

# Basics of writing a research proposal

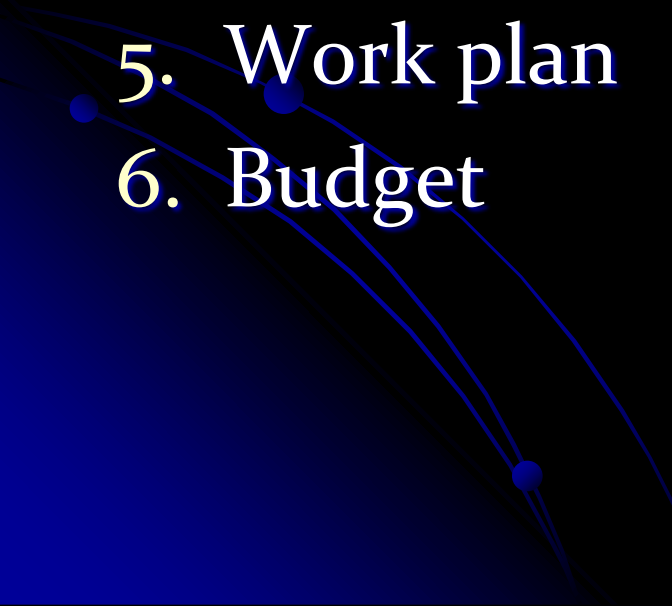
**Ketkesone Phrasisombath**

MD, MPH, PhD (candidate)

**Faculty of Postgraduate Studies and Research  
University of Health Sciences**

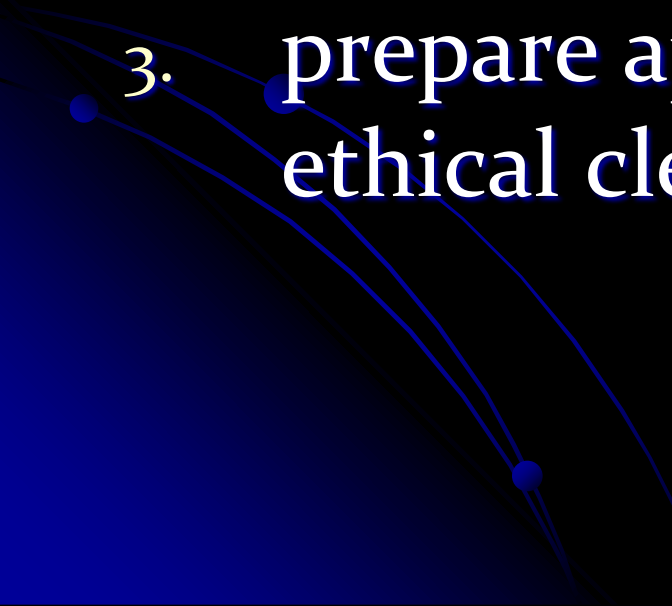
**Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research  
Training Course, Vientiane, Laos  
23 September, 2009**

# Contents

1. What is a research proposal?
  2. Outline of research proposal
  3. Writing a research proposal
  4. Ethical considerations
  5. Work plan
  6. Budget
- 

# End of this session

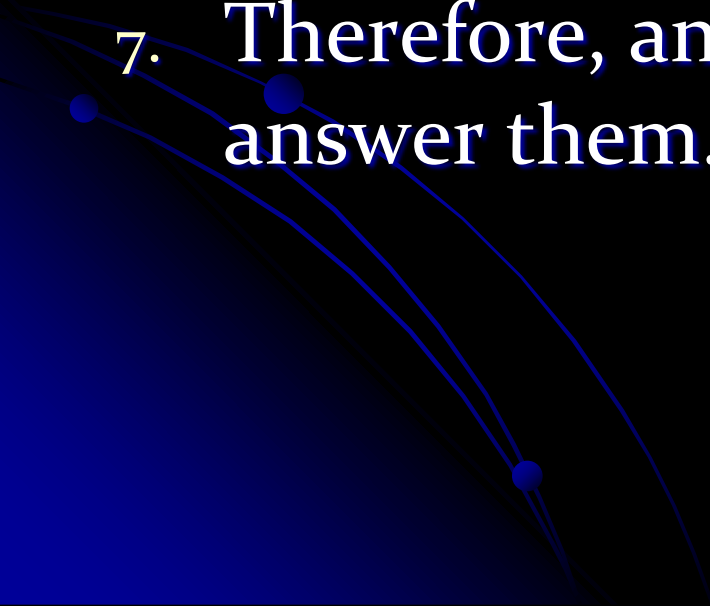
Participants are able to:

