Project Proposal
Due: October 23, 2014
Peer Review: October 16, 2014

Format
Double space, line numbers, page numbers, bold section headings, times new roman, 12 pt font, 6-10 pages of proposal writing not including references.

Basic Outline
• Title
• Introduction (400-600 words)
  a. Topic area
  b. Research question
  c. Significance to knowledge
• Background (600 – 1200 words)
  a. Previous research
  b. Interlocking findings and Unanswered questions
  c. Your preliminary work on the topic
  d. The remaining questions and inter-locking logic
  e. Reprise of your research question(s) in this context
• Methodology (400 – 600 words)
  a. Approach
  b. Data needs
  c. Analytic techniques
  d. Plan for interpreting results
• Expected results (200 – 400 words)
• References (at least 10 references)

The Sections of the Proposal – detailed advice

Title - A good title will clue the reader into the topic.

Introduction
Topic Area - Follow the title with a strong introduction. The introduction provides a brief overview that tells a well-informed (but perhaps non-specialist) reader what the proposal is about. It should be very clearly written and it should let one assess whether the research is relevant. What is your proposal about? Setting the topical area is a start but you need more, and quickly. Get specific about what your research will address.

Question - Once the topic is established, come right to the point. What are you doing? What specific issue or question will your work address? Very briefly (this is still the introduction) say how you will approach the work. What will we learn from your work?

Significance - Why is this work important? What are the implications of doing it? How does it link to other knowledge? How does it stand to inform policy making? This should show how this project is significant to our body of knowledge. Why is it important to our understanding of the world?
Background

State of our knowledge - The purpose of background is to situate your research in the context of what is already known about a topic. It need not be exhaustive, yet it should provide the theoretical basis for your work, show what has been done in the area by others, and set the stage for your work.

Outstanding questions - This is where you present the holes in the knowledge that need to be plugged, and by doing so, situate your work. It is the place where you establish that your work will fit in and be significant to the discipline. This can be made easier if there is literature that comes out and says "Hey, this is a topic that needs to be treated! What is the answer to this question?" and you will sometimes see this type of piece in the literature.

Research Questions in Detail - Your work to date. Tell what you have done so far. It might report preliminary studies that you have conducted to establish the feasibility of your research. It should give a sense that you are in a position to add to the body of knowledge.

Methodology

Overview of approach - This section should make clear to the reader the way that you intend to approach the research question and the techniques and logic that you will use to address it.

Data Collection - This might include the field site description, a description of the instruments you will use, and particularly the data that you anticipate collecting. The emphasis in this section should be to fully describe specifically what data you will be using in your study. Part of the purpose of doing this is to detect flaws in the plan before they become problems in the research.

Data Analysis - This should explain in some detail how you will manipulate the data that you assembled to get at the information that you will use to answer your question. It will include the statistical or other techniques and the tools that you will use in processing the data. It probably should also include an indication of the range of outcomes that you could reasonably expect from your observations.

Interpretation - You should indicate how the anticipated outcomes will be interpreted to answer the research question. It is extremely beneficial to anticipate the range of outcomes from your analysis, and for each know what it will mean in terms of the answer to your question.

Expected Results

This section should give a good indication of what you expect to get out of the research. It should join the data analysis and possible outcomes to the theory and questions that you have raised. It will be a good place to summarize the significance of the work. It is often useful from the very beginning of formulating your work to write one page for this section to focus your reasoning as you build the rest of the proposal.

References

This is the list of the works which you actually cite. Use a standard format from a discipline specific journal.
Tips
Read. Read everything you can find in your area of interest. Take notes and talk to your group about the topic. Write about the topic a lot, and don't be afraid to tear up (delete) passages that just don't work. Often you can re-think and re-type faster than you can edit your way out of a hopeless mess. The advantage is in the re-thinking. Very early on, generate the research question, critical observation, interpretations of the possible outcomes, and the expected results. These are the core of the project and will help focus your reading and thinking. Modify them as needed as your understanding increases. Use some systematic way of recording notes and bibliographic information from the very beginning. You might want to use specialized bibliographic database software. Papyrus, EndNote, and other packages are available for PCs and Macs. All of these tools link to various word-processors to make constructing and formatting your final bibliography easier.