

Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police



Report Writing Training

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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the report writing workshop conducted by the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat.

This workshop will help you understand the principles that contribute to getting effective results through report writing and effective communication.

We aim to build confidence and your ability to write reports well. You will receive tools and techniques that will assist you to structure and write reports clearly

About the workbook

This workbook is intended to be used with live instruction and assistance.

For this reason we have deliberately kept the information in this book to a minimum. We hope that during the course you make your own notes to assist your understanding and provide further assistance to you in your report writing.

Purpose of the training

Busy Police Officers and Managers value reports that are easy to read and understand. Because the better they can understand what they are reading, the sooner they can act on it.

That is precisely what this training is designed to do - to assist the readers of your work so they can confidently and quickly make decisions based on well written documents.

We hope you enjoy the training.

What we want you to take away

Key Objectives

Most times you will produce a report to achieve specific results. To get those results we want you to write so that:

- You understand the importance of a good report
- Your intended readers can quickly understand the main points
- Your intended readers can make decisions
- You use only as many words as necessary to get your main points across

Learning Outcomes

This training introduces a straightforward process that we trust you will find useful for most of your report writing.

By the end of the training you will understand how to implement the following steps:

- Obtain clear thinking through good planning, before you write
- Know how to gather data and information
- Develop and arrange content to achieve your desired results
- Self-edit and proof documents effectively

How we will achieve results

We will use real report writing examples to introduce you to the steps in writing effective reports. You will be given plenty of opportunity to experiment with each technique. You will also work with others during the training to discuss how the steps will work within your police service.

End results

By the end of this training you will be able to:

- Apply a process to all writing tasks you face
- Arrange the content in a way that suits your readers
- Feel able to write a report

Step 1 Planning and Preparation

The extent and quality of the report will depend on the work done during the planning step. The amount of planning and preparation can make the difference between the report making sense or being returned to be re-written.

Whenever we begin to write a report there is typically some documentation or a meeting attended to explain why a report is required. Gather all information and begin to treat the report writing as a specific project.

Things to consider

- + Who is the main reader? (who has asked you to write the report)
- + What is the topic?
- + What do you want this report to achieve?
- + Is there agreement on the subject or will the report be controversial?
- + Who else should be involved (did other people attend the meeting that you may want to consult with?)
- + Who should write the report? (one person or better suit to a team of people)
- + How should the work be broken down to manageable tasks, e.g. you begin the report but ask others for data, for youth offending you may need to ask other police officers for information.
- + Develop a report writing plan with timelines e.g. when does it have to be completed by, who will I get to peer review it, how long will they take etc.
- + Scope how long you think the report will take to write? What other assistance you may need, e.g. computer access.
- + If this is a topic you are unfamiliar with begin reading and talking to others to up skill your knowledge base
- + What meetings may be required? (budget and time implications)

Step 2

Research and Gaining Evidence for your Report

Why research and gaining evidence is important

Understanding the topic will enhance your ability to write the report professionally. Having a well researched and evidence based report will provide your report with credibility and allow you to professionally guide your Manager. Your report may be used in wider circles so it is important to plan what you want to write and important to make sure it is correct.

It is important to make sure when attending a meeting that you need to report back on, that your notes are thorough and accurate. If you are not sure of the topic ask others who attended the meeting or work in the area, to gain wider views of others on the topic.

For any writers, researching the topic is important to keep them up to date with what is current in the field. It also adds credibility of the writer and the report by providing a solid background.

Other reasons

- ✚ To identify gaps in your knowledge
- ✚ So you become knowledgeable on the subject and can advise your Commissioner or Manager. The "Boss" does not have time to be an expert on every subject and will rely on you to know the details of the topic
- ✚ To carry on from where others have already reached (reviewing data allows you to build on the platform of existing ideas and knowledge)
- ✚ To identify others working in the field (this adds weight to your ideas if others agree)
- ✚ To identify opposing views
- ✚ To identify information and ideas that are valid for your project
- ✚ To demonstrate that you have researched the topic and relying on other evidence rather than just your own or your Departments view

You may need to find data yourself

Types of Data that may be used

Quantitative data - that is or may be estimated by quantity: or describing the measuring of quantity

Qualitative data - pertaining to or concerned with quality or qualities

Local data - on crime helps to:

- ✚ persuade people of the need for action
- ✚ set a baseline against which to measure change
- ✚ decide priorities

Data may come from a wide range of sources.

