Characteristics of Proposals

- A well-defined problem – your purpose here is to not only state the problem but persuade your audience that it needs attention.

- A plan for addressing the problem – show them that you have a plan studying it (in the report, you'll make recommendations)

- An identified audience with a need – anticipate objections or reservations they might have.

Proposals are "If Selected"

- How you *would* solve.
- Not how solved . . . Don't assume the solution is already known. In the research phase, compare solutions.
- In the report, after you gather evidence, you make recommendations.

Make a List

◆ In the left-hand column, list college, community (including neighborhood, hometown, groups you participate in), and work. In the right-hand column, list any problems that exist within each group.

For example (internal) . . .

- college

- Poor advising or orientation
- Lack of facilities for disabled students.
- Class scheduling does not accommodate working students or students with children.

For a Sales/Service Proposal (external)

◆ Project yourself into the future.

◆ What services could/would you provide?

Samples from the Past

- Advise on the Purchasing of New Gym Equipment
- Develop a Council to Govern Off-Campus Housing
- Develop a New Process for the Evaluation of Employees

- Restructure the Advising Program
- Make University Facilities Handicap Accessible
- Evaluate the CORE

Samples from the Past

- Reshape RU's Recycling Program
- Install New Street Lights in Off-Campus Sections of Radford
- Improve the Appearance of Rental Housing Near the RU Campus
- Buy more Physical Education Equipment for a School District

- Give Incoming Freshmen more Information about Roomates
- Determine the Necessity of Student Assistants in the Dorms
- Investigate How to Improve Health and Wellness of RU Students

Feasibility (Is is possible)

- Starting up a blood-drive program through on-campus clubs, fraternities, sororities.
- Updating classrooms, computer workstations, or labs
- Starting a delivery service for??
- Selling _____ to raise money for a club or non-profit

Comparative (is X or Y better?)

- ◆ Equipment for team or club, local industry

- ◆ Aerobic or weight-lifting equipment for health club or YMCA . . .

Empirical (how can we prove Z?))

- Reducing energy expenditures in a specific workplace
- Increasing productivity and efficiency of a volunteer program
- Reducing waste in a specific workplace

Questions

- Why does X happen?
- How can X be improved or avoided?
- Is Y practical in this situation?

Choose One

- Choose **one** (if it doesn't work out, we'll try another)

Analyzing and Defining the Problem (for Introduction)

Write a few sentences in response to these questions:

- What causes or caused the problem? What is its history?
- What are the effects of it? How does it harm people or effect productivity?

Write a definition of the problem, being as specific as possible. Give one recent, telling example.

Identify Your Readers

Describe your readers, stating your reason for directing your proposal to them. Address your proposal to the person or persons who can implement it.

- How informed are my readers likely to be about the problem?
- Why would they care about solving it?

Procedures

What would you actually do to show the problem exists and propose solutions in the report?

- Who would you talk to? Survey?
- What research will need to be done?
- What solutions to this problem have already been tried?
- What solutions should you investigate? Which ones would eliminate the causes of the problem?
- How much will the solution(s) potentially cost?
- Who will be effected by the tentative solution(s)?

Questions

Write down some of the questions you want answers to in the research phase?

Testing Your Choice

Now examine the problem and the questions you want answers to.

◆ Is it a significant problem? Do other people in the community care about it?

◆ Do I have a sound plan for investigating the problem?

With a Partner . . .

Test your proposal idea with someone else.

- ◆ ***Presenters*:** Take turns briefly describing the problem you want to solve, your intended readers, and your tentative solution.

- ◆ ***Listeners*:** Tell the presenter whether the problem seems worthwhile and if their plan for solving it seems sound. Suggest objections readers might have.

Offering Reasons for Your Proposal (Conclusion)

Write down every possible reason you can give that might persuade readers to accept your proposal.

◆ If you can't think of convincing reason, and after talking with your partner you're still not sure, choose one of the other topics from your brainstorming list.

Seeing What You Have

- Do you have a clear purpose for a clear audience? What is it? Do you know what you want them to do? That will go in the Introduction

- Do you need to do any preliminary research? Talk to people to get a better idea of the problem, or to see if it's already being solved?

Goals for Drafting

- *Introduction*: how can I engage my readers? How much background do I need to give them about the problem?

- *Methods:* Do you have a sound plan for investigating the problem?

- Reader objections: Should I accommodate certain objections and refute others? Is the issue sensitive in any way?

Outline (internal)

A basic outline . . .

- ◆ Introduction – states the problem
    - ■ Its existence
    - ■ Its seriousness
    - ■ Its causes
    - ■ Consequences of failing to solve it
- ◆ Procedures
    - ■ Steps (phases) for studying or addressing the problem the problem

Outline (internal) Cont'd

- Schedule
  - Timeline for these phases outlined in the procedures
- Qualifications
  - Why are you well-qualified to lead a team in this endeavor?
- Cost/budget – estimate here.
- Conclusion
  - Restatement of the proposed solution and its advantages

Outline (external)

- Introduction – purpose and background. If unsolicited, indicate how you know of the problem.
- Description of the proposed product/service – How is it right for them? What does it do/look like? Any advantages?

Outline (external) cont'd

- Timetable – show that you know the work and have a plan and schedule for doing it. Delineate specific tasks.
- Costs – make it accurate, complete, convincing.
- Qualifications of you/your company
- Conclusion – the "call to action" section of your proposal.