1. state and define the concept of writing a research proposal
  2. develop a research proposal
  3. prepare appropriate work plan, ethical clearance and budget.
- 

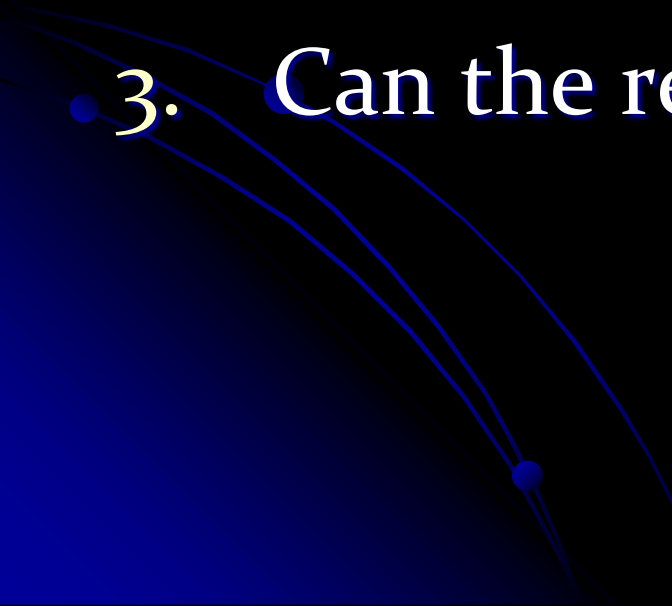
# What is a research proposal?

The research proposal is a piece of document which states:

1. What the proposed research is about.
2. What it is trying to find out or achieve.
3. How you will go about doing that.
4. **It is also an argument which needs to demonstrate rationality.**

5. So argue to convince the audience of the merits of your proposal, don't just describe.
  6. It needs to be a 'stand alone' document – it will be read by people who have not discussed the work with the researchers.
  7. Therefore, anticipate questions and answer them.
- 

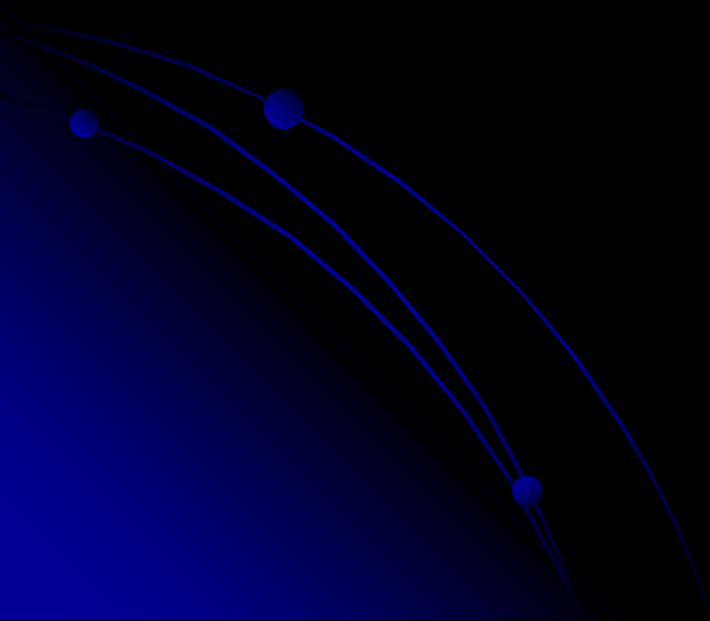
The audience will have 3 main questions when they read the proposal:

