THE INVESTIGATIVE PLAN

Why put together an investigative work plan? Why write it down?

- Serves as your ROAD MAP
- Convinces your editors/producers that you’re serious about the investigation

What editors/producers look for when you say you want to do an investigative project:
- Specialist knowledge
- Access to human, paper and digital sources
- Resources: Time, manpower, money
- Risks and repercussions of running the story
- Story’s competitive, dramatic value and relevance to the audience
- Reporter’s own history, relationships or interest (PASSION)

Step 1: STORY IDEA RATIONALE
- Does this story merits an investigation?
- What’s the reason? (Rationale)
- What’s the significance? Is it of public interest?
- Why should the audience care? Will there be an impact?
- Are there trails and leads to follow?
- Can you do it within a reasonable amount of time?

Step 2: Investigative HYPOTHESIS
- What is the focus of your investigation?
- What is it you want to prove or disprove?
- State the hypothesis in no more than three sentences

Step 3: MINIMUM and MAXIMUM
- What is the maximum story that can come out of my investigation?
- If my hypothesis is wrong or inadequate, what is the minimum story that can come out of my investigation?
STEP 4: LIKELY SOURCES
- Who are your likely sources?
- Classify them according to PAPER, HUMAN and DIGITAL
- What can they tell you?
- Where are they? List their contact details
- How will you get to them?
- Who is the most important? Who is the least important? Rank them according to order of importance

STEP 5: SMOKING GUN
- What primary sources are needed?
- What is the possible smoking gun evidence? (Optional)

STEP 6: STRATEGIES/METHODS
- What is the most appropriate method for each source?
- Interview, filing a request for documents, observation, survey, online search, database downloading, immersion, undercover reporting, others
- What questions do I have to ask sources?
- How will I convince difficult sources to cooperate?
- Are there unconventional reporting methods I must resort to? Are they ethical? Are they justified?
- If Plan A fails, what’s Plan B?

STEP 7: ADEQUACY OF PROOF (Optional)
- What criteria should I use as basis for saying that I have enough proof to back up my investigative hypothesis?

STEP 8: TIMELINE
- What long will the investigation take?
- How much time (Days? Weeks? Months?) should I allot for:
  - Background research
  - Field work
  - Initial evaluation
  - Additional field work
  - Organizing info
  - Producing the story
- If we have a team, how will the work be divided among members?

STEP 9: BUDGET
- What are my projected expenses?
- Travel
- Accommodation and meals
- Fees for expert advisers, translators, transcribers or service providers
- Fees for legal advice
- Fees for conducting archive or record searches or getting notarized copies of documents
- Communication costs
- Photographic costs
- Photocopying
- Supplies
**STEP 10**

**POSSIBLE OUTPUT**

- In what form will my story be?
  - Text + Photo
  - Text + Photo + Graphics
  - Audio
  - Video
  - Multimedia / Interactive

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**STEP 11**

**PROMOTION FOLLOW-UP (Optional)**

- How can the story be promoted?
- Am I ready to follow up the story?