

## Memoranda and Briefing Notes

Technically Memoranda are a form of briefing note and, in some organizations, all briefing notes are produced in Memoranda format. In many federal government departments, however, "Memorandum to the Minister" and "Briefing Notes for the Minister" (or Deputy Minister) are used for different purposes and are processed in different systems, as described below. The format is also different:

Memoranda to the Minister	Briefing Notes
<p><b>MEMO TO THE MINISTER</b></p> <p>To: Minister Taylor From Deputy Minister John Smith Subject: Media Criticizes Funding Cuts to XX</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> The purpose of this memo is to advise the Minister of widespread media criticism of proposed funding cuts to the XX program and to provide a suggested response.</p> <p>(The rest of the Memo will have sections such as Background, Key Considerations, Suggested Response).</p>	<p><b>BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE MINISTER ON MEDIA CRITICISM OF FUNDING CUTS TO XX PROGRAM</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> The purpose of this briefing note is to advise the Minister of widespread media criticism of proposed funding cuts to the XX program and to provide a suggested response.</p> <p>(The rest of the Briefing Note will have sections such as Background, Key Considerations, Suggested Response).</p>
<p><b>Content:</b> Generally for higher level issues.</p> <p><b>Process:</b> Formal, often paper-based with approval slips attached, labour intensive, most control-laden. Many “touches”.</p>	<p><b>Content:</b> Generally more routine issues.</p> <p><b>Process:</b> Electronic, products sent as email attachments, enabling quick and efficient turnaround times. Minimal number of “touches”.</p>
<p>Used for high level policy or operations issues requiring DM to Minister (or ADM to Minister) communication. "I concur" Memorandum are used to request and record ministerial decisions; generally pass through the official Registry of Ministerial Records.</p>	<p>Used to transmit information and updates to Ministers and Minister’s Office. Copies kept in electronic data bases.</p>
<p>Tracked and controlled through the Ministerial Correspondence System (MCS) - multiple entries, transfers, updates, scanning.</p>	<p>Minimalist approach to tracking, transfers. Generally electronic tracking and records systems in the Central Briefing Unit (may use MCS but generally minimal entries &amp; transfers.</p>

<b>Memoranda to the Minister</b>	<b>Briefing Notes</b>
Fixed review and approval system - no variance - multiple reviews and approvals associated with high level significance of content. "Touched" and approved/revised by Author's Manager, Director, Director General, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Deputy Minister (and support staff in all these offices). Must be signed by the Deputy head (who may delegate some signing authority to ADMs).	Approval requirements vary depending upon content and accountability framework. Deputy Minister's Office (DMO) may delegate some final approvals to a Central Briefing Unit for products approved and forwarded by ADMs.
Often, both paper and electronic copies and systems; some argue that the content redundancy warrants 'backup' system (scanning paper copies into MCS)	Generally requested and transmitted electronically (until printed and sent into MO and DMO).
Fixed and broad distribution; multiple paper copies distributed across the organization, associated with high level significance of content.	Narrow as possible distribution. Copies shared depending upon content and accountability framework.
Multiple records - DMO and MO registries, central records, ADMO and Directorate files.	Minimalist records - shared drive in the Central Briefing Unit. ADMOs also keep their own records.

Packaging all information requests as Memorandum to the Minister means everything is processed through the same labour and control intensive process, whether or not the subject matter warrants it. Routine information requests made by exempt staff are subject to the same control, review and approval requirements as strategic policy or "I concur" Memoranda to the Minister. There are costs and inefficiencies associated with these practises (time, executive attention, process and paper burden).

However, the rationale for processing all briefing requests as Memoranda is:

- Strict process and approval requirements enable the DMO to control what is going into the Minister's Office. There are very few opportunities for "by-passing" the system requirements as the Deputy Minister (or designate) must sign all Memos to the Minister.
- The Ministerial Correspondence System contains complete tracking records and copies (print and/or electronic) of all products produced for the Deputy Minister and Minister.