

## **Executive Summary SPS Guidelines**

### WHAT IS AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY?

An executive summary is a brief overview of a report designed to give readers a quick preview of its contents. Its purpose is to consolidate the principle points of a document in one place. After reading the summary, your audience should understand the main points you are making and your evidence for those points without having to read every part of your report in full. That's why they are called *executive summaries* — the audience is usually someone who makes funding, personnel, or policy decisions and needs information quickly and efficiently.

**KEYPOINT: Remember that your purpose is to provide an overview or preview.**

### GUIDELINES:

- ✓ **An executive summary will be required for the following Board items: Program Evaluations, Choice Proposals, and any report exceeding ten (10) pages.**
- ✓ Key elements:
  - Purpose: Explanation of purpose or why you wrote the report
  - Conclusion: Recommendation or key finding(s) and the information most critical to support your conclusions
- ✓ The sequence of information in the summary should mirror the full report, i.e., same order.
- ✓ The executive summary should not exceed one page and will often be a paragraph or two.
- ✓ No new information should be introduced in the summary.
- ✓ The summary should be able to stand alone as a clear communication of information.

### HINTS:

- ✓ Write the executive summary after you have completed the report and decided on your recommendations.
- ✓ Look at first and last sentences of paragraphs to begin to outline your summary.
- ✓ Go through and find key words and use those words to organize a draft of your summary; look for words that enumerate (first, next, finally); words that express causation (therefore, consequently); words that signal essentials (basically, central, leading, principle, major) and contrast (however, similarly, more than, less likely).

Adapted from San Jose State University <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/it/edit226/resource/execsumm.pdf>