

Impact Masterclass

Communication for increasing research impact

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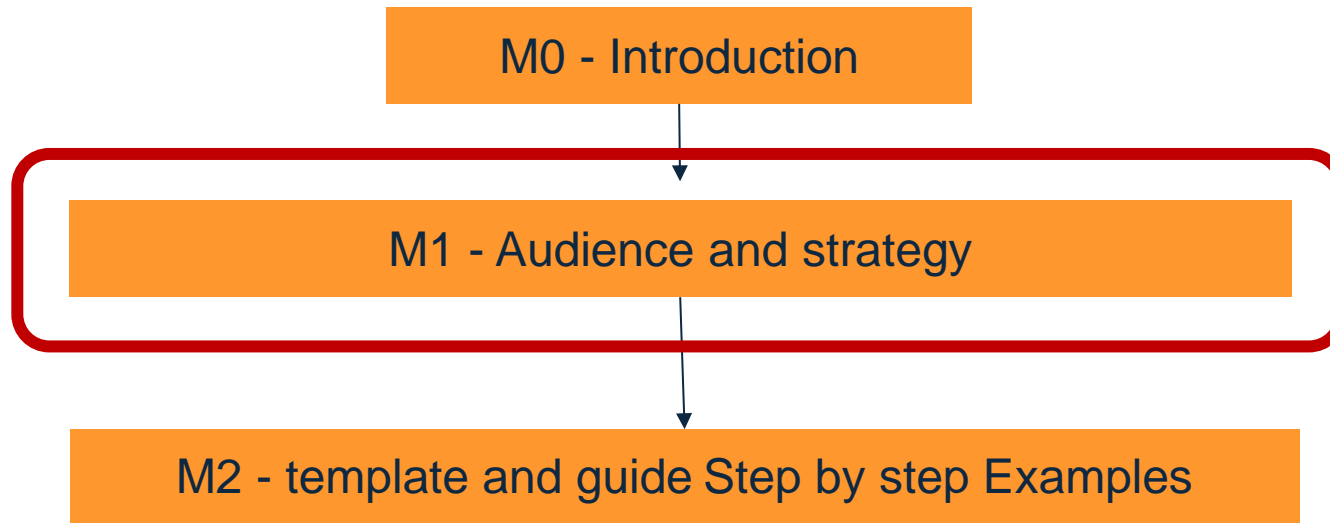
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AUSTRALIA

Commissioned by the International Energy Agency (IEA) Energy in Buildings and Communities (EBC) Technology Collaboration Programme (TCP) Steering Group

Masterclass Structure

Core learning modules



Specialised short modules

M3 - Government
and Industry

M4 - Public and
Media

M5 - Strategic Social
Media

Resources

Policy Brief

Writing Guide

Template

Executive Summary

Writing Guide

Template

Communication Insights and
Useful Resources

Workbook

Module 1 - Understanding your audience to develop an impact strategy

Structure of Module 1

- ☐ **The basics:** why you need to identify and understand your audience
 - ☐ Understanding your audience in a policy context
 - ☐ Your audience in its stakeholder ecosystem
- ☐ **Laying the foundations:** gathering audience and stakeholder information
 - ☐ Stakeholder mapping
 - ☐ **ACTIVITY 1:** data collection and grouping – understanding the stakeholder ecosystem
 - ☐ **ACTIVITY 2:** data mapping – 2 approaches – identifying the audience
 - ☐ Panel approach – deep dive into your audience
- ☐ **Getting ready to write:** Language choice based on audience
 - ☐ Decision maker and policymaker audience analysis
 - ☐ **ACTIVITY 3:** questions to focus on your audiences
- ☐ **The tools:** How this informs your policy brief or executive summary

Aim:

Provide the tools to understand key target audiences for research projects including:

- **The basics:** How to identify audiences and the ecosystem of stakeholders they operate in
- **Laying the foundations:** Audience analysis and stakeholder mapping
- **Writing basics:** Language style to use with your audience
- **The central tool:** Introduce policy brief and executive summary templates

Outcome:

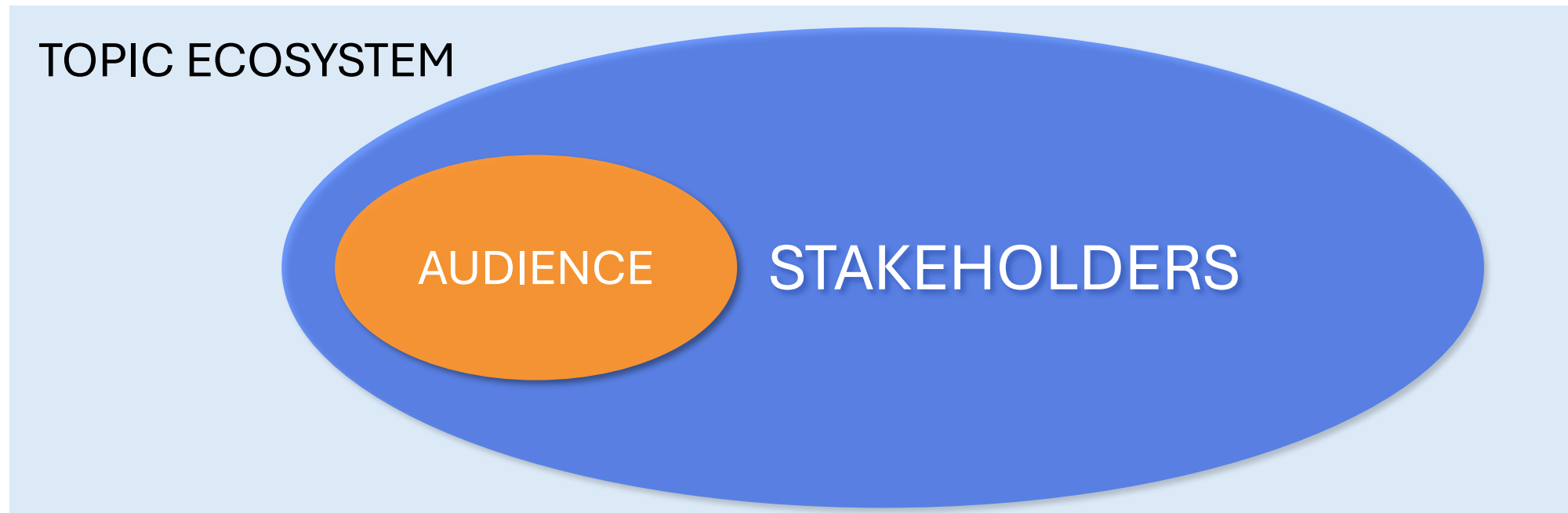
To develop a strategy to communicate complex research with an audience for impact.

Terminology: Audience and Stakeholders

The audience is the person who can use your research to make policy changes.

Stakeholders are people and organisations that have a stake in the outcomes of your research.

You might not necessarily target them, but you need to understand how they influence the application (or not) of your research.



The basics

Why you need to identify and understand your audience

Understanding your audience in a policy context

Your audience in its stakeholder ecosystem

Understanding your audience(s) is fundamental

For research to have impact it must be communicated to non-academic audiences.

Everything about communications starts and ends with understanding your audience.

You will communicate with several audiences and they will be different to each other.

Taking time to think about your audience(s) and deciding who to target as a priority will increase the impact your research has.

