

The Grant Institute

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: ICI PERSUASION AND ARGUMENTATION TECHNIQUES

READER

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Dynamics of Persuasion

Information

The target audience learns something new.

Imagination

With new knowledge comes the belief that there are new possibilities.

Passions

The persuasive turning point. We are emotionally invested in our perspectives. The idea of changing one's viewpoint or accepting previously rejected ones is, in most cases, a painful experience.

Will

This refers to a "movement of one's will." The successfully persuaded are willing to accept truths they previously rejected and are willing to act to support those truths.

The Narrative Paradigm

People are not computers or robots. We do not always make the most logical decisions. Instead, people act on what they feel are “good reasons.” Each person is a house that contains a lifetime of stories. Those stories define who we are and how we view the world around us. They frame our truths. When we communicate, we are exchanging our stories with others. Thus, communication is storytelling.

We are searching for narrative rationality when we communicate, not logic. If your “stories” are consistent with my own, then we will have agreement, understanding, and even a constructive relationship. If not, we will have misunderstandings, disagreement, and sometimes, confrontation.

We use what is inside of our houses of stories, called narrative constructs, to exchange and compare stories. What do we keep in those houses?

1. **Narrative Fidelity:** First, we keep our lived experiences. As a result of living, we have collected some fundamental truths of our own that help us make sense of the world around us. They are truths because we see them or experience them ourselves. Surely, it must be true if I have experienced it first hand. Right? Thus, narrative fidelity refers to how much a story rings true to our lived experiences.
2. **Narrative Probability:** This refers to stories that we have internalized from, namely, **myth** and **convention**. We refer to myths as “the stories used by cultures or groups to explain why things are the way they are.” When we receive these explanations, they cure our sense of vulnerability because they make sense of the difficult and complex issues. We respond positively to those stories that are consistent with those myths. These are significant because, conversely, we respond very negatively to those whose stories are critical or in conflict of our internalized myths. How did humanity begin; Where do we go after we die; Who decides right and wrong; What is the definition of marriage; and even why are there so many poor people are examples of questions that will reveal internalized myths. The answers can create long lasting relationships or cause deadly conflict.

Logic takes a back seat when dealing with human communication. The strategic communication specialist, whose task is persuasion, must understand this aspect of strategic persuasion and communication studies.

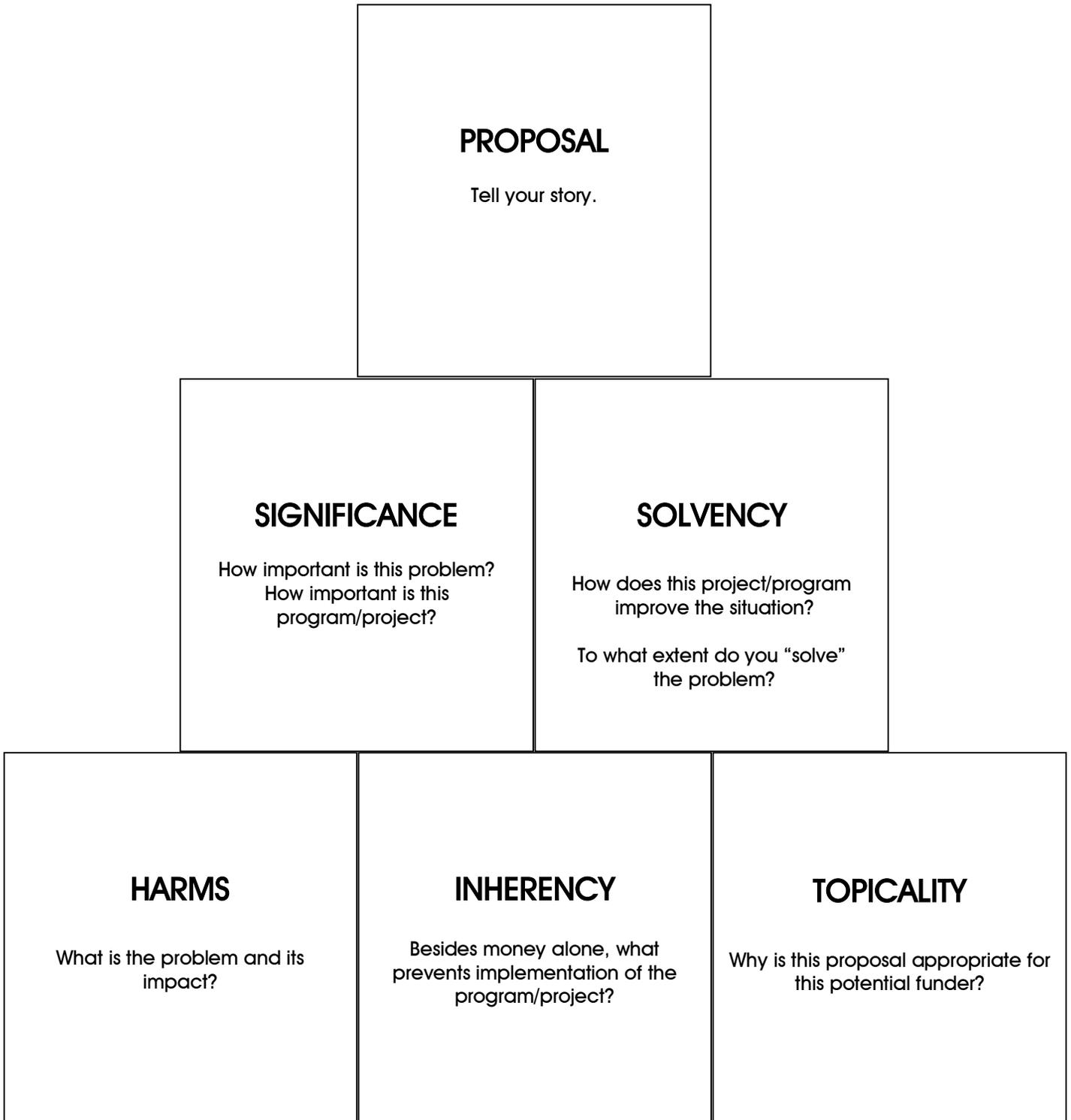
Building Blocks of Storytelling

To engage in successful persuasion where the focus is to convince an agency to utilize its authority or power is to engage in policy debate. Policy debate centers around the idea that a certain agency “should” do something. What we are arguing is in support of that. From the perspective of strategic argumentation and communication theory, an expert in persuasion will concern themselves with proving five types of arguments. These arguments determine whether or not the proposal meets the test of *prima facie*. This means that “at first glance” the proposal meets the standards of successful policy argumentation. Thus, as strategic persuasion and communication experts, you must engage in all policy persuasion prepared to prove the following in all of your proposals:

