> **TIP:** The first 3 components in this paragraph create a focusing progression, which the reviewer must perceive. To help ensure that they make that connection, the long-term goal, overall objective, and central hypothesis should be presented without interposed explanatory information. These three components should be juxtaposed, so that there is a seamless flow of logic from the broadest (the long-term goal) to the narrowest focus (the central hypothesis).

Follow the statement of your central hypothesis with another sentence that expands the bullet that you wrote to describe how your hypothesis was formulated, i.e., why it represents the most attractive avenue of research to pursue first. Remember that this is the second place that you can incorporate your earlier findings into the overall argument or story. For example, "We have formulated this hypothesis based on strong preliminary findings, which suggest that _____." If the work of others is used in addition to your own preliminary data to support formulation of your central hypothesis, the relevant publications should be cited. Other examples:

- "This hypothesis is grounded in our preliminary data indicating Q."
- "This hypothesis is based on our prior data suggesting X, which echoes and extends that of Archer and Katzenberg (2019)."

Now write your own central hypothesis, then expand the bullet(s) that you wrote to describe how your hypothesis was formulated, i.e., why it has been chosen as your "best bet."

Well-Prepared and Research Environment. Next, using the bullets that you wrote earlier, write 1 to 2 complete sentences that summarize why you and your colleagues have the competitive edge in this area of research. Remember that if no one feature makes your program stand out, you will want to emphasize the constellation of your research team's strengths. This statement also helps meet the statement in most USDA application instructions to describe, where applicable, in the *Introduction*, "reasons for performing the work at the proposed institution."

Regardless of what you write here, you must be very careful how you construct this component. The last thing that you want to do is inadvertently convey that you are overly impressed with your own credentials/accomplishments. An acceptable set of sentences might be something like, "We are particularly *well prepared* to undertake the proposed research because our team consists of a protein chemist, a membrane biophysicist, and a molecular biologist, each with long-standing research interests in signaling by bovine IFN-γ. Additionally, we have unique access to a research herd of susceptible cattle and equipment X, making our environment especially conducive to successful completion of the proposed research." Now, write your comparable sentence(s) in your draft document.

Specific Objectives "Paragraph"

Begin paragraph three with a sentence something like, "We propose [two/three] *specific objectives:*" For integrated projects, you can also harness this sentence to remind the reader that the