

# Project Proposal

### Overview

- The Project Option entails one large, documentary-style work of journalism.
- It's your opportunity to conduct an ambitious investigation or create a comprehensive public information project outside of the deadline pressures of daily journalism.
- Depending on your preference and expertise, you will tell your project as a long-form magazine piece; a video documentary; a radio feature; a multimedia package, or a serialized narrative.
- Candidates register for 6 Professional Project credits as they work on their project.
- A faculty committee needs to be seated *before* the student starts working on the master's project, typically before the student's third semester of residency at UM.

### Specifications

- A successful proposal will argue that the project represents an *original and in-depth* contribution to the public knowledge of environmental science or natural resources.
- You will support that contention with a detailed explanation of how the work will advance public knowledge on the theme. That explanation should include a *story pitch*.
- Your proposal must include an explanation of the *media* you anticipate using to tell your story, as well as your strategy for developing and practicing the skills you need.
- Spell out the *potential for publication* and include examples of established, reputable news outlets that you know to be interested in a story such as you have chosen.
- In addition, the proposal should address any *ethical concerns* associated with producing work related to this topic.
- Include a projected assessment of *costs* you expect to incur in doing the research and propose sources of funding. All proposals must include an annotated *bibliography*, as well as a discussion of potential *committee* members, focusing on their expertise.
- Your draft proposal will be your calling card when you start enlisting committee members. Often, committee chairs will expect you to *update* your proposal frequently as you work on your Master's project.

### Template

#### 1 Abstract

Summarize and pitch your project in 500 words or less.

- State your topic and your interest in it.
- Establish the greater context and news value of your topic.
- Pitch your story idea and name your target audience.
- Make a strong argument on how your work will advance public knowledge.
- Provide answers to these 3 questions: What's the point? Why now? Why you?

#### 2 Resume

Include a professional resume of no more than 2 pages.

#### 3 Pre-Reporting

By now, you know: Pre-reporting doesn't equal reporting. Therefore, begin with laying out the preliminary research you've done and plan to do, to get ready for reporting your story.

- List and describe previous journalistic coverage of the topic.

- List and describe previous scholarly work on the topic.
- List and describe comparable bodies of work.
- List and describe sources for background research.
- Discuss how your planned externship might further your project.
- If necessary, describe how you will acquire specific skills for your project.
- Discuss ethical issues associated with your project.

#### **4 Reporting and Production**

Describe the anticipated reporting and production phase of your project.

- Formulate two alternative story pitches of 150 words or less.
- List and assess availability of sources, including individuals, experts, documents, websites, institutions, organizations and databases.
- Describe the media you want to use to tell your story.
- Draw up a cost estimate, including travel and technology.
- List and describe possible sources of funding, including application deadlines.

#### **5 Publication**

Describe how you plan to publish or otherwise disseminate your work.

- List and assess possible venues of publication.
- List and assess award contests you want to enter.
- List and assess conferences you want to present at.

#### **6 Committee**

Propose a 3-member committee for your master's portfolio.

- Identify a J-School faculty member as potential chair of your committee.
- Identify another J-School faculty member as second member.
- Identify a faculty member from a relevant department as third member.
- Refer to their areas of interest and expertise, and discuss your familiarity with them, in supporting your choice.

#### **7 Timeline**

Draw up a timeline on when you plan to complete each phase of your master's work.

- Preliminary research and staging of story production
- Externship
- Coursework
- Distinct reporting phases, including travel
- Application deadlines for funds and awards
- Conferences
- Committee appointments
- Production phase
- Defense date

*Please update this timeline each time you re-submit your proposal.*

#### **8 Bibliography**

Document every source you've used for your proposal.