PROPOSAL CONCEPTUALIZING WORKSHEET

The Significance, Innovation, and Specific Aims sections of NIH grant applications are among the most important sections of the Research Strategy and are often the most difficult sections to write for those new to the requirements of the NIH format. These sections involve a good amount of conceptualizing with regard to various matters important for selling your project and defining its potential impact. **One cannot begin to write these sections without having first sorted out, in writing, his or her thoughts on the issues raised in the questions that follow the five main topics below.** It is important to answer the questions below in writing. **Only by first writing your ideas down can you begin to refine them.**

The topics below parallel the content and structure of the Specific Aims page for NIH grant applications. The questions concern many issues involved in the NIH review criteria: significance, investigator, innovation, approach, and environment.

* **Overarching problem/big picture and your goal/overall goal.**
  + *What general public health problem will your work address?*

[Start here]

* + *What is your long-term goal with regard to that public health problem? In other words, through the work you will do over the next 20 years, how do you hope to have helped improve the public health problem?*

[Start here]

* + *What specific part of the general public health problem will you address? In other words, what is the goal for the project you are proposing?*

[Start here]

* **Context and setting for your specific project.**
  + *What is currently known about this specific problem? In other words, what is the current state of knowledge about it?*

[Start here]

* + *What specific gap in knowledge, question, or challenge remains that your project will address?*

[Start here]

* + *Why is it important to human health and to the advancement of your field of research to address this specific gap in knowledge? Identify two or four specific areas/issues inherent in your proposal and provide background that highlights what will be possible when the gap is filled.*

[Start here]

* **Central hypothesis and specific aims (typically 3).** 
  + *What is your overall hypothesis?*

[Start here]

* + *State your specific aims. Begin each aim with a verb (e.g., determine, examine, identify, elucidate, explore).*

[Start here]

* + *How will you accomplish each aim? Under each aim, briefly describe the general approach or methodology.*

[Start here]

* **Innovation.**
  + *Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.*
  + *Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s).*
  + *Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.*

[Start here]

* **Expected outcomes and impact.**
  + *What results do you expect from your project, if things go as planned?*

[Start here]

* + *How will the results of your project move the field forward and/or improve public health? In other words, what will be possible after your success in achieving your goal that was not possible before?*

[Start here]