



## Writing the Executive Summary

An executive summary is a brief document typically directed at top-level managers who sometimes make decisions based upon a reading of this summary alone. As a result, the executive summary must be concise but comprehensive, meaning that it must present in summary form all major sections of the main report, such as:

- purpose
- problem
- methods of analyzing the problem
- results of analysis
- recommendations

To repeat, because of the critical role it plays, the executive summary is often the first and only part read by key decision makers. Therefore, it must be designed so that it can be read independently of the main document. Typically, figures and tables are not referenced in the executive summary. Uncommon terminology, symbols and acronyms are avoided. If the executive summary is sufficiently persuasive, the entire proposal will then be read in full.

Therefore, your summary is key to the success of your proposal and should reflect these characteristics:



**Perfect Miniaturization.** The executive summary should contain the same sections in the same order as the full report.



**Major Findings Only.** Because it is a distilled version of the full report, the summary should include only the proposal's principal points and major evidence. Most charts, tables, and deep-level analysis are reserved for full proposal.



**Proportional.** The executive summary should typically be only 10% the length of the full proposal it distills. Therefore, the executive summary for a 10-page proposal would be 1 page or less.



**Stand Alone.** The summary should be written in a way that it can be read as a stand-alone document. Before submitting it, allow a test subject to read the summary. The subject should be able to give to you the basics of the full proposal from one reading of the summary.



**Flawless.** Like a job resume, even the most minor error of proofreading or grammar can spell rejection.

### SAMPLE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

The City of Savannah's recycling program was designed and implemented in order to meet the city's civic responsibilities and to comply with the State of Georgia's Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act as it relates to aluminum, glass and plastic containers.

The purposes of this report are to:

- Determine the degree of public awareness of the recycling program
- Suggest ways to increase citizen participation in the program

### Methods

A questionnaire survey was conducted to assess the community's current recycling habits and to ascertain the degree of participation in city's program. A total of 1,041 responses were analyzed. Because Savannah's recycling program collects only aluminum, glass and plastic containers, these were the only materials included in the survey.

### Findings and Conclusions

A substantial majority (64%) of respondents rated recycling as "Important" or "Very Important." A lesser percentage (38%) indicated that they currently recycle at work. An even smaller percentage (17%) participate in the city's program. Two major reasons for their non-participation were highlighted:

1. Not knowing the location of the city's recycling centers
2. Lack of convenient access to the recycling centers

Results of this study indicate that citizens view recycling as important and will do so when convenient. However,

### Subheadings

The summary's subheadings should reflect the report's main divisions. Subheadings of the executive summary should not be same as those of the main report.

### Purpose

Provide purpose of the report in a concise format using present tense.

### Results

Findings and conclusions are reported in condensed form without reference to tables or appendices. Lists are used when possible.

as important and will do so when convenient. However, locations of the city's recycling centers are either unknown or too inconvenient for the program to achieve the desired level of participation. A substantial effort needs to be made to overcome these barriers.

### **Recommendations for Increasing Participation**

Cost-effective, scalable recommendations include:

- Increasing promotion of the city's recycling program through a coordinated campaign of PSAs.
- Relocating recycling bins and adding attractive signage
- Doubling the number of recycling bins
- Developing an incentive program for business participation

### **Recommendations**

**These should be in list form whenever possible.**