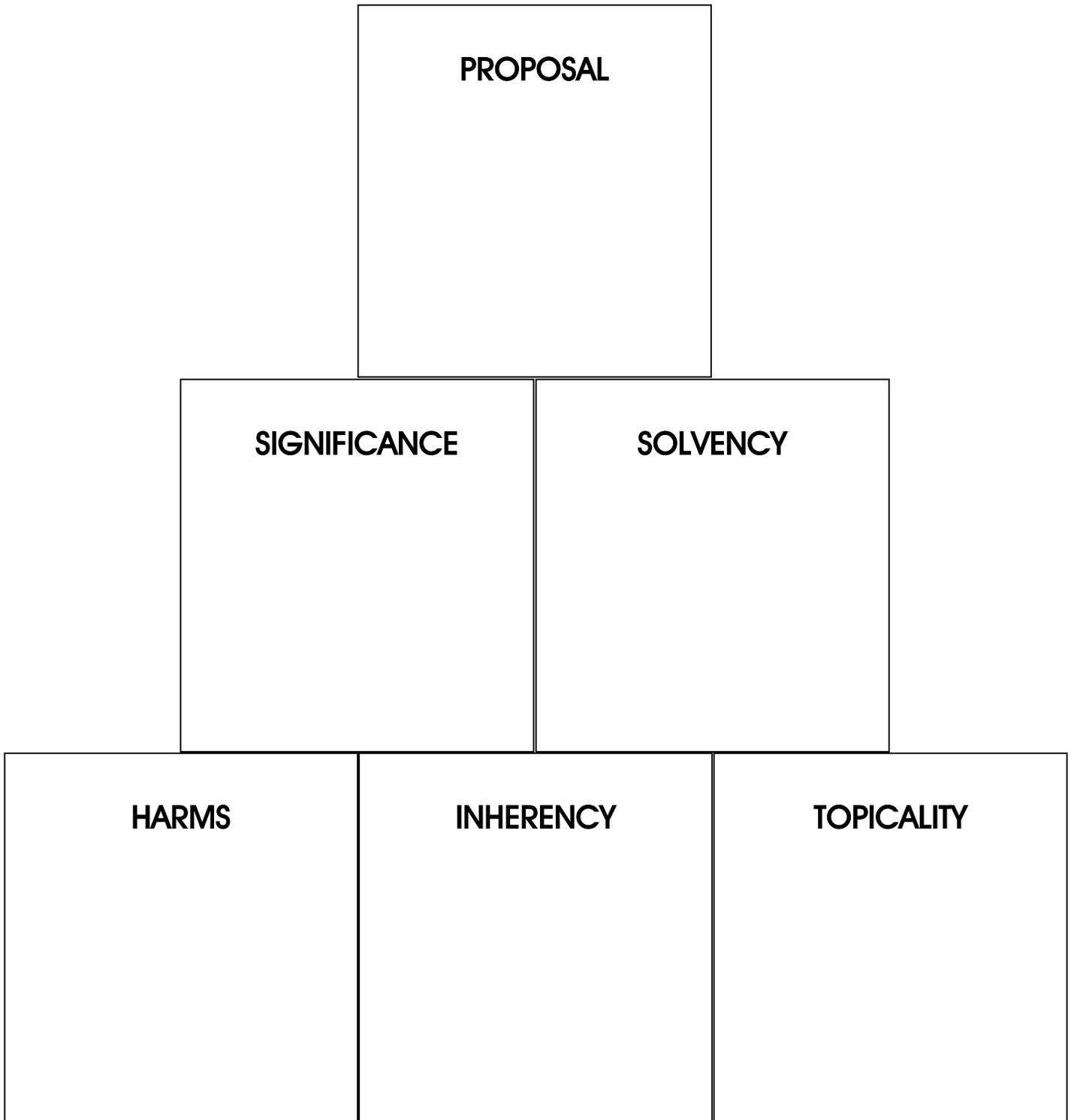
1. **Topicality:** You are submitting your proposal to the people who are in a position to make a decision on your proposal. Your proposal fits their criteria, you have submitted it to the right person, and it is the type of project or program they fund. In argumentation, this is all about jurisdiction. Make sure that your persuasive argument is targeted at the correct audience.
2. **Inherency:** There is currently a barrier or threat to your current proposed program or project. The program or project is not going to be implemented by your agency or other committed funds regardless of the decision of this agency as to whether or not they will support it. Additionally, this barrier or threat to the program (funding, staff, research or other forms of inherency) is instrumental in the creation of harms.
3. **Harms:** There are negative effects of not accepting your proposal. Here, the strategic persuader builds a **harms story** that is a scenario depiction of how things got bad, how bad they are, and how bad they will get. You must be careful to connect these bad things to the barrier mentioned above.
4. **Significance:** The harms must be important. You must prove that your proposal is worth it. For an agency to act on your proposal, you must prove that the harms mentioned above affect a measurable amount of people, occur a number of times, or are so big that they are immeasurable (like national security, safety, justice, compassion, love and equality, etc.).
5. **Solvency:** You must prove that a favorable response to your proposal will lead to an eradication of the harms you mentioned previously. You may not eliminate the problem completely, but the amount of solvency you will get is worth the action you are requesting.

