

How to Produce a Backgrounder

Backgrounder is one of the most important media tools. In the time when competition for media space and attention is getting fierce, and when journalists have no time for research, furnishing them with carefully selected, organized and presented facts, figures, quotes and additional sources on a topic is becoming of crucial importance.

Here are tips for writing effective fact sheets and backgrounders:

- * A Fact Sheet/Backgrounder provides facts, quotes, figures, summaries of reports and speeches that give a journalist —background information about certain story/issue/theme.
- * It helps the reporter to understand the issue, to see where the story is, and possibly, to write an article. Even if coverage is not an immediate result, backgrounders keep the journalists in the loop about the issue. They also decrease possibility for misinterpretation. A backgrounder increases the odds the story will come out with the angle you desire.
- * You should have on-hand backgrounders about all main issues that your organization deals with, and prepare the new ones for special events and actions.
- * Backgrounders should be updated regularly with new information, facts, and developments.
- * Backgrounders could be issued independently, or could be attached as an —expanded press release.
- * Backgrounders are also referred to as —Fact Sheets or —Info Sheets. —Q&A Sheets, and —Frequently Asked Questions-FAQ. —Policy Highlights, —Quote List, —Speech Highlights, —Biography Sheet are different formats of backgrounders.

Tips for writing backgrounders

- * Although they can be written in a form of an article, backgrounders are more likely to attract a reporter's attention if they are brief, readable, and easy to grasp.
- * Q&A format, bullets, and chronological approach are highly recommended. Best two or three, maximum five to six pages.
- * Where possible, mention sources of the facts/statistics you used— to provide for credibility.
- * Mention additional sources on the issue: literature, websites, film footage or photo material available, etc.
- * Mention your name, telephone, fax and email for those who need additional information
- * Distribute backgrounders in printed form and online.
- * Produce them on a letterhead stationary, with contact information.