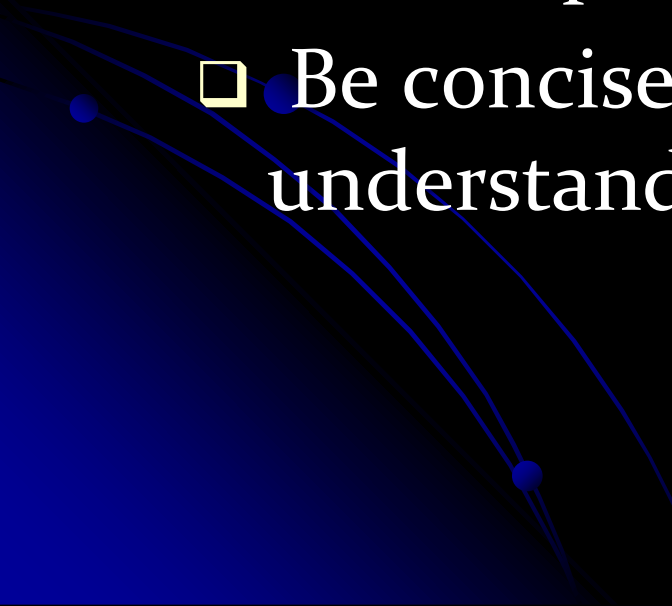
1. Is the research *worth doing?*
  2. Is the research *design coherent?*
  3. Can the researcher *carry out it?*
- 

# Proposal as a means of communication

The proposal is a **communication** to those who give approval and disburse budget.


Therefore the proposal must be **clear and comprehensive.**



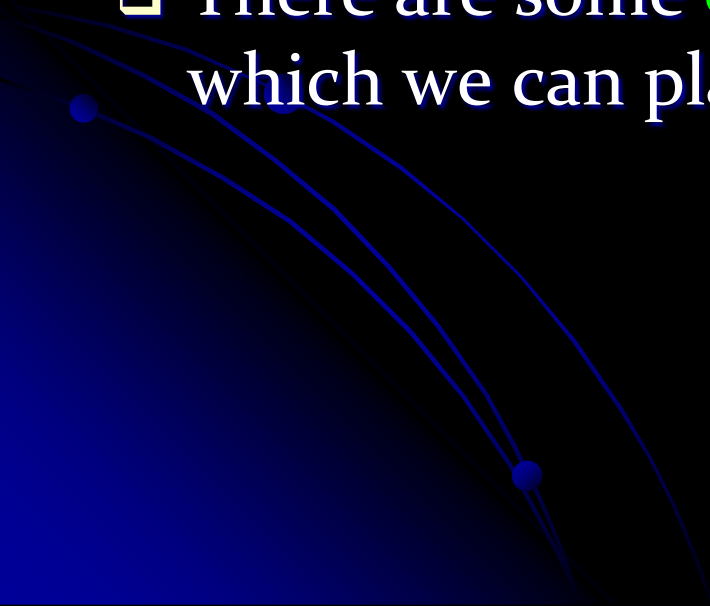
- ❑ Keep it terminology free
  - ❑ Use few abbreviations and acronyms
  - ❑ Don't assume previous knowledge
  - ❑ Avoid spelling errors
  - ❑ Be concise and make your sentences understandable on first reading
- 



# Proposal as a Plan

- The proposal is a **plan of action**.
  - An adequate proposal sets forth the plan in **step-by-step detail**.
  - All empirical research consists of a careful, **systematic and planned** investigation of some restricted set of phenomena.
- 

# Proposal as a contract

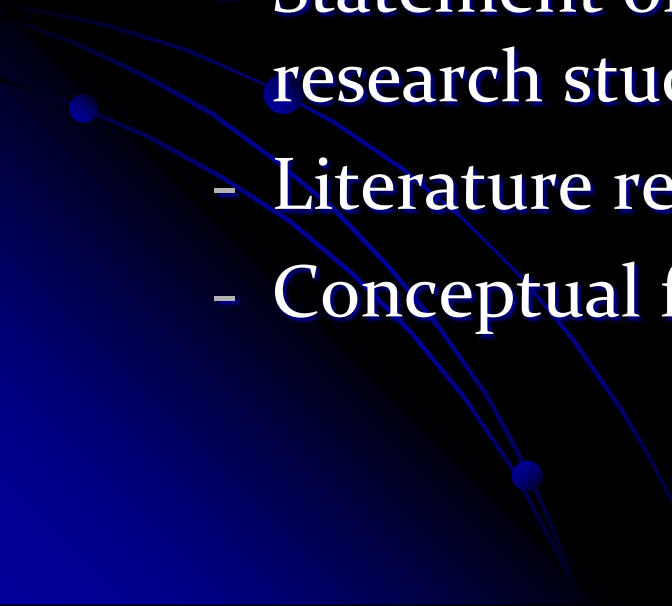
- ❑ A completed proposal approved by a research or funding committee constitutes **an agreement**.
  - ❑ Research design can **not be changed** when the approval is done.
  - ❑ There are some **constraints** on the degree to which we can plan things.
- 

