Thematic programme
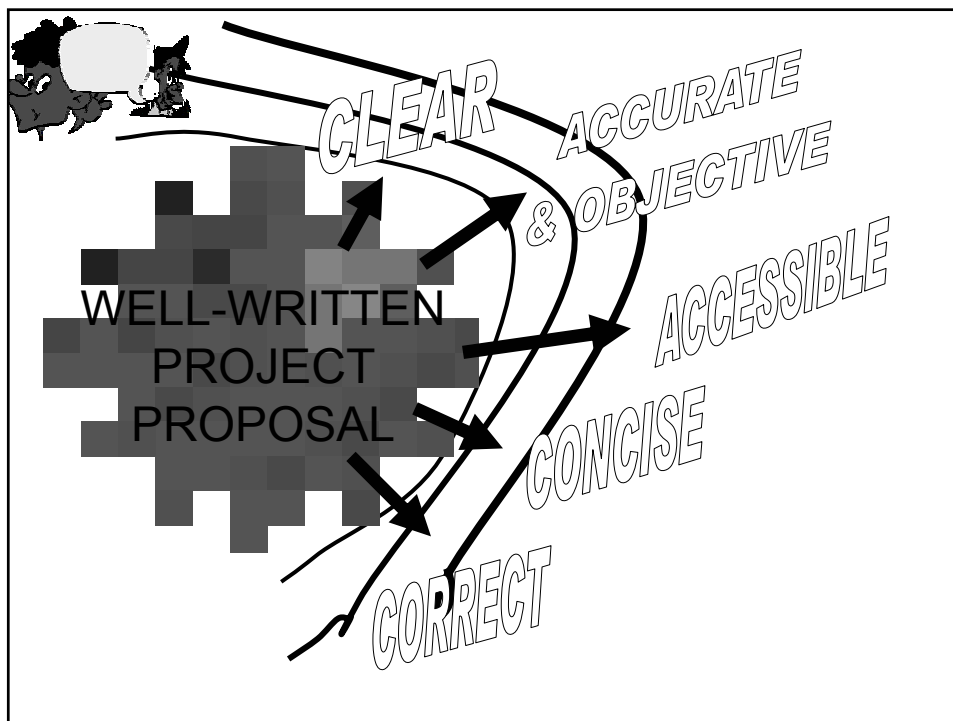"Non State Actors and Local Authorities in Development"

PROJECT DESIGN AND PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOP FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S GROUPS AND PARTNERS

MODULE 3:
TECHNICAL TIPS FOR PROPOSAL WRITING

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THE PHILIPPINES

SOFTSKILLSDEV CONSULTANCY

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…" |

TIP # 3

WRITING GOOD SENTENCES

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**

Independent clause 1	→	"The barangay residents get water from holes in the riverbank,
Independent clause 2		and many die from water-borne diseases because of
Dependent clause		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."

WRITING GOOD SENTENCES

Write mostly in the __ACTIVE VOICE__

ACTIVE VOICE Subject does the action	PASSIVE VOICE Subject receives the action
"__The boy__ ate the food."	"__The food__ was eaten by the boy."

☑SHORTER
☑EMPHASIZES THE DOER

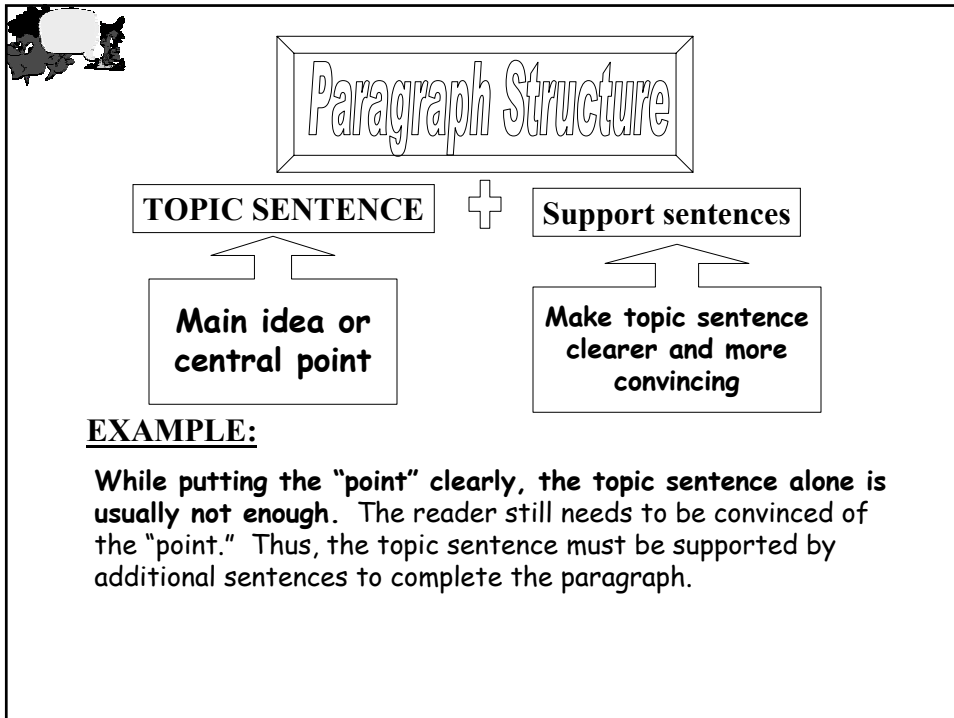Back to main discussion

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TIP # 4
WRITING GOOD PARAGRAPHS

Paragraph ⇨ 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.

Paragraph Structure

| TOPIC SENTENCE | ✛ | Support sentences |

Main idea or central point

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

How long should a paragraph be?

Good paragraphs should be SHORT.

Topic sentence
+ <u>4 or 5 support sentences</u>
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

TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING COHERENCE

- **Use of transitional words and phrases**

- **Repeating key words or phrases**

- **Use of demonstratives**

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

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"

EXAMPLES

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."

SOME FINAL TIPS
ON "COHERENCE TECHNIQUES"

→ **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.**

TIP # 5

USING HEADINGS AND LISTS

HEADING 1

Aς ΧΠΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΧΠΔΓ
ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΧΠΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ
ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΧΠΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ
Aς ΧΠΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ

ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΧΠΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ
ΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ ΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ

1. ΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς
2. ΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς
3. ΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΔΓ ΩAς
4. ΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΔΓ ΩΞΩΚ
5. ΔΓ ΩΞΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς
6. ΩΚΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς
7. ΧΠ ΘΩφ τδωπ Aς ΔΓ ΩΞΩΚ

MODULE 3 Proposal Writing Technical Tips

15

HEADINGS

Short phrases or single words

Divide sections or parts of a document

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.

Headings: examples

LEVEL 1 HEADING

LEVEL 2 HEADING

LEVEL 3 HEADING

LEVEL 2 HEADING

LEVEL 3 HEADING

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…

LISTS

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

A NUMBERED LIST

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

A BULLETED LIST