How communication can fail



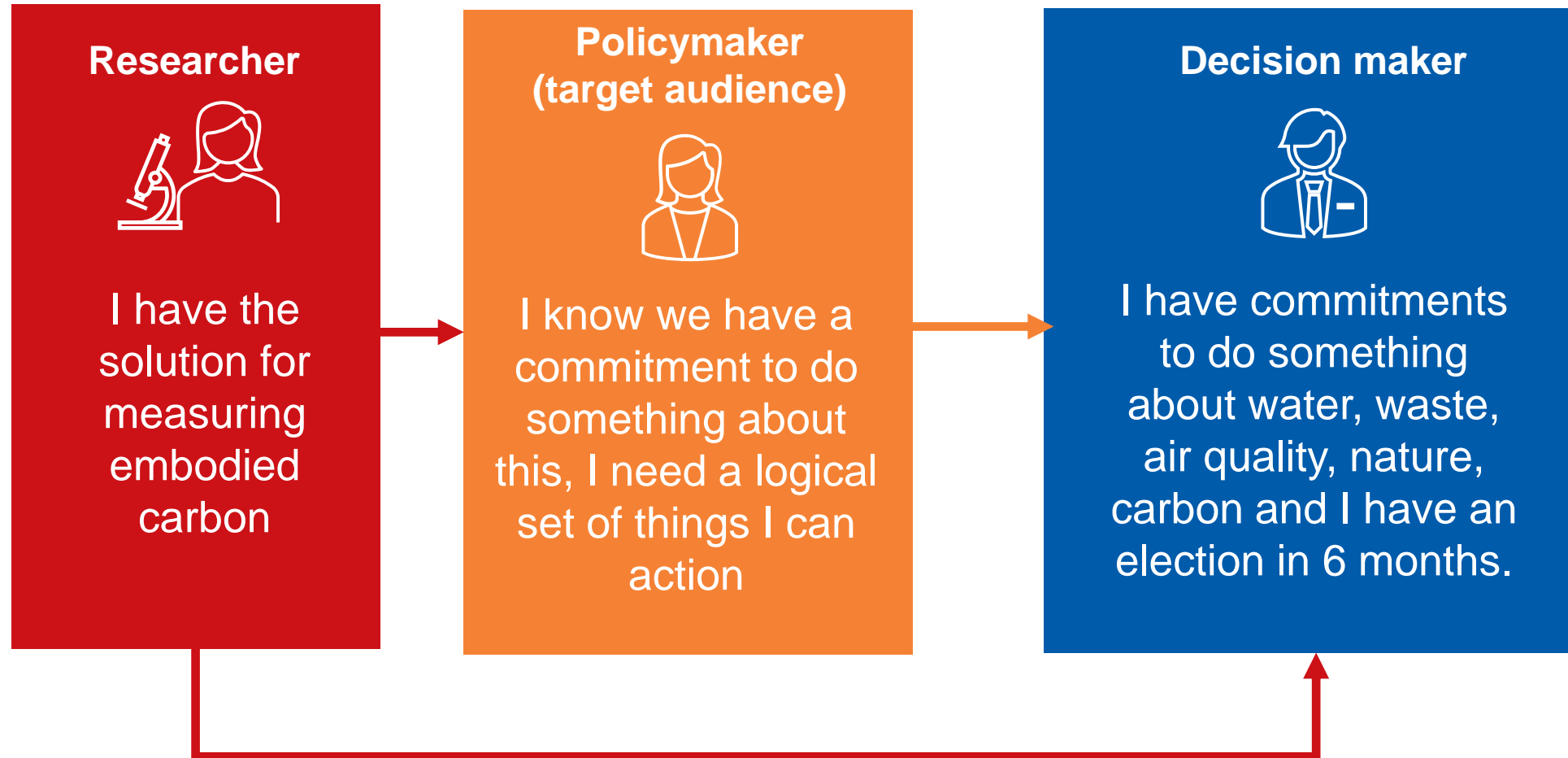
Communication versus effective communication

Communication basics

Words alone DO NOT have meaning.
People give them meaning.



Understanding you audience in a policy context



CASE STUDY: your locus of impact

Understanding

WHO has an interest in your research,

HOW your findings might affect them,

WHAT policy changes are feasible,

shapes what information you focus on and how you present it.



Key difference with academic writing

Writing for journals and academic audiences

The Pyramid



Writing for non-academic audiences

The Reverse Pyramid



Writing policy briefs and summary reports



Different audiences:

- have different levels of understanding
- have different drivers, interests and passions
- have different communication and learning styles.

For example:

- economists might not understand technical/engineering information
- economists are interested in financial information
- all people are interested in things that affect them personally (eg locally)
- urban designers may be highly visual people who respond to attractive imagery.

Laying the foundations

Stakeholder mapping

ACTIVITY 1: data collection and grouping

ACTIVITY 2: data mapping – 2 approaches

Panel approach – deep dive into your audience

Decision maker, gatekeeper and policymaker audience analysis

Annex 72 audience example

Annex 72 is about using life cycle assessment during the building design process.

The key audience for this is policymakers who are involved with building standards and regulation.

Policymakers:

- May not understand the knowledge gaps, lack of consistency or other barriers holding back building emissions reduction. Explain these issues.
- Want solutions that will help government deliver its commitments, such as net zero emissions by 2050 targets
- Want to enable other parts of society (such as industry) to play their part and take responsibility for their own emissions

The nature of your document depends on the audience.

Understanding your audience will help you to:

- Use the language, style and level of information that suits their needs and subject-matter knowledge.
- Give them the understanding and language they can use to represent your findings or recommendations to decision-makers.

You may need to write different documents for different audiences. For example, research about residential indoor air quality may need to be expressed differently to policymakers working in housing to those working in population health.

Policymakers want solutions that will help government ensure that:

- building codes/regulations are fit for purpose
- cities are well designed
- people stay healthy and safe in a changing climate, particularly heatwaves
- the electricity supply will be able to withstand increasingly frequent climate events

Audience introduction: Annex 80

Annex 80 is about resilient cooling applications that can help make buildings more comfortable in changing climates.

The key audience for this might be policymakers who are involved with building standards.

