The Macular Society has a Lay Panel made up of people living with or caring for those with macular disease. This group receive the lay summary of the applications and provide feedback to our Research Committee, who consider their views when making funding decisions.

Our Lay Panel have an understanding of the effects of macular disease and the importance of research in this area, but may have limited scientific or medical knowledge. Therefore, it is important that when writing the lay summary to take care to write in a way that is understandable to a non-scientific audience.

The lay panel assess and provide feedback on three criteria:

* Importance to people affected by macular disease
* Impact of project and how it could help someone affected by macular disease
* Whether they believe the project is a good use of the Macular Society funds

Lay Panel members may have sight loss, which can add extra barriers in reading and understanding summaries. Below are some recommendations one of the lay panel has provided on how to make the summaries accessible and understandable.

**Recommendations**

* Consider your audience. Members of the lay panel will have some knowledge of macular disease but may not have a scientific background and may have a macular disease themselves.
* Avoid filling the lay summary with descriptions of the impact of sight loss, it is likely the lay panel are aware of this. Similarly, the lay panel will know what age related macular degeneration is and who it affects. However, for rarer conditions (e.g. macular dystrophies) it may be worth including relevant information.
* Run a draft past a non-scientist friend, or local PPI group.
* Look at examples of good summaries.
* Use headings, subheadings and bullet points where useful.
* Keep paragraphs short and separate paragraphs with line breaks to improve readability, especially for those with sight loss.
* Keep technical/scientific terms and abbreviations to a minimum, and avoid jargon if possible.
  + Where necessary, technical or scientific terms and abbreviations used should be clearly explained. If used frequently draw attention to where it is first explained (e.g. making bold). This provides a kind of landmark to return to should a reader lose the thread and need to backtrack, which is especially useful for those with sight loss.
* Proof read your text. Repetitions and spelling or grammatical mistakes make reading text more difficult, and can create additional barriers to understanding the project.