

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING FACT SHEETS



Research-to-Policy
— Collaboration —

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WHAT IS A FACT SHEET?

The Research-to-Policy Collaboration facilitates the creation of fact sheets in response to policymaker interest on a specific issue or topic. Fact sheets are succinct, 1-2 pages' documents that synthesize targeted, timely, and relevant research and contain actionable recommendations geared towards policymakers. Legislative audiences have limited time to read through empirical articles and reports; fact sheets can help introduce them to the issue/topic at hand and start a conversation about it.

Fact sheet authors should focus on the parts of the document that make it skimmable. This includes:

- **Title** – which determines if someone will look at the document any further
- **Recommendations** – which determines if someone thinks the fact sheet is politically biased or feasible
- **Section Headers** – which clearly lay out supporting arguments that support your recommendations

Imagine your 1 pager is read for 30 seconds. Those are the things they will read and nothing else matters. They will read it more closely if they think it sounds relevant and compelling to their own policy goals.

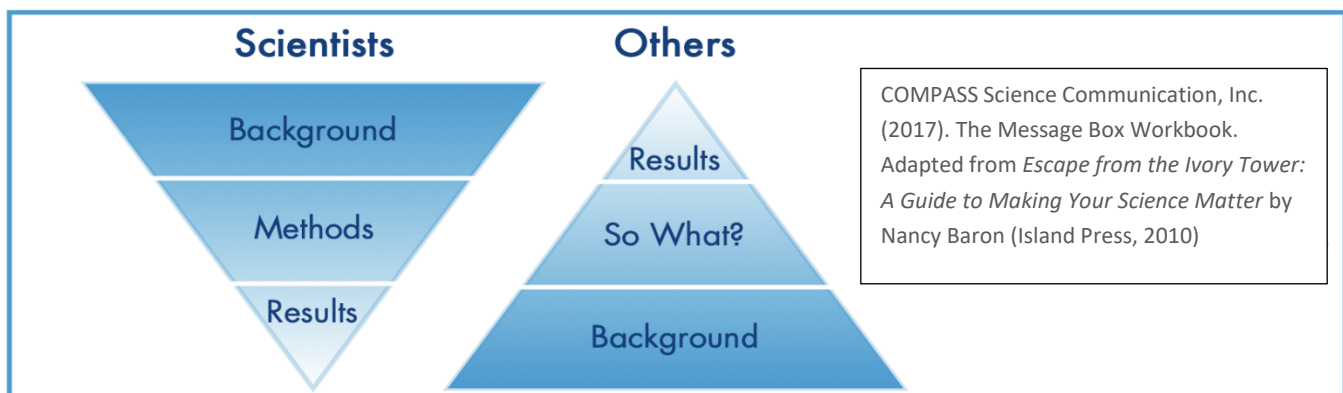
Components of a fact sheet include: (1) targeted audience, (2) your main point, (3) supporting arguments, and (4) actionable policy options.

1. TARGETED AUDIENCE

The same information can be constructed differently, depending on your audience. Consider the following question: Who are you trying to reach? Be specific about your audience – the more specific your audience, the more targeted information you can provide in your fact sheet. To write an effective fact sheet, you need to know who your audience is, what their values are, and how you can relate to them. The audience does not change what the evidence about an issue is, but it can inform how the information is framed.

2. THE MAIN POINT OF THE FACT SHEET

What is the one thing you want to tell your audience? Nonscientific communities lead with the main point because that's what people want to know. This should be apparent in your title as well as opening statement. Present your conclusion first, help your audience to see why the findings are relevant to them, and then provide more background information. Policymakers might be interested in different facets of your work, and you want your message to resonate with their interests and accommodate their needs. Thus, clearly communicating the "so what" of your main point is important.



3. SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

Subsection headers should convey the logic behind your main point, which makes the document very skimmable. Use simple language when providing scientific evidence. This boosts your impact because it shows that you know your audience, which builds trust and better ensures readers will be able to understand the information you provide. When writing your supporting arguments, consider the following tips:



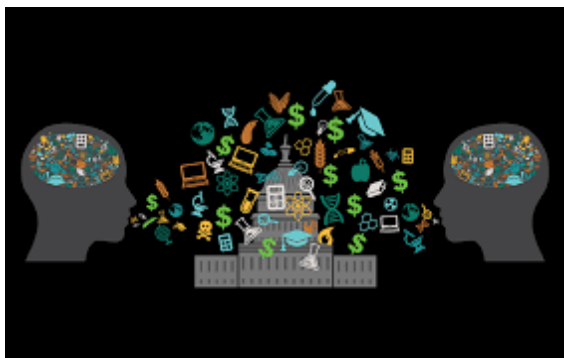
- Break content down into bullet points and **highlight** key text
- Include charts or graphs illustrating key points (if possible)
- Avoid using scientific jargon
- Use fewer words and try to maintain a middle school reading level
- Use neutral, [non-partisan language](#)
- Consider incorporating narratives supported by other types of evidence

4. ACTIONABLE POLICY OPTIONS

Policy makers appreciate explicit connections to how information could be applied to their work. Fact sheets should be solution driven. Don't merely state the problem. Rather, provide a range of policy options and list pros and cons of each option. Policy options should be clearly connected to the fact sheet's main point and supporting arguments – based on the summarized evidence, what are possible actions to take? A breakout text box can draw attention to these, further improving the skimmability of your document.

When presenting options:

- Have a neutral tone and do not appear to favor one option over the others.
- Discuss opportunities to take specific action to address the problem.
- Focus on the results of taking the action. Be specific here, if an action is taken, who is likely to benefit, where, and when?
- Do not make recommendations about specific legislation or federal programs (which are established through statute). Specific legislative recommendations are consistent with [lobbying](#). You may describe the legislative content, and how that aligns or contrasts with research evidence, rather than taking a stance on a specific bill or legislative action.



For more information, please visit:

- <https://www.research2policy.org/disseminating-fact-sheet-to-leg-aud>
- <https://www.compasscicomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/The-Message-Box-Workbook.pdf>