



# SHARING YOUR POLICY BRIEF

## GETTING YOUR POLICY BRIEF TO YOUR INTENDED AUDIENCE



This guideline is part of the University of Canberra's Faculty of Business Government and Law Policy Brief Toolkit available at

<https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/faculties/busgovlaw/research/research-in-practice/policy-briefs/bgl-policy-briefs-toolkit>

## SHARING YOUR POLICY BRIEF

Once you've developed your policy brief, it's time to disseminate it to your intended audience. It is likely that you had an audience in mind when you wrote your brief, but it may still be relevant to other audiences, and your thinking about your audience may have evolved. Here, we'll be outlining how to share your policy brief with suitable audiences. See the *Knowing your Audience* for more about identifying and writing to your audience.

It is important to keep in mind how much (or little) time your intended audience will have to read your policy brief. As such, when preparing your policy brief to share with them, make sure you have tailored it to spotlight the key things your audience will be looking for (see *Understanding Policy Briefs* and *Knowing your Audience* guides for more information on writing your policy brief). Keep a record of engagement, that is, how you engaged with your audience about your policy brief and what it led to (i.e. impact). This can help hone your methods of sharing your policy brief for subsequent research.[1].

As you develop your policy brief, think about who the intended audience is. This helps you structure the policy brief and plan its dissemination in the way your audience prefers. Be prepared for your policy brief to reach audiences you don't anticipate, and for it to be used in ways that might surprise or even disappoint you. The rules and norms of academic communication (e.g., acknowledging sources, openly publishing data and analysis, conducting open and respectful debate) do not necessarily apply in the contexts within which your audience operates.

## WAYS TO SHARE YOUR POLICY BRIEF

There are a range of ways to share your policy brief with your intended audience, whether they are government policy-makers, policy advocates, think tanks, businesses etc (see *Knowing your Audience* for a more detailed description of the different audiences for your Policy Brief). The following lists some critical steps and approaches to consider, which are further explored below in three key themes – targeting your audience networks, using your research networks and collaborations.





## 1. Target your existing and emerging networks

For impact, authority and agency is critical. Therefore, sharing your policy brief directly with key people in policy making positions is a highly effective method of disseminating your policy brief.[2] You may already have a list of contacts in policy making positions (in government, business or other sectors), or you may need to seek out specific people to connect with. Don't hesitate to use your networks to make these new connections, a polite introduction from a trusted colleague can go a long way!

It may take a while to develop these connections (even years), so it is important to maintain that connection and invest in the relationship. Engage in opportunities to work and connect with your target policy maker audiences, and continue to showcase the value of your work and credibility. It's also important to communicate with your connections in the way most appropriate to them; it's not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. In particular, government officials are often pressed for time and on short deadlines. They may also be constrained by confidentiality issues in dealing with you.

Think too about your means of communication. A brief, well-crafted email may be more effective than a long, formal letter, at least as an initial contact, especially if the person is not known to you. You may want to consider whether a short, focused meeting is a good use of your time, and your contacts' time. Preparing a high quality, short PowerPoint presentation and/or video can be useful ways to share the information at a time convenient for your audience.

Think carefully about timing. For example, where in the budget cycle is the issue that you are raising? Are there any relevant issues in the public domain (e.g., media, parliament, the courts) that may affect when and how government officials may wish to know about your policy brief? Look for that 'policy window' that may result in a greater uptake of your research – this might mean holding onto your policy brief for a more suitable time so as it is not lost in current political chatter that is not relevant to your research.

Use unnamed contacts (e.g. departmental email addresses, web forms, etc) sparingly, as these are generally conduits for the general public or specific interested parties, not academics and researchers. Take the time to find the right person in the right department to directly address your policy brief to. If you send your policy brief to more than one person or more than one agency, make sure all of your contacts know that you have done so.[3]



## 2. Use your research and other interest group networking channels

If you're a researcher, it is likely you will already have research contacts that you can share your policy briefs with, as appropriate. This supports the opportunity for these researchers to refer to your work in their work and/or meetings with policy influencers.

Other forms of academic/research networking—like social media channels, academic interest groups, conferences—can also be useful springboards to share your research and disseminate your policy brief(s). Be aware that non-academics may well be monitoring social media and conference announcements and publications as well. For more information on alternative approaches to policy briefs, check out the toolkit's *Alternative Approaches to Communicating Policy Briefs* guide.

Do not discount the opportunities for sharing your policy brief within your institution as well. Your faculty/department may hold regular seminars that you can present in, or other forms of formal or informal conversations (e.g. brown bag lunches, panel discussions). Often external audiences are invited to these events, such as adjuncts, associates or others on the faculty/department email list – you never know who might see your seminar topic and think that this is just what they need for their current policy challenge.



## 3. Collaborations are key

Research is not typically completed in a vacuum. It is likely that your research, its development, implementation and analysis, is the result of a collaboration amongst a range of researchers, funders (government and non-government), subject matter experts including technical, policy, economic etc, community groups and individuals. Therefore, your policy brief is also the result of this collaboration. Working with your collaborators in the development of the policy brief, or at a minimum the distribution of the policy brief, brings many advantages. Many hands make light work, with your collaborators each bringing their own networks to help share the information to key audience(s) and drive research impact. Additionally, acknowledging the contribution of your collaborators can help strength the credibility of the research and its findings.[4]

## GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS FOR SHARING YOUR POLICY BRIEFS



### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms with the main purpose of professional networking, like LinkedIn, are helpful for building contacts in your intended audience. [5]

Other social media platforms (e.g. X, BlueSky) are also useful for sharing your work with a broader audience and being able to 'tag' key stakeholders/audiences. [6]



### MEDIA COVERAGE

Writing media articles and/or just engaging with the media in general about your research can extend the reach of your policy brief, as the audience is much broader.[7] You may have some media contacts already, or you can look up and contact topic relevant journalists and/or media outlets.[8]

The Conversation, for example, is a notable and well-respected platform where academics share their research.

Professional, industry and trade journals and websites can be very useful, too.

You can also contact your institution's media team (e.g. UC Media at the University of Canberra) to discuss ways to disseminate your work. They have contacts to media organisations and can put you in touch with interested outlets.

## REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.bath.ac.uk/case-studies/dr-jo-daniels-and-policy-engagement/>

[2] <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/policy-briefs/#audiences-for-policy-briefs>

[3] <https://www.bath.ac.uk/case-studies/dr-jo-daniels-and-policy-engagement/>

[4] <https://doi-org.ezproxy.canberra.edu.au/10.1080/03098265.2021.2001793>

[5] <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/policy-briefs/#audiences-for-policy-briefs>

[6] <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Policy-Brief-Guide.pdf>

[7] <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/policy-briefs/#audiences-for-policy-briefs>

[8] <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Policy-Brief-Guide.pdf>