# Outline of the research proposal

Table of contents


Abstract/Summary

1. Introduction

- Background to the research
  - Statement of value and rationale for the research study
  - Literature review
  - Conceptual framework
- 

2. Research questions and research objectives

3. **Research methods**

- Study type and data collection procedures
  - Sampling strategy and sample size
  - Plan for data collection
  - Plan for data analysis
  - Plan for dealing with threats to trustworthiness
  - Ethical considerations
- 

#### **4. Work plan or project management**

- Staffing and work plan, including timeline
- Administration and monitoring
- Plan for utilization and dissemination of results

#### **5. Budget**

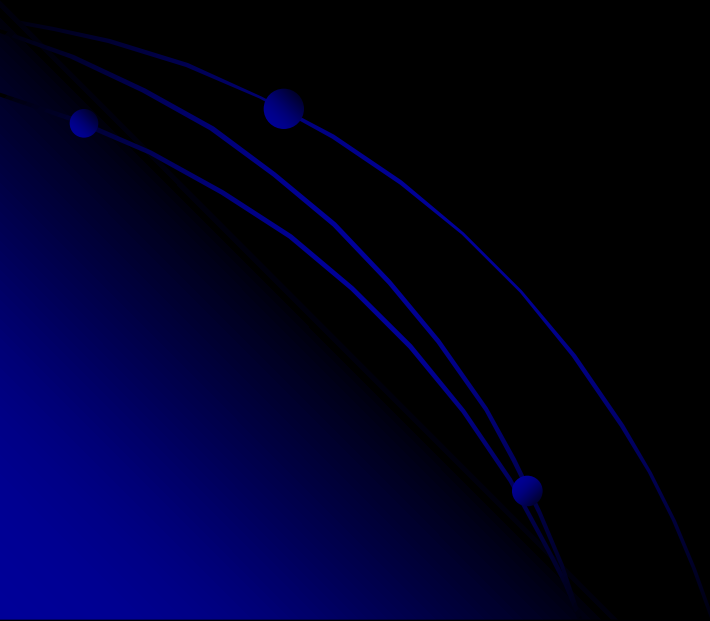
- Itemized budget
  - Budget justification
- 

# Annexes

Annex 1 References

Annex 2 List of abbreviations and acronyms

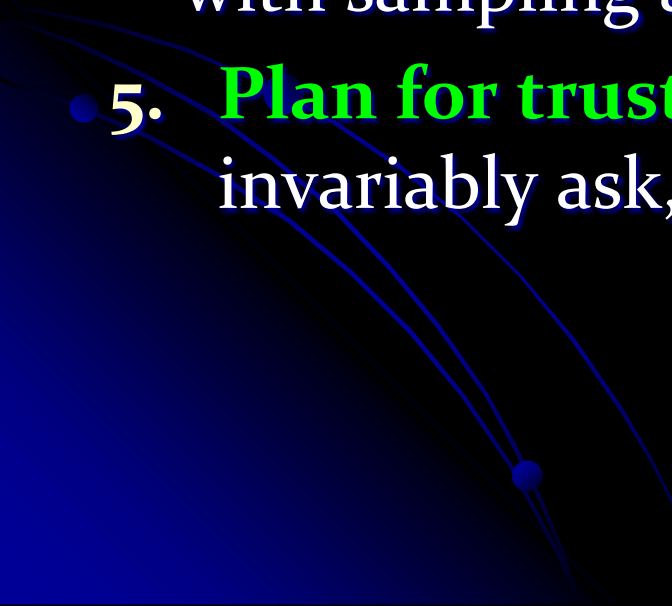
Annex 3 Interview guidelines, observation check-list, etc.



