

The Essence of a Good Public Policy Position Statement

A good position statement identifies the party making the recommendations and their relationship or relevance to the issue addressed. Its recommendations are clear, relevant and persuasive. It respects the policy-maker's time by getting right to the point. Key elements or characteristics include:

- 1) The draft should be short and easy to digest (key recommendations at a glance). Based on feedback from U.S. legislators and their staff, our goal is to keep the draft to one page (front only if possible).
- 2) Introduction should identify the party or entity issuing the position statement by name (see also 7 below).
- 3) The overall need, issue(s) or problem(s) addressed by the proffered policy recommendations should be clearly stated in the introductory paragraph in 1-2 short sentences.
- 4) Recommendations (or asks) should be clearly stated, in a bulleted list if there are more than one.
- 5) Recommendations (or asks) should make clear exactly who is expected to take what recommended action (e.g. government, courts, private sector, NGOs, etc.) and the action recommended should be within the power or jurisdiction of the identified entity.
- 6) Rationales (i.e. statements explaining the underlying need for action and/or the expected outcome of each recommendation) should be summarized in 1-2 sentences at most as part of each bulleted recommendation. Any associated detail and authoritative data/sources should be relegated to end of document in background, or provided in a supporting whitepaper or collection of resources that can be perused later at leisure.
- 7) The statement should clearly identify the party taking the position and what their special interest is, or relevance to the issue. This can be accomplished in the introduction and through use of a closing paragraph providing more information on the organization/constituency and its overall relevance to the issue.
- 8) Try to avoid footnotes or endnotes if possible. There is no need to site common knowledge; use footnotes only for citations to key data sources or references that underpin your recommendations.

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- 9) A well written position statement is more persuasive than a poorly written one. Good spelling, good grammar, active (not passive) voice, and avoidance of acronyms where possible are important.

A Suggested Drafting Process:

- 1) Start by drafting (and agreeing on) the list of recommendations.

Each bullet should consist of a declarative statement (who should do what and/or when/how should they do it), and 1-2 sentences of supporting rationale (why)? Review to make sure the recommendations are in the most logical, appropriate order (most important to least important).

- 2) Then draft the introductory paragraph of 2-4 sentences, which should
 - Identify the party making the recommendations
 - States the problem(s) to be solved and the public benefit(s) of solving it.
 - Provide an introduction to the solutions (i.e. references the list of bulleted recommendations)
- 3) Add the standard boilerplate provided with background on the party making the recommendation. Modify as needed to communicate any special relationship or information relevant to the targeted recipient. This segment goes after the bulleted recommendations.
- 4) Draft a supporting background section or whitepaper if needed to provide necessary data or new/unique analysis that supports the recommendation(s) given.. Ideally, background sections should not exceed one side of one page if possible (so that entire position statement can be published on one page front and back). If you need 3-5 pages or more to state your rationale...it may be better to jointly publish a detailed whitepaper and use the position's "background" section to summarize and reference the whitepaper and/or other relevant sources.