

How to write a successful proposal?



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 - Proposal planning: types of projects and structure of consortium
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Application phase



Starting point:

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Your idea
!!!

Is it a good idea ?

**“There is nothing more difficult
than to write a good proposal
based on a bad idea !”**

Dr. S. McCarthy, Hyperion Ltd., Cork, Ireland

First step: check your idea

What is a good idea ?

- **Is there concordance between my project aims and those of the donor?**
 - In case of grants this might mean:
 - Is the project appropriate for my career?
 - Do I learn new methods?
 - Did I select the right host institution?
- **Is the project innovative?**
- **Is the project relevant (for Europe)?**

Pay attention!



You can only write project applications with regard to the research aims give by the donor!

Current mistake:

Scientists plan projects without paying the due attention to these aims and topics („It will fit somehow“). Such proceeding will not work.

Second step: define the type of your project

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What type of project is suitable to realize your idea?

- **check the possibilities on the EU and national level:**
 - DG research
 - DG environment, ...
 - ERC (European Research Council)
 - ESF (European Science Foundation)
 - National research ministry
 - National env. ministry, ...
 - National science foundation
 - Other foundations
- **Take advice from**
 - Experienced researchers
 - Specialized units in your institution
 - National contact point for EU research

Third step:

Do I need partners for my project? →

Who are suitable partners?

- Does the programme foresee/allow/demand/limit the inclusion of partners?
- With whom do I want to co-operate for this project?
- Do these partners really have the competences I need?
- Do the partners have
 - the same understanding of the aims and the content of the project?
 - the same attitude towards cooperation?
 - a compatible understanding of science and its role in society?

Criteria for partner search

- example EU Projects

Project: one particular problem should be investigated in a transdisciplinary and multisectoral approach.

You need:

- partners with different, complementary competence combining e.g. natural sciences, engineering sciences, socio-economics
- partners with high qualification, expertise and experience
- Maybe to include end-users, problem owners and stakeholders e.g. local, regional or national authorities, companies, NGOs etc.
 - ***This is rather demanding!***

How to prepare a proposal : →

Read the important information material !

Key Elements of a Proposal

- Objectives
- Background
- State-of-the-art, Innovation
- Work Plan
- Time table
- Consortium
- Management
- *Milestones*
- *Deliverables*

Objectives

Clearly explain the aims of your project !

The objectives have to catch the evaluators' attention and interest in the proposal !

After reading the objectives, the progress (in science / technological development / implementation – or your personal knowledge & career) that your project would achieve should be absolutely clear.

(Maybe refer to background information.)

Objectives have to be measurable and verifiable !

Objectives might be divided into (especially for larger projects):

➔ **general objective(s)**

➔ **specific objectives**

Background

- justifies your project,
- has to convince the evaluator of the importance of your project !

“ Why bother at all? ”

Explain the scientific&technological, personal, (political, social and economic) relevance of the topics your project will deal with.

= Education of the evaluator !


= 2nd step to catch the evaluators´ attention

Innovation

Your project has to be innovative !

Otherwise it won't get funded.

- Describe the (scientific) state-of-the-art
- Explain innovation and progress and benefit for (you and) the scientific community



Having read „Objectives“, „Background“, and „Innovation“

the reader / evaluator must have understood **clearly**:

- **The current situation**
- **The essential progress that the project will bring about.**

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Now the reader / evaluator will check the **feasibility** of the project!

For this s/he will use the elaborated workplan!

Work Plan

This depends quite a lot on the requests by the different donors, but it should always include:

- The necessary steps and the logics of their suite,
- A clear schedule that can be verified
- The practical result aimed at (deliverables)

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Deliverables

are usable results!
“touchable”

Examples of Deliverables

- Report
- Guidelines
- Handbook
- Publication
- Data set
- Theory
- Methodology
- Protocol
- Procedure
- Standard
- Patent
- Prototype
- Equipment
- Software
- Simulation
- Workshop
- Conference
- Website

A diagram consisting of a horizontal blue arrow pointing to the right. In the center of the arrow is a red oval with a black outline. Inside the oval, the word "Milestones" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font with a white drop shadow.

Milestones

**are important time cuts
in the life cycle of a project !**

e.g. the end of a project's phase

“Not every deliverable has to be a real milestone.”

**“Not every milestone is connected with a deliverable
but most times they are.”**

Description of the consortium

Overview

- how the partners with their different expertise
- play together in the consortium
- to achieve the project´s objectives. (1-2 pages)
- list of partners (sometimes)

Description of the participants

Short description of the participating organisations and persons:

expertise and experience that is relevant to the project !

What do I need realistically to conduct the project?

These means have to be requested completely, as it is quite improbable that additional money will fall from the sky....

Cost dimensions

-
- **Personnel costs**
 - **Travel costs**
 - **Consumables**
 - **Subcontracting**
 - **Other costs**
 - **Overheads**
 - **Equipment (usually of no importance in social sciences)**

Please co-operate with your administration, as they know a lot!

How to start...

➤ **Read the call very very very carefully!!!**

➤ **Write a summary of your project**
(and discuss it with partners /
your potential host institution)


or (for a fellowship proposal):

➤ **Describe your**
major scientific achievements so far

Elements of a project summary (abstract)

-
- 1.) **Title (Acronym)** title should be (short,) concrete and clear
explains the whole project and its result in one line
 - 2.) **Objectives / Aims** 1 - 4 lines (more detailed than title)
describe the aims of the project (general and specific objectives)
 - 3.) **Background**
Why is the project important & necessary?
- describe the problem, educate the reader!
 - 4.) **Work Plan**
Explain elements and time table of the work plan
 - 5.) **The partners and their tasks** (if any)
 - 6.) **Deliverables and expected results** (if necessary)
What will be achieved? such as handbook, computer program, prototype... and benefits for scientific community
- should be in line with objectives.
 - 7.) **Rough estimation of costs and project duration** (if necessary)

Final request:

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“The achievement of the work done in WP 1 will allow to start with the analysis necessary for WP 3 and 4.”

– is in which part of the project proposal?

Final remark:

The rejection of a proposal is not a personal rejection!

You can learn and succeed by resubmissions ...