MEG’S CHECKLIST for Specific Aims drafts

Questions to ask yourself

Based on comments I typically see in Summary Statements

- Are my Aims related, but able to stand alone if necessary? If possible, failure on the first Aim should not mean you cannot continue with the project.

- Do I anticipate concerns about recruitment or retention? Assure reviewers that you are aware of competition for recruitment and sources of attrition toward project completion.

- Is my N large enough to power the study?

- Do my Aims sound like methods? Methods are used to accomplish your aims.

- Do I state my hypotheses? Is the work hypothesis-driven?

- Are there deliverables associated with each Aim? Not strictly necessary, but nice if you are able to map to timeline, determine when you have accomplished the goal (yes/no) and succeeded (yes/no). You will have to address these questions in progress reports.

- If appropriate, have I underscored my project’s relevance to medically underserved populations, including rural communities, racial/ethnic minorities, low SES groups, and disabled individuals?

- Have I discussed my preliminary data, and stated if they support my hypotheses?

- If working with a clinical population, and especially if that population is medically underserved, is the target population (or a representative) involved in the design of the study? Do the PIs have “buy-in” from the community? Are they seen as credible and trustworthy?

- Is my project overly ambitious; is the study design too diffuse? This comment may be the most frequent I see on Summary Statements for junior faculty. Make sure you can accomplish your Aims with the time/budget allowed; design Aims in publishable units.

- If the project is a basic science study with an eventual clinical application, do I have representation from that clinical community? Bring on an M.D. as consultant at 5% effort.

- Will I explore differences in race/ethnicity, sex, ages? If not, be sure to at least include such language in the Future Directions section of the Approach.

- Do I mention our competitive advantage—a technique, database, software program, prestigious person/institution, access to an unusual population, etc. that sets us apart?

Gather more strategies via my

Specific Aims Training Course