MODULE 3: TECHNICAL TIPS FOR PROPOSAL WRITING

WELL-WRITTEN PROJECT PROPOSAL

CLEAR, ACCURATE & OBJECTIVE
ACCESSIBLE
CONCISE
CORRECT
**CLEAR**

One and only one meaning to what is written can be easily understood by the reader.

**ACCURATE...**

Facts written exactly as they are.

...and **OBJECTIVE**

Facts presented fully and fairly.

**ACCESSIBLE**

Easy to find needed information.

**CONCISE**

Brief, direct to the point.

**CORRECT**

In grammar, punctuation and usage.
Style tips in proposal writing

"...express...not impress"

Choose the right words
Write good sentences
Write good paragraphs
Use headings & lists

TIP # 1

WRITE TO EXPRESS, NOT TO IMPRESS

Readers' need to understand
Writer's desire to grandstand
**TIP # 2**

**Choosing Words and Phrases**

- **BE SPECIFIC**
- **AVOID UNNECESSARY JARGON**
- **AVOID WORDINESS**
- **AVOID HIGH-SOUNDING WORDS**
- **AVOID SEXIST/GENDER-BIASED LANGUAGE**

**BEING SPECIFIC**

- Use precise, exact words
- Provide enough detail
- Avoid ambiguity and vagueness
AVOIDING JARGON

Jargon – technical terms, abbreviations or “slang” understood only by a specific group

Use words and terms that the ‘average’ intended reader can understand easily

AVOIDING WORDINESS

If you can say it with one word, say it with one word

The fewer the words used, the easier the reader understands.

“The conduct of an investigation is necessitated of us by the situation”

“It is necessary that we investigate”

“We need to investigate”

“We must investigate”
AVOIDING HIGH-SOUNDING WORDS

**Simpler words are easier to understand**

**Difficult words do not make your writing better, only more difficult to read and understand.**

“We would like to take this opportunity to extend to your good office our most profound and sincere gratitude for the prompt and favorable response to our request.”

“Thank you very much for your fast approval.”

AVOIDING SEXIST/ GENDER-BIASED LANGUAGE

**Use non-gender terms**

Chair or chairperson, not chairman
Spokesperson, not spokesman
Firefighter, no fireman

**Eliminate “his, him, he” if possible**

“An officer should submit his report…” → “Officers should submit reports…”

“If the “his, him, or he” cannot be eliminated…”

“The reporter should make sure his readers understand…” → “The reporter should make sure his or her readers understand…”
PROJECT DESIGN AND PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S GROUPS AND PARTNERS

TIP # 3

SHORT ≈ 15 to 20 words

Use mostly SIMPLE SENTENCES combined with some COMPOUND SENTENCES and occasional COMPLEX SENTENCES.

Avoid as much as possible COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES.

SIMPLE SENTENCE

➢ One (1) independent clause (“stand-alone” subject-and-predicate combination)

➢ Has only one basic idea

➢ Subject (what is described)

➢ Predicate (the description)

“Barangay residents don’t have a safe source of drinking water.”

☑ SHORT ☑ DIRECT ☑ CLEAR

☒ ONLY ONE IDEA AT A TIME

☒ “CHOPPY”, BORING, DISTRACTING

“Barangay residents don’t have a safe source of drinking water. They get water from holes in the riverbank. The river water is dirty. Residents often get sick from the dirty water they drink. Many die.”
COMPOUND SENTENCE

- Two (2) independent clauses linked by
  - a comma (,) or a semicolon (;)
  - a coordinating conjunction (“and”, “or”, “nor”, “for”, “so”, “yet”, “but”)

Barangay residents don’t have a safe source of drinking water, and they get water from holes in the riverbank.

- First independent clause
- Second independent clause

- STILL SOMEWHAT SHORT
- CAN EXPRESS MORE THAN ONE IDEA
- CAN MAKE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IDEAS CLEAR

COMPLEX SENTENCE

- One independent clause and at least one dependent clause, linked by a subordinating conjunction (“although”, “even”, “despite”, “because”, “if”, “while”)

Residents often get sick because of the dirty water they drink.

- Independent clause
- Dependent clause

- STILL SOMEWHAT SHORT
- EXPRESSES MORE THAN ONE IDEA
- CAN MAKE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IDEAS CLEAR
COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE

- At least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

“The barangay residents get water from holes in the riverbank, and many die from water-borne diseases because of the dirty water they drink.”

- Rather long
- May be hard to follow, even confusing
- Sometimes needed to show somewhat complicated relationships

Simple, compound and complex sentences can express ideas clearly and briefly

A combination of simple sentences with compound and complex sentences avoids ‘choppiness’, makes relationships between ideas clearer, and makes thought flow smoother.

