



Simplify Language

Boulder Chamber DEI Summit – 11/18/25

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Agenda

- 1** Why and when to simplify?
- 2** Tools, tips, and practice – writing and speaking
 - Concise and precise
 - Understandable
 - Readable
 - Translatable
- 3** Next steps

I'll share these slides upon request.

Example

***All examples are real, anonymous, and not meant to criticize.**

We believe that parks and recreation professionals are key to a fully integrated public health system and play a vital role in meeting the evolving health needs of their communities. They are uniquely positioned to create, in partnership with the community, public health leaders and other local organizations, upstream solutions that catalyze and transform their systems into holistic and people-centered community wellness hubs. In serving as community wellness hubs, parks and recreation connects community members to comprehensive programs, services and spaces that dismantle systemic barriers to health, especially for people of color and low-income communities, while investing in efforts that support and advance health and well-being holistically.

Parks and recreation professionals are essential for community health. They are uniquely positioned to partner with community members, health leaders, and local organizations to create wellness hubs that:

- Provide programs, services, and spaces that improve health.**
- Remove barriers to health, especially for people of color and low-income communities.**
- Support overall well-being.**

Training objectives

Learn skills to make communication easier for people to quickly understand.

- Literacy barriers
- Language barriers
- People who are neurodivergent
- People who prefer clear and brief communication

Reduce text by 20-80% without changing content.

Improve:

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| • Access | • Recruitment | • Efficiency |
| • Translations | • Retention | • Productivity |
| • Trust | • Surveys and data | • Belonging |

Who are your audiences?

Many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies and structures and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. - Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

Why I focus on this

1

This is a
common
problem.

2

The solution is
quick.

3

I have many
privileges,
including
language, race
and gender.

Why is this a problem?

What do people do when they don't understand?

- Pretend
- Ignore, disengage
- Misinterpret or assume
- Feel shame, excluded, dumb

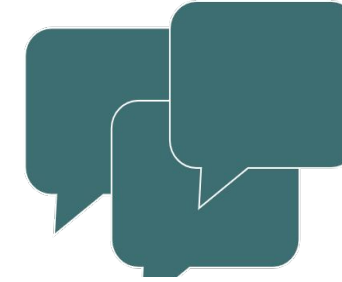
We receive a lot communication!

Unpopular messages need to be extra clear.

Shift responsibility.



Reflection



Small group
conversation

**Talk about your audiences and what they want from your communication.
Describe an area of communication you could improve.
How does power, privilege or language bias impact your communication?**

How can simplifying communication impact your work?

- Access
- Translations
- Trust
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Data and surveys
- Efficiency
- Productivity
- Belonging

How to be great

Practice and humility.

Make a choice.

Mirror individuals.

Do it quickly.

Balance clarity with compliance.

AI

Have a policy that everyone can explain in 15-30 seconds.

- **What do you encourage or discourage AI for?**
- **Are people required to use it?**
- **How does it align with your values?**

Alert on Health Insurance Rate Increases

1. Meal

Multi-page official document issued by the bureau including:

- A detailed explanation of approved rate changes for health insurance plans.
- Legal authority for rate review.
- Tables with percentages by insurer and plan type.
- Public hearing details.
- Justification for the decision (medical costs, inflation, etc.).
- Instructions for how consumers can appeal or comment.

2. Snack

- Summarize the average rate change (e.g., "Average increase is 7.4%").
- Mention top insurers affected.
- Briefly explain why rates are rising and provide a quote from a leader.
- Link to full report.

3. Bite

- Health Insurance Rates to Rise Avg. 7.4% in 2025
- Link for more.

Simplifying tips

1 Remove excess words. Minimize fluff.

- The orientation **will take place on** October 17th.
- **In the event that** your application is accepted, you will receive...
- We **would like to extend an invitation for** you to...
- We **made a decision to extend** the deadline.
- We are **excited to announce that we will be offering** three new programs.
- **Please note that** the program offers...

Sentence starters and qualifiers

- In addition to... we also...
- Not only do we...
- As you may have heard...
- It should be noted that...
- Take a moment to...

The organization **is dedicated to providing...**

Aim to, strive to, exist to, committed to, designed to...

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

2

Use understandable words. Avoid jargon or define it.