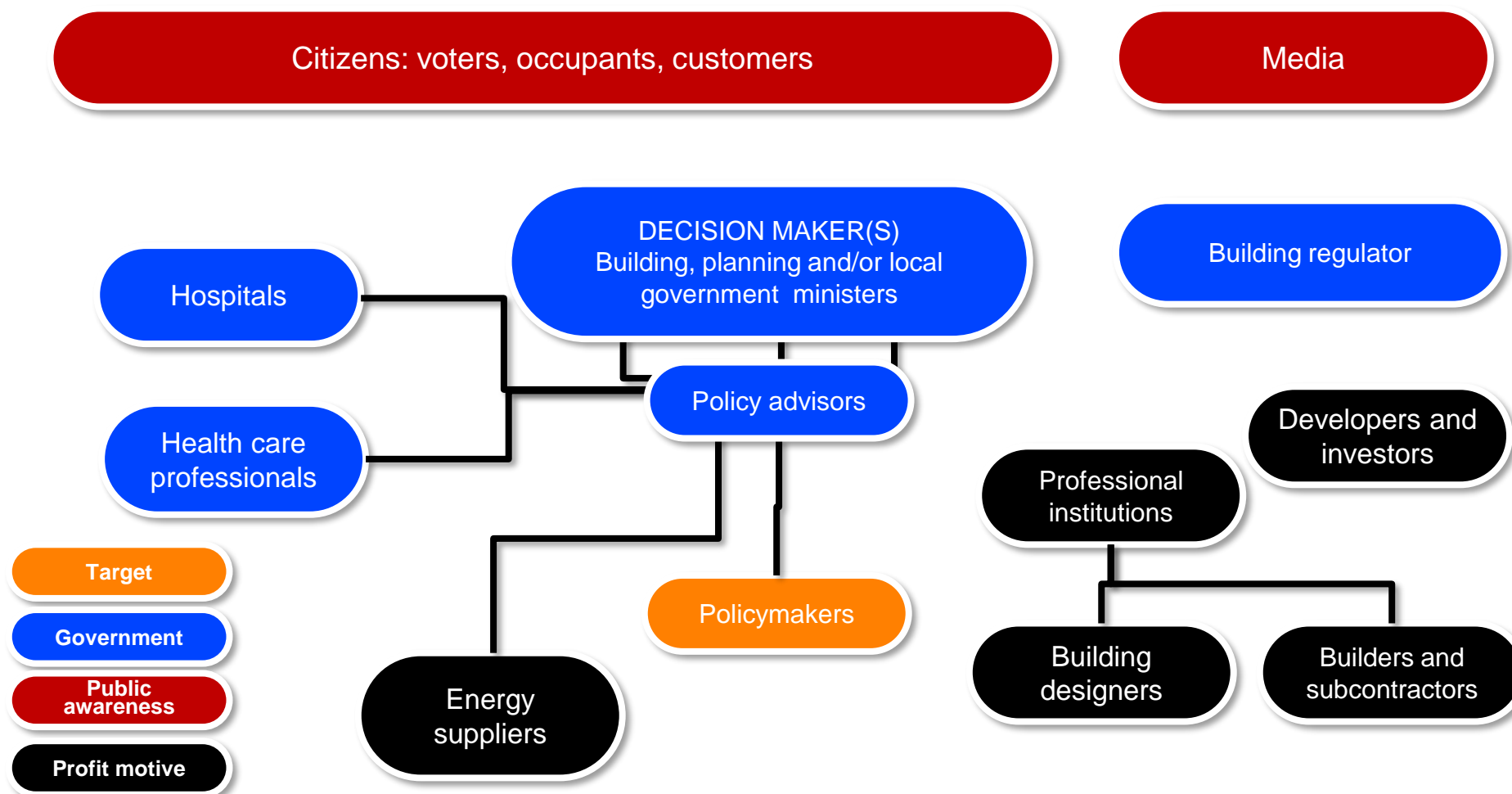
The stakeholders are people involved in health, power supply and urban planning.

Analysing Annex 80 audience and stakeholders

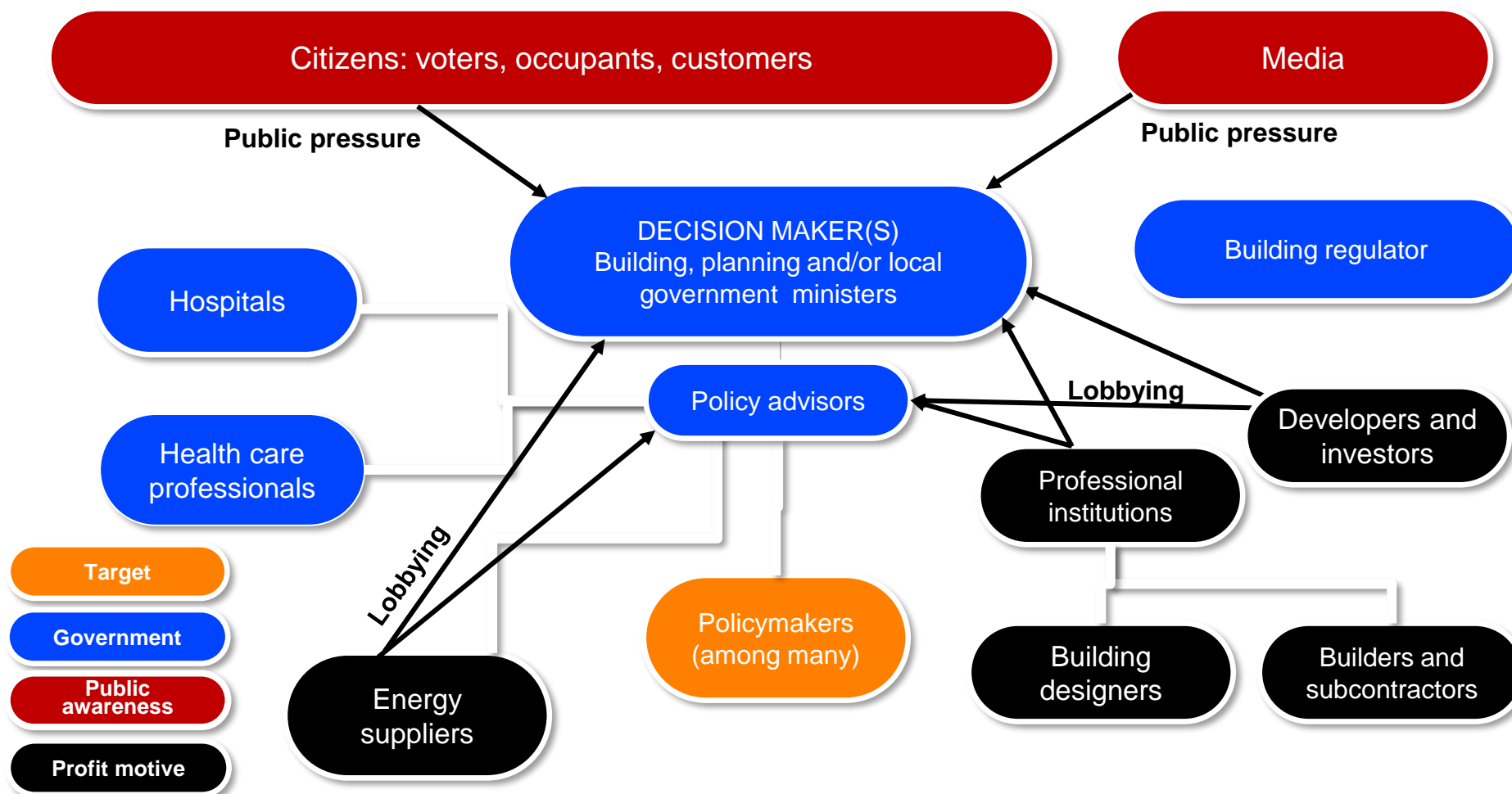
Example - Stakeholders with a potential interest in resilient cooling in Australia

STAKEHOLDER	INTERESTS AND GOALS
<p>Main stakeholders for the policy are government bodies setting the agenda for building codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Building Department and Ministers- Building Regulator	<p>Delivering policy that is appropriate and well directed for the benefit of many.</p> <p>Ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- government money is well spent- buildings built to code, are fit for purpose to keep people safe and comfortable- the energy grid is able to withstand future extreme heat waves.
<p>Government agencies and health care professionals providing health care</p>	<p>Ensuring people are safe and do not suffer heat stress in climate change events, putting undue stress on the health system and its ability to deliver</p>
<p>Government agencies providing power to the community</p>	<p>Ensuring the grid can withstand requirements in times of heatwaves and other climate events</p>

Example: Mapping Annex 80 stakeholders



Example: Mapping Annex 80 stakeholders



Gathering information about your audience and stakeholders helps you:

- target and focus communication of research
- have the greatest resonance
- remain mindful of other stakeholders who could influence outcomes.

The 2 main approaches to gathering information about your audiences and stakeholders are:

1. Desktop stakeholder mapping
2. Stakeholder panel or focus group deep dive

1. Stakeholder mapping approach: introduction

Stakeholder mapping helps you to **understand the context** your research can be applied in, including:

- Social
- Political
- Cultural
- Practical

Do it once – and update as required

Use the map to inform your brief or summary writing and other communication.

There are different ways to gather and present stakeholder information.

