize information: Synthesize complex information in a simple and accessible way.





Example: Instead of describing all the statistical details of the study consulted, you can say: “A recent study showed that our approach reduced cardiovascular disease-related hospitalizations by 20% in one year”.

It is recommended to ensure and verify prior to presentation:

- **Choose the appropriate type of graphic:** Depending on the information, consider whether a bar chart, pie chart, scatter plot or other type is more appropriate to represent data. Make sure that the type of graphic highlights key information effectively.
- **Use colors with a clear purpose:** Colors can make a graphic more visually appealing, but it is important not to go overboard. Use a color palette that is consistent with the theme and ensure that colors are distinguishable to avoid confusion. Assign colors to specific categories or data points to make the graphic easier to understand.
- **Add creative visual elements:** add elements such as icons, background images or subtle patterns to give the graphic a unique touch. These elements can help tell a visual story and keep the viewer’s interest.
- **Be clear and concise:** Although creativity is important, clarity and conciseness should not be overlooked. Avoid excessive visual elements that may distract the reader from the central information. Make sure that titles, labels and legends are easy to read and understand.
- **Customize the design:** the entire graphic line of the presentation must fit the theme and context. Add a catchy title, descriptive labels and a readable font. You can also adjust the size and layout of the graphics according to your needs to highlight information.
- **Add context and narrative:** include a context or narrative that explains the meaning of the data and why it is relevant. This will help viewers understand the importance of the information presented.
- **Ask for feedback:** Before presenting to decision-makers or stakeholders, it will be interesting to ask for feedback from teammates; an external perspective can help identify areas for improvement.

5.2 Address questions and concerns

Being prepared to deal with questions and objections is essential, as it demonstrates sound knowledge and a commitment to the feasibility of the proposal.

Why support, anticipate and answer questions?

Decision-makers or stakeholders look for guarantees regarding the feasibility of the proposal before they give their support to it. Here are some key strategies for addressing common questions:

1. Get familiar with the common questions:

Identify typical questions: research and understand the questions that often come up when presenting health policy proposals, which may be related to financing, implementation, benefits, and possible objections.

Example:

A Question or a Concern: One legislator raises questions about where the funding for a proposed comprehensive primary care program will come from.

Answer: Explain that the program will be funded through a combination of sources, including budgetary changes to existing resources. Demonstrate how the program will reduce long-term costs by preventing chronic diseases and reducing the burden on the health care system.

2. Develop convincing arguments:

Structure of answers: organize answers in a logical and convincing manner, starting by acknowledging the question or concern and then presenting arguments supported by solid evidence. It should highlight how the proposal will address the challenges or problems identified, highlighting the benefits to the population and how barriers will be overcome.

Narrative and emotion can be leveraged strategically, using personal stories, powerful examples and metaphors to connect with the audience on an emotional level.

Example: Optimal breastfeeding in children under two years of age has a greater impact on survival than any other type of preventive intervention. In low-income countries, about 1.4 million deaths in children under 5 years of age and 20,000 deaths per year in women due to breast cancer could be avoided thanks to breastfeeding.



According to the National Survey of the Nutritional Situation of Colombia (ENSIN) 2015 survey, early initiation of breastfeeding improved from 2010 to 2015, from 56.6% to 72.7%; however, exclusive breastfeeding in infants under six months has decreased, it dropped to 36.1% while in 2010 it was at 42.8%¹.

3. Be transparent:

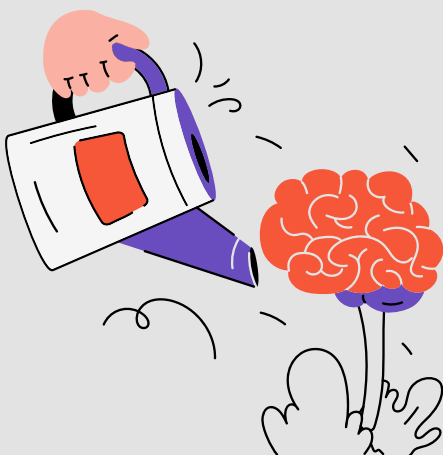
Transparency in limitations: If the proposal has obvious limitations or challenges, be transparent about them. Acknowledging limitations demonstrates honesty and can help build trust.

4. Practice effective communication:

Practice your answers: practicing how you react and answer questions and concerns in a clear and effective manner is essential as it will help to show confidence in your approach.

Tips for preparing a presentation using effective communication techniques:

- **Active listening:** pay attention to the audience and show genuine interest in what they are saying, if you have doubts, ask questions to clarify them and make sure you understand their needs and concerns. Active listening demonstrates empathy and strengthens the connection with the audience.
- **Clear and concise:** avoid using technical or complicated terms that may be confusing. Structure messages in a brief and direct manner so that they are easy to understand.
- **Adaptation to the audience:** adjust communication to the audience's knowledge and expectations. Understand their level of education, values and concerns in order to present information in a relevant and meaningful way.
- **Feedback:** promote feedback and participation, encourage questions and comments to ensure that the information is understood and to address any concerns.