- public goods
- wraparound services

- disseminate
- stakeholders

*Priority #1 is being understood!

- This is a **biennial** survey of employees.
- By collecting **disaggregated** data to assess initiatives, we learn what's effective.
- There are concerns about tax increases on local businesses and residents on **fixed incomes**, along with loss of **direct governance oversight**.
- Steer and coordinate the advocacy network, including through the ongoing support of members, meeting **cadences** and agendas.
- I visited **a number of** sites this week.

3 Avoid words with multiple meanings.

- get back
- give in
- let up
- let down
- kick off
- break down
- make up
- kick back



He **passed out** at school.

- We don't just meet **the bar**, we exceed **the bar**.
- Our term **kicks off** on October 7th.
- We will **wrap up** the project this summer.
- I can't **make out** what she's saying.
- This person will **field** communication from the public.
- We need to **iron out** a few details.

4

Define and limit acronyms.
No more than 2 per page.

- SOM
- GF
- IEP
- PD



5

Short sentences

Use bullets and avoid lots of commas

1. The assessment evaluated several factors that impact access to primary care, including geographic accessibility, demographics of who is being seen in safety net sites, the type and range of services available, and operational challenges impacting safety net clinics, including financial stability.

2. The assessment evaluated several factors that impact access to primary care, including:

- Geographic accessibility.
- Demographics of who is being seen in safety net sites.
- The type and range of services available.
- Operational challenges impacting safety net clinics, including financial stability.

6

Order

Header

The Program funding announcements have been released. Due to delayed processing times in the system, proposal submissions will need to take place prior to the submission date. We are recommending submissions 3 business days prior to the due date of December 2, 2025. We are closed 11/28 & 11/29, so the last date available for the submission, according to these guidelines is November 26, 2025. Therefore, if you have not already contacted the Proposals department regarding your intention to submit to the calls, please do so as soon as possible. Please visit the links below for more information regarding each funding opportunity.

1. What must come first?
2. What can come later?
3. What can be linked?
4. What can be removed?

Activity – Rewrite these

1. If you have questions or concerns related to the fee, the form, or filing exemptions, please contact Lee at lee@email.com. Please note that we cannot accept phone calls as a response to this request. All responses must be in writing.
2. We will create a repository of existing housing and health data, reports, etc. and share with key stakeholders.
3. Once our review is complete and rates are finalized, it is a good idea to take a look at available plans to see which one best suits your needs for the upcoming year. The state's healthcare marketplace – coverme.gov – is a good place to find information on the health plans available in your area.
4. If your initial travel request did not include personal travel but you would like to add personal travel to this trip or if you have already included personal travel and those dates change, please go into the original travel request and click the 'Revise' button.
5. The Risk-Focused Financial Analysis process may include more face-to-face meetings with key individuals in your company (usually senior management level) in order to get a better understanding of the company and its challenges and to provide a forum for the exchange of information of importance to the regulator as well as the company.

Simplify speaking

7 Enunciate and end sentences

- Did you
Ja
- Where is he going?
Wherzee goin?
- What are you watching?
Whatcha watchin?
- Doncha seeeyit?
- Tolja lgetidun
- I'll gettim som'in e likeslot
- Stoodis

Sound natural

Simplifying tips

Remove excess

Simple words and
phrases

Use bullets
Short sentences

Simple sentence
structure

Avoid words with
multiple meanings

Limit and define
acronyms

Order

Enunciate and
adjust volume

Slow down
Pause

Data

- The Veterans Benefits Administration revised a single letter and tested it at a regional office. In one year, phone calls dropped from about 1,110 to about 200.¹
- The Washington Department of Revenue rewrote a letter that tripled the number of businesses paying a commonly ignored use tax.¹
- The Cleveland Clinic simplified a billing statement and recovered an additional \$1 million a month in the months following from an 80% increase in patient payments.¹

¹. [Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please: The Case for Plain Language in Business, Government, and Law, by Joseph Kimble](#)



Brevity is confidence.

Length is fear.

- from the book *Smart Brevity* by Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen, and Roy Schwartz

I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.

- Blaise Pascal



Get clear on your main message

Next steps

1. Practice. Observe. Reflect.

2. What will you change?

3. Get custom training and spread the word 😊.

**Provide feedback, request slides,
sign up for my newsletter here!**



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