

Data Challenge: Guidance for Methods Reports & Policy Briefs

This document provides guidance for the Methods Reports and Policy Briefs your team will submit for each of the Data Challenge questions by **June 30**. You will submit a total of four documents: A Methods Report for each of the two questions, and a Policy Brief for each of the two questions.

We are leaving the guidance fairly open-ended because we are interested in what each team feels is most important to communicate and in how each team communicates.

The Methods Reports have no limit on their length. You should use these narrative reports to describe in detail your research design, data, and findings, as you would in a paper intended for an academic journal. You may include graphics, charts, and other visuals that support your analysis and findings. For the purposes of this Data Challenge, you do not need to include a literature review in your report. However, you are welcome to cite relevant literature that motivates the interpretation of your findings.

Each Policy Brief should be limited to two pages (front and back of one page if printed, with standard 1 inch margins and font no smaller than 12 point). The audience for your Policy Briefs is high-level decision makers. Your Policy Briefs should therefore be written in non-technical language that focuses on your findings, recommendations, and important remaining questions from your analysis (i.e., what we can't conclude from the analysis but would be important considerations for more study and decision making). The Policy Briefs should also include a brief explanation of your methods in non-technical language that provides rationale for why that method should produce reliable results and important limitations it might have. You do not need to include figures or graphics unless you believe they strongly help to convey your key findings. We do not expect you to include graphics or fancy formatting. A great example of a relevant Policy Brief can be found [here](#), and a Policy Brief on how to write a policy brief (!) can be found [here](#).

Methods Report

Submitted by: Please include your team's organizational affiliation and advisor's name so we can identify your team.

Data Challenge Question

Please include the relevant data challenge question at the top of your document.

- Question 1: How did the October 1, 2020 reinstatement of fares affect ridership on King County Metro? Did the reinstatement of fares by King County Metro have differential effects on ridership among different socio-economic groups?
- Question 2: How does the level and duration of incentive (i.e., fare subsidy) affect riders' long-term use of and enrollment in low-income transit programs?

Your Methods report may be of any length, and should include the following information:

Research Design

Describe the research design your team used to address the data challenge question.

Supplementary Data

Describe any adjustments your team has made to the King County Metro data. Examples include changes to variable operationalization, treatment of outliers, log-transformations of data, etc.

- For any other data you include, please include the raw data files in your final submission package.

Methods

Describe the methods used to address the data challenge question. Why did you think these methods would be especially useful for this task?

Findings

Present and discuss your findings.

- **For Question 1**, be sure to address both questions (e.g., overall effect, differential effects).
- **For Question 2**, be sure to address both elements of the question (e.g., effects on long-term use, effects on enrollment).

Policy recommendation(s)

You may wish to use a section of the methods paper to describe in more technical detail than can be provided in your Policy Brief your policy recommendations, the rationale for them, their limitations, and what warrants further study. Based on your analyses, what are your policy recommendations as they pertain to the Data Challenge question? What are the limitations of your analysis that should be considered regarding these recommendations? What are important aspects that remain unknown? What are your recommendations for further study of these questions?

Policy Brief

Submitted by: Please include your team's organizational affiliation and advisor's name so we can identify your team.

Data Challenge Question

Please include the relevant data challenge question at the top of your document.

- Question 1: How did the October 1, 2020 reinstatement of fares affect ridership on King County Metro? Did the reinstatement of fares by King County Metro have differential effects on ridership among different socio-economic groups?
- Question 2: How does the level and duration of incentive (i.e., fare subsidy) affect riders' long-term use of and enrollment in low-income transit programs?

Key Results

Include 2-3 bullets on the top findings from your analysis

Your Policy Brief must be no longer than 2 pages (front and back of one page if printed, with standard 1 inch margins and font no smaller than 12 point) and should include the following information, and you are free to organize it in a format that works best for you. See the examples [here](#) and [here](#) if you are seeking further guidance.

Context

Your audience is King County & Metro decision makers, so you can assume knowledge of the basic context presented in the Data Challenge. You may wish to present other context important to your analysis and findings.

Approach

In non-technical language explain your analytic approach, rationale for that approach, and important limitations.

Major Findings

Include a bit more detail on the key results summarized at the top of your document.

Implications & Recommendations

What should policymakers conclude from the results of your analysis? What key questions remain unanswered and deserve fuller study? If you were a King County Metro decision maker, what would be the next step you would direct staff to take based on your analysis?