Whenever you propose a policy argument, you have the burden to meet the above building blocks. Whether you are writing a policy report, a grant proposal, or arguing in favor of legal change, you have the obligation of proving that your proposal meets the aforementioned requirements. As a strategic communication specialist, you must commit to these requirements and use them to evaluate the arguments of others.

Building Blocks of Storytelling for the Grant Proposal

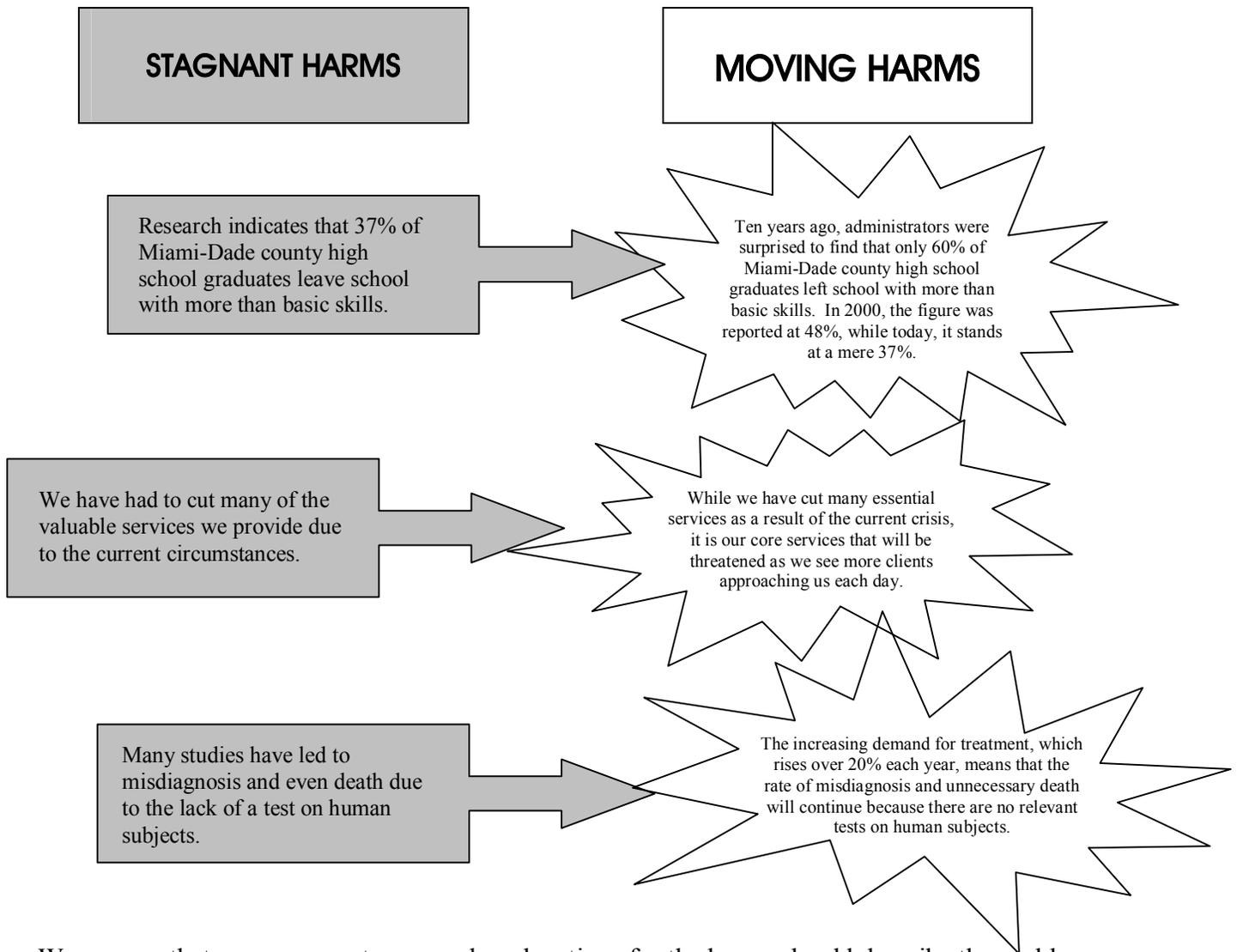


Building Blocks of Storytelling for the Grant Proposal



The Harms Story

An advanced technique when describing a harm involves describing the harm as a moving phenomenon. People in general, but program directors in particular, are moved by harms they feel they have some control over. People do not respond to general over-arching problems they feel are rooted in history, nature, or mere chance. It is important that you describe your “problem” or need in a manner that portrays it as a constantly moving event.



We can see that summary sentences and explanations for the harms should describe the problem as constantly evolving. The person reading this proposal must feel as if this award intervenes in events that are unfolding before their eyes. While applicants see program directors as part of a larger bureaucracy, many program directors see themselves as playing a pivotal role in changing the world. Remember, grant making is policy making. Decisions made by a grant maker affect real human lives. Most program directors are aware of this.

Strategies for Storytelling

An advanced technique used to ensure that a problem is understood as a constantly evolving phenomenon is to explain it in the form of a scenario. A scenario gives a context for a problem, provides characters for a problem, and describes the problem in a way that places program directors in a position to intervene. It calls out for intervention. It says “This is what’s going on. It’s gonna get worse, and for goodness sake, someone had better intervene.” For this reason, we look to what makes a scenario to help us practice building what we call a harms story. To begin practicing the technique of building a harms story and ensuring that you avoid stagnant description of the harm, it is helpful to understand the basic parts of a scenario.

At its most basic level, a scenario has three parts:

1. Link
2. Brink
3. Impact

A scenario is a story that describes the origin, current status, and potential consequences of a problem. Therefore the following definitions make sense.