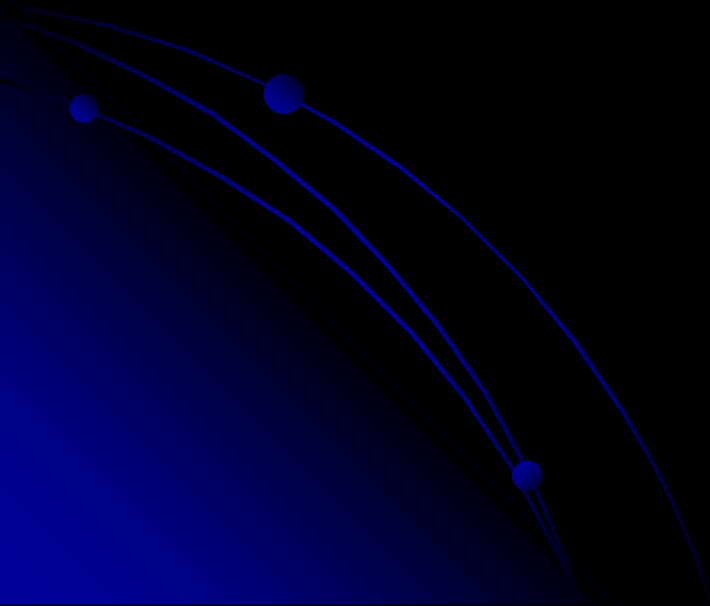
# Writing a research proposal

In general we consider:

1. **Explain** the approach you have adopted.
2. **Make absolutely clear** that a particular design is appropriate to your purpose and research questions.
3. Describe what you will do from the start to the finish of your research. If there is a need for **flexibility**, state what and why.

3. **Build a framework.** Present a conceptual framework that helps to explain and clarify your proposed design.
  4. **Articulate the parts.** Take special care at each step to write brief but explicit explanations of how the parts fit together– purpose with questions, framework with questions, questions with sampling and methods.
  5. **Plan for trustworthiness.** Readers will invariably ask, “Why should I believe you?”
- 

