Executive Summaries

Executive Summaries are similar to an abstract in that they provide an overview, but executive summaries are typically longer. They are often included at the beginning of Project Reports as an overall summary for the entire project and serve as a "stand alone" document (23). The audience is typically an organization itself (if they requested the project) or those who may be familiar with the organization and its efforts.

Executive Summaries should be succinct and discuss only the most important factors of the project. No background information is necessary, as the audience likely knows the background of the organization or could read about the background in later sections of the report. You should, however, introduce the problem presented by the organization and the purpose of the report.

If you are developing recommendations in the report, focus on these recommendations in the summary. If you are investigating a program or policy, discuss the major findings. Your readers are looking to the Executive Summary for a very quick summation of your findings and can defer to the rest of the report for more specific details.

Therefore, an Executive Summary does not exist to replace the Project Report, but rather allows the reader to quickly understand the results and persuade them to read the report (24).

General Tips

- Emphasize the following components(24):
  - The purpose and aim of your report.
  - The results and recommendations you discovered.
- Most executive summaries are **no more than** one page. However, some instructors prefer that the Executive Summary be about 5-10% of the total pages in the report (i.e. if the project report is 50 pages, the Executive Summary should be 2.5-5 pages long).
- Use bullet points and bolding to emphasize your main points. Bullet points can be helpful to list several findings in a clear fashion. Bolding can draw attention to a point you wish to emphasize, so you should use it sparingly to be effective.
- Use your best judgement to eliminate unnecessary information (24). Think about the following: What would the reader want to know about the report? What findings would the reader be most interested in? How can I convince them to read the entire report?
- Avoid copying/pasting sentences from the report itself (24). This can become repetitive and deter the audience from reading further.

For more information on writing Executive Summaries, check out these resources:

- Writing Executive Summaries – UMUC
- Executive Summaries Complete the Report - CSUN
- Good and Poor Examples of Executive Summaries