1. The **Link** describes how this issue came to affect you or your organization. It describes the relationship between your organization and the issue. It includes what we call an **internal link**. The internal link describes your organization and how funding affects your ability to perform. If you are an individual, it describes why you are dependent upon funding to perform. In essence, the link connects you/your organization with the issue being addressed.
2. The **Brink** is the most critical part of the scenario. It explains where we are now. It defines now as a critical time. The brink provides an opportunity and a warning at the same time. The brink says we have reached a point where we must be concerned. This proposal is being written at a time when we can still do something about this problem. However, there is a point where things can get so bad that they are out of our control. This point is referred to as the **threshold**. This part of the harms story is critical because it describes where we are now in relationship to how bad things can get if someone does not intervene.
3. The **Impact** provides a glimpse into what the world would look like if we crossed the threshold. It provides the negative effects of not acting. A program director will not be moved merely because an organization will have to lay off two people. Furthermore, revealing that an organization will have to shut down is not enough. This must be impacted. How will the community be affected? How will society at large be affected? Make them care.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

The Tim Hardaway Foundation seeks \$470,000 to continue after-school sports and recreation programs for inner-city youth.

LINK

The Tim Hardaway Foundation has been at the forefront of combating juvenile crime and delinquency by providing after-school recreation activities for inner-city youths.

Internal Link: The foundation relies on government funding to provide these services.

BRINK

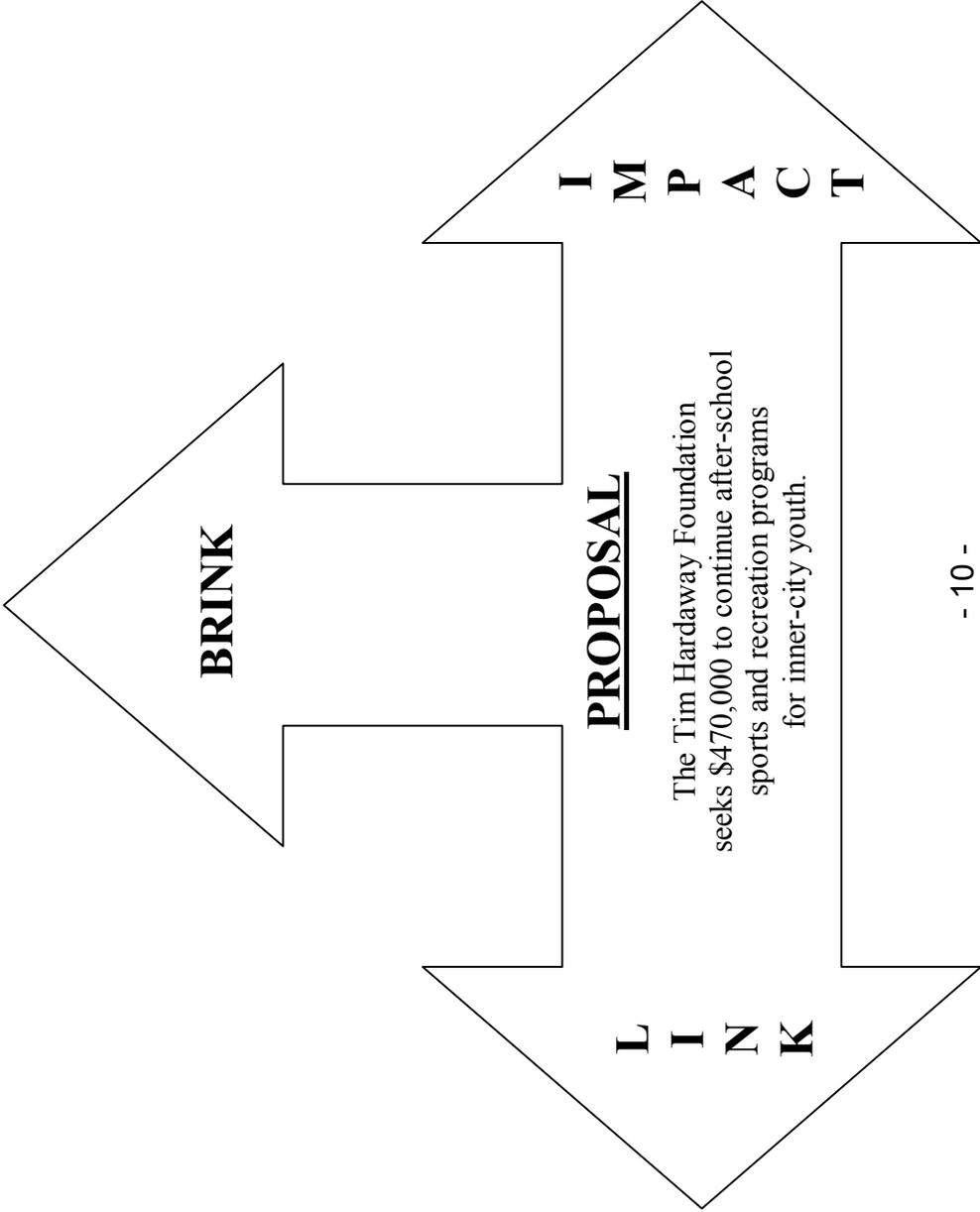
The brink is while juvenile delinquencies and crime has shown a significant reduction, the organization has suffered significant cuts in government funding at a time when a record number of youths need after-school recreation. If the organization is unable to respond, then thousands of youth will go un-served. Next year, the organization expects 2,500 youths to seek out after-school recreation services.

IMPACT

If the foundation is unable to respond to the increase in need, this will undermine the progress that has been made since the organization began providing services. Local experts and law enforcement agencies predict an increase of 25% in juvenile crime next year, should these youth be left without recreation programs. This is startling at a time when juvenile crime seems to get more and more severe.