Stakeholder mapping approach: how to

Activity 1 – ensure you have thought of everyone

Step 1. Brainstorm and identify who your stakeholders are.

Step 2. Group them

Activity 2 – two different ways to map based on context:

- Mapping by priority
- or
- Mapping by relationships

ACTIVITY 1, STEP 1: Brainstorm and list stakeholders

List as many stakeholders as you can.

Prompts for brainstorming:

- Governments & Ministries
- Judiciary governmental bodies
- Political parties
- Commissions
- Local governments
- Finance institutions
- Business associations
- Businesses and corporates
- National NGOs
- Social movements
- Advocacy groups
- Media
- Educational institutes
- Religious institutes
- Indigenous people

ACTIVITY 1, STEP 2: Group listed stakeholders

Public sector

- Political decision-makers
- Driving group – e.g. policymakers – driving the proposal
- Entities in partnership with the government (e.g. international bodies and financial institutions)

Civil society and non-profit entities

- Technical support (e.g. academia, researchers)
- Social support (e.g. Social movements)
- Institutional support (e.g. National NGO, local authorities)

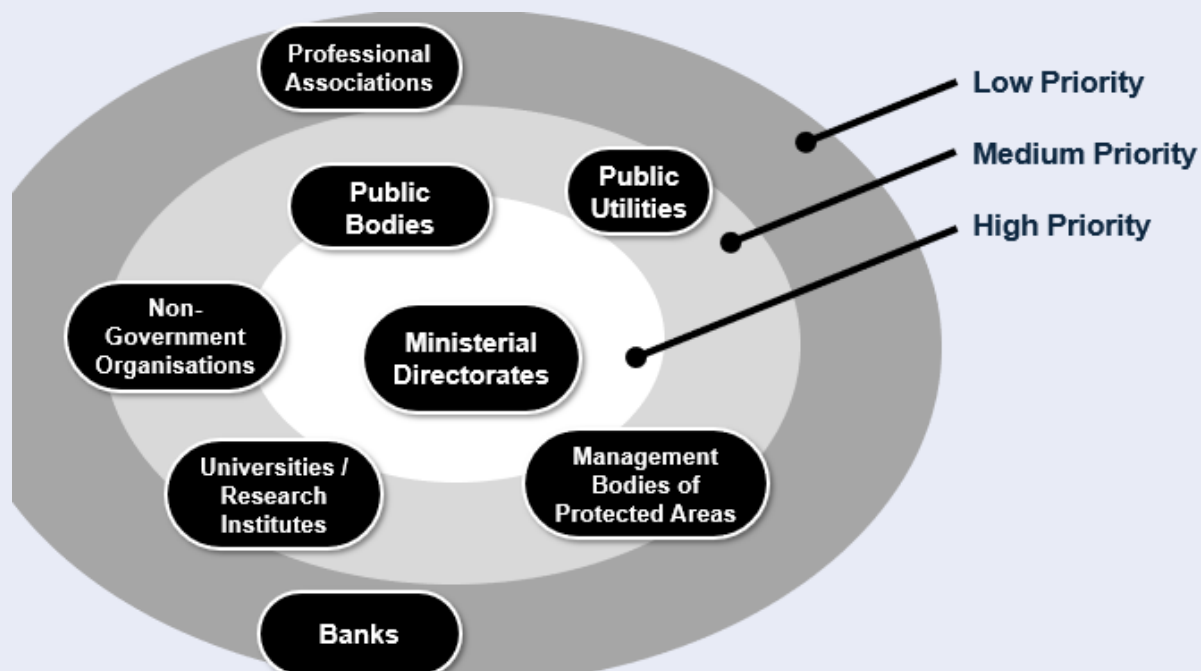
Private sector

- Private business developers (e.g. SMEs, firms and corporates, large industries)
- Business associations
- Private banks and financial institutions
- Technology developers

ACTIVITY 2: Stakeholder mapping options

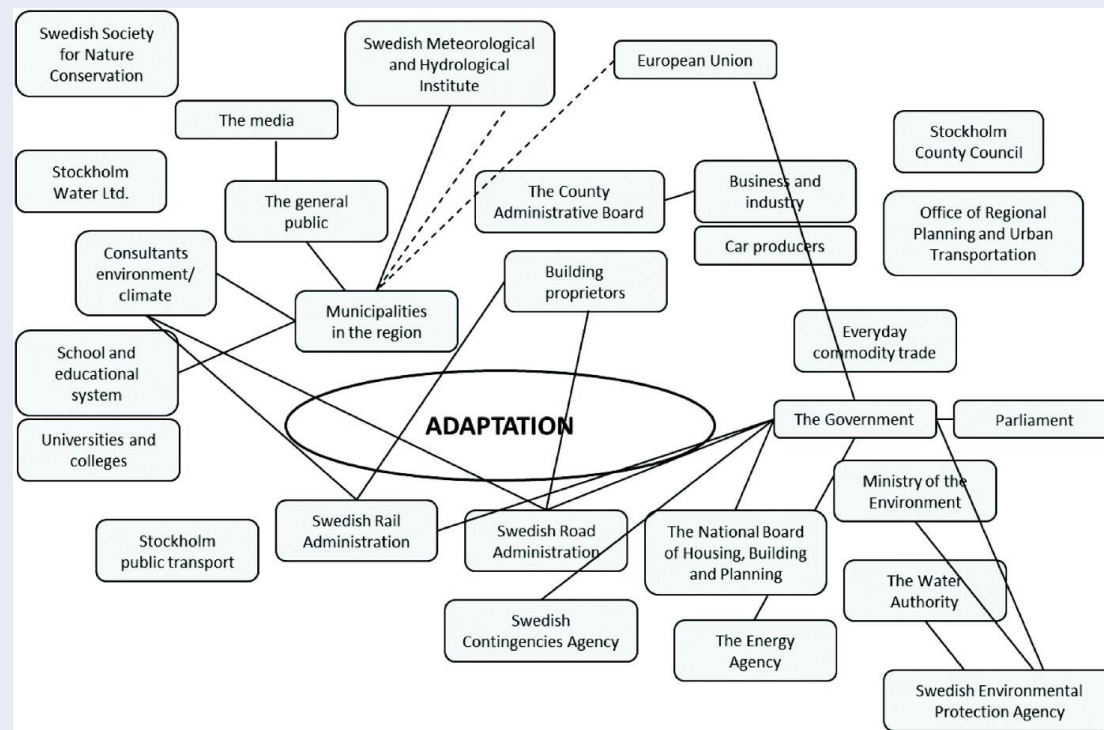
Mapping by priority

Quick and simple.



Mapping by relationships

More complex - useful when more complex stakeholders involved.



ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 1: Mapping by priority

Have a note taker note down the discussion as you draw.

1. Draw three concentric circles
2. Identify the highest priority stakeholders in the middle circle and work your way out
3. Your highest priority audience is the one who can have the most impact resulting from understanding your research – the one who is worth you making the most effort to reach.

ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 1: Mapping by priority (continued)

4. Include the specific names of key stakeholders as well as the type, especially if they are influential. For example, World Green Building Council (WGBC) is an important NGO.

