

# How are you currently feeling?

A



(loachim, 2013)

B



(Becker, 2014)

C



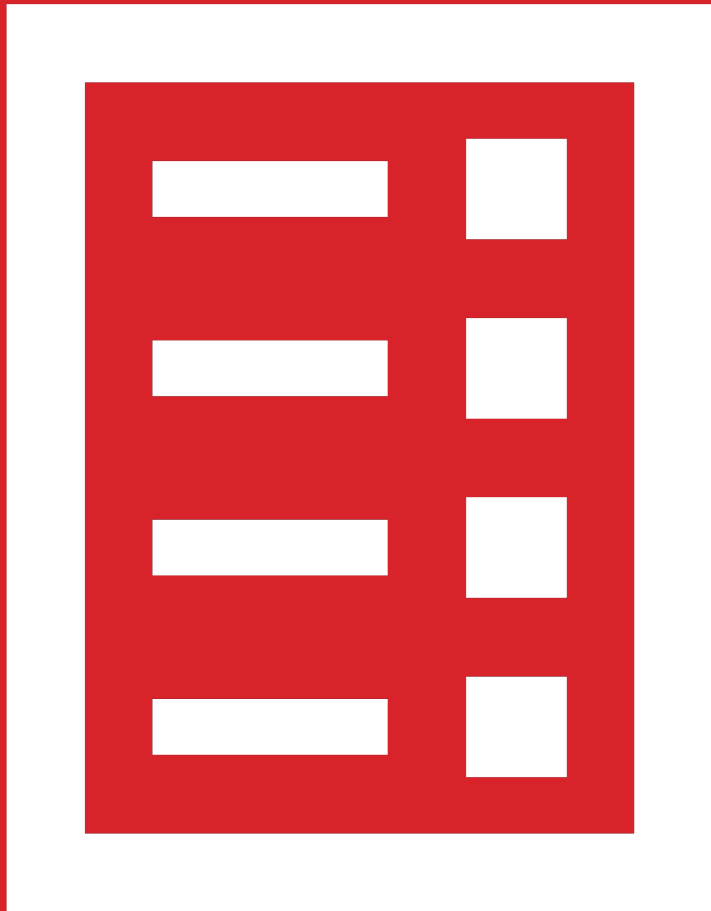
(J, 2018)

D



(Nowicki, 2015)

Use the annotation tool to circle one of the letters above, or type a letter into the chat



# WRITING POLICY BRIEFS

September 22, 2023

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# Download slides:

<https://www.kausharmahetaji.com/uploads/policybriefsiskills2023.pdf>

# This workshop will cover the following learning objectives:

- 1 Demonstrate an understanding of the tone, audience, style, and format of policy briefs
- 2 Examine policy briefs from governments, think tanks, and non-profit organizations
- 3 Devise an outline for a policy brief on an issue of interest
- 4 Synthesize research to produce a list of recommendations on an issue of interest

# Agenda: Part I

- 01 Significance
- 02 Tone and Audience
- 03 Structure
- 04 Problem–Solution
- 05 Recommendations
- 06 Tips



# PART I

## Content

# ACTIVITY

Use the chat feature to answer the following:

**Why might you be asked to complete a policy brief? Where have you seen policy briefs?**

● Significance

● Tone and Audience

● Structure

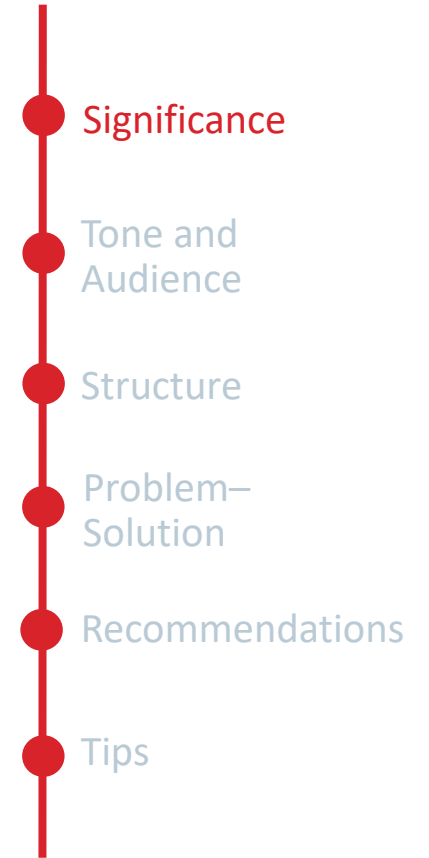
● Problem–Solution

● Recommendations

● Tips

# Policy briefs are concise documents that consolidate information on an issue and propose solutions, supporting decision-making