“Barangay residents don’t have a safe source of drinking water. They get water from holes in the riverbank, and often get sick because of the dirty water they drink. Many die from water-borne diseases.”
PROJECT DESIGN AND PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S GROUPS AND PARTNERS

WRITE GOOD SENTENCES

Write mostly in the **ACTIVE VOICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVE VOICE</th>
<th>PASSIVE VOICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject does the action</td>
<td>Subject receives the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The boy ate the food.”</td>
<td>“The food was eaten by the boy.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ☑️ SHORTER
- ☑️ EMPHASIZES THE DOER

Back to main discussion

TIP # 4

WRITING GOOD PARAGRAPHS

Group of sentences discussing a central point or clarifying a main idea

**EXAMPLE:**

A paragraph groups several sentences (although sometimes it may have only one sentence) into a single unit that discusses a central point or clarifies a main idea. Aside from putting together sentences that clearly support one main idea, a paragraph should also relate clearly to and logically follow the paragraph that comes before it.
TOPIC SENTENCE

Main idea or central point

Support sentences

Make topic sentence clearer and more convincing

EXAMPLE:
While putting the “point” clearly, the topic sentence alone is usually not enough. The reader still needs to be convinced of the “point.” Thus, the topic sentence must be supported by additional sentences to complete the paragraph.

Functions of support sentences:
- Define/clarify key term or idea in topic sentence
- Give examples/illustrations of situation described in topic sentence
- Identify factors leading to situation described in topic sentence
- Define/explain implications of situation described in topic sentence
- Defend/substantiate assertion made in topic sentence
Good paragraphs should be SHORT.

**Topic sentence**
+ 4 or 5 support sentences

- **5 to 6 sentences** ≈ 75 to 120 words

**AVOID** long unbroken blocks of text

*If necessary, break up presentation of one main idea into two or more paragraphs*

---

**COHERENCE**

**WITHIN PARAGRAPHS**

- Sentences must have logical, clear and smooth linking and flow of ideas

**BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS**

- Paragraphs that follow each other must have a clear and smooth flow of related thought
Use of transitional words and phrases

Repeating key words or phrases

Use of demonstratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>TRANSPORTATION WORDS/PREHASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>also, and, finally, first (second, etc.), furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, similarly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison/similarity</td>
<td>in the same way, in the same manner, likewise, similarly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>although, but, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>for example, for instance, in other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-effect</td>
<td>as a result, because, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time or space</td>
<td>above, around, earlier, later, next, to the right (left, east, etc.), soon, then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary or conclusion</td>
<td>at last, finally, in conclusion, to conclude, to summarize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLES: REPEATING KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Within a paragraph
"Paragraphs in a technical document should be generally short. Long paragraphs are more difficult to read and understand. Long paragraphs are often simply skipped by many readers who are ‘turned off’ by long unbroken blocks of printed words."

Between paragraphs
"Coherence means logical, clear and smooth linking of ideas. In technical writing, there must be coherence within paragraphs and between paragraphs. "Coherence within paragraphs means that there is a smooth flow of thought from one sentence to the next. "Coherence between paragraphs can be achieved..."

USE OF DEMONSTRATIVES

DEMONSTRATIVES:
“this”, “that”, “these”, “those”

Within a paragraph
"Paragraphs in a technical document should be generally short. Long paragraphs are more difficult to read and understand. These are often simply skipped by many readers who are ‘turned off’ by long unbroken blocks of printed words."

Between paragraphs
"... Many readers are ‘turned off’ by long unbroken blocks of printed words. "These long blocks can be avoided by keeping paragraphs within five to six sentences long, with sentences between 15 to 20 words long.”
Transitional devices should be placed as near as possible to the beginning of a sentence or paragraph.

Transitional devices are tools for making the linkage and flow of ideas clearer and smoother. They are useless when the ideas being linked are themselves unrelated to each other.
**Why use headings?**

For **TWO PURPOSES**

- Tell the reader the topic to be discussed
- Indicate relative order of importance of different sections of the document

Headings also make a document more ACCESSIBLE. Readers can more quickly find the sections they want or need to read.

---

**TIPS ON PARAGRAPH CONSTRUCTION**

A paragraph...

- **Paragraph structure**
  - As mentioned above, a paragraph is ...
- **Topic sentence**
  - The first sentence of a paragraph...
- **Support sentences**
  - While putting the “point” clearly, the topic sentence ...
- **Paragraph length**
  - Similar to sentences, paragraphs in a technical document...
- **Coherence**
  - Coherence means...
  - Coherence within paragraphs
  - Coherence within paragraphs means...
  - Coherence between paragraphs
  - Coherence between paragraphs can be achieved by...
Advantages of using lists:
1. Makes it easier for readers to follow long enumerations of information or steps for doing a task
2. “Lightens” text by breaking up large blocks of unbroken text

Lists are useful for the following purposes:
• Make it easier for readers to follow long enumerations of information or steps for doing a task
• Break up large blocks of unbroken text to “lighten” a paragraph