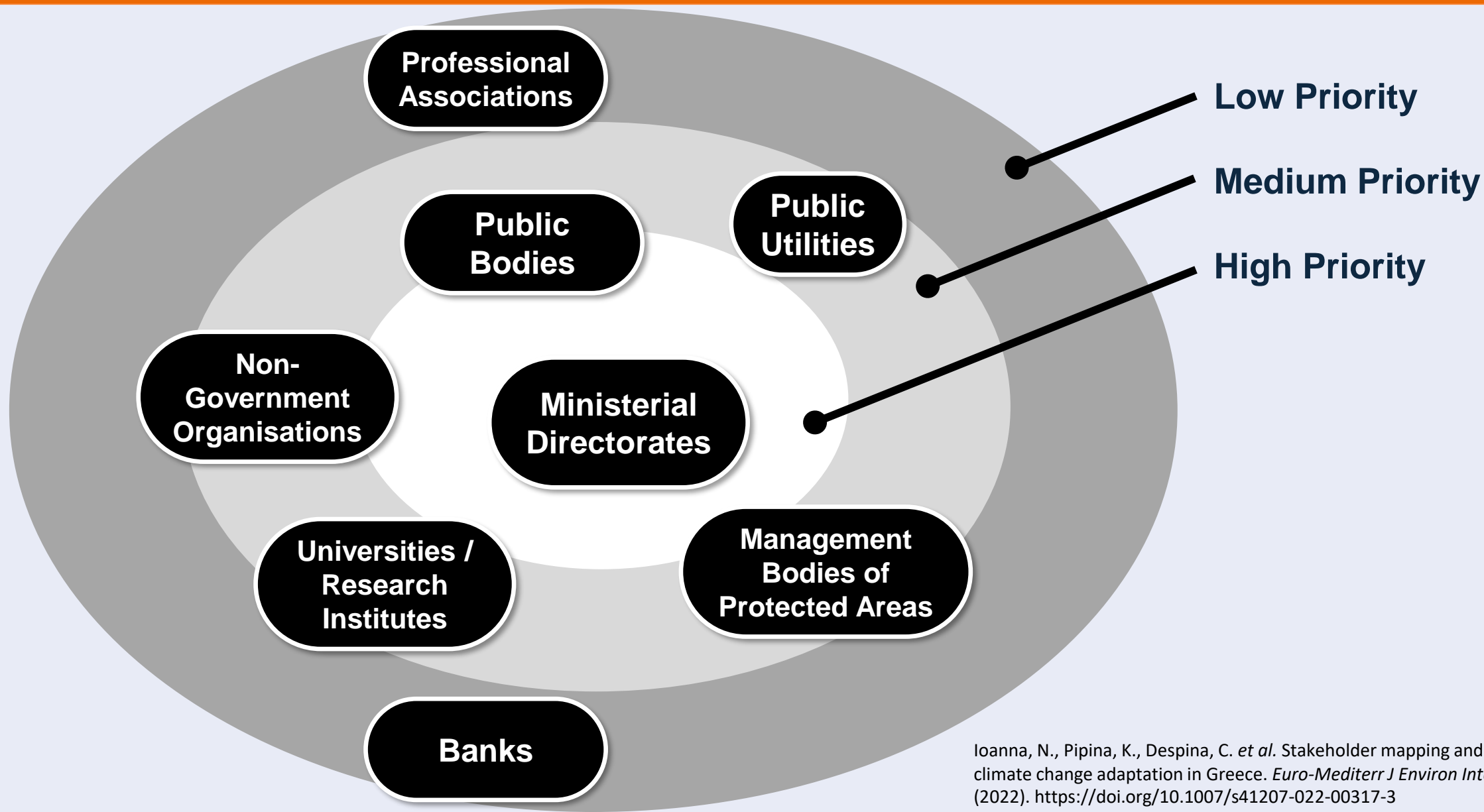
5. Revisit with everyone:

- Why they are a priority?
- What do you want them to do with your research?

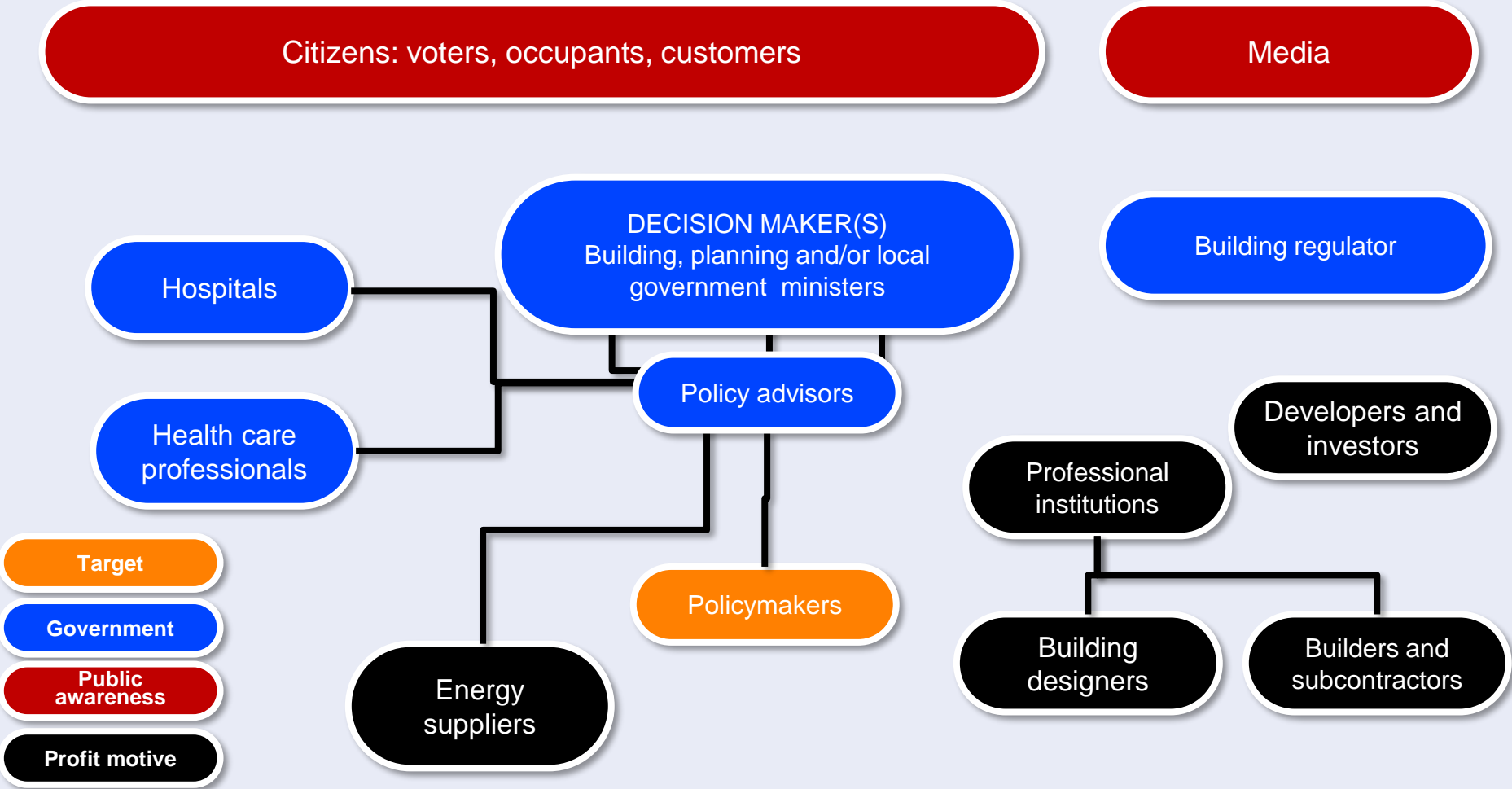
... and so....

- What would they want to know from your research?

