The “Thinking About It” Stage

- Be inclusive with your thinking
- Write down your ideas
- Try not to be overly influenced at this time about what you feel others expect from you
- Don’t begin your thinking by assuming that your research will draw international attention to you
- Be realistic about the time aspect of your project(s)

The “Thinking About It” Stage

- Are you familiar with other research that has been conducted in areas related to your research project?

- Do you have a clear understanding of the steps that you will use in conducting your research?

- Read through someone else’s research proposal

- Keep an organized set of reference material

Proposal Writing Hints

Project Title

- clear and unambiguous (don’t make it cute)
- think of title as a mini-abstract
- words used in title should reflect focus of proposal
- remove words from title that are not necessary
- try and use a single sentence for your title

Proposal Writing Hints

Project Overview

-think of project overview as a summary
-be specific and concise
-establish the framework so that the proposal has a frame of reference
-if you are collaborating with others, state up front
-best time to prepare overview is after you have completed the entire proposal

Proposal Writing Hints

Work on proposal to avoid giving reviewer the opportunity to say:

- Not an original idea
- Rationale is weak
- Writing is vague
- Uncertain outcomes
- Does not have relevant experience
- Problem not important
- Proposal is unfocused
- Project is too large

Proposal Writing Hints

Background Information/Statement of Purpose
- think of section as a review of relevant literature
- know what has preceded you
- be careful in the use of language and avoid
  jargon
  trendy or “in” words
  abbreviations
  colloquial expressions
  redundant phrases
  confusing language

Proposal Writing Hints

Background Information/Statement of the Problem, cont.

- position your project in relation to other efforts and show how your project:
  - will extend the work that has been previously done
  - will avoid mistakes/errors previously made
  - is unique since it does not follow the same path as previously followed

Proposal Writing Hints

Background Information/Statement of the Problem, cont.

-use the statement of the problem to show that your proposed project is definitely needed
-define what the problems are that you want to address
-state why these problems are important
-state why your insights/techniques will help in completing the goals and objectives
-important to refer back to the needs you have identified when writing the Methods Section of proposal

Proposal Writing Hints

Background Information/Statement of the Problem, cont.

- briefly summarize preliminary results and place in overall context
- think long-term rather than short-term if possible

Proposal Writing Hints

Project Detail

- differentiate between your goals and your objectives and include both

Goals are the large statements of what you hope to accomplish but are difficult to measure

Objectives are operational, tell specific things you will accomplish in your project and are very measurable

Proposal Writing Hints

Project Detail

- objectives form the basis for the activities of your project and will serve as the basis for the evaluation of your project
- present measurable objectives for your project

Proposal Writing Hints

Methods

- establish a clear link between the methods you describe in this section and the objectives you have previously defined
- describe any new, unique, or innovative methods
- do not forget to include any collaborative relationships
- clearly indicate how the methods that will be used will allow the outcomes of your project to have value for others beyond your project

Proposal Writing Hints

Available laboratory resources

- collaborative efforts
- local resources
- new instrumentation
- facilities (group, Departmental, University)

Proposal Writing Hints

Evaluation Plan

-describe how you will decide whether or not your project has been successful, achieved its objectives, etc.
-make direct reference to your objectives in your evaluation plan

Proposal Writing Hints

Time line

-clear indication of the time frame for the project and the times when each aspect of the project will be implemented

Other resources

http://www.learnerassociates.net/

http://iufro.boku.ac.at/iufro/spdc/handbook.htm

http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/research/writing.htm