Program Proposal- What is it?

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The **Program Proposal** is a key document in the production process. Essentially, it's an executive summary of the project containing all pertinent information from title to budget. Its style varies widely and is dependent on the type of production (E.g., narrative vs. nonfiction/documentary). Program proposals usually address some or all the points outlined below.

- **Title** - Always have a working title. It's tough to pitch a show without one.
- **Synopsis / Show description** - What is your show about? Do you have a log line? Describe the story in a paragraph or two.
- **Characters / Location** - Describe key characters and significant locations or settings.
- **Objective** - If applicable, state what the show will accomplish. Fictitious stories don't usually have clear objectives, but can teach values, lessons, and history while entertaining an audience. Non-fiction programs usually have specific objectives.
    - Example: After watching "**Be a Big!**" viewers will understand three things that Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteers do and will want to sign up to be a volunteer.
- **Target audience** - Who are you trying to reach? Narrative films are sometimes suitable for general audiences but often target specific age ranges (**Inside Out** vs **Y tu mamá también**). Educational/non-fiction programming is usually developed for specific target audiences. Consider the different audiences for these shows: "You Can Learn to Sail!", "What Every Single Parent Should Know", or "Strategies for Selling Your Home".
- **Format & Length** - How long is it and what format? Is it in HD or 4K? Is it a documentary, a cartoon, a reality show, a talk show? Is it shot in a studio, on location, or a multi-part series?
- **Visual Approach** - Describe the visual look your project will have using words, storyboards, or a mood board.
- Venue - Where will this be shown? (TV, streaming platform, web, film festival, conference, etc.)
- **Production method/plan** - Specify the production strategy, personnel, facility use, number of cameras, special audio needs, use of historic or pre-existing footage, etc.
- **Tentative budget** - While student productions typically don't have large budgets, this would be addressed in a proposal for a professional production. Time and money are always key and limiting factors in any production.
- **Schedule** - How long will production take?
- **Treatment** - A treatment is an abbreviated narrative description of the story. It doesn't contain detailed production information, but should concisely describe the story, the act structure, and the scenes within the acts. Treatments can show precisely how the story flows by describing the dialog and action of every scene. (If the scene does not advance the character or the story, cut it out!) Treatments for shorter programs can be included in a proposal. Treatments for long-form programs and movies (which can be 50 pages or more) are stand-alone documents.