

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

Tips for writing a plain English summary

We only fund the highest quality research. We use a thorough process, which takes around five months, to help us choose the best applications. You are asked to provide segments of your application in lay terms. This serves several functions – our PPI members of the decision-making committee use the Plain English section to inform their decision. It is used by our Senior Management team to consider whether your study is a good fit with us as an organisation. Our Comms department use it to communicate about your research to our stakeholders; and Fundraising use it to communicate to donors, and to generate funds for the research programme.

So, Don't overlook the lay sections. They're critical.

Worth a read

- NICHS grant workshop Powerpoint slides and associated notes - these outline the decision making process;
- Workshop videos - particularly Prof Mike Clarke's workshop on research question formulation; and
- Our research strategy
https://nichs.org.uk/assets/resources/NICHS_StrategyPlan_2023-2026_Public_Web2.0.pdf
- <https://nichs.org.uk/research-policy/research/research-application-process/how-to-apply-to-the-srg-programme>

Tips for a lay summary

A good plain English summary should include:

- Simple language.
- Where technical terms cannot be avoided - provide a plain English glossary
- Justify why the study is needed - how will it benefit the reader or their loved ones?
- Context: Why are you doing the research? Why is it needed? Are your research questions shaped by the experiences of patients / service users?
- Aims and outcomes: What do you hope to find? What benefit do you hope your research will result in? Who benefits and when?
- Method: Describe clearly what you are actually going to do throughout the project.
- Involvement: how will you involve patients / service users? Will they be involved in the study design, delivery and/or as research participants? How will they be supported, e.g. will they be provided any training? What incentives will they receive for their involvement?

A good plain English summary should avoid:

- Detailed explanations, unnecessary jargon, abbreviations and technical terms.
- Wordy sentences. Try to keep sentences short and simple.

Some resources

- NIHR Plain English guidance: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/plain-english-summaries/27363>
- Plain English campaign: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>
- Make it Clear campaign: <https://www.invo.org.uk/makeitclear-2/?print=print>
- Readability calculator: <https://readable.com/>