Worksheet
Preparing a Strong Proposal
Developed by Emily Bhargava of Connection Lab LLC

1. Don't run out of time

- Plan ahead and take advantage of the skills of all of your colleagues. Use the following chart to plan your proposal preparation
- Work BACKWARDS from the date you want to submit the proposal

Task	When it will be done	Who will do it?
Fill out this worksheet		
Sit down with the questions to "bullet" ideas for answers		
Turn the bullets into written paragraphs		
Do a first edit to make the writing read smoothly		
Read along with the questions to see whether every part of every question has been answered		
Final edit to look for spelling errors and formatting		
Print/Copy/staple etc.		
Submit proposal	(One week before it's due)	

(You'll be surprised at how many people enjoy the careful editing and how easy it is to come up with ideas for the bullets if you're not trying to write at the same time.)

2. Be clear about what you're trying to accomplish

- Hand someone else the questions:

    1. "Why are you doing this project?"
    2. "What will be different because of the project?"

- Ask them to read them to you and write down exactly what you say. These are your outcomes. Some will be things that happen right away because you've done what you plan to do. These are your short-term outcomes. Others will be things that you hope will happen over time or will happen indirectly as a result of you doing your project. These are longer-term outcomes.

You can use the following chart to write down your answers:

Activity/project	Short-term outcomes (things that happen right away once you've done what you plan to do)	Longer-term outcomes (things that you hope will happen over time or will happen indirectly as a result of your project)

Remember, be creative about what activities you do. Do an online search for ideas of what other people have tried. Talk to colleagues about ideas. Think about ways to genuinely engage your community and/or your clientele in developing ideas and in carrying them out.

3. **Make sure your idea will work/ check for an evidence base**

- See whether there's any evidence out there that your idea will work. See whether anyone has tried something like it. Were they like you? If not, how would you need to change their idea to suit your organization and its clientele?
- Explain in plain language why you think your idea will work. If it's hard to use plain language when you write, ask someone to write down what you say while you explain it to them.
- Check with constituents or clients to see whether they think it will work. Give them plenty of space to say no and to explain what they think would work better.

This idea will work because _____ and
_____.

4. **Convince the grant reviewers that your project is important**

Fill in the blank in this sentence:

This is an important project because
_____.

- Try the sentence out on someone in real life. See if they're convinced.
- Be sure to include a mix of qualitative and quantitative data (stories or anecdotes and numbers).
- Include data to indicate that the need is real. You could:

    ➢ Look at your own program data
    ➢ Check MassCHIP to find data for your community
    ➢ Use pubmed to find literature to support any claims you make about correlation and causality
    ➢ Look at CHNA 15's community health assessment
    ➢ Talk to people in the community about their concerns
    ➢ Ask local police for data
    ➢ Ask the schools whether they have data including YRBS surveys
    ➢ Talk to community coalitions about what they use to guide their work

5. Make a plan to evaluate your success

- Make sure that at least your short-term outcomes, if not all of them, are measurable. How will you know if they've happened? If you realize that you won't be able to tell, change your outcomes to be something that you can actually track.

To guide your thinking, add measurement columns to the chart above:

Activity/project	Short-term outcomes	Plan for how to measure them	Longer-term outcomes	Plan for how to measure them

6. Plan for sustainability after the grant ends

What can you do?
- Focus on sustainability of the IMPACTS of the project, not about just continuing the activity.
- Consider whether what you create will exist beyond the grant cycle.
- Think about the many ways that sustainability can be achieved. To help spark your thinking, brainstorm ideas for how to maintain the impact using the following "PEARS" categories:

P~ass it On/ Policy~

E~arn~

A~sk~

R~edevelop~

S~hare~

7. Make sure your budget adds up!

- Check it twice!

First check: Have someone else (preferably someone who looks at budgets as part of their job) check the math

Second check: Have someone else (preferably someone who **doesn't** look at budgets as part of their job) check to see whether the budget and the narrative make sense