



Tips for Writing a Lay Summary

Content

- Reviewers need to be able to quickly appreciate the importance of the topic that is being proposed e.g. there is a need or a deficiency in current treatment/technology.
- Focus on the relevance, the application or the benefits, of your proposed research. Why is the work important?
- The lay summary should try to outline what the research project is aiming to do. This ideally should include a summary of aims, background, design/ methods and dissemination (check with funding stream guidance on what is expected)

Style

- Those reviewing your application in a peer review process are not necessarily experts in your topic area; it's not only lay members of the panel that will find your lay summary useful.
- Write simply and directly, think about the structure. The structure should assist in making the lay summary easy to read (e.g. bullet points, short paragraphs)
- Avoid technical and scientific terms (or explain them in simple language)
- Avoid acronyms and jargon. If you do use one of them explain it.
- Avoid nominalizations e.g. change instances of 'utilisation' to 'using'. Use Anglo Saxon words, rather than Latin derived words.
- Don't turn verbs into nouns. 'She was engaged in the construction and installation of instruments.' She built and installed instruments.
- Short, simple sentences. Sentences should be less than 25 words long.
- Don't use a long word where a short one will do. Examples: endeavour... try, facilitate... help, consequently... so, advantageous... helpful.
- Write as you would speak. Keep your language punchy, clear and colourful. (Imagine you are explaining your work to a stranger with no science background. Write down exactly what you would say, and tidy up the punctuation later.)
- Find someone who isn't in your field to read over the summary. Get feedback on your draft from colleagues, supervisors, and at least one non-specialist friend. See what questions they have and ask them to explain back to you what they thought you were communicating.