

Alpha Brief Template

An Alpha Brief should outline the basic parameters of a project, based on initial brainstorming or discussions with a project partner/client.

1. Theme

A single sentence describing the theme of the project.

2. Audience

Who is this project intended to influence? Ideally describe 2-3 real people in detail, eg. age, nationality, profession/interests.

3. Purpose

A description of the rationale and intended impact of the project, including how it should influence the audience (eg. inform, educate, illicit action), and whether its dissemination is linked to a particular event/date.

4. Key messages

What are the 1 to 3 key ideas to be communicated to the audience? Focus on core (essential) messages.

5. Tone

What kind of language should the project use (considering both text and visual language)? What is the audience most likely to respond positively to? (eg. academic, journalistic, humorous, direct/forceful).

6. Format

A description of the intended format of the project (eg. interactive/static infographic, animation, billboard), and how it is expected to be used (eg. in a report, in a presentation, in online/social media).

7. Data

A description of the available data (including limitations), and links to key sources.

8. Reference projects

Visuals from (and/or links to) other projects providing inspirations in terms of style, format or content, describing the relevance of each one.

Beta Brief Template

A Beta Brief is used to guide the design phase of a project, and is the culmination of the research and storytelling phases. It should build on the Alpha Brief as a base, and describe at least one specific story angle to be developed visually.

1. Theme

A single sentence describing the theme of the project.

2. Audience

Who is this story intended to influence? Describe 2-3 real people in detail, eg. age, nationality, profession/interests. Outline one or two broader groups that these individuals fit into.

3. Impact Strategy

A description of the rationale and intended impact of the story, including how it should influence the audience (eg. inform, educate, illicit action), and whether its dissemination is linked to a particular event/date. Set impact goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound.

4. Key messages

What are the 1 to 3 key ideas to be communicated to the audience? Focus on core (essential) messages.

5. Story Hook

A single sentence describing the story hook. The key idea that will capture the attention of the target audience.

6. Story hierarchy

From the hook, what are the layers of information/messages the story should convey? How, and in what order? Consider how the story may be read by the surfer (glances quickly), the swimmer (immerses more), and the diver (goes into deep details). (Note that a 'diver' level typically only applies to interactives.)

7. Tone

What tone will best convey this story (considering both text and visual language)? What is the audience most likely to respond positively to? (eg. academic, journalistic, humorous, direct/forceful).

8. Format

What is the chosen format for this story? (eg. interactive/static infographic, animation, billboard). What are the limitations or strengths of this format?

9. Data

A description of the collected data and information to support the story of the visual, including full sources. A spreadsheet containing all the relevant data should be produced in parallel to this document, along with basic charts to visualise key data.

10. Sketches/Wireframes

One or more sketches exploring the visual format/hierarchy of the story. Depending on the nature of the project, these may be more developed, taking the form of wireframes (rough design mock-ups).

11. Reference projects

Visuals from (and/or links to) other projects providing inspirations in terms of style, format or content, describing the relevance of each one. At this stage the connection to the desired story/format should be explicit.