Guidelines for LDT Masters’ Project Proposals

December 2001

Your proposal should fit your ideas and the project you are proposing. The following guidelines specify what you are to include in your proposal and suggest how you might present them in your proposal. The lists of what to include are standards – be sure to include everything mentioned here. The suggestions about format here are defaults presented for your convenience only.

Imagine that you are writing this proposal to a sponsor who will authorize and fund the project. Depending on the project, the sponsor could be a school, a museum, a corporation, a government agency, or a foundation that supports development projects.

Your proposal should include the following parts.

Cover page
Title (subtitle optional)
Name(s) of project personnel
Learning Design & Technology Program, Stanford University
Date submitted
Signature lines for adviser and program director, with dates

I. Abstract
(Suggested length: one page, 300 words or less)
Mention the following:
your users;
the learning problem;
the product: what you propose to develop;
why you chose to work on it; the major benefits for you from working on it;
main benefits your product will provide for your users;
identity of sponsor, real or hypothetical;
description of setting and institutional background; how the project originated;
the main challenges you face in doing this project; how you propose to meet these challenges;
description of the design process you plan to use;
design studies you plan to do during development;
how you propose to assess what users learn from using your design.

II. The learning problem
(Suggested length: two pages, 600 words)
Statement of the learning problem your project will address.
Background of the learning problem: The larger social and institutional problems out of which your specific learning problem arises.
List the most important learning needs (suggest 3 or fewer needs)
Documentation for the existence and seriousness of the learning problem (references, data, reported and first-hand experience).

III. Review of existing alternatives
(Suggested length: two pages, 600 words)
Describe how people cope with this learning problem currently.
Critically assess the best available programs, whether technology-based or not, for addressing the learning problem. Say how you propose to take advantage of existing best practices in your project.

IV. Approach to be taken in this project
(Suggested length: three pages, 900 words)
Theoretical framework
Learning theories, design principles, and design methods you plan to use.
Rationale for the framework
How it fits the learning problem and goes beyond existing alternatives.
Technologies you plan to consider or use
Why these technologies are appropriate; what they add to the most promising existing alternatives.

V. Project plan
(Suggested length: four pages, 1200 words)
Concept
Description of the design as you currently envision it
Diagram, sketch, schematic, or other visual(s) showing your concept
List of the key features of the proposed design with brief explanation and rationale for each feature
Methods
Brief description of the methods you will use to develop the project. Include all important steps you have taken and plan to take such as: design studies, literature review, assessment of existing alternatives, production of prototypes, tryouts of prototypes with users, development of assessment instruments, analysis of assessment data, revision of prototypes, and preparation of final report.

Plan for user testing and learning assessment
How will you determine if the learning problem has been successfully addressed?
What questions do you plan to focus on answering?
What kinds of evidence will you collect?
What methods of inquiry will you use to collect this evidence? What users, occasions, treatments, and outcomes will you study?
How will you analyze and interpret your findings?

Plan for collaboration
For collaborative projects, how will the work and responsibilities be divided? How will individuals' contributions be incorporated into the group product?
Questions remaining
What are the most important questions that remain undecided as you begin work on this project?

VI. References
Alphabetical list of articles and books that will be useful to this project.

VII. Appendices
Deliverables/Milestones
Proposal
Report of design studies, including literature review
Prototype, with rationale
User testing and learning assessment plans
Report of results from user testing and learning assessment
Suggestions for revisions of the prototype for next version

Milestones:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 18, 2002</td>
<td>Project proposal submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 1, 2002</td>
<td>Project proposals approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date ?</td>
<td>Design studies complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date ?</td>
<td>Prototype design complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date ?</td>
<td>Plans for user testing and learning assessment complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date ?</td>
<td>User testing and learning assessment complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17, 2002</td>
<td>Exhibition</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 3, 2002</td>
<td>Final report submitted</td>
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Budget
Give time allocations for all personnel in hours for each step in the process.
Charge at an appropriate hourly rate.
Budget for all out of pocket costs of materials, personnel, travel, etc.

Qualifications
Knowledge, skill, and experience you bring to this project
Brief summary of accomplishments that shows your preparation for undertaking this project.
Learning agenda: Knowledge, skill, and experience you plan to gain during your work on this project.

Contributors / Collaborators
Others who will bring additional knowledge, skill, and experience to the project.

Resources
List of resources needed for the project, including access to technology, field sites, materials, and other.