

SBAR Writing Tips

An SBAR, which you may also see in a similar format called a Briefing Note is an essential skill for Education and Practice Leaders to convey issues to decision makers. An SBAR should be no more than 2 pages in length. The most important piece to remember is to be CLEAR and CONCISE. These documents will often land on the desks of busy senior leaders. When possible, tailor the document to the reader. Get to your point, be objective (unbiased) and offer multiple courses of action. Assume the contents of these documents could be widely distributed or shared.

Situation

- State the issue (problem) in 1-3 lines
- Grab the attention of your reader, ensuring that the urgency/severity of the matter is conveyed

Background

- Provide only the pertinent context and history (ie. previous decisions made, program details)
- No more than 1-2 short paragraphs
- Identify the contextual factors, including consultation with key collaborators

Assessment

- This should be the longest part of the document
- Outline possible courses of action, and the impacts of each possible course
- Your analysis should be well-reasoned, logical and demonstrate critical thinking
- This section should convey evidence and information not opinions or hearsay
- Identify and discuss
 - The key collaborators
 - Considerations/criteria for making a decision
 - Analysis of alternatives ensuring that potential trade-offs and consequences are addressed

Recommendation

- Short, thoughtful and precise. State each option in no more than 1-2 lines
- Ensure your SBAR/Briefing Note is appropriately balanced, and does not include a strong bias towards an option
- Remember, an option you present can also be to do nothing so as long as you have presented the decision makers with the risks in your analysis