- Translate and condense complex research
- Inform decision-makers with (in some cases) limited time and resources on an issue
- Support policymakers in the decision-making process
- Advocate for important issues/push for action





# Policy briefs are written using a professional tone (not necessarily academic) with little to no specialized terminology or jargon

## ABSTRACT

Housing has played a significant role in increasing inequality. It has been financialised and losing its human and social dimensions. A critical review of housing policy directions is needed to explore a new housing approach. This article revisits the underpinning perspectives of housing policy discussions through the lens of the capability approach. The capability approach is a normative evaluative approach to understanding poverty, well-being, and justice. It argues that policy should primarily focus on expanding individuals' capabilities instead of resources and utilities. From its perspective, understanding the sources and nature of capability deprivation and inequity is central to removing existing injustice in our society, and to re-establishing ethics at the centre of policy discussions. What implications for housing studies can we draw from the capability approach? The article presents a conceptual application of the capability approach to housing policy discussions, and concludes that a capability-oriented housing policy framework has an added value.

Ontario has set a goal of ending chronic homelessness. A significant proportion of those who are homeless either have mental health problems, are youth or are Indigenous. Ending chronic homelessness requires action on these groups. This policy brief focuses on the 2 to 3 percent of the population that lives with a severe mental illness or addiction. This group will benefit from increasing housing affordability but also from access to supportive housing. Across the political spectrum, supportive housing is recognized as a key to ending chronic homelessness.

Academic Abstract  
(Kimhur 2020)

Policy Brief  
Executive Summary  
(Suttor 2017)

Significance

Tone and  
Audience

Structure

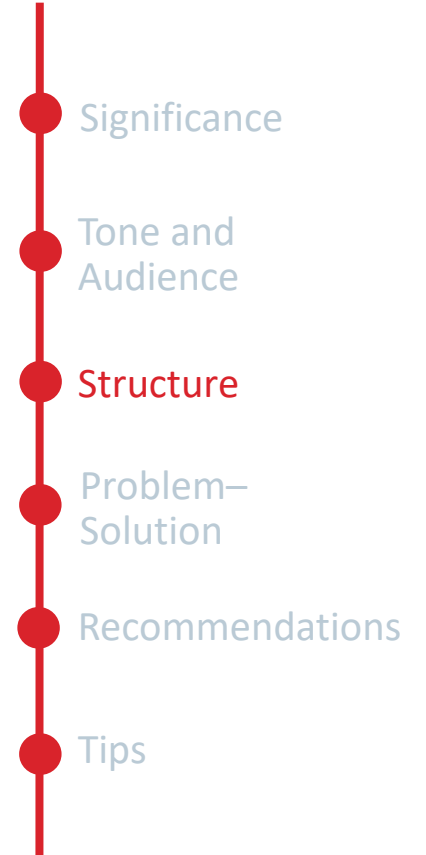
Problem-  
Solution

Recommendations

Tips

# Policy briefs tend to follow a specific structure

1. Title
2. Executive Summary
3. Context or Background or Problem or Issue or Research Overview
4. Policy Options or Policy Alternatives or Approaches or Findings or Policy Implications
5. Recommendation(s) or Conclusion
6. References or Bibliography or Consulted Sources or Recommended Resources or Further Reading



