

Tips for Success

PLANNING

Think about possible local community/campus connections:

- Explore your interests.
- Find out if research in your prospective area exists on campus (a good way to find a potential faculty/instructional staff mentor if you haven't approached one yet). Schedule a meeting with Interim Associate Director Pete Keys (pkeys@wisc.edu) to explore campus research.
- Once partners have been identified, discuss your project proposal with your faculty advisor and community partner organization.
- The selection committee awards innovation and contributions of new/useful knowledge. Research other Leadership or [Wisconsin Idea Fellowship projects](#) for ideas!

THE PROPOSAL

In *no more than 10 double-spaced pages*, explain: (1) the PURPOSE of your project; (2) a SUMMARY of major activities; (3) the TIMELINE for these activities; (4) the BENEFITS to your campus/community partner organization, your faculty advisor, and you.

Presentation matters. It helps if the proposal looks appealing and professional (but remember, there's no "one right way" to achieve this—we provide a sample template, but you are entitled to make it your own.

The selection committee reviewing your proposal will be interdisciplinary. Keep this audience in mind when composing your proposal—keep jargon to a minimum and explain any discipline-specific terms you use. *Remember that the committee will be asking themselves the following questions:*

- o Does this project meet a real community need? What is the potential for actually making a measurable impact in the community?
- o Is the proposal well-written? Is the proposal detailed, thorough, and comprehensive? Is it original and innovative? Did the applicant discuss issues relative to finances, responsibilities, and timelines with their faculty advisor, campus/community partner organization, and/or Honors Program Administrator Kendra Ramthun (kendra.ramthun@wisc.edu) prior to submitting the proposal?
- o Is the project truly a three-way collaboration? To what extent will the academic and campus/community advisor engage?

- o Are project evaluation (benefits, impacts, etc.) and goals discussed in the proposal?
- o Can the project be completed within the allotted time frame? (BE *CRITICALLY REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH IN A GIVEN TIME PERIOD*—students often over-estimate what is realistic).
- o Is the budget clear and accurate? Are all expenses accounted for? Make sure to meet with Kendra Ramthun (kendra.ramthun@wisc.edu) prior to your proposal submission!
- o What is the overall 'learning potential' for the applicant—does the project integrate service *and* learning?
- o Other questions the selection committee will consider:
 - Does the project require that the student learn more about the work of the community agency and the people it serves?
 - Does the project focus on an oppressed or marginalized population?

Choose a topic you are interested in, and don't be afraid to show your passion for it!

THE ABSTRACT

In a *concise*, 250-word synopsis of your project, explain: (1) **WHAT** the project seeks to accomplish (purpose); (2) **WHY** you have chosen to pursue this particular study or question (rationale); (3) **HOW** you are proceeding (methods); (4) **WHAT** you hope to accomplish (outcome or results).

Make your abstract self-contained: skip references to figures and tables; no cited sources.

If you have space, include some **BACKGROUND** about your project.

Suggestion: write the abstract *after* you write your five-to-ten page proposal.

FINAL TIPS

Show your proposal to other readers, including those involved in your project (campus/community advisor, faculty advisor, and even academic advisors), as well as readers who *aren't* involved in your project. Remember, while others can give you feedback and ideas, it is you who must compose the proposal!.

Choose an accurate, straightforward title that captures the reader's attention.

If your project will involve working with and collecting data from people, it is likely that you will need to complete an application for human subjects research approval via [a UW-Madison Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#).

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS! The selection committee is looking for a professional proposal that is well-written and COMPLETE. Make sure you have all necessary signatures and materials, as well as original copies where specified in the instructions.