What is a good Research Proposal?

Introduction to Workshop on Participatory Research and Proposal Writing

Sponsored by Florida A&M University, and Community Forestry Research Fellowships, University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Carl Wilmsen
4 Elements of a Good Proposal

- A research question
- Research question is rooted in the literature
- Methods that will enable you to answer your question
- Good writing
Everyday Notions about the Research Question

- arises from something in the literature
- asks something that is not already answered in the literature.
- informed by, and contributes to, theory.
Things that are often implied

- Something that you are passionate about.
- Makes the linkages between the question, methods, and the literature clear.
  - Why is this question worth asking?
  - How does it relate to theory?
Rigor vs. Relevance: Adopting a Participatory Approach

- Community members want useful knowledge.
- Scientists want knowledge that contributes to theory.
- What are their monitoring methods? vs. How efficient are they?
“Relevant Research”

Sample questions proposed at CBCRC conference

Academy 🔄 Community

+ “How do exotic and native species differ in their use and assimilation of energy and resources?”

+ “Are ranching and endangered species conservation compatible?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academy</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Universal</td>
<td>+ Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Novel</td>
<td>+ Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Testable</td>
<td>+ Reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Finite end</td>
<td>+ Long-term process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Building theory</td>
<td>+ Applied to problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Process-focused</td>
<td>+ Descriptive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods: Make the Punishment fit the Crime

- Methods that are appropriate to the research question.
- Make these linkages explicit.
- You cannot expect the reviewers to make them for you.
Good Writing

- Sloppy writing is a sign of sloppy thinking
- Poor grammar, spelling, and punctuation makes a poor impression
Linkages

- Integrate the research questions, methods, and literature.