

News Release Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you think out the content of your news release before writing. The most important part of clear writing is clear thinking.

1. **The “lead” or opening sentence:** The lead (the first paragraph of a release) should prove your headline's promise. In the best case, the lead is accurate, brief, clear, colorful and compelling. At its worst, it swamps the reader in confusion, abstraction, jargon, opaqueness and irrelevance. Jot down, in one sentence, the news in a nutshell. What's the most important/ exciting thing that will happen because of your program or grant? Is there a key detail you should include?
2. **Second paragraph; the bigger problem to be solved:** What is the context? What larger problem is being tackled? Jot down a detail or two giving background about the issue or program at hand. Always use the active verb tense.
3. **The quote:** Jot down a few names of people you might want to quote in the release. Who can best explain why people should care? Another key player? Tip: When you go to get the quote, be sure to ask: “Why does this grant matter?” You can ask for quotes from several people. But then, you need to choose the one (two, at most) that sings – a clear, compelling, persuasive point, said in everyday language.
4. **More details and background:** Jot down further details about how this program will work, who will be affected, and what will be accomplished, when.
5. **Official background on your organization/ the funder:** Find the official background from your web site or literature that briefly describes the *who-what-why* of your organization.
6. **Further information:** Be sure to include, at the bottom of the release, names/ numbers/e-mail addresses/ Web sites for people to go to for further information. One should be from your organization. Another should be from the funder's communications department.
7. **Headline:** Now that you clearly see the details of the story you want to tell, write a brief (6-12 words) headline that captures the story's essence. The headline should tell the story in sketch form, using concrete language.