

Invasive Species Advisory Council (ISAC) Process for Generating Outputs

Based on guidance from the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), the Executive Director of the NISC Secretariat establishes task teams that are intended to provide advice to NISC. This includes inviting task team membership, as well as designating the Designated Federal Officials (DFO) and ISAC Chairpersons for the task teams. The Executive Director of the NISC Secretariat will dissolve these task teams once ISAC has adopted their advice to NISC. Task teams report directly to ISAC and their recommendations and/or products must be discussed and approved in a public meeting by ISAC before being presented to NISC through the NISC Secretariat. Task teams will include at least one ISAC member as the Chairperson of the task team.

Task team advice will generally take two forms:

- Briefing papers (White Papers) for advice on policy and operational matters, and
- Scientific/technical review papers for analyses of specific issues of a scientific or technical nature.
- An output may include both a technical analysis and a series of policy recommendations.¹

WRITING EFFECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS *to the National Invasive Species Council*

Please keep in mind that:

- NISC is comprised of the Secretaries and Administrators of 13 Executive Branch Departments/Agencies;
- Your recommendations are going to the highest level of the Federal government;
- Your target audience is extremely busy and has competing priorities;
- NISC's unique niche is high-level, interdepartmental policy making, Federal priority setting, and institutional/programmatic planning;
- Members of your target audience are unlikely to be technical experts on invasive species;
- There are budgetary limitations for each Department/Agency and their respective bureaus/divisions;
- The focus of recommendations needs to be on Departmental policies, programs, and activities;² and
- In order to be implemented, recommendations need to be consistent with legal and regulatory authorities and address Federal priorities, as well as be practical, cost-effective, and socio-politically acceptable.

Crafting Recommendations

- *Keep it short.* Limit the number of recommendations to six or fewer. Three is ideal.
- *Be focused.* Limit each recommendation to a single topic.
- *Know what you want.* Identify a practical objective (i.e., it can be accomplished within realistic timelines and budget) with measurable outcomes.
- *Be strategic.* Whenever possible, fit the recommendation within existing priorities, strategies, and frameworks. State how taking the proposed action will advance NISC's mission, Departmental/Agency missions, specific programs, etc.

¹ Extracted with minor modification from the ISAC bylaws approved 8 July 2016.

² It is not appropriate/useful for ISAC to make recommendations that address Executive Branch budgets or appropriations.

- *Think “less is more.”* Recommendations need to be self-standing, providing just enough background information to enable NISC members to understand the context and needs for new or different action. If you are providing opinions rather than facts to set the stage for the recommendations, make this clear.³
- *Establish a justifiable connection.* Clearly link background information to your recommendations. The recommendations need to readily flow from the case you present.
- *Be brief.* Keep the statements concise and to the point.
- *Make it happen.* Propose a specific time-delimited *action*. Use active rather than passive voice.

³ Although recommendations may initially be included in a briefing paper, White Paper, or scientific/technical review article, they will need to be extracted for various policy making processes and thus need to be self-explanatory.