WIKIMEDIA
FOUNDATION

Policy Advocacy Workshop

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Wikimania 2023

Singapore

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Every opportunity for policy advocacy is unique, and your strategy should be tailored to the specific circumstances of each issue, audience, and opportunity.

You don't necessarily need to say anything new- what's important is <u>making a convincing argument</u>.

Writing on policy can come in my formats: blog posts, opinion pieces, white papers, letters to policymakers, summary documents, etc.

Today we'll focus on how to write a brief "policy position summary" intended to familiarize an external audience, like a policy maker, with the issue, how it affects Wikimedia projects, and what our recommendations are.

These steps, however, can be applied to many formats for writing about policy.

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

1.
Identify & research your topic

2.
Identify your audience

3.
Develop your argument

4.
Determine your medium

5.
Draft your paper, include recommendations

6.
Proofread, factcheck, refine, and revise

7.
Share with your audience

8.
Follow up

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 1

Identify & research your topic

Are there any bills or new regulations being considered?

Is there a new technology, challenge, trend, etc. that may have an impact on your community or Wikimedia projects more broadly? What will that impact be?

What are others saying about this topic? Have others in the movement written on it? Can they help?

What is your unique point of view as a Wikimedian in your context?

What are policy makers saying or asking? What can they do? What do you want them to know?

What do you want policy makers to do?

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 2

Identify your audience

Who do you want to influence? Be specific.

What do they have the ability to do?

What is their position on this topic?

Have the written or spoken about this before?

Are they an ally? Do they understand Wikimedia projects?

How can you reach this audience?
- Submitting an analysis through formal channels?
- Sending a letter?
- Traditional media? Share a blog?

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 3

Develop your argument

What is your unique perspective as a Wikimedian?

What do you have to offer to the debate that others do not?

What is the primary argument you want your audience to understand?

What are 3 ideas that support your argument?

What data and facts can support your arguments?

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 4

Determine your medium

How can you best reach your audience?

Are there upcoming opportunities to submit policy recommendations? What is the best timing?

Could you contact the policy makers or their offices directly?

If you will publish your paper in the media or in a blog, make sure it's where your audience goes to for information.

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 5

Draft your paper, include recommendations

Start with an outline. Include your bottom line up front (BLUF).

Clearly state your argument and supporting arguments. Support them with facts and data. Cite your sources.

Write clearly in language that will be familiar to your audience.

Make concrete recommendations your audience can act upon to create the desired outcome.

Make your paper easy to read: formatting is everything.

Formal processes can include specific criteria (format, length, etc.). Follow these closely.

Example: Formatting Your Document

Overview of the organization and WM Projects (if appropriate)

Citation needed: Hyperlinks to key sources

Photos can increase visual appeal

Plenty of breaks & white space to break up text

Propper branding

Clear division of sections & sub-sections

Clear, concrete recommendations

Bullets to simplify text

Introduction

About the Wikimedia Foundation

The Wikimedia Foundation is the nonprofit organization that hosts Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects. The vision of our free knowledge movement is a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. To this end, we support a vibrant community of more than 300,000 volunteers around the world, who contribute to the Wikimedia projects by adding, editing, and verifying content in over 55 million articles across 300 languages, all for free and without ads.

About the Wikimedia Projects

Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects provide free access to neutral, well-sourced information about science, culture, history, and more encyclopedic subjects. The information in question is added, organized, and edited by a decentralized community of volunteers who engage in open debate to reach consensus around content decisions and policies. Volunteers address most everyday content issues on the Wikimedia projects, such as intentional vandalism or edits that do not meet Wikipedia's reliability and neutrality standards, without interference from the Foundation. This unique community-led governance and content moderation model has allowed the Wikimedia projects to achieve the prominence and high quality they have now, and the volunteer-led, distributed decision-making that occurs on the Wikimedia projects is a manifestation of the ideals of online participation and expression.

The Wikimedia model is unique and allows editors and volunteers to work together towards the creation of a shared knowledge. We believe that this model should be protected and supported, as well as other community-based models of information sharing. However, these are often unknown by governments and agencies drafting policies and tech regulation.

ADavenport (WMF), CC BY-SA 4.0

Internet-related policy development should not only be consistent with universal human rights standards, but also developed and implemented through a multi-stakeholder model and be grounded in a transparent and accountable process, with meaningful participation of different stakeholders, who can best advocate for alternative models of positive internet developments. For this reason, we appreciate the United Nations initiative to develop a Global Digital Compact through a multi-stakeholder process, and welcome the opportunity to submit our input.

The Wikimedia community experiences the consequences of technology regulation everyday, and sometimes faces unintended consequences of misguided policies alongside harms caused by laws that are inconsistent with human rights standards. With these concerns in mind, the Foundation's Global Advocacy team, composed of experts in technology policy and regulation, has worked to collect input that reflects and highlights both the Wikimedia model explained above and the experience of our global communities and volunteers.

