

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY GUIDELINES AND EXAMPLES

Urban Science Intensive I (USI I) | CUSP - GX - 9001 Spring 2016

The executive summary for the Social Impact Project should be a one-page document that summarizes the purpose, goals, approach, and conclusions of your project. This is a graded, individual assignment.

As you prepare to write the executive summary, keep the purpose of the document in mind:

- Reading this summary should give any evaluator a clear idea of the problem you are tackling, your approach to solving it and what your conclusions are. Consider the executive summary is for someone who may not have time to read the full report and yet need to know enough about the project to intelligently assess the project, discuss it with others, and determine appropriate next steps.
- The summary should be original: do not simply copy and paste sentences from the full report.
- The summary should be self-contained. It could be presented separately from the rest of the report, without having to consult the actual document, and for determining next steps based on this information. It should be able to replace a full document reading.
- The summary should be the last report component to be written. It may be difficult to ensure that a report's key points are all addressed unless the report has already been written.
- All claims made in the summary must be fully substantiated by the report content, but the summary itself will contain little of that supporting detail. In general visual aids (graphs, picture, etc.) are not encouraged, unless the graph is absolutely important to understand the topic.

When writing the executive summary, keep the following questions in mind:

a. Who will read the executive summary?

Always keep in mind that the reader of an executive summary needs to know all of the important information in the main document without reading the actual document. Write the executive summary as a "stand alone" document.

b. What is the purpose of the main document? Try to summarize this in two or three sentences in the executive summary.

c. What are the sections of the full report, and can these sections be reflected in the executive summary? Try to decide which ones are necessary to an understanding of the issue at hand, and which ones can be left out.

Examples:

From a NYC agency: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/ssi12_summary.pdf

From a university research institute:

http://irp.wisc.edu/research/WisconsinPoverty/pdfs/First_Wisconsin_Poverty_Report_Final-2.pdf