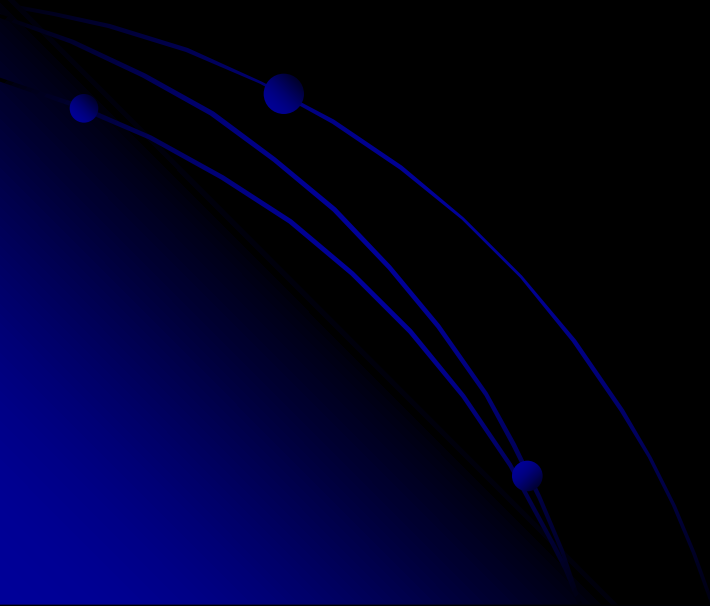


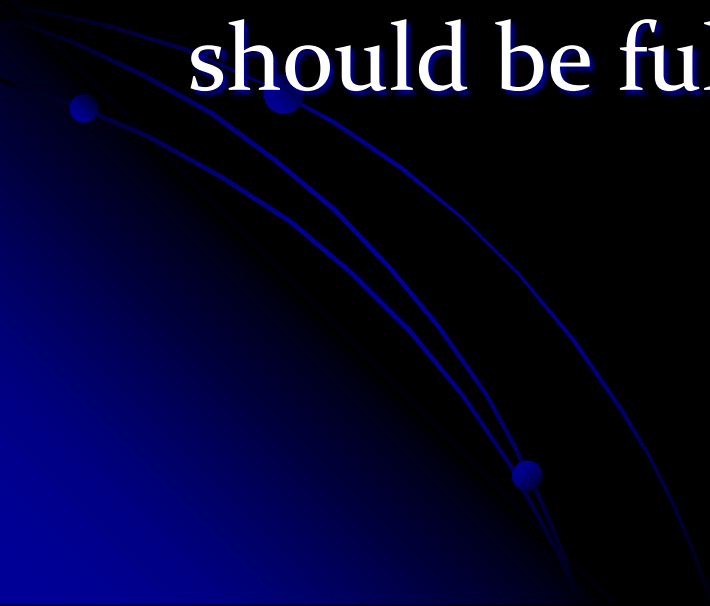
6. Are your **personal biases** a threat? If not, why not? If they are, how will you deal with them?
  7. **Illustrate analyses.** Discuss your plans for analysis, giving practical examples where possible.
  8. **Plan for records.** Explain how you will manage the data or a paper trail.
  9. **Don't anticipate findings.** Be careful about using language that appears to anticipate a finding.
- 

# Ethical considerations

People who are asked to participate in a study have a right to know:

- ❑ What it **fully involves**.
- ❑ What **implications** there are for them or others close to them.
- ❑ How it could effect them **negatively or positively**.

- Participants should be informed of the research purpose and of their **role** in terms of time and effort.
  - Participants should be informed of procedures used to **protect their anonymity**.
- 

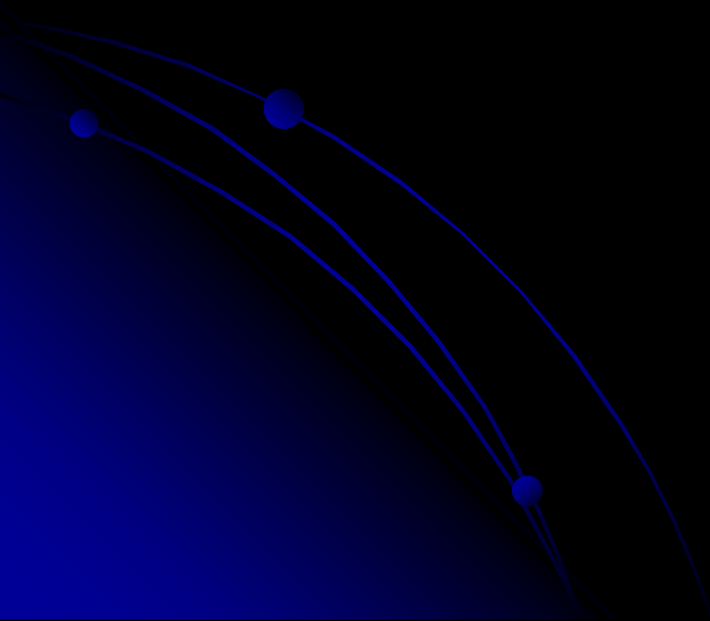
- ❑ In experimental studies, participants should receive an explanation of **all treatment procedures** to be used (discomforts or risks involved).
  - ❑ Procedures used to protect well-being should be fully explained.
- 

- Participants should be told what **benefits** they will receive if they participate in the study.
- Participants should be **fully instructed** that they are free to withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time without the need to justify the decision and without prejudice.
- Participants should be offered the opportunity to **receive feedback** about the results of the study.

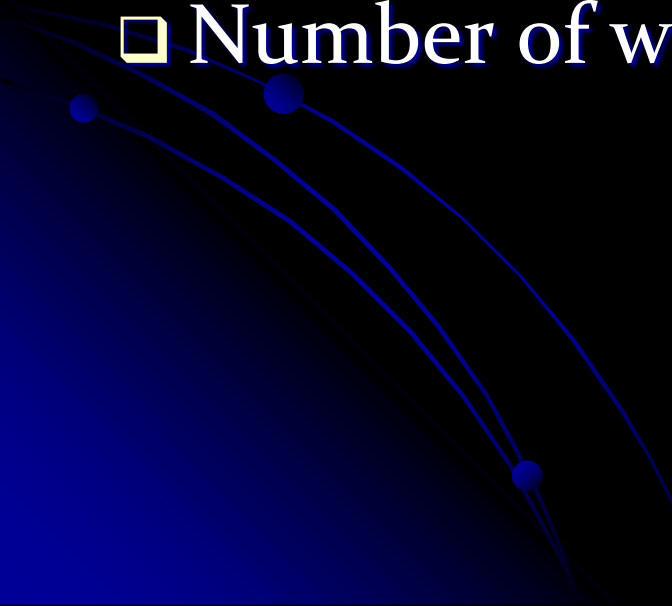
# Work plan

## What is a work plan?

A work plan is a schedule, chart or graph that summarizes the different components of a research project.



