

Section 2: Writing the Remaining Sections

All HIV/AIDS epidemiologic profiles should have 6 sections. Chapter 2 describes these sections:

- front matter
- introduction
- body
- conclusion
- appendixes
- other back matter (in addition to appendixes)

Chapters 2 and 3 describe how to develop the body of the profile. The body of the profile consists of core and supplemental data that describe the epidemic. This section focuses on the front matter, introduction, conclusion, and the appendixes.

Front Matter

Include these elements at the front of the profile in the order shown:

- Contributors: The names of profile writers and other contributors
- List of abbreviations: The short forms (including acronyms and initialisms) used to refer to certain terms and organizations
- Executive summary: A synopsis of the profile's content
- Table of contents: A list (usually just called Contents) of the topics covered (along with appropriate page numbers)
- List of Tables and Figures

The list of contributors, list of abbreviations, and the table of contents are self-explanatory; however, writing an executive summary takes time, skill, and an understanding of its purpose.

Executive summary

Although the executive summary goes at the beginning of the profile, it is one of the last elements you should write. It is also one of the most vital because it meets the need of the reader who does not have the time or has no reason to read the entire report.

The executive summary presents the highlights. Use it to summarize the purpose (e.g., to help CPGs set priorities among populations who need prevention and care services and determine present and future needs for programs such as counseling and testing services) and to convey key points about the epidemic in your service area. Keep it to 1 or 2 pages.

Introduction

The introduction should describe the overall intent of the profile—what it will accomplish—the major issues it will address, the time period and service area covered, and any technical or other specific factors that affect the profile. It also provides a roadmap to orient the reader to the format and content of the document. For example, explain how you organized the profile (perhaps around the core epidemiologic questions).

Include these elements in your introduction:

- background
- data sources
- strengths and limitations (For example, a strength might be that the report draws upon many data sources so that it presents a rich portrait of particular populations; a limitation might be that because the HIV surveillance data included represent only

people who have been confidentially tested, they do not represent those who have been recently infected and thus are not a true measure of HIV incidence.)

- process followed in preparing the profile

Background

State the purpose of the profile. Exclude extraneous historical data. Indicate whether the profile is an update or a full profile, and highlight differences between the previous and the current profile.

Data sources

In general terms, describe the sources of data for the profile and the overall strengths and limitations of those sources. You may include discussion of how complete the data are, whether they are representative and timely, and whether they can be generalized.

Strengths and weaknesses

Your goal in describing the strengths and weaknesses is to provide the user with a realistic basis for evaluating the profile's data and conclusions.

Explain the overall strengths and weaknesses of the profile to ensure that users understand what the profile can and cannot explain. Describe how the limitations affect the conclusions and how this may affect the decisions of the CPG.

Process followed in preparing the profile

Describe how the profile was developed to meet the needs of end users. Typically, address

- methods used to obtain data
- persons involved in preparing and reviewing the profile
- statistical methods used to analyze data

Conclusion

Summarize the results of the analysis described in the body of the profile and your evaluation of the epidemic. In the body of your profile, it is a good idea to synthesize the results of your findings on each question before you move to the next question. You can use these syntheses as the foundation for your Conclusion section. Discuss the implications of your findings for planning prevention or care services for the service area.

Appendixes

The appendixes are not a catchall for information that did not fit into the other sections. Appendixes should include information that supports the content of the profile but is not vital to an understanding of the main points and the analysis. Appendixes are also a good place for information that is too technical for the body of the report, such as the methods used for calculations. At a minimum, include the following in your appendixes:

- list of data sources

- feedback form for planning groups

Other Back Matter (in addition to appendixes)

This section consists of any other items that do not belong in the front matter, the body, or the appendixes, such as

- glossary of terms
- references