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BRINK

PROPOSAL

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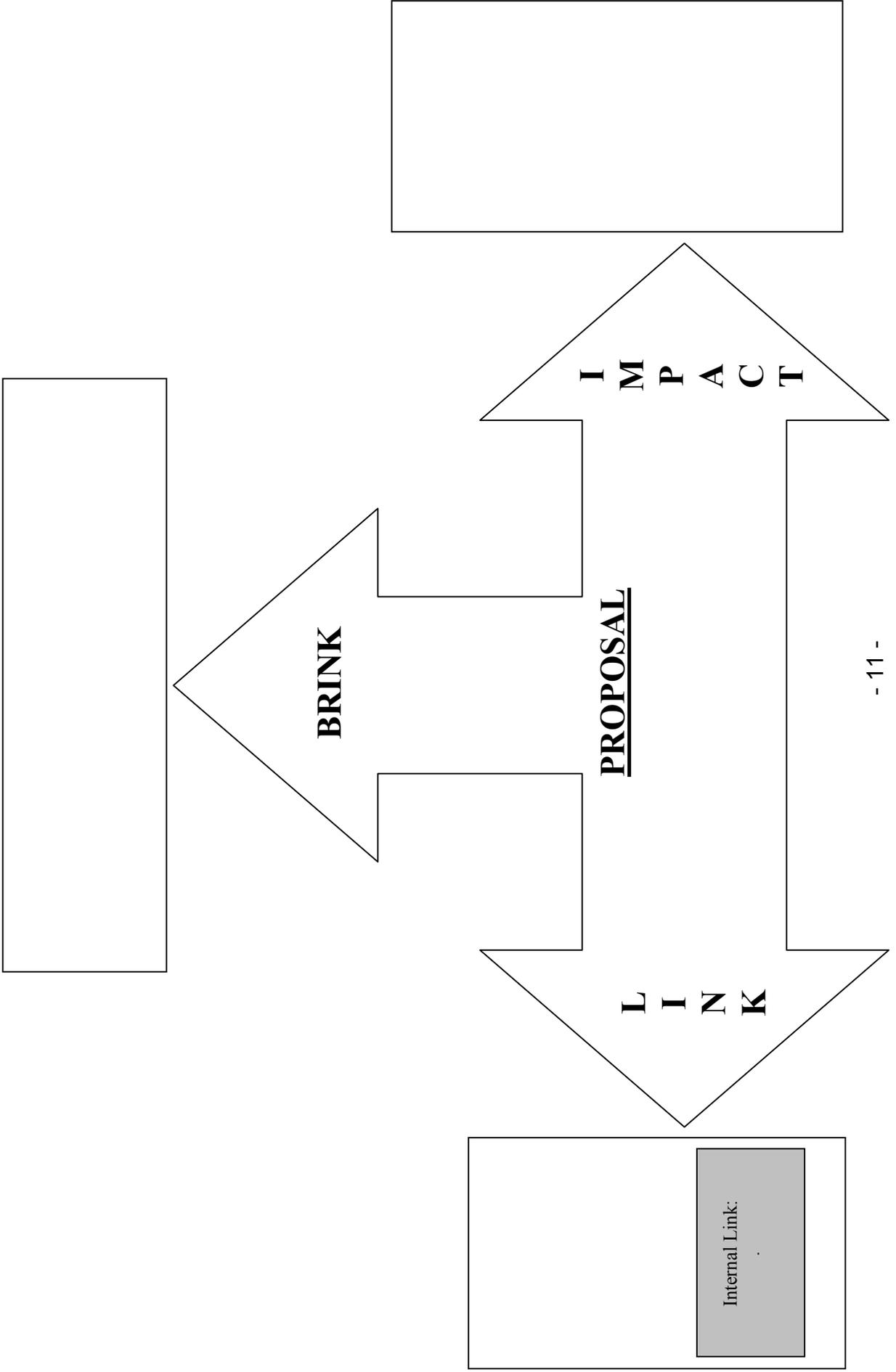
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SCENARIO WORKSHEET



Strategic Communication Organizational Narrative Skeleton (SCONS) ©

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Attention Getter: Narrative which sets the psychological tone
- 1.2 Thesis: Proposition of Policy (The program sought to be implemented)
- 1.3 Purpose Statement: Communication Intent (The reason you are submitting the proposal.)
- 1.4 Significance
 - 1.4.1 Quantitative
 - 1.4.2 Qualitative
- 1.5 Preview

2.0 Organizational Credibility

- 2.1 History: Why the organization was established, who founded the organization, and when it was founded.
- 2.2 Mission Statement: Philosophical Narrative (Literal or Framed)
- 2.3 Incorporation: Legal Status
- 2.4 Significant Accomplishments
 - 2.4.1 Past
 - 2.4.2 Present
- 2.5 Future Developments
 - 2.5.1 Short-Term Goals
 - 2.5.2 Long-Term Goals
- 2.6 Organizational Structure: Is there a head executive who reports to a board? How many departments are in the organization? Which departments answer to whom?
- 2.7 Board of Directors: Names and their affiliations
- 2.8 Needs, Client Group, Programs/Services: 1-2 paragraphs using Monroe's Motivated Sequence

3.0 Stock Issues (Building Blocks)

- 3.1 Problem Identification in Area Description
 - 3.1.1 Topicality
 - 3.1.2 Inherency (Structural or Attitudinal)
- 3.2 Needs Assessment
 - 3.2.1 Harms Story
 - 3.2.1.1 Link (Connect to Inherency)
 - 3.2.1.2 Brink (Time Frame and Threshold)
 - 3.2.1.3 Impact
 - 3.2.2 Source of Needs Assessment (Research Evidence and Verifiable Support)
- 3.3 Project Importance
 - 3.3.1 Significance
 - 3.3.1.1 Quantitative
 - 3.3.1.2 Qualitative