1. Retrieved from: Lactancia materna, clave para el desarrollo. UNICEF Colombia. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/colombia/comunicados-prensa/lactancia-materna-la-clave-para-el-desarrollo-optimo-durante-la-primer-infancia>

STEP 5 | Rehearse your speech

5. Customize answers:

Concerns may vary for different audiences, so adjusting arguments according to the context will be essential. Prior to each presentation, the profile and the space where the proposal will be presented must be studied. A policy brief does not have a one-size-fits-all presentation; it will vary according to the target audience and the results expected from your presentation.





5

fundamentals to answer questions and concerns

1. Listen and understand:

Listening and understanding are essential to establish effective two-way communication, gain the trust of the audience and ensure that the policy is responsive to their needs and concerns.

Guiding questions:

What are the specific questions that arise?

What is the context behind these questions?

What is the audience's motivation for asking these questions?

What key concerns have been previously identified?

2. Provide solid evidence and data:

support answers with concrete, reliable, clear and updated information.

Guiding questions:

What data or evidence supports the answer?

How will the facts related to the questions be verified and evaluated?

Have you anticipated frequently asked questions and prepared answers supported by data?

3. Communicate clearly:

provide answers that are direct, accessible and evidence-based when appropriate, use clear language and avoid technical terms.

Guiding questions:

How can you explain the answer simply and clearly?

Will you use examples or analogies to illustrate complex concepts?

Have you planned to provide a brief summary of the answer for easy comprehension?

4. Manage objectives and disagreements:

address questions with a balanced and respectful approach, recognizing both the audience's objectives and concerns and possible disagreements or opposing points of view. It is important to answer with empathy and clarity.

Guiding questions:

How will you respond to objections or disagreements with the proposal?

Have you prepared an approach to facilitate dialogue and constructive discussion?

STEP 5 | Rehearse your speech

Have you identified areas of agreement and areas where trade-offs can be made?

How can you present long-term benefits of the proposal to counteract immediate disagreements?

5. Anticipate questions: think proactively about the possible questions the audience might ask, based on the content of the policy and its context, and prepare appropriate and well-founded answers in advance.

Guiding questions:

What questions might naturally arise in the audience?

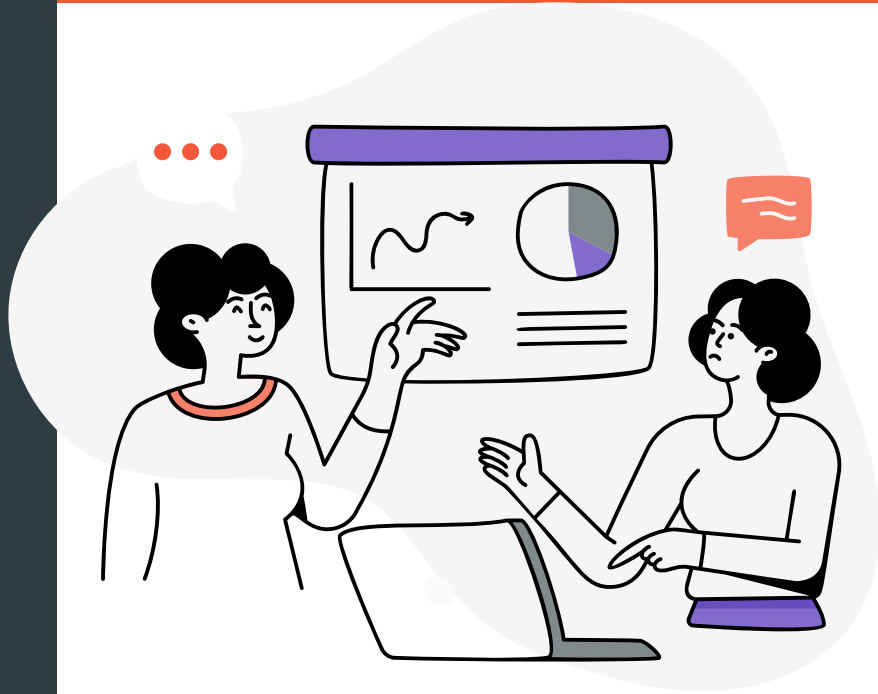
Have you consulted internal or external experts to identify potential areas of concern?

Have you conducted a simulation or rehearsal exercise to anticipate the questions?

Have you made a list of the most likely questions and prepared solid answers?



