

5. *Synthesis of the Executive Summary into a First Draft*

The first step in writing your *Executive Summary* section is to create a bullet outline for it. We will help you do so by asking you to make a series of responses in a set order. Your responses will become the ‘bullets’ in your outline. Once you are satisfied with the bullets you have written, and how they relate to each other, we will ask you to expand them into sentences that, when pasted into a new file, will become the first draft of your *Executive Summary* section. You can then modify, amplify, re-write and otherwise refine your first draft to produce the version that will become the template for writing the rest of your grant application.

a. First, Introductory Paragraph

- i. As noted above, you need to open with an interest-grabbing sentence that has two primary objectives. The first is that your opening sentence should contain a sufficient number of keywords that it will be easy for the reviewer to understand what your grant application is likely to be about, and the second is to establish the relevance of your proposal to the mission of the funding agency. You want to open this way, because you want to convey that, by supporting your proposal, the reviewers will be contributing to the goals of the funding agency. For example, were you writing an application about the difficulty that teenage mothers have in relating to their children, you would not use as your opening sentence the fact that there are 500,000 babies born to adolescent women. Instead, you would want to open with a sentence that makes clear how important bonding between mothers and their children is for the proper development of social skills, both from the standpoint of successful integration with peers in preschool and kindergarten, and the ability to learn in the classroom. In the space below, write one or more bullets that similarly convey the importance of your project to a general area of interest.

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- ii. Next, in chronological order, write bullets that succinctly summarize the most important information that is *known* in the area of your project. Remember that very few, if any, of your reviewers will be true experts in your field. Therefore, you need to acquaint them with the knowledge base, as it currently exists, so that everyone will be starting from the same point. Begin with older, but seminal, observations (the ‘forest’) and continue until you have reached what is considered the current status of the field (the ‘tree’). These need to flow logically, one into the next, in such a way that they will lead the reviewer inexorably toward the jumping-off point that you want him/her to have for your application, (i.e., the ‘branch’), what needs to be done next. Add bullets, if necessary.

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