JOHNS HOPKINS
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Proposal Writing

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Abstracts

What Is an Abstract?

- A brief summary (half a page)
- Include
  - Background
  - Objective of research or objectives of program being evaluated
  - Study design
  - Methods

Specific Aims of Study

- Main goal of the program—what does your program intend to accomplish?
- Specific objectives that you will evaluate
- Or, what are the major research questions?
- What will be gained by the study?

Significance of the Study

- Justify the relevance of the research to science and/or
- Justify the relevance to policy or social welfare, and/or
- Why are the questions or issues important to public health?
- Where does the study fit in the HSRE framework?

Background of the Study (or Literature Review)

- What is already known about the issues or this type of program?
- What are the gaps in information?
- Describe previous relevant research
- How will answering this research question add to the knowledge base?
- How will a positive program evaluation contribute to public policy?

Hypotheses of a Research Proposal

- Provide a general focus to approaching the problem
- Is generated from the conceptual framework of the study
- Expresses some relationship among variables
- Is stated in a way that is testable
- Usually describes the stated direction of the relationship

Hypothesis of a Program Evaluation

- The program is effective in that it meets the established objectives
- Normally, in a program evaluation, this hypothesis is not stated

Methods

1. Research design
2. Study setting and population
3. Variables and measures
4. Sources of data
5. Timeline

Methods: Study Design

- Experimental
- Quasi-experimental
- Observation
- Give Campbell and Stanley notation of the design
- Describe number of observations

Methods: Study Setting

- Population to be studied
  - Clinic population
  - Community-dwelling
  - Demographics
- Criteria for inclusion in numerator or denominator
- Describe sampling frames and possible randomization

Methods: Variables and Measures

- Independent, dependent, intervening
- Constructs, definitions, and instruments to derive measures
- Theoretical model describing relationship of variables

Methods: Sources of Data

- Primary or secondary data? (or combination?)
- What data will be used to derive each variable?
- How will data be collected? (interview, mail-in survey? medical record abstracting?)
- Identify survey instrument to be used

Methods: Analytic Approach

- What will you do with the data you collect?
- Make comparisons with chi square or t-tests
- Plan to carry out multivariate analysis
- What analysis will be used to assess reliability and validity of measures?
- Power calculations to determine sample size

Methods: Timelines

- Develop task list
- Lay out tasks along time continuum
- Develop milestones or deliverables
- Describe who will perform which tasks
- Organizational chart (if large study team)

Methods: Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

- What is the purpose of the study?
- Why was subject chosen for the study?
- What are the potential risks and benefits?
- Present health care will not be jeopardized by refusing to participate
- Can withdraw at any time

Methods: Other Considerations

- Logistics
  - Qualifications of the research team
  - Organizational resources
- Budget and other resource requirements
  - Personnel
  - Supplies, equipment
  - Computer time
  - Travel

Methods: Limitations of Study

- Consider all Campbell and Stanley threats to internal validity
- Consider all threats to external validity
- What are the limitations related to measures?
- What are the limitations due to populations?

Summary

- Overview of study
- Highlight methodological uniqueness if any
- Why should this study be done? What will it add to science? What will it provide to the agency paying for the study?
- Highlight why the proposed research team is the right one to do this project