Best Practices for Writing a Plain Language Summary

Below you will find suggestions and recommendations from patient partners who have experience reviewing plain language summaries. Please use the following as your guide:

- **Consider writing your plain language summary using one or a combination of the following formats**:

  1st Suggested Format:
  - **Purpose:** What is your research about?
  - **Procedure:** What are the steps required to accomplish the goals of your proposed research?
  - **Outcome**: What are the results you are expecting?
  - **Relevance to patients**: How will your research improve or impact the lives of patients? What is the nature and extent of the problem you are trying to address?

  2nd Suggested Format:
  - **Background**
  - **Method**
  - **Conclusion**

- **Please use Headings** to guide context and understanding. They also break up the text and make your summary easier to read.
- **Indent and separate new ideas.** When changing ideas or topics use an indent or a space or begin a new paragraph.
- **Please use plain language.** This will allow lay people insight into your ideas. (Please refrain from clarifying to the point of patronizing). Keep in mind that the reader will not be familiar with technical terms. Write as you would for a newspaper.
- **Legend/Glossary**: Consider including a legend of terms and acronyms.
- **Acronyms:** Acronyms must not stand alone. Include a brief explanation of the acronym and terms that you are using. This will bring clarity to your document.
- **Use of analogies, similes and metaphors:** Using a metaphor or analogy to help explain your document may be helpful. These tools are only helpful when they are relevant to pertinent concepts.
- **Provide context:** It is helpful to include information about the depth or extent of the issue your research will address. In addition, include information related to how your research will improve patient lives.
- **Choose a reader:** Consider asking someone who does not work in research to read your plain language summary before finalizing it.
- **If someone doesn't understand what you are writing about, it becomes ineffective**.

We are looking forward to receiving your summary!