

# American Institute for Conservation Position Paper Guidelines

## Definition

Position papers are designed to present an organization's opinions or stance regarding a particular topic utilizing research and citing precedents or supporting information.

## Goal

The goal is to educate, inform, and influence the cultural heritage field, members, and users of conservation services about appropriate practices, procedures, and political positions regarding conservation and preservation topics. Arguments should be brief and to-the-point, always keeping the goal and reader in mind. The readers may be museum leadership, curators or other professionals, collectors, gallery owners, or potential clients. Ideally the reader is a decision maker or an influential person addressing conservation or preservation issues. The aim is to provide solutions, establish authority, or create awareness of an issue in an easily read document that is readily available. Position papers are not a format to present conservation research or treatments.

## Proposing Topics for Position Papers

Topics may be put forward in writing by any individual member, committee, specialty group, or network of AIC. Proposals are sent by email to the Executive Director, who will share the proposal with the board. Members submitting a proposal must include their name(s) and contact information and may include a list of suggested authors.

Proposals will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.

The document should clearly indicate that it is a proposal for a position paper and include a topic title. The proposal should contain a brief synopsis of the topic and its relevance for the organization, its mission, and the larger conservation community. The board of directors will make the final decision on the selection of a topic.

Once the board has approved a topic, all efforts will be made to publish according to the following timeline.

## Timeline

1. The Executive Director receives and conveys a proposed topic to the board
2. Board approves/disapproves topic (within 2 weeks)
3. The Executive Director notifies proposer regarding the board's decision
4. Author(s) completes work and submits to the ED (within 3 months)
5. Board reviews first draft and suggests author revisions (within 1 month)
6. Author(s) makes revisions and resubmits to the Executive Director (within 1 month)
7. Executive Director reviews draft and submits comments and edits to the board (within 1 week)
8. Board reviews final draft and approves; professional design and editing of paper by Communications Director (within 1 month)

9. Publication/release on Governance page on website and to membership on the Online Community.

**Please Note:** *From time to time a topic may be of such importance or time sensitivity that the board may deem it necessary to bypass this proposed timeline and issue a position statement. In these situations, the board and Executive Director will either draft the document or identify and work directly with an appropriate author. A full position paper on the topic may still be written and replace the statement.*

### **Criteria for accepting Position Paper Proposals**

The board of directors will make the final decision on the selection of a topic. The board bases its decision on the topic and its relevance for AIC, its mission, and the larger conservation and preservation community.

### **Selection of Authors**

The board of directors will select an author. Consideration will be given to authors suggested in the proposal, research into established authors relevant to the topic, the board's larger understanding of the issues, and any proposed author's ability to complete the task within the stated timeline. Should an open call for an author be required, it will be posted on the online community, notifying membership of the need.

Position papers from any organization or institution reflect the official position of that body and, as such, are not appropriately associated with individual authors. AIC may assume official positions on some issues that are controversial and best defended by AIC itself, not individuals. For this reason, individual authors will not be credited on the position paper and the organization will undertake full responsibility for the position paper and defend its position as necessary.

Authoring a position paper provides a valuable service to both AIC and the conservation community as a whole by helping to educate decision makers and allied professionals about important issues in the conservation field.

### **Guidelines for Writing Position Papers**

Because position papers are dated and posted on the website and remain available as decided by the board of directors, the papers must be written at a high level.

Position papers should not exceed 5,000 words (10 pages) including references. Examples, case studies, and graphics can be used for emphasis in the text or as side bars.

The paper must be written in a persuasive style and in the third person.

References that can easily be accessed by the general public should be included to reflect the professional credibility of the positions expressed. A bibliography or annotated bibliography may be included.

Once author submissions and revisions have been received by the board, the author(s) will not be asked for approval of changes or editing of board-approved text.

A brief paragraph describing the organization will be added at the end of the position paper and will not count in the total number of words.

The final, board-approved paper is submitted as a Microsoft Word document to the Executive Director and Communications Director for design, layout, and publication.

Activities related to position papers are the responsibility of the Board President in cooperation with the Executive Director.

Organization of position paper:

1. Introduction should include the problem, question, or issue. A summary may be used to immediately give readers the main point.
2. Present background facts related to the issue. Focus on the single topic. Use active present tense whenever possible. Establish AIC as the authority where appropriate.
3. Present the solution or answer. Motivate and persuade the reader to accept the solution/position.
4. Make a final conclusion and closing. Push for the appropriate action by the reader. References should follow the [guidelines for authors](#) in the *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* (JAIC). References are not mandatory but are strongly encouraged.

### **Review of Position Papers**

Position papers will remain available on the website until the information is no longer up-to-date or important, as decided by the board of directors. The board will review position papers on an annual basis and, if it feels that a paper is outdated or no longer relevant, the paper will either be revised or removed. The board may consult with Specialty Groups, Committees, or Networks as needed to determine the relevance of a position paper. If a paper requires revisions, the original authors will be contacted and asked to consider revising the position paper. If they are unable to do this, either a new author will be approached, or the paper will be removed from the website. If a paper is removed from the website, the author(s) will be notified.

### **Resources and Examples**

Please note that the term “white paper” is also sometimes used to refer to position papers.

[http://docs.joomla.org/White\\_Papers](http://docs.joomla.org/White_Papers) Accessed 8/28/2019. Focused on publicizing white papers. 4 p.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_paper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_paper) Accessed 8/28/2019. Very brief. Distinguishes government white papers from commercial white papers. 2 p.

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/professional\\_technical\\_writing/white](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/white)

[papers/index.html](#). Accessed 8/28/2019. Writing a White Paper. “Summary: a white paper is a certain type of report that is distinctive in terms of purpose, audience and organization. This resource will explain these issues and provide some other tips to enhance white paper content.” 4 p.

<https://aamd.org/standards-and-practices>. Accessed 8/28/2019. AAMD has six position papers available on topics from restitution of works stolen by Nazis to governance and managing relationships between art museums and corporate sponsors (2007-2009).

<https://www.writerswrite.com/journal/effective-business-writing-the-white-paper-9027>  
Accessed 7/20/2020. Srikanth, Anjana. September 2002. Effective Business Writing: The White Paper in Writers Write: The Internet Writing Journal. Gives technical guidance on writing a position paper and online sources for style, grammar, and editing. 10 p.