 

Desktop research

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**Digital Transformation Agency**



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## Desktop research template

This template is designed to assist policy developers conduct effective desktop research during the pre-discovery phase of the policy development process. The aim is to provide a structured approach to gathering and synthesising relevant information to inform the early stages of policy ideation and development. Remember to save your own version of this document before making any changes.

### Purpose of desktop research

#### Objective

Clearly define the purpose of your desktop research. Identify what you aim to achieve and how the research will support the policy development process.

Example: "To gather background information on existing government policies, international best practices, and academic perspectives on digital transformation in public services."

#### Key research questions

Define core questions: Frame the research around key questions that guide your search. These should be aligned with the policy problem you are addressing. For example:

* What existing policies or guidelines govern digital transformation in public services in Australia?
* What are the key challenges government agencies face in implementing digital transformation initiatives?
* What are the emerging trends or technologies that could impact digital service delivery?

#### Sources of information

##### Internal sources

Identify existing internal documents, data, or insights within the DTA or other government departments that may be relevant. For example, internal reports, policy frameworks, evaluations, or project data.

##### External sources

Use credible external sources to gather data and insights. Consider the following categories:

* Government reports: Australian government policies, international government frameworks, case studies, or white papers.
* Academic literature: Journal articles, research papers, or studies relevant to the policy area.
* Industry reports: White papers, insights from tech firms, or industry experts on emerging trends.
* Global Best practices: Policies or case studies from GovUK, GovUS, or other international peers relevant to this policy initiative.

#### Research methodology

##### Search strategy

Outline the methodology for conducting desktop research, such as:

* Keywords. List primary and secondary keywords for searches (e.g., “digital transformation,” “public service delivery,” “technology adoption in government”).
* Databases/Platforms. Identify the platforms you will use for research (e.g., Google Scholar, Australian Government Archives, academic journal databases).
* Timeframe. Define the timeframe of publications that are most relevant (e.g., last 5 years, 10 years).

#### Synthesising research findings

##### Key themes and insights

Summarise the major themes or trends identified in your research. For example:

* "Increased use of automation and AI in public services; focus on citizen-centric service delivery."

##### Policy gaps or challenges

Identify any gaps or challenges in existing policies or practices. For example:

* "Limited guidance on integrating new technologies with existing legacy systems."

##### Opportunities for innovation

Highlight any innovative approaches or strategies that can inform your policy development. For example:

* "GovUK's agile approach to digital policy development could be adapted to fit Australia's digital transformation objectives."

#### Limitations of research

##### Gaps in available information

Identify any limitations or gaps in the information available through desktop research. For example:

* "Limited recent studies on the impacts of digital transformation on small agencies in Australia."

##### Assumptions

Highlight any assumptions made during research. For example:

* "Assumed that the findings from international case studies are transferable to the Australian context."

#### Next steps

##### Further research needs

Specify any areas where further research or consultation is required. For example:

* "Further stakeholder engagement needed with agencies involved in digital transformation projects."

#### Transition to discovery phase

Provide guidance on how this research will inform the discovery phase of the policy development process. For example:

* "Research findings will shape the user needs analysis and the consultation plan for key stakeholders."

#### References

Ensure all sources of information are properly cited using a consistent referencing format. For example:

* Australian Government. (2023). Data and Digital Government Strategy v1.0. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Retrieved from https://www.dataanddigital.gov.au