STEP 6 Monitoring and review



Monitoring and review

Monitoring and measuring the impact of a policy brief presentation is fundamental to evaluate its effectiveness. To do so, it is important to establish specific indicators to help understand how the audience is responding to the presentation.

For example, you can track the reach of the presentation by measuring how many people have seen it on social media or at events. It is also important to measure audience participation, such as how many people interact with the presentation through “likes”, comments and shares.

It can be evaluated if the audience takes concrete actions after the presentation, such as supporting the proposed policy. These indicators provide a clear picture of the impact of the presentation and the policy brief.

1. Social Media Reach:

Reach: measures how many people saw the post related to the presentation on social media..

Calculation: Total number of impressions for the post..

Example: If a post was displayed 10,000 times in users’ news feeds², the reach would be 10,000.

2. Feed: A feed is a stream of content that can be scrolled through. The content appears in similar-looking blocks that repeat one after the other. For example a feed can be editorial (for example, a list of articles or news) or listings (for example, a list of products, services, and so forth). Feeds can appear anywhere on the page. Retrieved from: What is a feed, Google AdSense, available at: <https://support.google.com/adsense/answer/9189559?hl=en-419>

STEP 6 | Monitoring and review

Engagement: Engagement measures audience interaction with the post, including likes, comments, shares and clicks.

Calculation: (Total number of “likes” + comments + shares + clicks) / Reach * 100

Example: If a post had 500 likes, 100 comments, 200 shares and 300 clicks, and the reach was 10,000, the calculation would be $(500+100+200+300)/10,000*100 = 11\%$.

Conversion: Conversion measures how many users took a specific action after viewing the post, such as registering, downloading a report or completing a form.

Calculation: (Number of conversions / Total number of clicks on the link) * 100

Example: If the post leads to a link where users can register to receive updates, and 50 users registered after clicking on the post (out of a total of 500 clicks), the calculation would be $(50 / 500) * 100 = 10\%$.

2. Monitoring of decision-makers' behavior

Level of support from decision-makers: percentage of decision-makers expressing support for the policy after the presentation.

Calculation: (Number of decision-makers expressing support / Total number of decision-makers) * 100

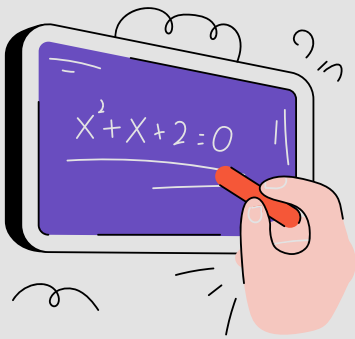
Example: If 20 decision-makers express support out of a total of 50 who attended the presentation, the calculation would be $(20 / 50) * 100 = 40\%$.

Commitment to subsequent actions: percentage of decision-makers who take concrete actions after the presentation, such as initiating internal discussions, endorsing a proposal or allocating resources.

Calculation: (Number of decision-makers taking action / Total number of decision-makers) * 100

Example: If 15 decision-makers take concrete actions out of a total of 50, the calculation would be $(15 / 50) * 100 = 30\%$.





Influence on subsequent decisions: percentage of subsequent decisions that are aligned with the policy presented.

Calculation: (Number of decisions aligned with the policy / Total number of decisions made after presentation) * 100

Example: If 10 subsequent decisions are aligned with the policy out of a total of 20, the calculation would be $(10 / 20) * 100 = 50\%$.

3. Participation in policy brief presentation events

Indicator: Number of attendees at policy brief presentation events

Calculation: Number of attendees at specific events.

Example: If 50 people attend the Intersectoral Health Committee, that would be the number of attendees.

4. Evaluation of online comments and reactions:

Indicator: Qualitative analysis of online comments and reactions to assess the tone and quality of audience responses.

It is used to understand the quality of responses and detect trends in comments. This analysis provides valuable information on how the audience is responding and what areas may require greater clarity or focus on future health policy communications.

Example: a public health policy aimed at improving access to health care in a specific community has been presented. After the presentation, when reviewing the comments on social networks and on the website where the presentation was shared, we find:

Comment 1:	"Excellent initiative! This is what our community needs."
Comment 2:	"I'm not sure how this will be funded. Where will the money come from?"
Comment 3:	"I am excited about this change. Thank you for listening to the community."
Comment 4:	"It sounds like an empty promise. We've heard this before."
Comment 5:	"How exactly will it be implemented in our area?"

STEP 6 | Monitoring and review


When evaluating comments and reactions, you could categorize Comment 1 as positive, Comment 2 as critical, Comment 3 as positive, Comment 4 as negative, and Comment 5 as a specific implementation question. In addition, the concern about financing is a recurring theme.



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**Guide to
Communicating
Policy Briefs in
Public Health**