Sometimes **quantitative** data on crime/harm is not collected at a local level, and therefore is not available. **Qualitative** data, such as newspaper articles about crime, or anecdotal information from stakeholder interviews can be useful when quantitative data is limited or unavailable.

When quantitative data is limited, national research can also be used to indicate where problems are likely to be. Also the use of other data from differing sources should be accessed. For example data on population If you have a higher than average proportion of youth in your community, you might need more focus on initiatives for young people in your report, than an area with an older population.

Sources of useful information that may be available locally include:

- ✚ economic data
 - Income levels
 - Access to employment
 - Density (geographic and per head)
- ✚ social data
 - Demographics
 - Local drinking patterns and levels of alcohol consumption
 - Health services e.g. hospital admissions
 - Community safety e.g. Community Safety Audit and safety questions within Residents' Satisfaction Surveys
 - Family Violence
 - Housing (overcrowding etc)

Step 3 Involving stakeholders

Who are stakeholders?

They are specific people or groups who have a stake in the outcome of the report, and/or may be affected by the activity or report being written.

There are many people who have a stake in addressing crime ranging from local business to health professionals to community members and those working in the criminal justice system. It is important to get their views on crime related issues and their ideas on how to address it, if that is what your report is about.

Note - if the report is for internal police staff only, it is imperative staff are given the opportunity to provide input and peer review the report. You need to make sure your report is accurate and other divisions within police agree with your recommendations.

Why involve others?

Getting stakeholder input will assist with:

- informing decisions about what to prioritise in the report
- letting people know that the report is being written
- encouraging ownership of the report

It may be possible to use existing meetings or undertake basic analysis such as Community Safety audits or Residents' Satisfaction surveys to get an indication of stakeholders' views on crime.

Involving stakeholders

Key people should have reasonably informed views of policing issues but this is an opportunity to give as well as take information. There are a number of ways of gaining information from stakeholders, e.g. questionnaire, interviews, public meetings, road shows, one on one meetings or even putting on a morning tea!

Factors to be taken into account when planning stakeholder involvement include:

- What information is required

Step 4 Drafting the Report

This step involves drawing the process of report development together into a written document. Before you write anything always take a few minutes to gather all your information into logical sections.

Before you begin writing the report *Get your thinking Clear*

1	Specify your Purpose	<p>Why are you writing this report? What is the purpose? What are the main points you must get across (Use short, sharp, crisp sentence)</p>
	example	<p>Attending PICIP-WAN Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform my Commissioner about the conference • what interesting points were discussed at the conference • support for research on youth offending to support the conference my Commissioner will be attending in Sept 2009
2	Identify your Audience	<p>Who is your report written for? (intended audience) a- who is the main audience b- who else do you want to read it (Secondary -e.g. supervisors) c- who else could read it Ask yourself who you want or need to read the report, also who would you NOT want to read the draft , e.g. the media etc</p>
	example	<p>Main audience - Police Commisioner Secondary Audience - Other Police Managers Who else could read it - Other agencies</p>
3	Filter your Information	<p>a- Do a brainstorm (mind mapping) with others who could provide further information or check your data b- Scope the work, what is to be included or excluded and why c- Outcomes, what do you want people to know after they have read your report. What do you want people</p>

