Writing to Convince:
The 1-page Abstract & More

UW ICTR-CAP
Madison
March, 2009
“Just a minute, young man. That’s not quite the way we do things here at the Ford Foundation.”
Today’s Agenda

1. Required components
2. Tips for writing
3. Style & form
4. Budgets
5. Critique examples
6. Packaging
7. Answer your questions
Writing to Convince

➢ Fit between applicant & funder--are you a hermit crab?

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Abstract Requirements

1. Magnitude & importance
2. Goals & objectives
3. Gap research will fill
4. Project design
5. Community involvement
6. Potential impact on improving health
7. Next research steps & funding plan
Magnitude & Importance

Does the study address an important problem of significant scope in Wisconsin?

Colon cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Wisconsin, strikes over 3,500 people a year. When found early and treated, the 5-year relative survival rate is 90 percent.

Insulin resistance (IR) predicts risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease and stroke, and is rising in children & adolescents. No practical tool exists to measure & track IR in community & school settings.
Goals & Objectives

Goals = Broad & Lofty

To determine whether targeted community outreach, a family history checklist and genetic testing decreases deaths from breast cancer in women under 40.

Objectives = Specific, measurable outcomes

By 2012, to increase from 20% to 35% breast cancers found while in situ in women under 40.
Research Gap

If research achieves its aims, how will health or healthcare practice be improved?

Translating readily obtainable measurements into a reliable health indicator of diabetes risk would allow practitioners to target obesity and diabetes interventions to children most at risk.

Ability to detect adenomas (pre-cancer colon polyps) varies 10-fold among endoscopists. Using systems engineering approaches, we will identify reasons for this quality gap and create protocols to correct it.
Project Design

- How will the intervention work?
- How will the study measure impact?

Trained Salvation Army staff will deliver the brief intervention (2-8 min.) usually conveyed by health clinicians. We will compare effectiveness in the intervention group to a randomly assigned information-only control group. Two surveys, post intervention & 1 month later, will measure quit attempts, access to medications & counseling, smoking reduction, smoke free days and quit rates.
Community Involvement

➢ How engaged will the community be in the research (partners v. subjects)?
➢ Is involvement meaningful?

Focus groups of PCP’s from rural and urban communities will guide development of an Internet based patient management tool. We will train 20 PCP’s from 4 regional healthcare centers to use the tool. PCP’s will manage stage 3 chronic kidney disease patients using the tool & electronic linkage to a consulting nephrologist.
Potential Impact

- Will the study translate new & existing findings into improvements in clinical practice & community health?

  If successful, this study will open up an entirely new setting– the community agency– for providing brief tobacco use interventions to smokers living in poverty.

  This project will translate exercise physiology research into a practical tool for identifying within the classroom & community a child’s risk for type 2 diabetes. The tool will provide information to guide policy, target community resources, evaluate interventions and assist individual children.
Next Steps & Funding Plan

What evidence can you present?

If the pilot study creates a reliable method for identifying surgical environment factors in surgical errors, the investigators will apply to AHRQ for a 3-year trial of the method in community hospitals. AHRQ recently identified surgical errors as one of five priorities for research funding.
Style– the “hook”

- Engage reader in 1st two sentences

  Last night, 11 year-old Celeste searched for a safe place to sleep under the freeway bridge. This morning she cries for her 9 year-old brother Tim who disappeared overnight while they slept.

  In Wisconsin 40-50% of poor adults smoke—double the state average. This study will test an entirely new setting, the community agency, to deliver brief tobacco use interventions to smokers living in poverty.
Type 2 diabetes will strike 1 in 3 children born in 2000. Overweight adolescents with type 2 diabetes risk heart complications before age 35. Early screening saves lives.
Compelling Case

- Who will be helped?
- Tell a story
- Need with a human face


Last year, Midtown Clinic treated breast cancer in 18 young mothers. They are not alone. In Newberry each year, 1 of every 75 women under 40 risks this silent killer. Early detection saves lives.
Establish Credibility

- Why your research will create change
- How likely you are to succeed

Mariners Hospital provides cancer screening and treatment to over 3,000 families a year, serving 60 percent of the households in Sturgeon County. We are the only cancer program providing family histories and screening to identify families with higher risks for developing cancers. Our colon cancer screening program identified 200 higher risk families last year, detected and removed 38 early cancers before they turned deadly.

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Reasonable & Justified Budget

- Market pricing
- Clear reasons for requested item
- Thoughtful detail

\[ \text{.5 FTE genetic counselor X } \$60,000/\text{yr.} = \$30,000 \]
\[ \text{Fringes @ 25\% X } \$30,000 = \$7,500 \]
\[ 240 \text{ miles/month X 12 mos. X } .37/\text{mile} = \$1,065.60 \]
Innovative Approaches & Methods

- Captures imagination, while plausible

In collaboration with workplaces that employ high percentages of women under 40, the breast cancer clinic will conduct breast cancer information sessions & provide a family history checklist. A mobile mammography van will visit each worksite to screen at-risk women. Private testing & counseling for women who choose to find out if they carry the gene that makes them more likely to develop breast cancer early will be offered onsite by a certified cancer counselor.

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Practice Examples

This pilot project aims to evaluate the feasibility and initial efficacy of an innovative family-centered approach to genetic counseling that combines patient-centered principles and mental health techniques to address the cognitive and emotional needs of parents whose infants have abnormal DNA analyses from newborn screens (NBS) for cystic fibrosis (CF).

This pilot will help parents whose newborn infants screen abnormal for cystic fibrosis (CF), by evaluating the feasibility and efficacy of an innovative approach. The approach combines genetic counseling with mental health techniques for processing and responding to traumatic events.

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Mindfulness training is a new tool that is being used to help manage weight by affecting behavior patterns. In our proposed feasibility study, we introduce an innovative weight reduction program that includes mindfulness training, exercise, nutrition education and practical cooking classes. We have an interdisciplinary team consisting of an MD, exercise and mindfulness teachers, a nutritionist, and a nurse practitioner to engage with and teach the patient-participants over a six-month period.

We will study the feasibility of an innovative weight reduction program that includes exercise, nutrition education, mindfulness training and practical cooking classes. Mindfulness training—a new tool to manage weight by affecting behavior patterns—teaches overweight people techniques for choosing what they consume. Our team (MD, personal trainer, nutritionist, RN) will coach participants for six months....
The research design is a Brain Trust of five UW health, social, and behavioral scientists (assisted by two graduate assistants) who will meet monthly for eight months to critically examine the literature and existing parent and family programs… The graduate assistants will apply the advice of the Brain Trust into a manualized version of the intervention, and present it to the adolescents (ages 12 to 19) and their parents who are seeking treatment for adolescent overweight/obesity. What’s wrong with this picture?

We will synthesize evidence on parenting style and develop an intervention to help parents of obese children control family feeding & eating practices. Following focus groups with parents & children, we will create a manual of fun exercises to train parents to use a more effective parenting style....
Packaging

- Font: 11-12, No stoppers: Arial not Times NR
- Clean, neat, grammatically correct
- Number pages
- Simple & clear trumps fancy

The woeful tale of “Dear Mr. Moneybags”
Putting It All Together!

- Abstract as first impression
- Tips:
  - Write it last
  - Highlight 1-2 sentences from each proposal section
  - “Hook” the reader immediately
  - Edit, edit, edit: Active case, vary sentence length, jargonectomy, dynamic flow
  - Make compelling case

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Thank you!
✓ Your Questions

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