



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

- A. The starting point: Your Idea
- B. Identifying Sponsors
- C. Reviewers: Who reads your proposal?
- D. Getting ready to write: Best Practices



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

## A. The starting point: Your Idea

1. Define the problem or need that you want to address.
2. Collect and critically analyze relevant background information/needs assessment.
3. Generate a preliminary idea or activity that is pertinent to the problem or critical need you have identified.



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

## A. The starting point: Your Idea

4. Assess your idea's potential for success and modify it, if necessary.

- a. critically assess your own ability to pursue the idea
- b. critically assess your competition
- c. critically assess your funding potential



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

## A. The starting point: Your Idea

5. Seek constructive criticism of your idea from knowledgeable colleagues.
6. Refine the idea or activity to maximize its potential for impact on your field.



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

## B. Identifying Sponsors

1. Know your field, follow the literature
2. Databases, email alerts, OSP
3. Hanover prospecting
4. Foundations and industry
5. Know your sponsor's mission



# Part 1: Before You Begin to Write

## C. Reviewers: Who reads your proposal?

1. What is the reviewer's level of expertise?
2. What is the reviewer's level of interest in your idea?
3. Why is the reviewer reading your proposal?
4. Will the reviewer be fair and impartial in assessing the merits of my proposal?



## Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

Referred to by various names:

NIH — Specific Aims

NSF — Beginning of Project Description

USDA — Beginning of Introduction

### Content

- A. Introduction Paragraph
- B. What is going to be done and by whom?
- C. Specific Aims/Goals/Objectives
- D. Payoff Paragraph



## Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

***...it is highly likely that, by the time the reviewers have finished reading this ~1-page section of your proposal, they will have made an executive decision about whether or not this is an interesting or novel idea, as well as whether this is a proposal that will be enjoyable or painful to read.***





# Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

## A. Introduction Paragraph

1. Opening sentence(s)
2. Important knowns
3. The Gap

**Tip: Linkage of individual components within the Overview/ Executive Summary section and elimination of extraneous detail are key to leading your reviewers to a position of advocacy.**



# 1. Opening sentence(s)

- Should be written in a way that it will immediately catch the attention of the reviewers
- Provide sufficient information such that reviewers will understand what the proposal is about — ***keywords***
- Convey why this proposal should be of interest to the funding agency — ***agency mission, objectives***



# 1. Opening sentence(s)

- Example(s)
  - professionals must deal with colleagues, competitors, and customers from other cultures
  - cooperative R&D and marketing depends on all collaborators being familiar with cultural expectations and perspectives



## 2. Important Knowns

- The most important info reviewers need to know in order to understand why your project needs to be done.
- Begin with older but seminal observations ('the forest') and continue until you reach the current status of the field ('the tree')
- Should flow logically, one into the next



## 2. Important Knowns

- Example(s)
  - English has become the primary language for international communication and commerce
  - global corporations and international organizations have recognized the importance of multiple languages and cultures
  - one language or one cultural perspective no longer provides standard for students aspiring to leadership roles in the global community



## 3. The Gap

- What essential pieces are missing — the Gap?
- The Gap is holding back your field or creating a problem or critical need.
- The Gap, as you define it here, should be exactly what you intend to address in your grant proposal.
- The Gap should flow obviously from the “Important Knowns.”



## 3. The Gap

- Example(s)
  - there is a critical need to develop interdisciplinary academic programs that interface between departments
  - interdisciplinary academic programs should focus on:
    - multilingual cultural literacy
    - core competencies for success in specific professional disciplines
  - there is a critical need to design interdisciplinary programs to make studying other languages and cultures both attractive and feasible



## Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

### **B. Paragraph 2: What is going to be done and by whom?**

4. Your long-term goal
5. Objective of *this* proposal
6. Hypothesis-driven vs. statement-of-need
7. Statement of rationale
8. Why you? Why UNC?





## 4. Long-term Goals

- What is your long-term professional (career) goal?
- What is the continuum of activities that you intend to follow over the course of your career?
- What is the niche that you have either carved out or want to carve out in which you are planning to become an expert?



## 4. Long-term Goals

- Example(s)
  - to better prepare our students to function effectively in a global environment
  - to create lasting collaborative curricular programs between the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature and ISU's professional colleges



## 5. Objective of *This* Proposal

- Define exactly what your specific objective for this proposal will be.
- What is the next (or first) step that you plan to take along the continuum of your long-term career goal?
- Attainment of the objective *must* fill the gap in knowledge or solve the problem or issue that you identified in the first paragraph.



## 5. Objective of *This* Proposal

(continued)

- Avoid placing emphasis on the methodology
  - e.g. ‘...to use my bicycle to ride to the grocery store to purchase a loaf of bread.’
  - actual objective is the purchase of the bread
- Remember to keep the linkage between sections tight: make it clear that the objective is one step along the continuum of activities projected by your long-term goals.



