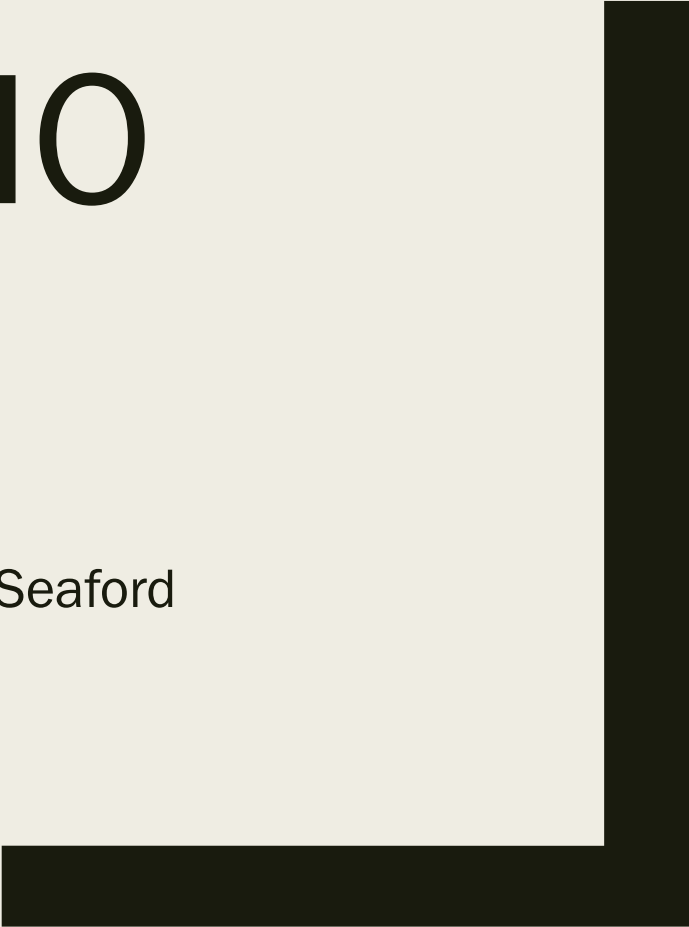




POLICY MEMO SESSION

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Today we'll be answering 4 questions.

1. What even is a policy memo?
2. Why write (or read) a policy memo?
3. Ok, but what does a good one actually look like?
4. What are do's and don'ts that I can fall back on when in doubt?

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- Impact and Empathy!

2. Why write (or read) a policy memo?

- Decision-makers are busy people and often do not have time to read all of the research, consult relevant stakeholders, and arrive at well-founded conclusions by themselves.
- They may be evaluating several distinct issues (and memos!) over the course of one day or meeting.
This is why they hired you!

2. Why write (or read) a policy memo?

- They are concise, well-organized documents that privilege readability. Not only are they fun to read, but they can be fun to write. They are easily passed along and easily implemented. Compare with philosophy paper...

2. Why write (or read) a policy memo?

- In synthesizing diverse sources and interpretations into a coherent, succinct document, you are likely to better acquaint yourselves with the issues and associated costs, benefits, stakes, etc.

3. What does a good one look like?

- Let's actually take a look...

3. What does a good one look like?

- Clearly articulated purpose, at the outset and in the beginning of every paragraph.
- Meaningfully incorporated evidence and perspectives of diverse stakeholders.
- Effective use of formatting (can you tell what's going on with a quick skim?)
 - *Bulleted list can be helpful, as can popout boxes, summary boxes, etc.*
- Thoughtful arguments (and counter arguments, and rebuttals!)
 - *Use only the strong and important versions.*
- Reasoned recommendations, with an eye toward real-world implementation.
 - *Who's in the task force? How will you enforce a ban?*

3. What does a good one look like?

- Put another way...(and in order!)
 - Content. Prioritize clarity, structure, precision, and linguistic efficiency. Include relevant information and arguments, but no irrelevant considerations. Data and facts (from your field work) need to work together with argument here. You might want to organize the memo around your recommendations.
 - Structure. Clarity and flow are key. Use headings and paragraphs.
 - Presentation / Formatting. Although it might first strike you as the thing that sets a memo apart from everything else, this is the least important aspect of good memo writing. Devote time to this at the end.

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- Do anticipate counterarguments, make them explicit, and offer explanations for why they do not change your recommendations. Don't assume your recommendations are fool-proof!

Good luck!