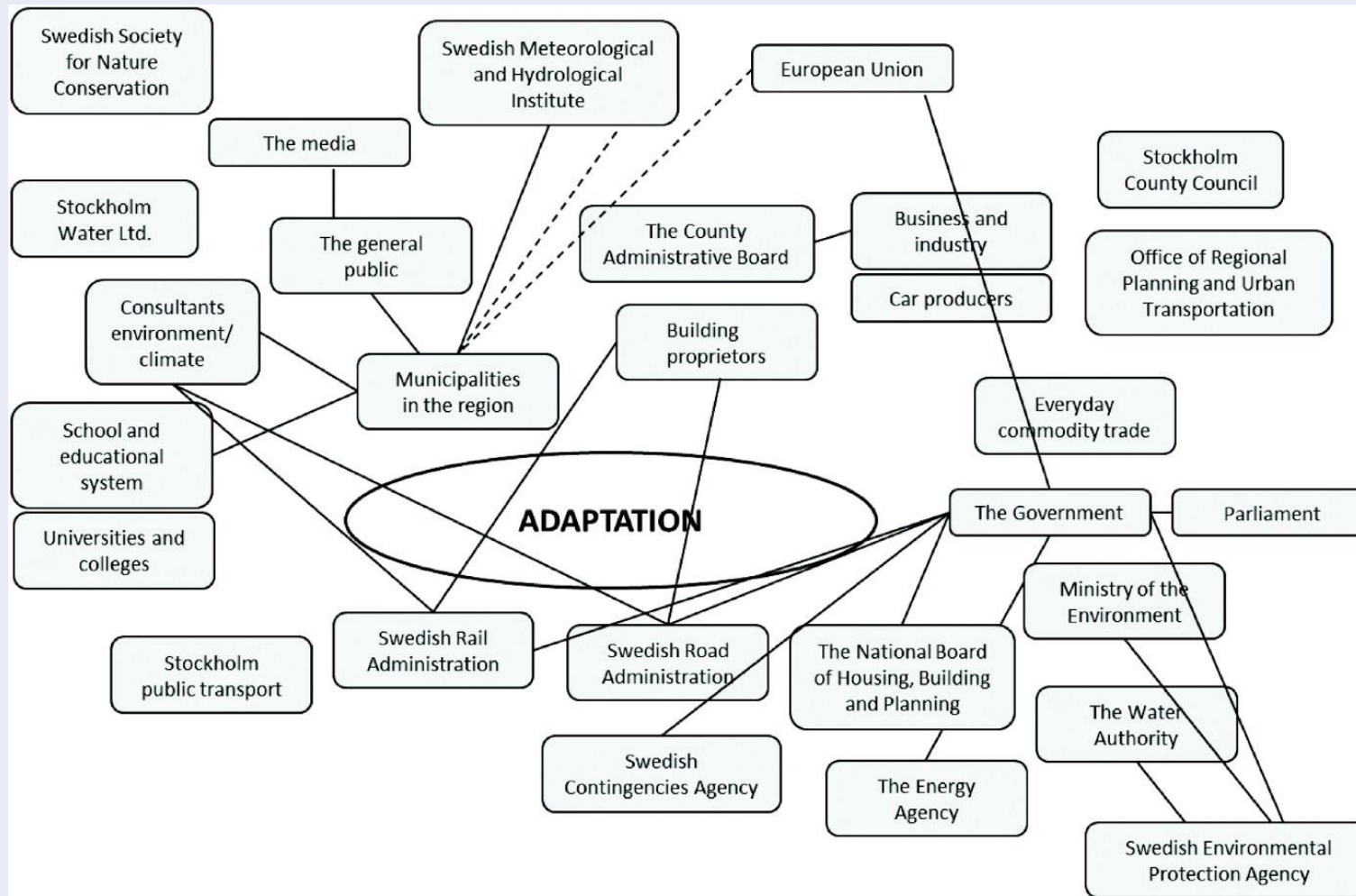
ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 1: Example of mapping by priority



ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 2: Example of mapping by relationships



ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 2: Example of mapping by relationships



ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 2: Mapping by relationships

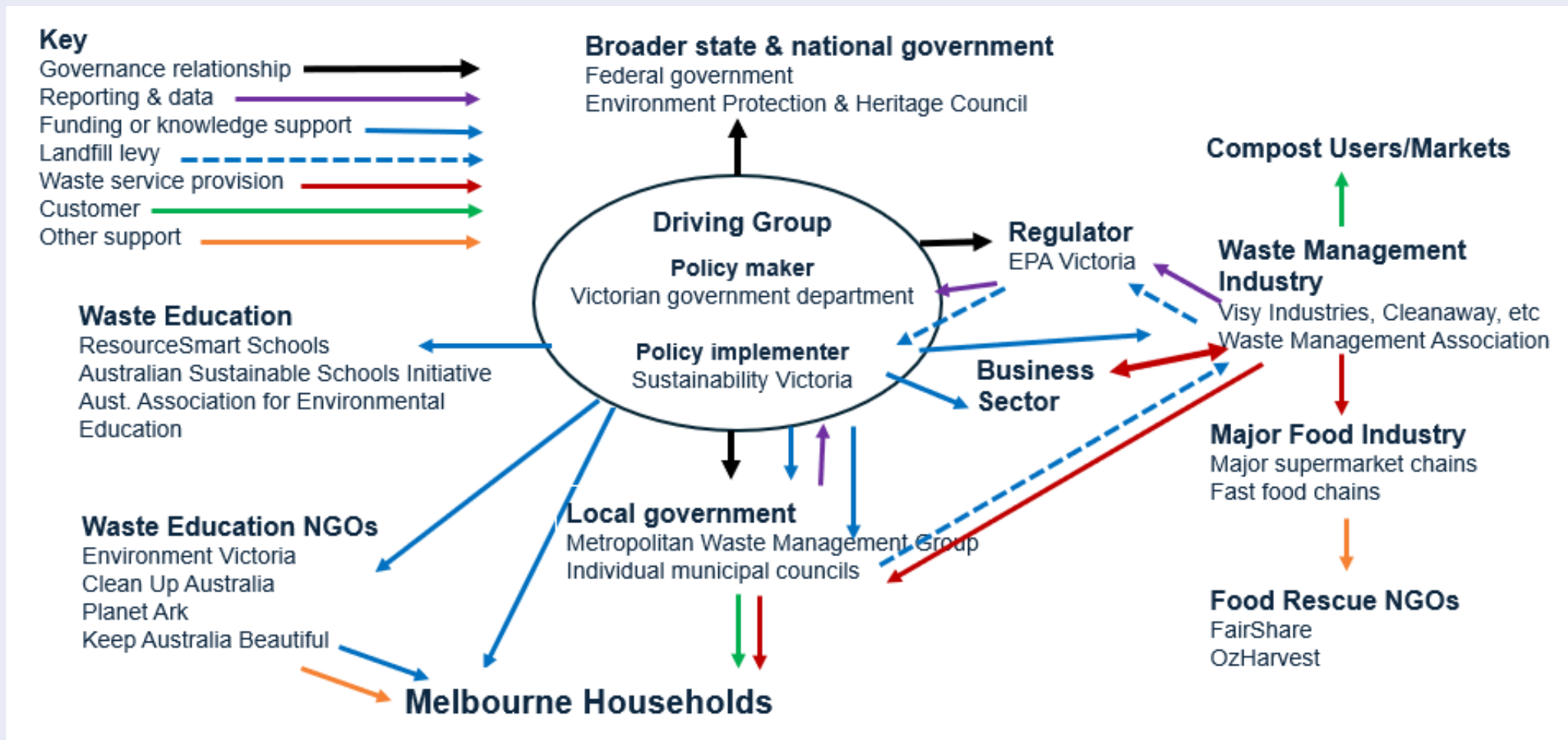
1. Using your stakeholder list and/or priority map, identify your target audience.
2. Write down the name of the target audience in a circle in the centre of a whiteboard or large piece of paper.
3. Add other stakeholders, starting with those they have direct and important relationships with.
4. Draw lines between the target audience and stakeholders to indicate relationships. Also indicate relationships between stakeholders.