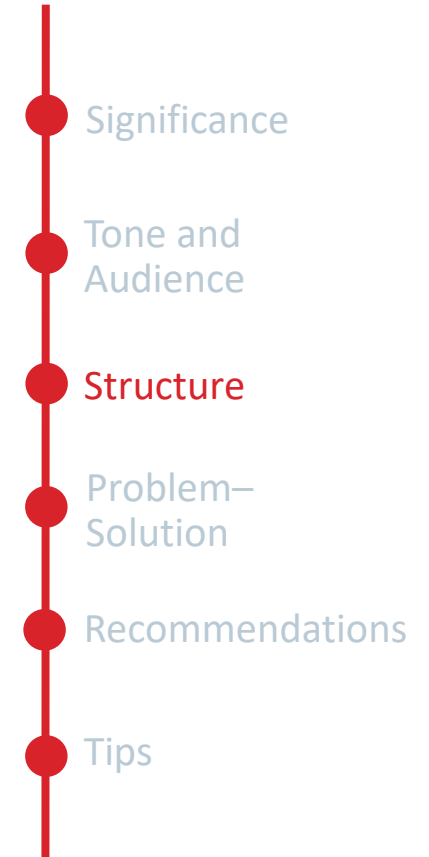
# Use instructions provided by the stakeholder requesting the brief to determine whether to include additional components

## Additional Evidence in Different Formats

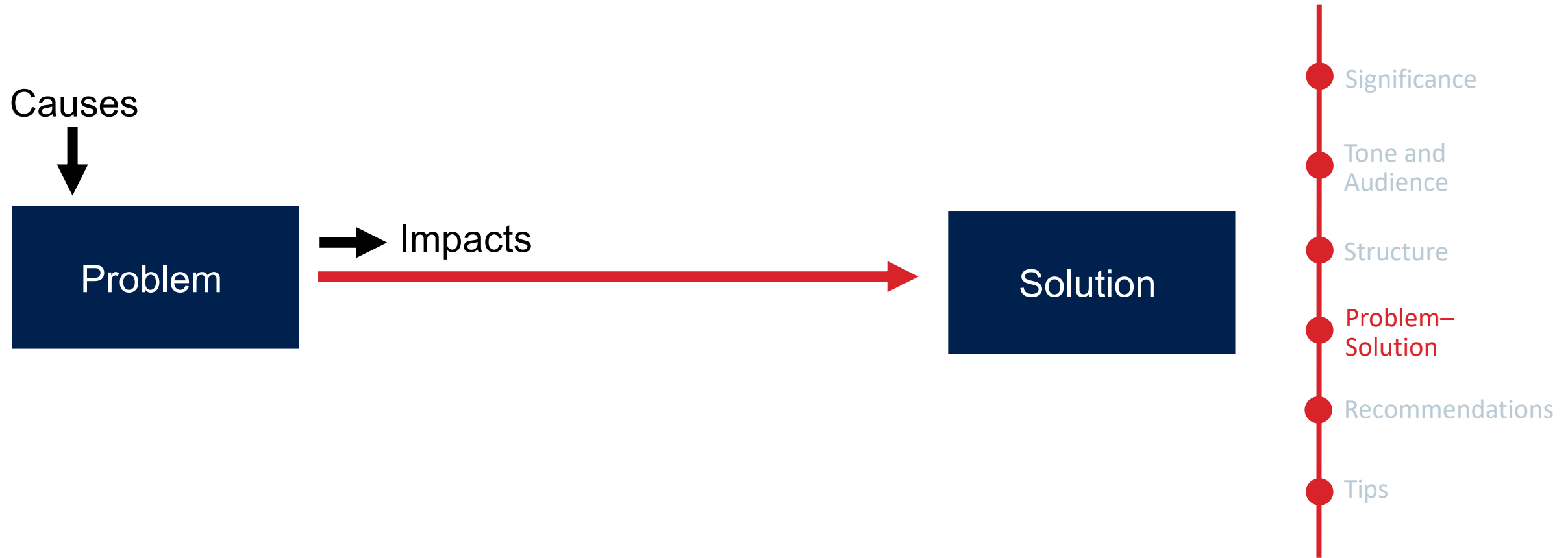
- Tables
- Case studies
- Graphics
- Images

## Additional Sections

- Appendices
- Author Information
- Acknowledgements



# Ensure that the problem is clearly defined and described, and the recommendation(s)—solution—directly address(es) the problem



