Section 1: Company Description

Marriages That Work (MTW), a 501©(3) corporation, was formed in 1997 to advocate and strengthen marriage through education. MTW was founded in response to the many social problems experienced by adults, children, and the community as a whole, due to demographic / empirical data indicating breakdown of marriage and certain types of family structure.

Section 2: Project Description

MTW’s project is part of a Federal Grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. The grant proposal has two primary parts, one of which is relevant here. This section of the project is to do a survey of the couples married and/or divorced in Lenawee County since June 1, 1997, when Lenawee County adopted its community marriage policy. Among other data the survey will determine (1) how many couples went through premarital education programs and/or attended post marital programs; (2) try to identify what helped and what did not help; (3) whether a premarital inventory was used; (4) if so, which inventory; and, (5) its usefulness in preparing for marriage.

Section 3: Specific Research Questions

Among the intriguing aspects of this project is that we have, rather than a host of very specific questions, a set of areas we would like to know more about, and that we need help developing. In the interest of completeness, we have listed them in great detail (hopefully, not too much!) Of course, the group would be expected to pick an appropriate subset of these. We are open to working with more than one group in different sections of the course as well, if there is sufficient interest.

I. Generally, we need information to help:

1. Determine what are the most effective marriage programs (premarital and post)

2. Help with marketing programs, i.e. increase the perceived need for premarital and post marriage skills education and the desire to be involved in recognized programs.
II. Initial items needed.

1. How many couples went through premarital education.
   A. What education did they go through?
      1. Was a premarital inventory used? If so:
         Prepare / Focus / Zoe / Other? If so which?

   2. What was the setting of the education?
      
      Church: Was the person who presented the program
         Clergy? / Paid staff professional? / Professional
         volunteer? / Lay volunteer?

      Secular: Was the person who presented the program
         Professional counselor? (Was the counselor specifically
         trained in marriage issues?
         Friend? / Family member? (Trained? Untrained?)
         Other?

   3. How long was the educational program?
      Number of sessions? / Length of each session?

   4. Did you have a mentor or mentor couple?1
      
      Who supplied the mentor or mentor couple?
      Through a church / Family member(s) / Friend(s)

      Did you view this of value? If not, why not? If so, why so?

   5. Would you recommend the program you went through to other
      couples? Have you done so?

   6. Is there anything that has come up in your marriage which you now
      wish had been covered in your premarital education?

   7. If you had to pick the most important thing(s) you learned in this
      process, what would it / they be? Why?

   B. Was PREP, or any other skills program taught? If so, which? (PREP, Step-
      Family program, Other, etc.)

   C. Any specific books read by the couple that helped? (His Needs, Her Needs,
      etc.)

1 Make sure the terms “mentor” and “mentor couple” are defined.
D. Did you use any other resources to prepare for your marriage (not, the wedding, but the marriage, itself) other than those already mentioned? If so, which ones? How did each help?

E. Why did you take a premarital education program? (The church required it / The public official doing the wedding required it / Heard about it and it seemed like a good idea.) How did you hear about it? (Media, e.g., stories in newspapers of magazines, etc., radio programs, TV shows, etc. / Family / Friend / Church / Local advertising)

2. If no premarital ed., any specific reason why not? Cost? Inconvenience?

3. Helpfulness of the programs that were used.

4. How long married? Are you still married? How would you rate your marriage:
   Overall? / Arguments? / Conflict resolution / problem solving ability? / Ability to communicate? / Sexually? / Feelings of respect for each other? / Levels of trust?

5. Any post-marriage seminars / programs? Which one(s)? Effectiveness of each?

6. Have you and your spouse ever sought marriage counseling from a professional? Clergy? Marriage Counselor? Other?

7. Would you consider participating a marriage skills program? Do you believe your spouse would?

8. If the couple was divorced in Lenawee County, but married outside the county during the time in question (i.e. from June 1, 1997, to present) did the need to have premarital education done in the county effect their decision not to be married here?

III. Demographic issues

1. Age
2. Gender
3. When married
4. Where were you married? Geographic location? Was this where you were living at the time?
5. If you are divorced, where did you get the divorce? Geographic location? Was this where you were living at the time?
6. Range of income
7. First marriage? Second, etc.
8. Children? If so, how many? Gender and age or each Step-children? If so, how many? Gender and age or each
9. Premarital cohabitation? How long? Any other cohabitation experiences other than the person you married? If so, how many & for how long, each.
Section 4: Any other pertinent information

There are three administrative points. First, as part of the Federal grant process we are in the process of hiring a consultant firm to assist with the survey effort and its evaluation. The firm we in the process of contracting with is SPEC Associates, Detroit, MI. They will help draft the final survey questions and evaluate the data we collect.

Second, MTW has already hired several local college students who have already started collecting the names and contact information of the couples married in Lenawee County since June 1, 1997. We are not asking your students to help with that collection process. The results of the data collection will be made available to your students to the extent needed.

Third, the time frame we are working with under the grant requires MTW to obtain an initial draft of the proposed survey questions no later than March 31, 2006. Needless to say, if we have that done in February, 2006, which fits with the time frame of the course, it would put us ahead of schedule, always a good place to be.

[We welcome assistance on the data analysis portion of this survey project, depending on the timing, to coincide with the second portion of the course, although the timing of March – April, 2006, may be a bit too early. ]

Section 5: Contact Information

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(please also copy to: james.sheridan@lenawee.mi.us and jsheridan@marriagedoneright.com)
Web Site Address(es), if applicable: Unfortunately, we do not have one. If any socially-committed students would like to help us develop one … for a poor struggling 501(c)(3) corporation ‘trying to save the world’, we would greatly appreciate it!