



Pacific Institute
for Climate Solutions
Knowledge. Insight. Action.

PICS White Paper Guidelines

PICS white papers are solutions-oriented reports of approximately 5,000 words in length that explore, in-depth, a specific climate change-related policy issue or topic relevant to British Columbia (BC), and jurisdictions beyond. Authored and peer-reviewed by leading researchers and policy experts, these reports are often produced in response to a specific request from the provincial government or as the result of a PICS initiated or independent proposal.

Purpose

PICS white papers are designed to foster climate-related policy and decision-making that will lead to the development of a vibrant low-carbon economy. The papers offer relevant expert-led research, analysis and recommendations. The white paper series aims to:

- increase awareness and understanding of specific climate-related problems
- propose mitigation and adaptation solutions to those problems, including technological solutions
- identify opportunities to improve wider environmental, economic and/or social outcomes as society confronts the climate-change challenge.

Audience

PICS white papers should appeal to, and be accessible by, a broad audience base. A challenge for authors is therefore to convey complex technical concepts in such a way that all readers gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, including those without a scientific background. Authors should avoid use of industry-specific or technical jargon, while at the same time, not over-simplify. Use of plain and concise language is essential.

Key audiences include:

- decision-makers within provincial and local governments, including government ministers and policy advisors, department heads, and municipal and regional officials
- leaders within the business or industry sector, and regulatory bodies
- educators and students (post-secondary levels)
- community activists and NGO's
- the science and academic communities
- media reporting on environmental, business and other related topics
- members of the public with an interest in climate-related policy issues

Distribution

PICS white papers are freely available on the Institute's website, where they receive thousands of downloads. The reports are also directly emailed to approximately 600 recipients (many within government), with hard copies sent to key stakeholders in government and industry. In addition, PICS prepares and distributes media releases for select white papers that address topical and newsworthy issues. Authors may also be asked to assist with preparing a media release for their paper and be available for potential follow-up interviews. Media training and support is provided by PICS.

White Paper Structure

PICS research is solutions-oriented, and accordingly a white paper's 'flow' should take the reader through a process that: introduces the topic; describes in depth the nature of the problem; outlines the author(s) key findings; identifies possible solutions; and concludes with practical recommendations. The author's voice/opinion should be clearly discernable from referenced material throughout. The following elements should be included:

- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary** – this section reiterates the key points and conclusions of the full paper, typically finishing with recommendations laid out in bullet point form for quick viewing. Length should be 300-600 words.
- **Introduction** – a brief overview that states the topic and purpose of the paper (i.e. the issue it is addressing, and why it is important to BC, and if applicable, beyond).
- **Background** – relevant information could include the following: historical context, an overview of a specific technology, the current political climate or regulatory framework, and environmental implications. This is the best place to introduce and define specific related terminology.
- **Topic specific headings** – the body (and therefore headings) of each paper will vary but should essentially lead the reader through a logical flow of information, typically including research findings and analysis that supports the author's conclusion. Case studies, comparisons, graphs and tables may be used.
- **Challenges/Opportunities** – an analysis or evaluation of the challenges, gaps and unknown factors revealed during the author's investigative research.
- **Conclusion** – a summing up of the findings and discussion.
- **Recommendations** (solutions oriented) – typically presented as bullet points, these specify direct action or "next steps" that should be undertaken by the target audience. Recommendations must be concise, and should identify to whom they are directed.
- **Endnotes**
- **Glossary of Terms** (*only* required if the paper uses technical descriptions, abbreviations and acronyms are not readily understood by a general audience). If used, alert readers to the glossary resource within the Introduction section.
- **References**

Format

- Headings with sub-headings as required, using a multilevel, numbered format for headings and subheadings. Authors should try to keep the heading levels to three or fewer. E.g.:
 - 1.0 Heading level one
 - 1.1 Heading level two
 - 1.1.1 Heading level three
- Tables and figures (if used) should be numbered independently in order of appearance, beginning with Table 1 and Figure 1. Include a brief caption for each. Refer to tables and figures within the text, and place them at natural breaks, such as the end of a section. Keep tables and figures relatively simple, to clarify data.
- PICS white papers should adhere to the University of Victoria's style guide, available online at <http://communications.uvic.ca/publications/style/>.
- Questions on style and format can also be directed to the PICS communications staff.