Many funders ask for a summary of your research for a non-expert audience. Here’s a short guide on how to craft a lay summary that grabs the reader’s attention and leaves them wanting more.

What’s the purpose of a lay summary?

• They demonstrate to reviewers that you can explain your research to non-experts
• Some funders list lay summaries from successful applications on their website, to showcase the research that they’re funding.

A lay summary should...

✓ Grab the reader
✓ Get them excited about your research
✓ Make them want to know more

A lay summary is not...

X A review of others’ work
X The introductory paragraph to the rest of your application

Structuring your lay summary: the hourglass model

Lay summaries should contain a balance of these three topics:

Context
What research has come before? What’s the problem/gap/opportunity for innovation?

Your Research
What are you going to do, and how?

Impact
Why does your research matter? What societal/economic impact could it have?

Tips for writing a lay summary

1. Avoid jargon and specialist terms
2. Use the active voice, rather than the passive
3. Avoid long sentences
4. Use a readability checker to check if it’s ‘lay’ enough
5. Get feedback from non-experts
6. Be prepared to rewrite!