Writing the Proposal
for Dissertation Research Funding Abroad

by David Wiley, Sociology and African Studies (9.17.93)

A. Orient yourself to the process
   know your audience: read requirements, re-read, ask who were the winners & losers
   know your subject, your goals, your capacity
   know the region and country (permission, costs, collaboration, problems)

B. Master the basics of your discipline, your field, your area, your library, and your
word-processor - but do not be bounded by your discipline

C. Remember the multiple functions of the proposal
   • a sales brochure
   • concept paper
   • plan
   • agreement
   • design for evaluation

D. The First Approach - Identifying the Concept

   1) Write the precise question on paper
   2) Revise and re-revise
   3) State the expected solution to the question
   4) Write a title that is clear, interesting, bounded, and accurate
   5) Write a synopsis (or abstract) of the research
      ■ purpose
      ■ methods
      ■ rationale
      ■ what new knowledge
      ■ significance
   6) Outline the Major Sections of the Proposal
   7) Outline detail in rational flow

   An alternative: sit down and, without planning or outlining, draft a conclusion to your
   research, then add the abstract and table of contents

E. Crafting the Proposal

   1) The Cover Letter - the abstract of the abstract

   2) Title Page
      ■ proposal title, period for which funding is sought (dates), submitted by (your name),
your department/program, (advisor?), university, submitted to (name of program and
agency), your address, telephone #, fax #, e-mail #, date
3) Abstract (maximum one page, single space)
   - a summary of the problem
   - theory and methods
   - findings and conclusions

4) Introduction • throughout • how it fits the funders objectives and purposes
   - purpose, objectives or hypotheses
   - overall research approach
   - researcher qualifications, experience, cultural & language knowledge
     (possibly attach resume)
   - collaborative relations and research permission (possible verifying letters)
   - organization of report

5) Problem Statement (the theoretical or practical why and what)
   - nature and extent of problem, needs and population to be served, significance
   - significance and for whom
   - conceptual model and definitions
   - related literature review (succinct and funneled)

6) Research Design (the how)
   - overall design: major objectives and sub-goals (organize theoretically or by calendar)
   - discuss variables and operational definitions
   - describe data sources
   - data collection methods (pilot study, pre- or field-testing, instrumentation, procedures, field operations and organization)
   - data analysis techniques
   - project calendar and statement of any contingencies
   - plans for data deposition and access

7) Findings and Conclusions (based on problem definition, specific questions, objectives, hypotheses to guide this section of proposal)

8) Budget (possibly manage budget by objectives, see example)
   - separate into:
     □ personnel (stipends and assistant salaries)
     □ add institutional fringe benefits if relevant and allowed (for social security, etc.)
     □ travel (transportation, field costs, meals, & per diem costs)
     □ equipment (if allowable),
     □ supplies and services (all stationery, printing, research supplies, and miscellaneous)

9) Appendices
   - Sample instruments
   - References cited
   - Personal resume
   - Verification of foreign area support and imprimatur of your department
F. Improving your content, writing, expression, and style
(remember: Form and expression can inhibit the reader in understanding your content.)

✓ Read the Chicago Manual of Style (rules)
✓ Strunk and White, The Elements of Style (how to edit for conciseness and directness)
✓ Peter Elbow, Writing without Teachers ("power writing")
✓ Learn to use your word processor to good effect (turn off the right justification)
✓ Use your word processor's spell-check features
✓ Submit your essay to Grammarly or similar writing analysis program to find simple problems such as the passive voice and run-on sentences.
✓ Find a buddy to read your essays, and he/she reads yours.
✓ Have your penultimate draft read by at least three faculty paralleling the disciplinary, regional, and topical spread of the national review panels.

G. Correctly Solving the Probabilistic Equation:
⊕ "If first you don't succeed, try, try again." ⊕

H. Long-term planning for your research and life abroad

☐ Relations in the Foreign Country

✓ Collaborator(s) and friends (leave time for people outside of research)
✓ Cooperation in forming the proposal
✓ Research permission
✓ Depositing the data there
✓ Sharing your wealth

☐ The research contract in your departmental file
  - maintaining contact at home (out of sight, out of mind)

☐ For your research effectiveness

✓ the new communications: fax and e-mail
✓ the new equipment: documenting with the right camera, copy machine
✓ the new laptops and portables: field notes and analysis
✓ the new sound recording equipment
✓ more importantly, travel light and do not become electronically dependent

☐ For your health and family welfare

✓ make a will, a living will, and power of attorney
✓ master the health problems of the area
✓ stock-up on the medications (e.g. malaria prophylaxis & treatment)
✓ buy a copy of the Peace Corps' Where there is No Doctor
✓ find a relevant health insurance policy in case you need to return to the U.S.
  for free market health care