SCONS Continued

- 3.3.2 Solvency
 - 3.3.2.1 Solvency Story (Harms Mitigation)
- 3.4 Letters of Support
 - 3.4.1 Solvency Advocates (at least three)
 - 3.4.1.1 Community Representative (Government/Policy Activist)
 - 3.4.1.2 Problem Area Expert/Client Base Representative
 - 3.4.1.3 Academia/Research
- 3.5 Community Participation: Create a community narrative or a societal narrative that includes your organization
 - 3.5.1 Advantages
- 4.0 Project/Program Description**
 - 4.1 Goals and Objectives
 - 4.2 Project Activities and Strategies
 - 4.2.1 Plan
 - 4.2.1.1 Implementation
 - 4.3 Communication Identification
 - 4.3.1 Project/Program Identifies with Funders' Priorities and Philosophies
 - 4.3.2 Consubstantiation (The point at which common understanding is developed or achieved)
 - 4.4 Project/Program Outcomes and Lasting Benefits
- 5.0 Funding and Enforcement**
 - 5.1 Means and Motives
 - 5.2 Evaluation
 - 5.2.1 Anticipated Outputs
 - 5.2.2 Participant Impacts
 - 5.2.3 Specific Outcomes
 - 5.2.4 Monitoring
 - 5.2.5 Reporting
 - 5.3 Funding
 - 5.3.1 Budgeting
 - 5.3.2 Project/Program Revenue
 - 5.3.3 Accountant's Audit
 - 5.3.3.1 Auditor's Results (Formal Letter)
 - 5.3.3.2 Financial Statement (Receipts and Expenses)
 - 5.3.3.3 Balance Sheet (Net Assets/Net Liabilities)
 - 5.3.4 Financial Enforcement and Management
 - 5.3.4.1 Monitors and Controls of Funds
 - 5.3.4.2 Budget Enforcement
 - 5.3.5 Fundraising
- 6.0 Rhetorical Conclusion**
 - 6.1 Restate the Proposition of Policy
 - 6.2 Review the Thesis
 - 6.3 Tie-In Narrative (Same as the Attention Getter or Based on the Same as Attention Getter—Provide Positive Outlook; Use the Rhetoric of Possibility)

SCONS™

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Organizational Credibility

3.0 Building Blocks

4.0 Project/Program Description

5.0 Funding and Enforcement

6.0 Rhetorical Conclusion

The Standard Grant Proposal Outline

I. Introduction

- *This section of the proposal should tell your agency/organization's story.*

II. Problem Statement/Needs

- *This section of the proposal should explain the problems/issues you are trying to fix and/or address.*

III. Program Goals & Objectives

- *This section of the proposal should state what your agency/organization hopes to accomplish with your program.*

IV. Methods

- *This section of the proposal should explain your program and how it will be implemented.*

V. Evaluation

- *This section of the proposal should state how your program measures will be evaluated.*

VI. Future Funding

- *This section of the proposal should explain how your program will receive funding in the future.*

VII. Budget

- *This section of the proposal should detail your program's budget.*

VIII. Appendix

- *This section of the proposal should include any necessary documents to supplement your proposal.*

NOTE: *Include a one to two paragraph proposal summary or abstract before the proposal.*

Standard Grant Proposal Outline

I. Introduction

II. Problem Statement/Needs

III. Program Goals & Objective

IV. Methods

V. Evaluation

VI. Future Funding

VII. Budget

VII. Appendix

Main Elements of an NIH Proposal

- I. Specific Aims
- II. Background and Significance
- III. Preliminary Results
- IV. Research Method and Design
- V. Schedule, Budget, and Resources
- VI. Summary
- VII. Figures
- VIII. Literature Cited

NIH Proposal Outline

I. Specific Aims

II. Background & Significance

III. Preliminary Results

IV. Research Method & Design

V. Schedule, Budget & Resources

VI. Summary

VII. Figures

VIII. Literature Cited

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

The motivated sequence provides a strategic guideline for all persuasive texts. If you are going to be a successful persuader, whether in written or oral format, you must pay particular attention to ensuring that your content fulfills these requirements.

Attention: All formal communication should have an attention-getter in the introduction to ensure that (1) you have the audience's attention and (2) you place the audience in the emotional and psychological mood you need them to be in to make the communication effective. The **Attention** component of Monroe's Motivated Sequence is an expansion of that rule. To fulfill this aspect of the sequence, your content must **maintain** the attention of the audience. Throughout the text, you must strategically place attention-getters that keep the audience from being distracted by internal or external noise. This may take the form of elaborating with startling facts and figures, emotional or illustrative narratives like success stories, and/or visual aids.

Need: Again, this is a term that you have seen in other handouts and outlines. The sequence dictates that to be persuasive, you must include content that establishes a need to follow your proposal. Remember, a proposal is a persuasive proposition of policy. This means that action must be warranted. The need for action must jump from your text. Don't over-do it, because overkill will de-sensitize your audience. Paying attention to the building blocks means that you will usually meet this criteria.

Significance: This means that the need you establish must come across as significant. All persuasive texts must meet this criteria. In a Lexus automobile commercial, for example, they focus very little on needs that relate to your need for reliable transportation or affordable luxury. Rather, the need for this car is associated with how much you love your spouse and family, how hard of a worker you are, and how much class you have. Thus, the need for this car, whether you can afford it or not, is a significant one, as the 30-second commercial would have you believe. It is a simple fact, that significant needs are more persuasive. Without overkill, you must strategically employ this concept. How many people are affected? What is the worst impact? What major values does it affect? Is the significance measurable?

Satisfaction: If you successfully establish a significant need, then your proposal should offer a plan for satisfaction. Be sure to indicate how your plan specifically eliminates a measurable amount of the need. Remember, this is not a zero-sum concept. Very rare is the plan that totally eliminates a problem. Your credibility is at stake. Claiming too much satisfaction can backfire in the trust department.

Visualization: Human beings are natural storytellers. Strategic communication must always adapt to this. In this component, you are using storytelling to allow your audience to "see" the benefits of your proposal. They should be able to read your proposal or listen to your presentation and "see" how the world will look after it is implemented. Specifically dedicate a portion of your content to paint a picture of how things will look after implementation of your proposed program or project.

Action: You will rarely see a successful persuasive text without this concept. Specifically tell your audience, in clear and plain language, what they should do next. For a commercial, they will end with, "Call your Southern California Lexus dealer," or "Go see Lord of the Rings: Return of the King today at a theater near you." Even though everyone knows what the proposal is for, there are too many reasons to mention here (communicative, psychological, even cultural) to explain why it is absolutely imperative that you specifically tell your audience exactly what to do with the content you have just provided. "The LACE Children's Theater respectfully requests that you grant our request for \$70,000 in support" is an example of a sentence that should not be forgotten. It seems obvious, but you would be surprised how many people omit this concept.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

ATTENTION

You must gain and maintain your audience's attention and place them in the emotional and psychological mood for your proposal.

