Specific Aims Template

The Specific Aims is the MOST important section of your grant. It serves as a "first impression" for the reviewer that will shade the entire review and score. If the reviewer is convinced of the importance, logic/premise and approach of your project, excitement to review it favorably is generated. Alternatively, if the reviewer reacts with skepticism or confusion, the rest of the review will be negatively biased. Following this outline will maximize the organization and content of your four-paragraph Specific Aims section and can identify any "unknown-unknowns" (unk-unks) that must be addressed before moving on with the application.

I.   The "Problem" Paragraph
1) Hook: What is the problem being addressed and why is it important? (1-2 sentences)
2) The Known: What do we currently know about the hook problem? (2-5 sentences)
3) The Unknown (Gap): What do we still need to learn or accomplish to (further) resolve the hook problem? (1-2 sentences)
4) What's Needed: What would have to be done to bridge the knowledge gap? (1-2 sentences)

II.   The "Solution" Paragraph
1) Objective: What are you are seeking to accomplish to bridge the gap (*overarching goal/objective*)? (1 sentence)
2) Rationale: What is the key assumption(s) (*overarching hypothesis*) and how did you arrive at it (premise) that recommends this objective as a means of bridging the gap? (2-4 sentences)
3) Qualifications: What makes you as an investigator and this environment uniquely suited to obtain this objective? (1-2 sentences)

III.   The "Aims" (mini-)Paragraph(s) (one for each aim)
1) Title: What will this part of your project address? (one sentence)
2) Hypothesis: How do you think things actually operate with reference to this Aim? (1 sentence)
3) Approach: How will you test this hypothesis (method)? (1-2 sentences)
4) Expected Outcome: What result from this test would serve to confirm your hypothesis ("*prediction*")? (1 sentence)

IV.   The "Impact" Paragraph
1) Impact: Assuming your research aims are met, what important things will become possible that are not currently; i.e., how will it impact the field with specific reference to the hook problem. For Ks, how will the work impact you as a candidate? (1-3 sentences)