

**Proposal 101:
"So, You Want to Change the World
AND Receive Funding to do so?"**

Pamela Mitzelfeld
Sherry Wynn Perdue
Oakland University Writing Center
212 Kresge Library

The Nature of Proposals

There is no such thing as "one size fits all":

- o Content varies by purpose and context, and
- o Situation dictates protocol and format.

With that said, all proposals must attend to:

- o Audience,
- o Situation,
- o Purpose,
- o Subject, and
- o Tone.

Anticipate Your Audience

- What constitutes its membership?
- What are its standards and values?
- What does it know/need to know?
- What are its expectations?
- What are its inclinations?
- What are its motivations?

Understand Your Purpose

- Exhibit the author's expertise and competency,
- Demonstrate a suitable response to an identified problem and document its viability,
- Explain project specifications,
- Inform audience,
- Persuade reviewers that the research is worth undertaking,
- Function as a "contract" with/promise to the researcher's benefactors and beneficiaries, and
- Serve as a planning tool for the researcher.

The AIDA Approach

Attention: solicit it

Interest: sustain it

Desire: motivate it

Action: promote it

Accomplish Your Task

- o Showcase knowledge,
- o Employ specific language,
- o Offer concrete and audience appropriate examples and evidence,
- o Conform to disciplinary or reviewing agent conventions,
- o Demonstrate project viability, and
- o Polish Presentation.

Proposal Organization

Introduction:

- o Pose a research worthy/funding worthy question,
- o Explore a problem that precipitated the proposal,
- o Offer background and context,
- o Overview the current "conversation" about the issue,
- o Define the project's purpose and scope, and
- o Offer an organizational frame.

Proposal Organization

Methods:

- Formulate a plan,
- Identify primary/secondary research requirements,
- Demonstrate project efficacy (Do the reviewers expect quantitative support?), and
- Designate Oversight Protocol.

Proposal Organization

Outcomes/Deliverables:

- What is the intended product?
- How will its success be gauged?
- What will it contribute to future research or to the targeted community?

Proposal Organization

Conclusion:

- Summarize purpose,
- Restate objectives, and
- Clarify benefits.

A Few Additional Thoughts

Effective Proposals are:

- Informative,
- Prioritized,
- Consistent, and
- Persuasive.

Persistent Problem

Almost since the beginning of time, male births have been disproportionately rewarded. As such disreputable cultural practices--such as euthanizing unwanted female babies, especially in cultures where resources are scarce and where older generations rely on the younger--have developed.

Feminists seek in the long term to change mindsets and in the short term to alter practice, but the problem remains, always downgrading the value of women, often straining sibling and familial relationships, and sometimes creating a shortfall of females in a culture, which temporarily reduces the practice, etc.

Proposal: You Are What Your Mother Eats

Some researchers have attempted to provide parents with a better way to predict or tip the scale. (We won't discuss the potentially problematic ethos, here). Unfortunately, those in informatics have reminded them that male partner's input determine sex. More recently, researchers at Exeter and Oxford have proposed that, "You are what your mother eats." Were these researchers asking different questions? Why do those in informatics still dismiss the mother's pre-pregnancy diet as a potential factor? How was such research funded? Who would potentially benefit from its findings?

Other Examples

- A proposal to mandate paid breastfeeding breaks via revised Canadian Labour Code. Here the authors sought a tangible outcome, one that would be put into practice and directly benefit lactating mothers.
- A critique of antifeminist biases in epidemiological research on women's health and a subsequent proposal to define an emancipatory epidemiology within an alternative feminist framework. Here the "product" is more theoretical in nature and serves to produce an extended academic conversation about the discipline.

Getting Started: Your Turn

- What persistent questions about the global health status of women nag at your conscience?
- What discipline addresses such questions/topics? In what publications are you most likely to find relevant literature that addresses them?
- What is the state of existing knowledge?
- What would you like to accomplish?
 - Do you want to draw attention to a neglected question or phenomenon by advocating additional research?
 - Do you want to advocate a paradigm shift?
 - Do you want to propose a plan of action and secure funding for it?

Thank You!!

We appreciate the opportunity to speak with your class. Please feel free to visit the Writing Center for assistance with your writing needs and challenges.