Options:

- use position to indicate hierarchy,
- use different line styles to indicate types of relationship.

ACTIVITY 2, OPTION 2: Example of mapping by relationships

Stakeholders involved in reducing food waste to landfill in Melbourne



2. Panel approach – introduction

A Panel approach allows you to take a deep dive into what makes the target audience tick.

A panel discussion is similar to focus group research - it involves informal discussion with the people/stakeholders of interest to gain insights into their world.

Panel sessions are good for helping a large number of researchers understand stakeholders better.

VIDEO: Three policymakers joined a panel at the IEA EBC Impact Masterclass on 20 November 2024

www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X2pCydmtnA



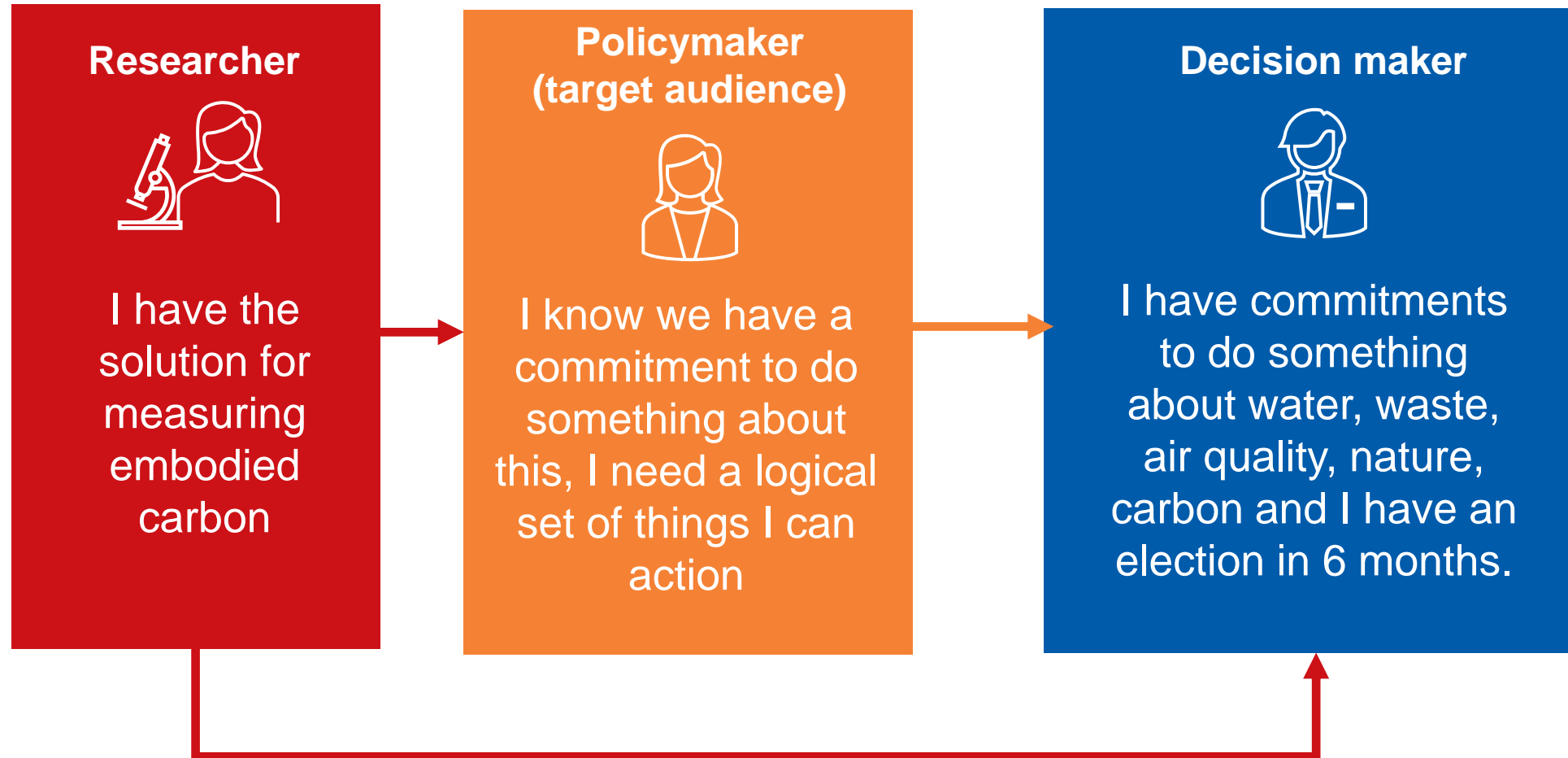
Meet the Policymakers panel discussion

Getting ready to write

Decision maker, gatekeeper and policymaker audience analysis

ACTIVITY 3: questions to focus on your audiences

Understanding you audience in a policy context



Introduction to activity 3 - Questions to help focus language and approach

- Run through a checklist of questions to identify the information your audience needs to enable them to understand your research.

Remember that:

- Each stakeholder or audience has different information needs.
- Matching the style of the language and report to the audience will increase the chance of your research being understood and recommendations implemented.

Decision maker



I have commitments to do something about water, waste, air quality, nature, carbon and I have an election in 6 months.

An elected representative that you want to consider the information you provide.

- Identify what they are interested in and the information they will need from the policymaker you are working with.
- Identify their level of understanding.
- What might mean they reject your idea (turn them off)?

Polycymaker (target audience)



I know we have a commitment to do something about this, I need a logical set of things I can action

The person you can have direct contact within government.

- Are you sure you have the right person?
- Identify the information they will need (next activity)
- How long should written material be?
- What tone should it have?

They may have subject-matter expertise, but the decision makers they brief will not.

Give them the simple language to pass on your work to others without the need to interpret it.

ACTIVITY 3: Focusing on your target audience

These are the questions you will be running through

1. **Who** are they? Identify your target audience(s).
2. **How** do you want them to act? What do you want them to implement?
3. **What** do they want to know? What is important to them?

This will help you to identify what to focus on.

4. What do they already understand about the subject?

This will help you to write for their level of expertise.

ACTIVITY 3: WHO is your audience

Take the outcomes from Activities 1 and 2

Identify your target audience

Do you have a name, a title, and idea of the specific person who will use the outcomes of your research? What is their job – which policies do they lead on?

ACTIVITY 3: HOW do you want them to act?

Think about specific **policy levers** or instruments they should use.

What changes do you want them to implement using your research findings or your recommendations?

How is this different and better than the status quo?

Note: we will explore the development of policy recommendations further in Module 3.

Example of policy levers – Annex 80




Recommendations for policymakers

The IEA EBC Annex 80: Resilient Cooling of Buildings has considered wide ranging opportunities to address the need for resilient cooling, with significant benefits identifies by adopting the following cool envelope approaches:

- **Expand cool-roof policies to include cool walls, accounting for roof-wall differences in materials and physics.** Every building energy standard, green building program, product rating program, and product certification program that already incorporates cool roofs should be expanded to include cool walls.
- **Expand existing requirements in the National Construction Code for cool roofs and walls.** Provide appropriate pathways (J1V2 and NatHERS) to credit the use of solar reflective and thermal radiative (sky cooling) roofs and walls to reduce the interior heat gain of buildings. International building energy codes such as [International Energy Efficiency Code \[IECC\]](#) and [California Title 24 Part 6](#) feature these approaches.
- **Offer rebates for manufacturers or homeowners to offset initial cool surface product premiums.**
- **Create a training and certification program for roof and wall contractors to (a) understand cool surface benefits and (b) locate and apply/install products.** This will help them understand the benefits of cool roofs and walls, communicate these benefits to their customers, and apply/install cool surface products.