## 5. Objective of *This* Proposal

- Example(s)
  - to strengthen the new Languages and Cultures for professions — Engineering secondary major
  - to establish similar programs in collaboration with the Colleges of Business and Agriculture

**Tip: To better link your long-term goal, objective, and (if needed) central hypothesis is to avoid the temptation of interposing explanatory info — extraneous details — between them. These components should be as closely juxtaposed as possible so there is a seamless flow of logic from one to the next.**



## 6. Hypothesis

- Statement of need-driven proposals need not include an hypothesis.
- Hypotheses should be objectively testable and cannot project a predetermined conclusion.
- Objective and hypothesis should be linked: the objective is obtained by testing the central hypothesis.



## 7. Statement of Rationale

- Describes exactly why you want to carry out the activities proposed.
- What will become possible after the proposed studies are completed
- Linkage between the gap and what will become possible is critical.
- Rationale should be appealing to (the mission of) the funding agency.



## 7. Statement of Rationale

- Example(s)
  - critical need: multinational corporations express interest in recruiting students with international culture and language experiences
  - significant increases in interest among students in pursuing secondary majors in foreign languages
  - demands of most professional programs have made this difficult
  - a major specifically designed for professional-degree programs will reach a much larger group of students





## 8. Why you? Why UNC?

- Introduce key important facts that make you uniquely qualified to address the issue or solve the problem.
- You and your team have the competitive edge to do the project.
- Working environment and institution are highly conducive for success.



## 8. Why you? Why UNC?

- Example(s)
  - strong institutional support for this project
  - ISU's strategic plan to “encourage globalization ...”
  - task force initiated development of the Languages and Cultures for Professionals programs in 2002
  - Dr. M. Rectanus, Director of the task force, developed programs
  - each language group has representation on the task force



# Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

## C. Specific Aims/Goals/Objectives

9. Specific activities to be undertaken to achieve the objective of the proposal



## 9. Specific Aims/Goals/Objectives

- Detailed steps that you will take during the course of the project to test the hypothesis or address the critical need and achieve the overall objective.
- Brief, informative, attention-getting headlines.
- Two to three specific aims are ideal.
- Should logically flow from first to second, second to third, etc.



## 9. Specific Aims/Goals/Objectives (continued)

- It is *not* necessary (or even advisable) to provide a lot of detail in the Specific Aims.
- Suggested format:

Specific Aim/Goal #1 (***Written in boldface italics***): Amplifying statement (working hypothesis or informative descriptor as appropriate).

Specific Aim/Goal #2 (***Written in boldface italics***): Amplifying statement (working hypothesis or informative descriptor as appropriate).



## 9. Specific Aims/Goals/Objectives

- Example(s)
  - **Objective #1: *Implement a secondary major option in Languages and Cultures for Professional Programs within the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature.*** <<amplifying statement>>
  - **Objective #2: *Create stronger bridges between courses in Foreign Languages and Literature that already have a professional focus and those courses that have an area studies focus.*** <<amplifying statement>>



# Part 2: Overview/Executive Summary

## D. Payoff Paragraph

10. Innovation

11. Expected outcomes

12. Impact



## 10. Innovation

- Why is the proposed work potentially novel, innovative, or unique?
- Being “the first...” is not always an appropriate argument.
- Not always true and/or necessary: meritorious projects are not necessarily novel or innovative.
- Optional, depending on your project.





# 10. Innovation

- Example(s)
  - the Languages and Cultures for Professionals major will be unique within the Iowa Regents University system
  - no other universities in Iowa offer a specially designed major option in foreign languages for professionals
  - the proposed project will integrate and diffuse elements of professional communications with those of global literacy



# 11. Expected Outcomes

- What is expected from the successful completion of the project?
- Should collectively validate the central hypothesis or critical need.
- Should attain the originally stated objective(s) of the proposal (break down by #).
- Accompany each with a precise, substantive statement of why that expected outcome is important.



# 11. Expected Outcomes

- Example(s)
  - a significant increase in the number of students in professional programs who will declare a secondary major in foreign languages
  - the students enrolled in this new major can be expected to achieve a higher level of linguistic proficiency and global literacy



## 12. Impact

- Generally convey why your expected outcomes will have a positive impact once knowledge is applied or need is filled.
- Should relate to both your field and the funding agency's mission.



## 12. Impact

- Example(s)
  - platform and forum for global education at ISU that is embedded within the professional
  - create new opportunities for collaborations among students, faculty, and corporate leaders



# Next Steps

## **Expanding your Executive Summary outline**

1. Consider how all of the elements relate to each other. Logically and well?
2. Does your long-term goal encompass the knowledge gap?
3. Refine and perfect your outline, then expand into sentences.



# Next Steps: The Full Proposal

- A. Executive Summary/Overview
- B. Background/Needs Assessment
- C. Significance Paragraph
- D. Preliminary Studies/Previous Experience
- E. Projected Approach/Plan of Work
- F. Budget & Budget Justification
- G. Supporting documents
- H. Abstract and Title