NEED

You must establish the need for change within the current climate. Tell the audience what problems exist that merit immediate action.

SIGNIFICANCE

Once you have established the need, explain the importance and impact of the problem and/or need.

SATISFACTION

This step offers your program/project as the plan/solution for the aforementioned problem.

VISUALIZATION

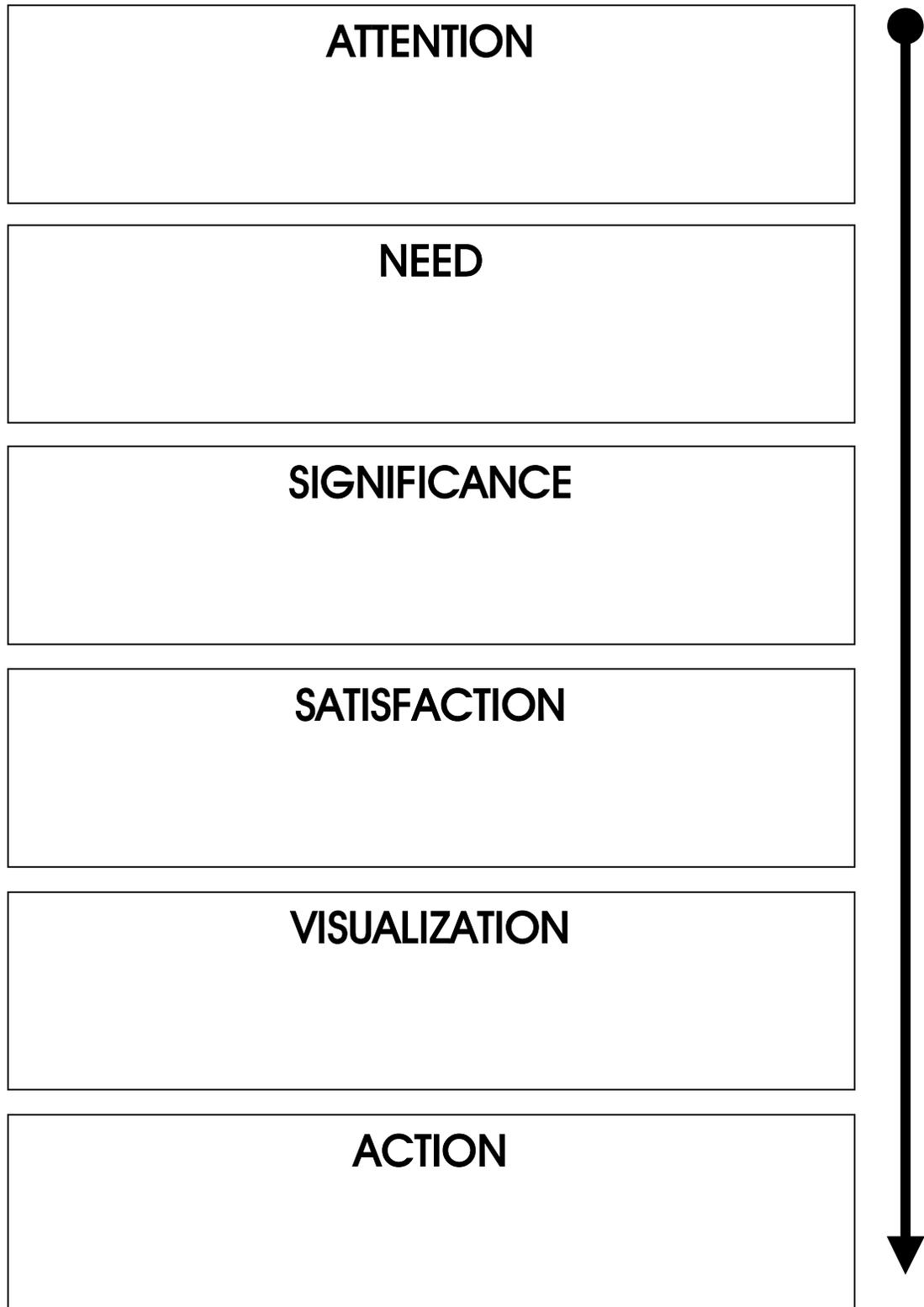
Help the audience visualize the benefits of implementing your program/project through the use of a story.

ACTION

Let the audience know the specific action they must take after reading or listening to your proposal.