Which policy recommendations to articulate?



Policy instruments	 Regulation (the stick)	 Economic means (the carrot)	 Information (the sermon)
Affirmative	Prescriptions	Subsidies, grants, in kind services	Encouragement
Example	A minimum standard of performance in equipment or systems.	Funding for research and development into a particular technology.	A policy that requires disclosure to the market or to the government of particular information.
Negative	Proscriptions	Taxes, fees, physical obstacles	Warning
Example	A phase-out of particular materials or equipment.	A tax to discourage a particular behaviour.	Communications materials to help people make better choices.

Example – Annex 80

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ACTIVITY 3 - WHAT do they need/want to know?

Keeping in mind what you want your target audience to do, what do they need to know to be able to do it?

What is important to them?

This will help you to identify what to focus on in your executive summary or policy brief.

ACTIVITY 3 - What do they already know?

As you prepare what you want to communicate, what does your target audience already know.

For example: If you are talking about Indoor Air Quality - is it the economic and finance department or the human health department?

This will help you to write for their level of expertise and their area of interest.

Your audience is under pressure

- They have limited time
- They have limited understanding of your topic
- You need to do some of their thinking for them

Make it easy for them – for example: short sentences, clear language, simple diagrams.

Key difference with academic writing

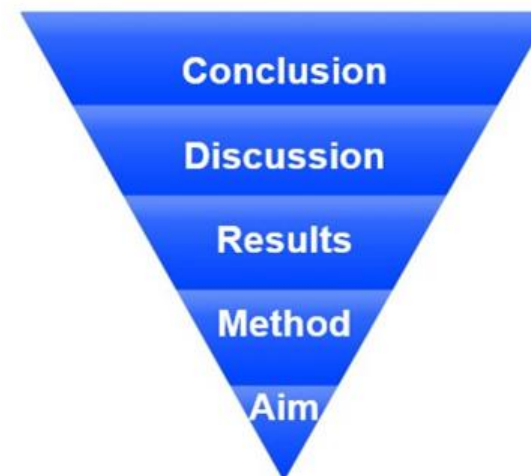
Writing for journals and academic audiences

The Pyramid



Writing for non-academic audiences

The Reverse Pyramid



Writing policy briefs and summary reports



Avoid using acronyms

If you must use them, always spell out the term in full first - eg World Health Organization (WHO)

Follow the version of English used by the Operating Agent - agree on a single English version

Exceptions: report titles, proper nouns and organisation names - e.g. American spelling for World Health Organization in a British English document).

Use the active voice, which is clear, direct and easily read and understood.

Active: Ventilation improved indoor air quality.



Passive: Indoor air quality was improved by ventilation.

Language – commonly misunderstood words

Scientific term	Public meaning	Better choice
enhance	improve	intensify, increase
aerosol	spray can	tiny atmospheric particle
positive trend	good trend	upward trend
positive feedback	good response, praise	vicious cycle, self-reinforcing cycle
theory	hunch, speculation	scientific understanding
uncertainty	ignorance	range
error	mistake, wrong, incorrect	difference from exact true number
bias	distortion, political motive	offset from an observation
sign	indication, astrological sign	plus or minus sign
values	ethics, monetary value	numbers, quantity
manipulation	illicit tampering	scientific data processing
scheme	devious plot	systematic plan
anomaly	abnormal occurrence	change from long-term average

Source: Somerville, R.C. & Hassol, S.J., 2011. Communicating the science of climate change. *Physics Today*, 64(10), pp.48-53.

Recap of the tools

Understanding your audience to inform your policy brief
or executive summary

How audience understanding informs policy brief

STAKEHOLDER	INTERESTS AND GOALS
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- **Create a training and certification program for roof and wall contractors to (a) understand cool surface benefits and (b) locate and apply/install products.** This will help them understand the benefits of cool roofs

- Which communities are most vulnerable to urban heatwaves?
- Western Sydney is a hot spot
- Constituents are affected by heat. Their elected representatives may champion the issue.
- Western Sydney is a growth area and politically, strategically and socially important.

Policy Brief:

Codifying Cool Surfaces to Protect People and the Grid During Heatwaves

Heatwaves are among the most lethal of natural hazards exacerbated in population centres, such as Western Sydney, due to the urban heat island effect. The resilience of our building stock to provide appropriate shelter is an urgent public health challenge. Current active cooling systems are vulnerable to rising frequency of extreme weather events like heatwaves and power outages. These challenges, compounded by climate change, are putting unprecedented pressure on building cooling systems and, in turn, the power grid. Resilient cooling approaches, such as cool surfaces, provide energy efficient and affordable solutions that strengthen the ability of individuals and communities to prevent and withstand extreme heat gain. (Figure 2).

ANNEX 80

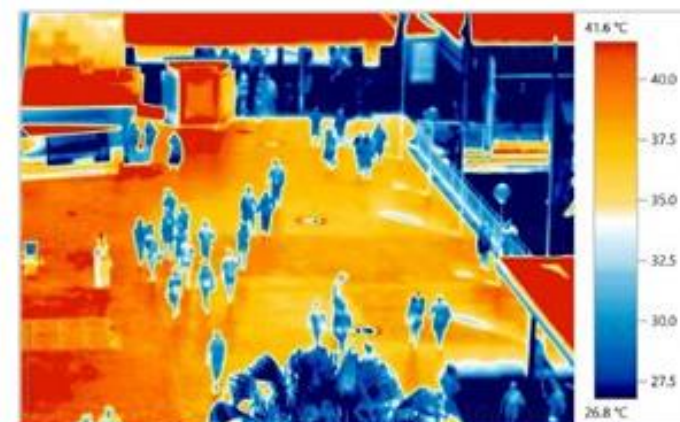


Figure 1: Thermal image of a Sydney mall.

■ Daily heat stress (°C-h) ■ Electricity need intensity [kWh/m2]

101

1.94

87

1

10-11% of
Australian GDP
spent on health
budget



Good IAQ
improves
productivity

ANNEX **86**



Executive Summary:

Balancing the Financial Costs and Health Benefits of Optimising Energy Efficient Ventilation



Indoor air quality (IAQ) affects both the health and productivity of office workers, leading to important economic impacts. While IAQ management systems use a lot of energy and can be costly, these expenses are minor compared to the productivity benefits of healthy workspaces.

Since people spend over 90% of their time indoors, pollutants have serious health effects. Long-term exposure can lead to conditions like lung cancer, asthma, and leukemia, while short-term exposure can cause symptoms such as headaches, coughing, and eye irritation, known as Sick Building Syndrome (SBS).

Annex 86 introduces a methodology to estimate the harm and economic costs associated with poor IAQ in office buildings. Research of the health and environmental trade-offs in IAQ management, emphasises the health risks posed by poor IAQ far outweigh the impacts of the energy-related emissions from IAQ management systems. That is, **saving money through energy efficient but less effective IAQ management is likely to be a false economy** when considering broader societal and financial costs of health impacts

Use your audience and stakeholder mapping and analysis work to recycle your policy brief or executive summary into:

- media releases
- social media posts
- annex news stories – e.g. EBC newsletter
- articles for different audiences.

Core modules:

Module 2: step-by-step use of templates

Specialised short modules:

Module 3: focus on government and industry

Module 4: focus on the public and the media

Module 5: use social media strategically to build your profile and increase the influence of your research

Thank you