		<p>to feel after they have read your report? Most importantly what do you want people to DO after they have read your document</p> <p>e.g. you may want people to act differently? No one should think after reading you report "What am I to do about it?"</p>
	example	<p>Get together a group from the PICP-WAN Conference and ask them what they believed the main issues were from the WAN Conference, ask what points must be conveyed to the Commissioner or Police Executive - write down on a whiteboard or on a piece paper what is said. Then group them into themes, discuss controversial topics to see if agreement can be found.</p> <p>Decide what to include in your report and what to exclude and reasons why.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We want people to know about the PCIP-WAN 2. I want staff to FEEL responsible to implement things resulting from the PICP-WAN Conference 3. I want people to assist with youth offending research to support the Commissioner in Sept 2009.
4	Test your assumptions	<p>There are 3 levels you need to test</p> <p>1- Personal, what are my own personal beliefs I might have bought into this report, are my own opinions clouding my judgment? Am I looking for evidence to back up my own world view?</p> <p>2- Organisational, Is this what the organisation wants? Have I listened, written down enough information? Have I made sure all those with knowledge have had an opportunity to input into the report?</p> <p>3- Professional, do you have support for your report? Have your assumptions been proved by evidence? Have you thought of ways to solve some of the problems you have seen?</p>
	example	<p>1- What do I believe about the PICP-WAN meetings, do I think the conference is important for women police</p>

		<p>staff to attend, do I think most of the women need a specific network, does the conference have value or is it just a trip away?</p> <p>2- Have I written good notes at the conference, have I participated to such a level that I can write a report? Have I spoken to others here about what they are reporting back, if I didn't understand something did I ask for clarification or just leave it? Have I let my personal feelings get in the way, e.g. I disagree with others but I will only put down my view and not the view of others.</p> <p>3- Have I spoken to previous people who have attended to get their view? Have I spoken to staff and investigated what they really think of the Women's Advisory Network, if not what can I put in my report to assist, how can I help with buy-in, talk to more people, write the report clearly so everyone understands the reasons for attending the conference and the research afterwards that requires some further commitment. Does my report clearly show that attending the conference is only part of the process, that further work is required to practice the skills learnt.</p>
5	Begin to arrange your ideas	Now you can start to begin writing

NOTES

Report Template

It is important to note that this template is just a guide and some headings may not be necessary based on the report you are writing. Some simple reports may only be a page or two so all headings may not be appropriate.

This template is just for your guidance, some samples of reports are at the back of the work book.

Heading 1	
Title	<p>State what your report is about so everyone viewing the documents knows what it is about by looking at the title</p> <p>Note: If your report is very long, use a contents page</p>
Heading 2	
Purpose	<p>State what your report is about in short, crisp sentences. A concise summary of the objectives of the report may also be given to clarify the subject matter.</p>
Heading 3	
Executive summary	<p>This should be written last, and include a brief summary of the main points from each section</p> <p>It is located at the front of the report</p>
Heading 4	
Background / Introduction	<p>This should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reasons for the report being written ▪ Previous information or data, e.g. how many other PICIP-WAN Conferences there have been ▪ Overall benefits ▪ Who must understand this report ▪ The need for this report ▪ Be concise and if you use acronyms spell it out the first time you use it
Heading 5	
The body or content of the report	<p>This should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The overall goal of the report ▪ The objectives of the report, related to the goal ▪ Use different headings to separate main points

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data gathered e.g. who attended from where ▪ Topics covered
Heading 6	
Outcomes	What has resulted from this meeting
Heading 7	
Next Steps (Monitoring, evaluation and review)	Your report should include a section that describes how monitoring and evaluation will be conducted - what else is needed to follow-up from this report. If nothing else is required, place in the recommendations that the paper be noted and no further work required.
Heading 8	
Conclusion	<p>Everything in your report should lead to logical conclusions. Your research and the facts drive these conclusions. Do not put any new ideas in this section.</p> <p>The conclusion should reflect the main body of the report.</p>
Heading 9	
Recommendations	The recommendations state actions that the writer of the report feels need to be taken based on the findings and conclusions.
Heading 10	
Appendices	Any additional information that is relevant but doesn't need to be included in full in your report can be included as an appendix. Examples of information you might include in an appendix are interview forms, survey results, and a glossary of definitions

Handy Hints for Writing a Report

This section contains tips for writing your report in a way that is easy to read and accessible for all those who may be interested in reading it.

