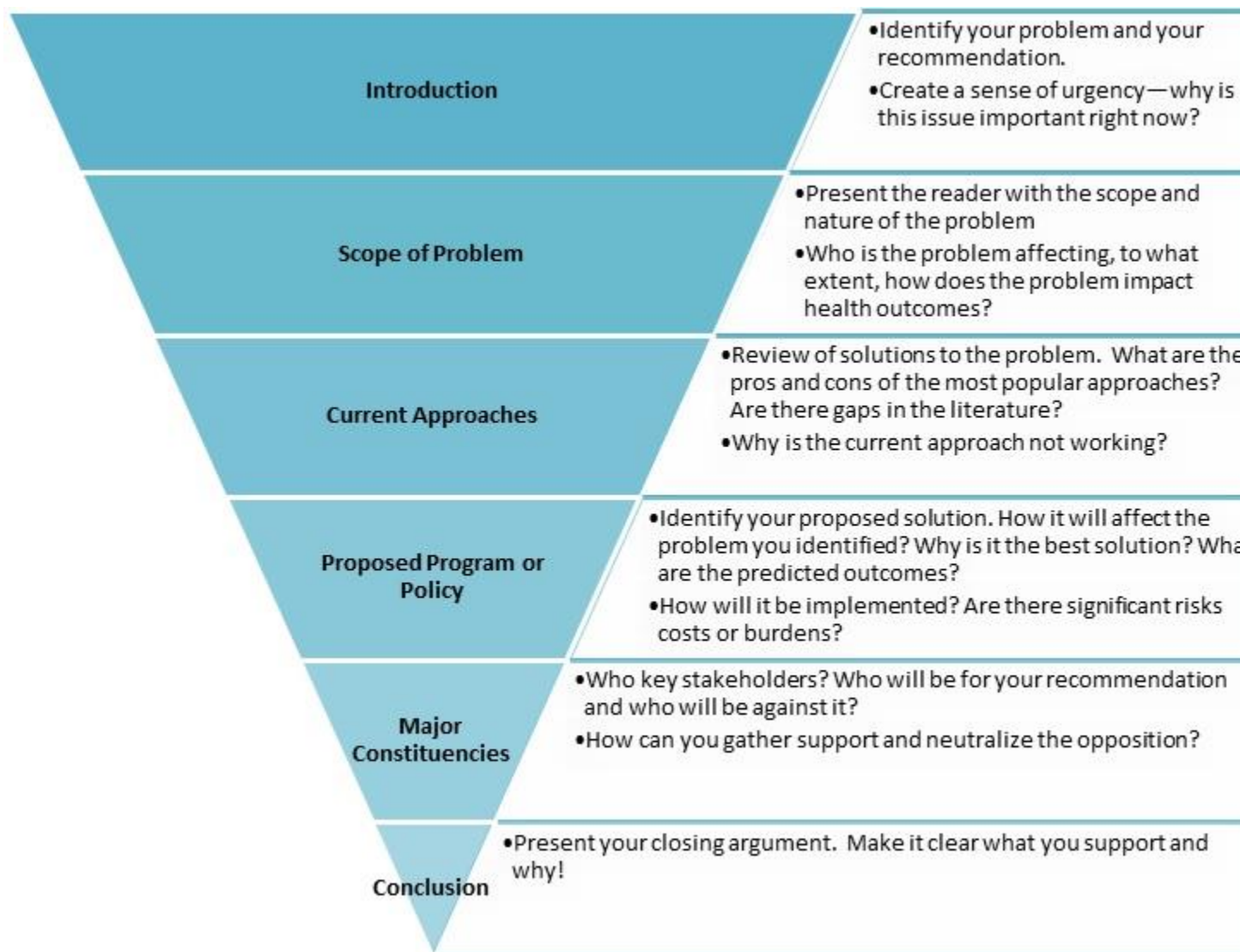


## Policy Memos

A policy memo is a paper written to provide an analysis or recommendation of an issue to a specific audience (37). In public health, they are frequently used as a tool to inform and influence busy decision-makers (38). This section provides a brief overview of the organization and style of a policy memo.

### Organization

In contrast to an academic paper, the organization of a memo is an “inverted pyramid”—the essential information is emphasized first and is followed by the less important points in order of significance (37). The organization of a memo is generally as follows (38–40):



### Format and Style

Memos are known for a clear, professional format and style. Make your memo into a “mini roadmap” to guide your reader through it (39). Each section should have a header that summarizes the main point of the section and keeps the reader’s interest (39,41). Likewise, paragraphs should have a topic sentence

that summarizes the main point. Your reader should be able to skim the memo to understand your main ideas (39).

Bullet points, tables, and figures can also simplify your message to the reader (39,41). When displaying data, explicitly link how the data fits into your argument (41). When writing about data, emphasize the claim rather than the source and methods (41,42):

- **Needs Improvement:** The Health of Boston Report derived from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2009 reported that 10% of public high school student smoke (43).
- **Improved:** Ten percent (10%) of public high school students in Boston smoke (43).

Your reader can check your references for more specifics about the numbers and sources.

For more resources on writing policy memos, visit:

- [Policy Memos by Harvard Kennedy School](#)
- [Tips on Writing Policy Memos by Peter Wilcoxon](#)
- [Framing Memo: The Affirmative Action Debate by Certain Trumpet Program](#)