How to Write a One-Page Brief

One-page briefs are the most useful way to communicate your message, in a format that is easily read and digested by others.

You might feel that writing only one page cannot capture the complexity of your issue and is over-simplified, but in reality, many people you will interact with in advocacy work only need the core information to take the issue forward.

You are competing for the decision-maker’s time, so you need to be able to grab their attention, raise a compelling points, and offer reasonable, plausible recommendations. One-pagers are extremely valuable for meetings with MPs, ministers, the media, other advocates, and members of the public.

OUTLINE

Title
[Name of group, contact information]

Summary
  - State your key message

Issue
  - Describe the problem in more detail. Link the issue to the government’s current priorities.
  - Introduce a frame that resonates with shared values.
  - Add in credible evidence on the scale of the problem, backed up by reliable sources.

Background
  - Give a brief history of the issue using only the facts that are necessary.
  - Include a history of your group’s involvement in the issue, if applicable.

Rationale
  - Explain the rationale for your solution.
  - Include any research you have done, or provide the best evidence to back up your position.
  - Demonstrate that you have thought through the major implications of your proposal.
  - Address any anticipated criticisms in advance.
  - Outline who else supports the issue and what they are doing to move it forward.

Recommendation
  - Conclude with the specific ask that is relevant to your audience.

Contact
  - Provide name and contact information for a specific individual who can be contacted at any time for further information.

*Ensure that grammar and spelling are correct!!!

Source: The Art of the Possible, by Amanda Sussman.

For a sample one-page brief, see “A Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Budget 2009” by the Citizens for Public Justice:
http://www.cpi.ca/files/docs/Sample_Brief.pdf