Knowing Your Audience
And the Review Criteria

Proposal Writing Series

Research & Innovation Office
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
Jim Mazzouccolo
Proposal Editor & Writing Coach

- Supports AB Nexus (Anschutz-Boulder Collaborations)
- Focus on NIH & Biosciences proposals on CU Boulder campus
- Works with all bioscience associated departments across campus (including NIH proposals coming out of CEAS) on multi-disciplinary proposals
- Helps individual investigator & small teams proposals, as available
- Focus on stylistic, structural, substantive, and revision editing of research proposals from the prospective of an educated, non-SME reviewer
Agenda

• Purpose and Expectations

Session Topics

▪ The Role of Rhetoric
▪ Audience
▪ Writing to the Reviewer
  ▪ Language
  ▪ Grammar
  ▪ Structure
▪ Review Criteria
Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. …Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself.

http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/#4.1
THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE RHETORICAL APPEALS

SPEAKER | Ethos is the Greek term for "ethics," but has been made to represent credibility of the person making a communication (the "speaker"). Ethos is established through a variety of factors, including status, awareness, professionalism, celebrity endorsement, research, and so forth. Build ethos to make your audience trust what you are saying.

AUDIENCE | Pathos is the Greek term for "emotion," but has been made to represent how an audience feels or experiences a message. The appeal of pathos makes a person feel excited, sad, angry, motivated, jealous, or any other number of emotions that may persuade them to act based on what you say.

LOGOS | Logos is the Greek term for "logic," but has been made to represent the facts, research, and other message elements that provide proof or evidence to a claim. Use logos to convince your audience that what they are hearing or seeing is well researched, well built, or otherwise worth their time.

TheVisualCommunicationGuy.com
“Agreed. We fund only those proposals we can understand.”
Audience

Reviewer

• Responsible for reading multiple proposals in consideration for funding.
• Does not have your training or background.
• May not be interested in your research area.
• May not know your work.
• Responsible to the program/funding agency.

Your job…

Convince the reviewer of your project’s…
Value to the agency
Significance to the field
Feasibility of scope (time and money) and science/technique
Investigators
THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE RHETORICAL APPEALS

Credibility of the investigator and/or investigator team

Rigor and Reproducibility
Hypotheses
Methodology
Scope
Gap/problem addressed
Impact on the field

Motivating and maintaining reviewer interest in the project by considering reviewer attitudes and methods to convey information

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic vs Proposal</th>
<th>Scholarly Pursuit</th>
<th>Past Oriented</th>
<th>Expository</th>
<th>“Theme”-centered</th>
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<td>Sponsor Goals</td>
<td>Future Oriented</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
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<td>Theory/Thesis/Hypothesis</td>
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<td>Dispassionate</td>
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<td>Exciting</td>
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*Why Academics Have a Hard Time Writing Good Grant Proposals* – Robert Porter
Writing to the Reviewer

Language

Technical terms only when necessary

Simple and direct words – accessibility of language

Explain key terms when necessary

Incorporate the language used by the agency and the solicitation
Writing to the Reviewer

Grammar

Active Voice and Passive Voice
Active voice: Jack loves Jill.
Passive voice: Jill is loved by Jack.

Tense: Past/Present/Future
Past: Preliminary studies, work done, observations
Present: Truths/Facts/Conclusions unlikely to change, suggest implications of results; introduction
Future: Project methods/techniques

Action: Verb Placement
Distant: The Dean made a decision to conduct a review of the matter.
Near/With: The Dean decided to review the matter.
We tend to take something like a "mental breath" as we begin to read each new sentence, thereby summoning the tension with which we pay attention to the unfolding of the syntax. As we recognize that the sentence is drawing toward its conclusion, we begin to exhale that mental breath. The exhalation produces a sense of emphasis. Moreover, we delight in being rewarded at the end of a labor with something that makes the ongoing effort worthwhile. Beginning with the exciting material and ending with a lack of luster often leaves us disappointed and destroys our sense of momentum. We do not start with the strawberry shortcake and work our way up to the broccoli.

- The Science of Scientific Writing, George Gopen and Judith Swan
Writing to the Reviewer

Structure

Themes and “Units of Discourse”

• The first sentence of each paragraph should be a theme sentence that introduces the contents of the upcoming paragraph.

• The last sentence of every paragraph should tie back to the theme sentence of that paragraph AND lead easily into the next paragraph’s theme sentence.

• A sentence/paragraph that is too long or disjointed will tire a reader.

• A reader should not have to “do work” to understand the connection between a previous sentence/paragraph and the current sentence/paragraph.

Stress Placement

• The stress placement is typically at the end of a sentence or before a semi-colon.

• This can be used to affect tone.

• Readers interpret words in the end place position as carrying more importance.

Topic Position – Perspective, Context, Linkage, Logical Flow

The Structure of Scientific Writing – George Gopen and Judith Swan
Logical Flow

Information that establishes linkage

Topic Position

Verb Placement

Stress Position

Information to be stressed (New)

Forward  Backward

Forward
Review Criteria

- Agency Specific - Explicit
- Program Specific - Implicit
- Solicitation Specific - Explicit

READ THE WHOLE SOLICITATION
RIO Grant Writing Series

Jim Mazzouccolo
Proposal Editor & Writing Coach
PGP: he/him/his
Research & Innovation Office – Request Proposal Support

6/9: Explaining the Project in One Paragraph
6/16: Writing a One-Page Project Summary
6/23: Keeping the Narrative Simple
6/30: Sustaining Your Argument