# Use evidence to back recommendations, and consider frameworks that help determine feasibility and relevance

## SWOT Analysis: [More information on SWOT](#)

- **S**trengths
- **W**eaknesses
- **O**pportunities
- **T**hreats

## PESTEL Analysis: [More information on PESTEL](#)

- **P**olitical
- **E**conomic
- **S**ocial
- **T**echnological
- **E**cological
- **L**egal



# Review examples of policy briefs

## Databases

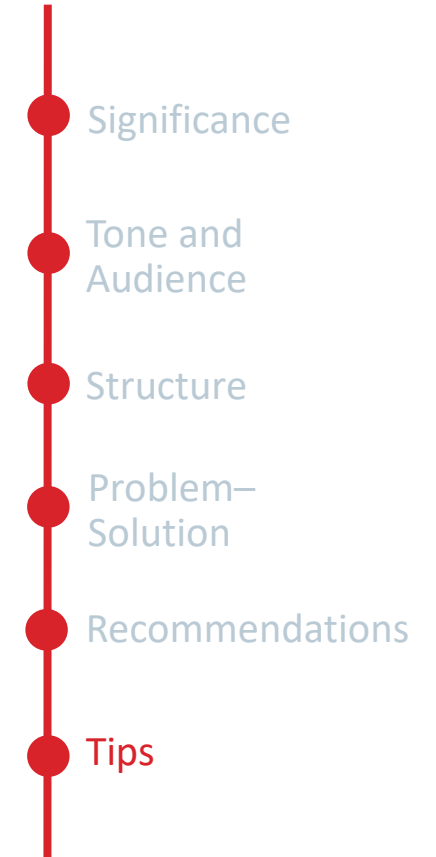
- [Policy Archive](#)
- [Canadian Public Documents Collection](#)

## Publication

- [Health Affairs Health Policy Briefs](#)

## Think Tanks

- [Wellesley Institute Archives for Policy Briefs](#)
- [Brookings Policy Brief Series](#)
- [RAND Corporation Research Briefs](#)



# Find examples on pages for think tanks, research institutes, non-profits, and governments engaged in policy work



RAND > Published Research >

## Research Briefs

RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

**2023**

**Findings and Recommendations for Funding Technology-Related Business Initiatives in the Department of the Air Force** — September 21, 2023

Don Snyder

- [Think Tank Search \(Harvard Kennedy School\)](#)
- [List of Canadian Think Tanks](#)



# Locate policy briefs by searching with quotations

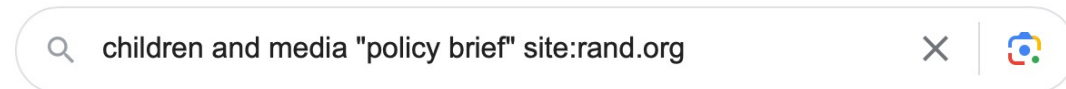
In Google Search enter the topic of interest along with policy brief in quotations (i.e., “policy brief”):



Narrow your search results to government or educational websites (.edu, .gov, .org):



Try searching sites of think tanks and non-profit organizations specifically focused on policy:



- Significance
- Tone and Audience
- Structure
- Problem–Solution
- Recommendations
- Tips



## ACTIVITY

Use the chat feature to share links to the policy briefs you find

# Find examples of policy briefs on the topic of misinformation and media

- Significance
- Tone and Audience
- Structure
- Problem–Solution
- Recommendations
- Tips

# Agenda: Part II

01 Title

02 Executive Summary

03 Context or Problem

04 Options or Alternatives

05 Recommendation(s)

06 Recommended Resources



# PART II

## Application

## ACTIVITY

### Devise a policy brief for the following scenario.

*In September 2023, OpenAI announced DALLÉ-3, a new version of its AI-driven image generator DALLÉ (Metz and Hsu 2023). This version of the image generator will eventually be embedded into the company's popular chatbot ChatGPT, making AI-based image generation more accessible to the public (Metz and Hsu 2023). As AI image generators like DALLÉ become more common, stakeholders across industry, academia, and government must reckon with questions of ownership and authorship for art (Small 2023).*

*A think tank has asked you to produce a policy brief on the issue of AI-produced art and copyright protections for Canada's federal government, specifically, for policymakers in the Innovation, Science and Economic Development department.*

Clearly identify the issue and audience, and then prepare a policy brief.

