Backgrounders

Backgrounders are lengthier documents that provide additional information on an issue, report, or decision. They can supplement the information that you include in press releases and provide answers to commonly asked questions.

When and how to use them:

You should prepare backgrounders on some general topics of interest and have them available for reporters anytime you issue a release or otherwise interact with them. It never hurts to include basic background pieces in your standard press packet on topics like the history and organization of your project, your major initiatives, and your major accomplishments. You should also prepare background pieces whenever you are making an especially significant or complicated announcement that cannot be fully explained in a typical press release.

Format:

A good backgrounder will present the basic information about a topic in a clear, direct, and factually accurate way. Although it should be clearly formatted and easy to read, it is not necessary to go overboard with the graphic design. These are primarily working documents for reporters to use as they write stories or prepare for interviews.

- Use a clear font and plenty of white space.
- Bullet points and "Q&A" formats often work well.
- Clearly identify your organization on the document and include contact information.
- Include references and web sites where the reader can find more information.
- Include a date so the reader knows when it is no longer useful or accurate information.