Monroe's Motivated Sequence



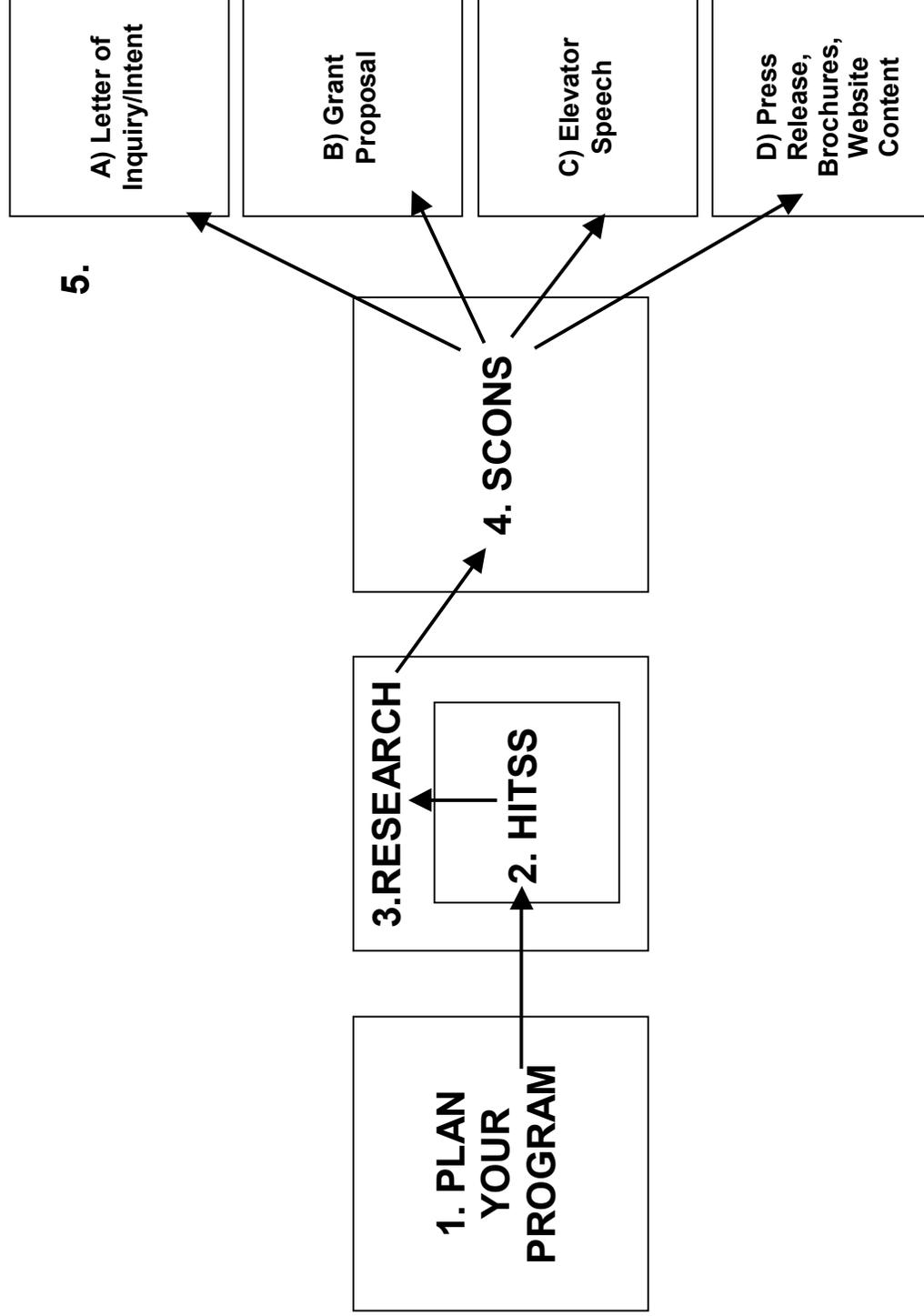
Writing It Up: Steps for Writing The Grant Proposal Using Building Blocks

Anthony Jones, *The Grant Institute*

1. **Plan the program.** Thinking about your program, its goals and objectives, from the perspective of evaluation is essential. Create SMART objectives and outline measurement criteria. Evaluation is a part of the program planning and proposal writing process and should not be “saved for later.”
Are your objectives SMART? Write them down.
Do your objectives filter from your mission or satisfy your specific aim?
2. **Write up your building blocks.** In addition to having an informal outline that summarizes your Harms, Inherency, Topicality, Solution (Solvency), and Significance, you should have a standard, conversational summary that you can verbally express in 2 minutes.
3. **Research.** The goal is to go from an informal H.I.T.S.S. outline to a *prima facie* outline. The *prima facie* outline is argumentatively solid because it includes well-researched support and evidence for the building blocks. Each building block must be built upon. To accomplish this, you should strengthen each one with two kinds of support: 1) Quantitative evidence, such as statistical evidence that provides a measurable picture of your point. 2) Exemplars, more qualitative support that not only give a more specific view of your point but which humanize the proposal. An example of a successful program, research need, or a client need usually satisfies this component.
4. **Write SCONS.** With the program planned and *prima facie* outline in hand, it is time to construct your proposal story. This story should include the program description and details, as well as your researched building blocks. Remember, the point of SCONS is to construct your story. Try not to think about your proposal format during this step.
5. **Adapt SCONS to your proposal format.** In some cases, you will be provided with a specific format. In others, you will use a general format of your choice. The Standard Grant Proposal format provided in the course handouts is a generally accepted one and adapts well into SCONS. In some instances, a grant application may only allow you to use some elements of SCONS; in other instances, you will find the entire outline necessary. The point is to have the entire narrative constructed so that you may adapt it according to the necessary format.
6. **Frame your proposal.** Be sure to make each proposal tailor-made for the funder. Being careful not to sacrifice your mission or specific aim, try to understand the funder’s story for a project/program such as yours, and make sure you’re speaking their language. Remember: we may all think homelessness is a major problem that needs to be solved, but we may not share the same story for what the problem is.

Think Strategy. Tell Your Story.

Writing It Up: Steps for Communicating Your Story Using Building Blocks



Suggested Reading

(The following list represents a solid introduction to the communication concepts presented. These are seminal texts in the field of communication studies which lay the foundation for current theory and practice.)

Bass, Jeff D. "The Appeal to Efficiency as Narrative Closure: Lyndon Johnson and the Dominican Crisis, 1965." *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 50 (1985): 103-20.

Bennett, W. Lance, and Murray Edelman. "Toward a New Political Narrative." *Journal of Communication* 35.Autumn (1985): 156-171.

Carlson, A. Cheree. "Narrative as the Philosopher's Stone: How Russell H. Conwell Changed Lead into Diamonds." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53.Fall (1989): 342-355.

Carpenter, Ronald H. "Admiral Mahan, 'Narrative Fidelity,' and the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 290-305.

Ehrenhaus, Peter. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: An Invitation to Argument." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 25.Fall (1988): 54-64.

Farrell, Thomas B. "Narrative in Natural Discourse: On Conversation and Rhetoric." *Journal of Communication* 35.Autumn (1985): 109-127.

Fisher, Walter R. "A Motive View of Communication." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 131-139.

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Hollihan, Thomas A., and Kevin T. Baaske. *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Processes of Human Decision Making*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
[argumentation textbook with narrative perspectives]

Hollihan, Thomas A., Kevin T. Baaske, and Patricia Riley. "Debaters as Storytellers: The Narrative Perspective in Academic Debate." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 23.Spring (1987): 184-193.

Hollihan, Thomas A. "Narrative Studies of Argument." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 25.Fall (1988): 47-48.

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