

Grant Proposal Writing

How to design and communicate your project convincingly

Workshop Description

Motivation and Objectives

Successful grant proposal writing is a fundamental basis to fund a career in research. There are plenty of national and international funding programmes with different funding schemes. Each scheme has its individual context and thematic focus, eligibility and funding rules, submission and evaluation process, and evaluation criteria. Thus, the detailed features and aspects of a successful proposal in one funding scheme are naturally differing from those of a successful proposal in another funding scheme. However, the process of how to work out these details is a common denominator to the different funding schemes. It requires skills way beyond the ability to work out a research idea in detail.

The overall proposal writing (Figure 1) starts with the generation of a new research idea and the identification of an appropriate funding scheme. This requires knowledge on funding programmes and their scientific, political or societal background. Here, documents and professionals from contact points and funding authorities may be of much help.

For an excellent grant proposal it is necessary to match the research idea with the evaluators' view on

what is wanted by the funding scheme and what is considered fit for funding. This usually requires work on the details of the idea and the specific research context.

After this has been concluded, the work on the actual project and proposal can be started. A concept has to be developed, ideas, workplan and the approach have to be visualised, the budget needs to be planned and the overall proposal has to be structured and formulated. If other project partners or institutions are involved, the submission of documents has to be coordinated.

Therefore, the objective of this workshop is, that students obtain an overview on funding opportunities, understand the core aspects of winning grants and know how to adapt the proposal writing process to their funding scheme of choice.

Depending on the duration of the training, exercises are focused on different process steps and required skills.

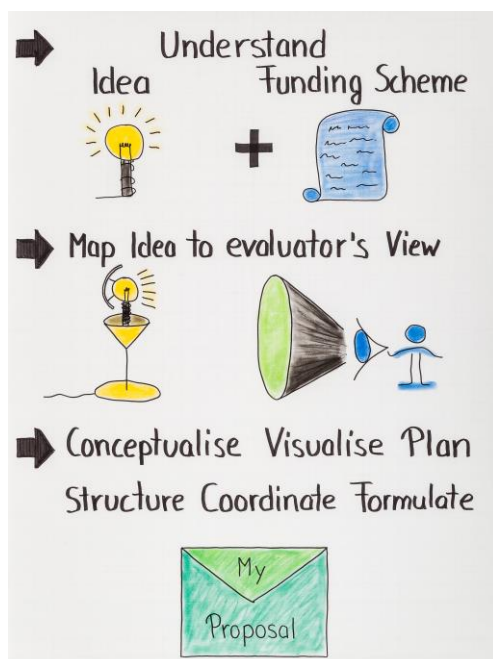


Figure 1 Proposal Writing Process

Workshop Contents

The workshop covers the complete proposal process as given in Table 1. Topics and exercises are detailed and chosen with respect to the duration of the workshop and the participants' preferences.

Process Steps		Required Skills and knowledge
1	Identification of the right funding scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview on funding programmes, contact points and other sources of detailed information
2	Assessment of the framework defined by the funding scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meticulous textual work on funding programme documents • Knowledge on political and societal background of funding programmes and schemes
3	Mapping the research idea to the framework to achieve a high relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the objectives, the evaluation criteria and the informal, non-written aspects of the evaluation process • Increasing congruency of the project with the funding scheme and the evaluators' view by enriching or focussing the research idea or by variation of the project context
4	Setting up a concept for the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning objectives, approach and activities of the project • Grasping risks and challenges internal and external to the project and defining contingency plans
5	Identification of necessary expertise and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translating objectives into a workflow of generating knowledge • Finding the right stakeholders, project partners, team members • Estimating resources and planning a budget
6	Structuring the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once more meticulous textual work on funding programme documents
7	Visualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the one-way communication with the evaluator by a coordinated interplay of figures, structure and text
8	Formulation of the different parts of the proposal with regard to the framework and the evaluation criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the complex and detailed research ideas to the evaluator • Communicating the progress beyond the state-of-the-art • Restricting the information to what is required • Answering to the political or societal aspects of the funding scheme to pin down the benefit and impact of the project • Focusing the self-portrayal
9	Coordination of the proposal writing and submission process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed knowledge on all documents which are part of the proposal • Coordination of getting necessary documents and contributions from stakeholders or project partners in time

Table 1 The proposal writing process with respect to required skills and knowledge

Training Method

The trainer will provide expert input with respect to the different topics. However, the focus lies on the actual work of the students on their own research idea. The building blocks for these proposals are prepared in the context of a funding scheme of their choice. Thus, several funding schemes will be covered and the differences will then be worked out in the plenum.

In order to obtaining good examples for their future proposal writing, the trainer will provide constructive feedback on the students' building blocks.

The course language will be English or German.

Preparation of the Training

The trainer will provide a questionnaire in advance of the training to assess the individual interests with respect to funding programmes, the experience of the participants in proposal writing, and special wishes concerning the relevance of the different topics. This will be used to focus the training and the exercises to the needs and wishes of the participants.

Documentation

Each participant will receive a detailed training manual in English covering all topics of the training. Furthermore, the trainer will document the workshop in a photo protocol which will be sent to the participants within three weeks after the workshop.

Target Group

This training is dedicated to PhD students and postdocs.

Duration and Group Size

This is a 2- to 4-day training for a group of up to 12 participants. The training can be split in two blocks of 2 training days each.

Results to take home

At the end of the workshop, the participants will have the following results:

- An overview on funding possibilities and helpful sources of information;
- A list of contact points, websites and phone numbers, which provide support and detailed answers to questions;
- A set of tools for efficiently developing research ideas into research projects and designing them to a funding program of interest.
- Commented examples on proposal building blocks;
- Concise building blocks for different parts of a proposal as text, schemes, sketches, figures etc;