---

5. Digital commons as a global public good

Core Principles

Wikimedia projects' content, be it text, images, data, or other, is created and developed under a Creative Commons open license and is, by definition, part of the digital commons. Informational resources and technologies are open to all, and these are designed to be used by the same communities that have created them. Everyone, everywhere, can access, reuse and/or remix them with attribution, and participate in their development in order to advance toward the Foundation's goal of joining in the sum of all knowledge.

This vision and the openness of Wikimedia projects makes their resources and content a global public good. Everyone, not only the Wikimedia volunteer community, can use and develop them, as well as further develop the community-led policies that sustain them. Minorities and historically-excluded communities are especially encouraged to join in these efforts.

Digital commons such as Wikimedia projects are essential to provide wide access to accurate information, which in turn is fundamental for the development of the SDGs by supporting digital public goods that can be used by all.

As more services and information sources move online, having access to digital public squares and digital repositories of knowledge and memory is increasingly a prerequisite for participation in public life. The ability to access and share knowledge can create social good and promote social equity, but barriers to access often mirror ... existing inequities instead.

... we need a robust public ... structure that supports ... global public goods, since ... sharing information helps ... the promise of the internet as a digital public good. Such an information

...ment in ...easy and ...tion, but ...e and academia. This support extends to legal structures and open and free licensing of many different types of information.

Key Commitment/ Pledges/Actions

Digital commons such as Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects should be supported because they are global public goods, and contribute to the development of the SDGs.

• Governments and international organizations should protect and support the right of communities to create and maintain online platforms dedicated to public information and other digital public goods.

• Governments and international organizations should work through multi-stakeholder processes to develop standards and definitions for what constitutes a digital public good, ensure the right to expression online is protected, and that people are not punished for accessing or sharing factual information.

• Governments should balance intellectual property rights interests with the right to information, and ensure the continued existence of a robust public domain.

• Governments and international organizations should invest in and promote the creation and distribution of content that is relevant to local and communities in a variety of languages.

• Governments and international organizations should support and invest in a variety of knowledge production and preservation organizations and institutions.

• Governments and international organizations should create policies that

8

WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 6

Proofread, factcheck, refine, and revise

Proofread your document multiple times at multiple stages. Ask a colleague or your team to also proofread it for content, grammar, tone, style, etc.

Factcheck everything. Using factually incorrect information can undermine your argument.

How can you strengthen your argument? Is there a way to make it easier to understand?

Revise your paper based on the feedback you receive.

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 7

Share with your audience

Share your paper with your audience!

Publish it. Post it. Retweet it. Amplify it.

Are there any allies that can help amplify your ideas? Ask them to share it with their networks!

Are you submitting it through a formal process? Follow the directions very closely.

Are you sending it to a policymaker or their office? Include multiple staff members and offer to speak to them in-person.

Writing a Policy Position Summary in 8 Easy Steps

Step 8

Follow up

Always follow up on your paper- don't hit send and then forget about it!

Can you offer policymakers a briefing on your paper?

How is your paper being received and shared? Do you have any data available to evaluate?

What future events, debates, etc. can you use to share your ideas?

Who else in the movement might benefit from this work?

Topic 1: Copyright

Copyright is a system of temporary exclusive rights that is limited by exceptions & limitations and the expiration of these rights.

Exceptions & limitations as well as the term of copyright determines what content we can include in our projects.

Content whose rights are expired is thought to enter the public domain, but the latter is not well defined and protected.

Copyright law also mandates that the community and the service provider also remove infringing content, usually once aware of their existence. Some legislative proposals are asking for a more active policing role by the service provider, which might disrupt community moderation processes if adopted.

Topic 2: Global Digital Compact

The Global Digital Compact is a UN-led initiative that invites governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and individuals to contribute to discussions about issues such as digital connectivity, avoiding Internet fragmentation, providing people with options as to how their data is used, application of human rights online, and promoting a trustworthy internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content.

The Global Digital Compact is expected to "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all" in a document adopted by the UN.

We believe that Wikimedia can have a meaningful contribution to the discussions and can have a impact on the final document. We also believe that having some of our core principles and beliefs established at this level can help Wikimedians in their local work.

Topic 3: Surveillance/Privacy

Privacy enables people to engage and share knowledge freely, without fear of someone watching their online lives.

Wikimedia defends everyone's right to privacy and to contribute anonymously to our projects.

Wikimedia also challenges mass surveillance practices, whether imposed by governments or private businesses.

Yet, many legislative proposals, for instance ones that target terrorist content or child abuse metrials, suggest to use mass surveillance technologies to protect society and its members.

The business models of most of the dominant online platforms are built in a way that they track users across the internet.

Politicians are regularly proposing to impose some sort of compulsory online ID/registration system for online platforms that would make anonymous contributions impossible.