Writing a proposal in a manner which clearly defines a clinical problem, research questions, hypotheses, and expected benefits of the research is critical to the success of a project. The burden of proposal writing rests primarily with the principal investigator.

A principal investigator should roughly develop his or her proposal to the point where personnel, equipment, facility space, and other support requirement can be estimated. The investigator should then discuss these plans with his or her department chief in order to assure consistency with departmental mission and objectives.

The content and style of a proposal must match an external funding source's requirements. A general proposal is offered here. This outline can be used for generic proposal development and is suitable for all internally-funded proposals at St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network.

1. **IRB Application Form**

2. **Title page**
   - Unless a specific format is supplied by a funding source, a suggested title page includes:
   - the name of the agency to which the proposal is being submitted (if externally funded)
   - the name of the department and of St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network
   - the title of the proposed project,
   - the name of the principal investigator, co-investigators, and other members of the multidisciplinary research team
   - a place for the principal investigator's signature
   - a place for the signature of the department chief
   - the date of submission to the REC
   - the proposed project period

3. **Abstract**
   The abstract should be a condensed version of the proposal, usually no more than 200 to 250 words. State concisely the purpose and significance of your research, the methodology, and the time span of the project. Bear in mind that you may be writing for a well-informed layperson and not an expert in your field. Remember also that the abstract is extremely important in creating a favorable first impression of your proposal.

4. **Table of Contents**
   (Optional)

5. **List of Tables**
   (Optional)

6. **List of Figures**
   (Optional)

7. **Introduction**
   In the introduction, the proposal should be set within a background of previous and related research. Indicate here the purpose and clinical significance of your project. The relationship of the project to the interests of the funding agency may be stressed tactfully.

8. **Research Questions and Hypotheses**
   In this section, state your research questions and hypotheses. A research question must be free of ambiguity, express a relationship among variables, and imply an empirical investigation which can be tested with null and alternative hypotheses. A research question must be clinically significant, that is, it must pass the "So what?" test.

9. **Methods and Procedures**
   This section gives the details on clinical procedures, research design, and the analytic plan. Design sensitivity issues, including statistical power analysis, should be explicated.

10. **Plan for the Dissemination of Project Results**
    This section should indicate presentation and publication plans. External funding sources may require specific venues for distribution of project results

11. **Budget**
    The researcher must estimate, with reasonable accuracy, the costs of performing the research. To underestimate might lead reviewers to the conclusion that you do not know the full extent and complexity of the research and therefore should not be funded. On the other hand, an extreme overestimation of funds required could lead to disapproval for precisely the same reasons. In addition to personnel salaries and benefits, (if applicable), budgets should include a section on equipment and facilities to be used on the research project. It is extremely important that major items of equipment and facilities either requested or being supplied in-house are clearly identified so that reviewers will not question whether or not you have the items necessary to do the proposed research. In addition, many federal agencies now require certification as to the non-availability of capital equipment at the time of proposal submission.
    Sample budgets are available in the Research Institute. Principal investigators are encouraged to discuss funding options with the Director of the Research Institute prior to proposal submission. Funding sources may include:

    o **Research Institute General Research Fund**
      (Empirical projects with residents as co-investigators receive priority. This fund is a line item in the Research Institute's annual operating budget.)

    o **Research Institute Educational Grants**
      (This is a fund for first empirical research projects in which residents, nursing students, and other students are co-investigators. Funds are available for direct costs, including costs associated with presentation of project results at peer-reviewed conferences. Proposals must include clearly delineated educational objectives for the student co-investigators. This fund will become effective in the Fall of 1999.)

    o **Departmental funds**

    o **External funds**

12. **Personnel Qualifications**
    The qualifications of the research staff should be presented. This may be done simply by including the curricula vitae of the research team members.

13. **References**
    This section is a list of references cited in the proposal.

14. **Tables and Figures**

15. **Appendix**
    The use of an appendix is recommended, particularly when a sponsor limits the length of the proposal to a specified number of pages. The contents of the appendix may include:

    o Subject consent forms (required for research needing IRB approval
    o Copies of survey instruments
    o Questions for structured interviews
    o Supplementary bibliographies
    o Data of peripheral benefit to the research, e.g., reprints of articles, subcontract data, etc.
    o Letters of support