POSITION PAPER

Date

FOR: Identify the recipient (specific position) of the position paper

SUBJECT: Clearly and succinctly specify the topic of the position paper. Use specific descriptions that summarize the content, avoiding vague, one-word subjects. Do not introduce acronyms in the subject line. (1-2 lines)

1. PURPOSE. State what this position paper seeks to do, focusing on the desired outcome (1 sentence)
2. POSITION. Clearly state your position on the issue without justifications. (1-2 sentences)
3. KEY POINTS. (1 sentence per bullet)
   1. Clearly and succinctly state the main points of argument that justify the stated position. Key points should stand alone without requiring subordinate points.
   2. Present each key point in the same order it will appear in the Discussion section to help the recipient connect the key point with its more detailed discussion.
   3. Consider that a busy senior leader may only have time to read the Key Points section.
4. DISCUSSION. (1 paragraph per bullet)
   1. Clearly and succinctly explain each key point using evidence in the order as the road map above in complete, but succinct bulleted paragraphs.
      1. Include information that the recipient needs to know to understand each key point and why that information is important for the recipient to have (e.g., significance).
      2. Tailor the discussion to the needs and knowledge of the reader.
      3. Do not include background information the recipient already knows unless that information is essential for the logical flow.
   2. Present information in logically organized way to allow a busy recipient to digest the information quickly and easily (e.g., chronological, systemic, problem-solution, general to specific).
   3. Use short, concise sentences in the active voice. The tone should be neutral, clear, and direct in nature. Limit sentences to one thought. Use short, simple words. Avoid using acronyms and jargon.
5. ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINTS. Briefly present accurately and objectively any opposing viewpoints or counterarguments, such as those of other stakeholders. (1 paragraph)
6. REBUTTAL. Briefly refute opposing viewpoints, explaining why the author disagrees with their viewpoints in a way that reinforces the position without simply restating it (i.e., why this position is more valid). (1 para)
7. WAY AHEAD. Describe the specific actions the author wants the recipient to take to advocate or advance the recommended position.

*An author uses a position to advocate for a particular stance on an issue. It lays out arguments, evidence, and recommendations to a decision-maker or someone who will engage with a decision-maker on the issue. Though similar to an argumentative essay in academic writing, a position paper differs in format and communicative style. Position papers present information and analysis in easily identified chunks for an audience with limited time and cognitive bandwidth.*