Top tips:

- Include definitions
- Avoid using acronyms
- Use page numbers
- Keep formatting simple
- Use diagrams
- Adapt the template and contents for your area
- Include an executive summary

Include definitions

It is important to clarify what is meant by key terms like 'alcohol related harm' as interpretation may vary depending on what the key issues in your area are. You may develop your own definition during consultation and drafting of your report, which is fine – just remember to include your definition in your report. Include definitions in an appendix in your report if you have a number of them.

Avoid using acronyms




In general, you should avoid using acronyms in your report as it is a formal document, but you may wish to use them when space is an issue – in tables, for example. If you do use acronyms, include explanations first and then use the acronym.

Include page numbers

Page numbers make it easy for people to quickly find the information they need. This is important in draft versions as well as the final document.

Keep formatting simple

The formatting of your document should be simple and uncluttered.

-  Don't use a lot of different fonts or font sizes.
-  Numbered section and subsection headings are a good idea.
-  Use font size 12 or larger and don't cram too much text onto each page.

Frequently Asked Questions

From the day you start working as a Police Officer until the day you leave, there are many reports you'll have to write.

As an Officer, these reports might be the bane of your life—but the truth is, you'll have to them no matter where you go. From a simple work assessment report to the high-flying technical crime report, reports are a common form of workplace communication.

Report writing is an essential skill for professionals; master it now and writing reports won't have to be a pain. Here's some frequent questions people ask about writing a good report.

How do I identify my audience?

A simple way of doing this is while you are writing keep asking yourself

1. Who asked for they report?
2. Why have they asked for a report?
3. What do they need to know?
4. How will they use the report?

Ask yourself how much information the reader has on the topic. If they have little or no knowledge then your report needs to be easy to understand with limited use of 'jargon' and technical terms.

If you are writing a technical report intended to be read by Police experts, then you can assume the reader has some knowledge and may be offended if you write it like they have no idea. Get someone to check the report who is of similar experience to the audience you are writing for.

How do I clarify my purpose?

If you haven't got a clear picture in your own mind of what the topic is or what to write, summarising the purpose will be difficult. Ask yourself the following:

1. What type of report do I need? Technical, informative, does it require recommendations?
2. How big does the report need to be?
3. Who is my audience?
4. What is the aim of the report?
5. What key points need addressing?
6. What key information do I want the reader to remember or act on?

What is the basic structure of a report?

Types of reports can vary greatly; there is however, a basic structure common to most reports, irrespective of their type.

1. **Title**
2. **Executive Summary**
3. **Purpose**
4. **Background / Introduction**
5. **Main body of the report**
6. **Conclusion**
7. **Recommendations**
8. **References**
9. **Appendices**

This section deals with writing the important sections of your report the introduction, and conclusion. They are important because 9 times out of 10, readers will focus on these sections.

Executive Summary, Introductions & Conclusions - What's the difference?

An executive summary is a brief statement which outlines the report in full; what *was* done, achieved, decided and concluded.

The introduction is a section which states your aims and some required background knowledge. An introduction will also outline the body of the report (where you state what you *will* do).

Don't confuse the introduction with the executive summary or the conclusion; they are very different. Writers often confuse the main purpose behind writing an introduction and an executive summary. The common misconception is that one is simply a smaller version of the other (that the introduction is a rewritten, chopped-up version of the executive summary).

However, this is not the case.

The Executive Summary

Most reports need an executive summary, they are generally used for reports over 3 pages long.

- is a succinct passage which provides a brief outline on what was achieved/decided/concluded in the report.
- is placed at the front of the report.
- can be written last so that every bit of necessary detail is taken from the finished report
- is one part of a report that will certainly be read by your boss The rest of the the report is read then if more detail is required.

