

Writing Effective Action Alerts and Fact Sheets

The main purpose of a fact sheet or action alert is to get the reader to do something. A **fact sheet** uses examples, statistics, and personal stories in an effort to persuade a legislator, staff person or policymaker to support an issue or policy. The goal of an **action alert** is to mobilize a large number of people to take action on a particular issue.

Although there is no standard format, the following are guidelines to help you maximize your outreach and build your credibility:

- On page is ideal. People are more likely to read (and retain) short pieces of information.
- Title should be short and to the point. It should reveal the nature of the problem. If an action alert, also include the words ACTION ALERT OR URGENT ACTION NEEDED.
- Make sure the purpose is clearly stated in the opening paragraph, which should be 2-4 sentences. People are likely to read the first paragraph then skim the rest.
- Keep the text brief and simple. Legislators and staff have many people competing for their limited attention.
- Give enough background information to give people confidence to respond. Organize information into “talking points.” Avoid providing too much information.
- Sometimes a short personal story in a side bar/text box can illustrate issue and create an emotional connection.
- Leave plenty of white space, color and/or graphics.
- Always make the actionable item and deadline clear. What is it that you want the person to do? It should be very clear stated and stand out with everything they need to complete the requested action, including phone numbers, email addresses, bill numbers, sample script, deadline, etc. *Participation and success drop dramatically with each piece of information someone is asked to look up or find on their own.*
- Include your organization’s contact information and website.
- Add references and where to go for more information on the bottom or the back page.
- Consider leaving longer issue brief along with fact sheet.
- Edit, edit, edit and always have a second person provide feedback.

Accurate/relevant information presented in a professional way builds your organization’s credibility on an issue.