# Keep your title concise yet ensure it is engaging and provides an accurate description of the contents of the brief.

- Is my title brief?
- If I think I need to include more information for my title, have I broken the title up into title and subtitle?
- Is my title relevant to the subject matter of my brief?
- Does my title engage my target audience?
- Do I have anything unnecessary in my title?



## Synthesize the contents of the brief in a short paragraph, including the issue, alternatives, recommendations, and conclusion (if applicable)

- If my reader only reads this executive summary, will they be able to tell me the problem, potential options, and my recommendation?
- I know my executive summary should not read like an introduction or academic abstract, but a synthesis of my brief. Does my executive summary sound like an introduction?
- Is my executive summary too long?
- Have I paraphrased the contents of my brief? Do not directly paste in sentences from your brief in the summary
- Have I used strong, action-oriented language?



# Explain the issue (or problem), considering the causes, impacts, and significance—why should the decision-maker care?

- Have I narrowed the scope of my problem to the point where it can be addressed?
- Have I described the problem clearly? Is there enough context?
- Have I noted what factors caused the problem?
- Have I noted which stakeholders are involved and impacted?
- Have I explained the impacts of the problem on stakeholder groups that may be of interest to the reader?
- Have I emphasized the importance of addressing this problem?



## Describe the current approach for addressing the issue and use evidence to explain alternatives—think about comparable issues in other jurisdictions

- Have I explained the current approach and its limitations (or no approach)?
- Have I described each of my options in sufficient detail?
- Are my options backed by evidence that is credible and relevant?
- Have I explained how I assessed each option?
- Have I considered the implications of each policy option to the involved and impacted stakeholder groups? Do I consider a diverse range of perspectives?





# List recommendation(s) based on research, considering steps needed to carry out recommended action items

- Have I used evidence (rather than personal biases) to guide my recommendation(s)?
- Have I considered the feasibility of my recommendation(s)?  
Actionability?
- Do I address the problem?
- Am I clear and concise when providing the recommendation(s)?



# List sources used to support points made in the policy brief and to direct decision-makers toward additional information, if needed

- Have I included full bibliographic citations for the information I reference in the text?
- Do I provide “further reading” (if asked to do so), and do the additional readings contribute to my reader’s understanding of the issue and recommendation(s)?
- Am I consistent in my formatting?



## ACTIVITY

# Complete a final check of your policy brief

- Is there jargon? (consider sharing with a colleague or friend to see if phrases and terminology make sense)
- Is my brief well-structured? (consider adding subheadings)
- Do my transitions between paragraphs make sense? (consider reading aloud)
- Do my paragraphs flow? (consider reading aloud)
- Have I addressed my intended audience? (consider whether the information in each section makes sense for your target audience)
- Are my sources well-formatted? (consider using a [citation manager](#))

# Additional Resources

## University of Toronto Library Guides

- [The Policy Brief: Helpful Resources](#)
- [Public Policy: Key Government Resources](#)
- [Public Policy and Governance](#)
- [UN & Intergovernmental Organizations](#)
- [Critical Information Policy Studies](#)

## Additional Guides

- [Writing Public Policy Briefs](#) (Arizona State University)
- [Policy Briefs](#) (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
- [Social Work: What is a Policy Brief?](#) (University of Southern California)

# Additional Support

## Writing Support

Writing Tutors at the Learning Hub  
(Book appointment through Quercus)

- Receive feedback on ongoing assignments and writing projects
- Develop writing skills

[Graduate Centre for Academic Communication \(GCAC\)](#)

- Sign up for writing workshops (asynchronous and synchronous)
- Book an appointment with the writing centre

## Reference Support—University of Toronto Libraries



[Ask Chat](#)

- Speak to a librarian
- Immediate support via instant messenger

Drop-in Hours (Check Quercus)

- Speak to a librarian
- Immediate support over virtual platform

# Download slides:

<https://www.kausharmahetaji.com/uploads/policybriefsiskills2023.pdf>

# Thank you!

# Questions?

<https://forms.office.com/r/W9c98Smk9m>

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# References

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