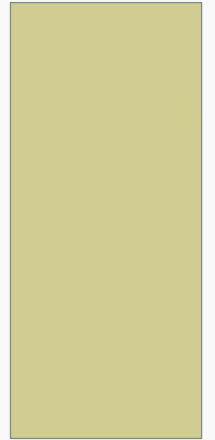




PROPOSAL WRITING

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PURPOSE

“The intent of the proposal is to construct a feasible plan for you to explore, understand or test a concern about which you are curious and **do not know** the answer.” (Reitsma-Street, 2007)

- Proposal writing is about learning to clearly articulate the process of inquiry
- Statement of intent and feasible plan to engage in research

AUDIENCE

- Academic Committees (Reitsma-Street, 2007)
- Practice Settings – negotiating a “project”
- Small grant proposals – response to a funding call
 - Format may be specified (usually shorter)
 - Need to use the language of the call (see example)
- Fellowships and large granting agencies (e.g. CIHR)

PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

- Usually the most difficult part of the process
- Finding the focus of your inquiry
- Length depends of purpose(2-5 pages)
- Share with your supervisory committee
- Being able to clearly state your overall aim (what you want to learn) and how this knowledge contributes to your discipline.
- Write and re-write as your thinking develops

ACADEMIC PROPOSALS

Blueprint Type

- 20-35 pages
- Projects (e.g. literature review with identification of implications for policy & practice)
- **Thesis** (literature review is integral to demonstrate gaps in knowledge)

(Reitsma-Street, 2007)

Foundations Type

- 50-75 pages
- Dissertations (PhD)
- More extensive literature review (substantive, theoretical & methodological)
- Draft Chapters

TYPICAL FORMAT

- Introduction
- Background and Significance
- Literature Review
- Purpose & Objectives
- Methodology
- Ethical Considerations/Limitations
- Timeline & Budget (if required)
- References
- Appendices

INTRODUCTION

- What do you want to learn more about & why?
- What is your overall research question or phenomenon of interest?
- Who are you and why do you want to study this in this way?
- Be creative!!! (grab the reader's attention)
- Sometimes a **practice story** helps generate interest in your topic

BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

- Provides your reader with a **basic** understanding of your topic/focus of your inquiry
 - Assume your reader knows less about your topic than you do
 - Guide your reader through your thinking process
- Makes a case for why your study is important
 - Link to other studies that demonstrate the importance of your inquiry focus
 - Keep it real, don't exaggerate

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Depth required here will depend on the purpose of your proposal (e.g. some projects are literature reviews)
- Purpose is to:
 - Demonstrate that you know something about your topic
 - Discuss what is already known about your topic (disciplinary knowledge)
 - Critically analyze the strengths & weakness of this body of literature
 - Identify gaps in knowledge

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

- Needs to flow from:
 - Your reflections on personal/professional experience
 - The literature you have reviewed (empirical & theoretical)
- Can be written in different ways
 - A puzzle or problematic
 - Overall purpose with specific objectives
 - Research questions with or without hypotheses
- Opportunity to clarify what drives a study
 - e.g. your beliefs, values & assumptions
- Conceptual and/or operational definitions (when relevant)

METHODOLOGY

What does methodology mean to you?

- Theoretically informed approaches to research? (Design)
 - Opportunity to explicate epistemological assumptions?
 - What is the relationship between methodology & research methods?
-
- Data collection methods (includes recruitment)
 - Analytic methods
 - Approaches to Knowledge Translation

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Relates to both research ethics and your profession
- What are the implications of studying this (area of inquiry) in this way (links to methodology)?
- Might not contain all the details required for your ethics application
- If your research involves human participants, online tutorials from Tri-council (a must!)

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/>

LIMITATIONS

- Demonstrates that you understand the limitations of your project
- Relates to the epistemological assumptions & rigour of your methodology
- Most journals will require this section



TIMELINE

- Be realistic
- Remember other commitments & self-care
- Remember to include realistic timelines for feedback from your supervisory committee (e.g. 2 week minimum)
- Remember to build in time for Ethical Review
- Sample backwards timelines (goal can be motivating) 😊



BUDGET

- A justified budget is VIP for a grant call
- Request samples from supervisory committee
- Read the grant carefully (exclusion criteria)
- Have someone else double check your math



REFERENCES & APPENDICES

- Strongly recommend a reference manager system (e.g. Ref Works)
- May include research instruments
- May include recruitment posters, information for participants & consent forms (need for ethical review)

SUMMARY

- Proposal writing reflects the process of inquiry & the purpose of the particular proposal
- Begin by demonstrating why your inquiry is relevant for you and important for your discipline
- Guide your reader through your thinking processes
- Demonstrate your ability to summarize, critically analyze & synthesize literature
- Demonstrate your understanding of your chosen approach to inquiry (including the epistemological assumptions & limitations)

REFLECTIONS

- Student inquiry projects are a **learning** experience
- Be clear, concise & creative. Have fun!!!
- Seek support from your peers (some of these relationships may last a lifetime)