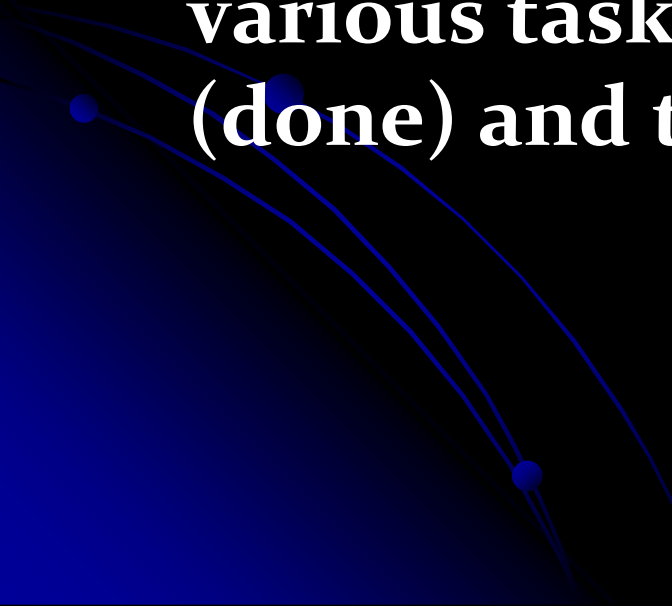
# What should be included in the work plan?

- The tasks to be implemented.
  - The start and end date of each task.
  - Research team, assistants, supporting staffs.
  - Number of working days per person, etc.
- 

# The Gantt Chart

## What is The Gantt Chart?

**The Gantt Chart is a planning tool which shows graphically the order in which various tasks must be implemented (done) and the duration of each activity**





# Example of a Gantt Chart

Tasks to be performed	Person assigned	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Finalized research proposal	Research team	✓						
2. Train research assistants and pretest instrument	Principal invest. and research team		✓					
3. Data collection	Research team		✓	✓				
4. Prepare for data entry	Hire one statistician			✓				
5. Data cleaning and preliminary analysis	Principal invest. and statistician			✓	✓			
5. Data analysis and report writing	Principal invest. and local authorities				✓	✓		
6. Finalize report	Research team						✓	
7. Discuss recommendations/ plan of action	Research team/MOH and local authorities						✓	✓
7. Presentation and dissemination	Research team/Policy maker MOH							✓

# Budget

Budget preparation should consider:

- ❑ Estimation of the time needed to complete project tasks in reality “**Real World**”.
- ❑ Include a **5% contingency**.
- ❑ Provide not very detailed categories and amount “**consider regulation**”.
- ❑ A contribution from Gov. side or Depart.  
Try to arrange the contribution separately.

## Example of Budget for Safer Driving Promotion Program

Budget items	Unit cost	Multiplying factors	Total cost (US\$)	Remark
1. Resource persons Counselors Health professional Traffic expert Vehicle expert Policy maker	Daily wage (include per diem)	Number of staff-day x of working days	3000	Invited
2. Brochures Leaflets Posters	\$ 1.00 \$ 3.00	1 x 500 pieces 3 x 500 post.	500 1,500	
3. Visualization Microphones Loud speakers Display monitors CD-Rom	\$ 10 \$ 100 \$ 200	10 x 3 Mic. 100 x 2 loud speak. 200 x 2 Monitors	30 200 400	
4. Vehicles Car (rental include driver) Motorcycles	\$ 120 \$ 12	120 x 30 days 12 x 2 x 30 days	360 720	Consider the local economy
5. Office supplies Toner (laser toner) Pens	\$ 75 \$ 0.30	75 x 2 boxes 0.30 x 500	150 150	
Grand total			US\$ 7, 280	

Thank you

