

Writing for a Non-Scientific Audience

The plain language sections are a critical component of your application – they make multiple sclerosis (MS) research accessible and relevant to the public, highlight the important work of researchers and trainees to the MS field, increase engagement of various stakeholders – including people affected by MS and donors – in MS research, and demonstrate accountability to the public around the use of research funds. Follow the points below to help write the plain language sections of your application.

Who is your primary audience?

The plain language sections of your application should be clear and accessible to people who do not have a scientific background or those who are not experts in your field of research. These sections are reviewed by members of the MS community termed **Community Representatives** – who are people living with MS, MS care partners, and family/friends of people living with MS. The Community Representatives evaluate plain language sections of the application based on the review criteria outlined in the program guide.

If you are awarded an MS Canada grant, plain language summaries are also shared with the public to describe the research we fund.

What information should you provide?

When writing the plain language sections of your application, please follow the program guide and review the Community Representative evaluation criteria.

In your content, be sure to clearly identify the research question providing sufficient background for a non-expert, state the importance and relevance of the question, what you plan to do, what you expect to find, and what is the anticipated impact of this research on people living with MS.

Review your writing for these DO's and DON'Ts:

DO's

- Use an active voice and speak directly to your reader.
- Use short, clear, and simple sentences.
- Use common words and plain language where possible.

DON'Ts

- Avoid overuse of technical terms, jargon, and acronyms (i.e., *PwMS*, *EAE*) that are not well-defined. If a technical term is necessary to include then provide a simple definition and/or examples.
- Avoid using mathematical or scientific symbols/notations, instead write it out (i.e., *10 days or more* vs ≥ 10 days).
- Avoid oversimplification of the research that may distort the meaning, relevance, and impact.

We highly encourage you to ask a non-scientific person to review the plain language sections of your application for any feedback before you submit your application.

Additional Resources:

- Plain Language: Getting Started or Brushing Up (NIH) – click [here](#).
- Plain Language Course (Province of BC) – click [here](#).