



**Maynooth
University**

National University
of Ireland Maynooth

How to Find Research Funding and Tips for Writing a Successful Proposal (part 2)

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Follow Call Guidelines

- **Read the call document and supporting details**
 - This is your key guide to proposal preparation and the submission process
 - If you do not follow this, you may be deemed ineligible or miss vital elements
- **Check the submission process**
 - How do you submit? Electronic or hardcopy? If hardcopy, how many copies?
 - Deadline date? Time? GMT or CET? Is the deadline the date of postage or the date of arrival?
- **Check the documentation requirements.**
 - What institutional endorsement is required? Do you need letters of support? Do you need CVs of collaborators?
- **Look at the evaluation criteria – NB!!**
 - Reviewers will use this to evaluate your project so make sure that you address all the evaluation criteria in your application.

Follow Call Guidelines

- **Follow the format guide**
 - Is there a template? Budget template? CV template?
 - What font, style, size, spacing is allowed? Are there word or page limits?
If you ignore these your proposal could be deemed ineligible
- **Answer the call**
 - Ensure that your project answers the call outlined in by the Agency. Create a project to fit the call; do not shoehorn a project into the call.
- **Learn the language**
 - What terms does the Agency use? Work packages, milestones, deliverables, technology readiness levels – do you know what these mean?
 - If this is the language the call uses, then you should use them.
 - Read and reference supporting policy documents

Plan your Proposal

- **Start early**
 - Begin as early as you can, to avoid last-minute panic.
 - Ideally at least several weeks, if not several months.
- **Learn from others**
 - Talk to people who have gone through the process and were successful.
 - Get your hands on a successful proposal and read it.
 - Attend any training sessions or information workshops.
- **Summarise; then expand**
 - Outline your project/idea in a one-pager and then expand it to a full proposal.
 - You should answer all the key questions in the one-pager, which will make it easier to address each section later.

Plan your Proposal

- **Divide up the work**
 - Don't attempt to write all sections at once! Assign a timeslot for each section
 - If you are collaborating, divide the sections/workpackages/tasks between your collaborators.
- **Time-consuming items**
 - Supporting documentation – letters of support, CVs, institutional information etc. – these can take time to collate so get them early!
 - Request administrative documents from Maynooth University at least two weeks before the deadline.
 - Online registration – register early, do not assume it will be straightforward. Complete any information you can in advance of deadline

Write for the Reviewer

- **Be clear, concise and “a joy to read”**
 - Evaluator may not be an expert in your field and English may not be their first language. Don't confuse or complicate things for the reviewer; make it easy for them to understand your project.
 - Evaluators will normally review multiple documents.
 - Make the proposal, especially the abstract, exciting and interesting - grab the reviewer's attention.
 - Avoid grammar and spelling mistakes, typos and sloppiness.
 - Make your proposal visually appealing: do not have dense text, use spacing and sizing; use clear graphics and colour where possible (ensuring all is printable in black and white).

5 Key Questions

- These questions should be answered in the abstract and first page of the proposal
 - What is the problem you are trying to solve?
 - Is it a regional, national, European problem?
 - Is the solution already available? (Current state of the art)
 - Why now?
 - Why you?

Impact

- Impact is a crucial element of both national and European proposals- it is often the deciding factor
- Use fact and figures, be specific, not vague
- Reference national/international policy
- What impacts are you expected to have (from the call doc)? Do you meet these?
- What are the commercial benefits?
- Answer the following questions:
 - What will come out of your project? (expected results and specific benefits)
 - Who are the lead users of these results? Who will benefit?
 - Why do they want the results?
 - How will you tell them about the results? When?
 - What further steps will be needed beyond the project?

Key Words/Abstract

- **Keywords/Acronym/Title**
 - Choose your keywords carefully; these are used to select evaluators.
 - Make your acronym catchy and easy to remember, you want to stick in the evaluators mind (brand)
 - Use a title that reflects the project correctly, but is clear and concise (Slogan)
- **Abstract and Lay Abstract**
 - This is your first impression to the evaluator, entice them to read more.
 - Ensure that your lay abstract is in lay terms! Check it with a non-specialist.

Implementation

- **Implementation**

- Use diagrams, charts, graphs – make the implementation easy to understand.
- Gantt charts are often a requirement – make it clear and legible, don't overfill!
- Deliverables: a distinct output of the programme e.g. a report, a document, a piece of software, a prototype etc.
- Milestones: control or checkpoints used to chart progress e.g. completion of data collection etc.

Dissemination/Communication Plan

- **Dissemination:**
 - How will you communicate to a research audience? Publications? Conferences? Other?
 - Describe the potential impact of disseminating to them
- **Communication:**
 - How will you communicate to the wider public? Website? Schools? Media? Outreach? Events?
 - Describe the potential impact of engaging the public
- Think about all the stakeholders/end users – have you included them?
- Open Access – will your publications be open access?

Budget/Gender/Ethics

- **Budget and Justification**
 - Contact Petra (pre-award accountant). Workshop next semester
- **Gender Aspect**
 - Gender equality is becoming increasingly important in proposals, particularly for H2020.
 - Is there gender balance in your research team? At all levels? In decision-making? Have you considered the gender aspect of your research?
- **Ethics:**
 - Research ethics should be consistently demonstrated throughout the research proposal, embedded in research design from the outset and clearly indicated when necessary throughout the project proposal.
 - Ensure you state that you will seek ethical approval for your project from the Maynooth ethics committee

Be Ambitious

- **Be ambitious with your idea.** Funding is difficult to get, so think big with your idea. Is your idea groundbreaking?
- **Be Passionate about your idea.** If you are not convinced by it, the reviewer won't be either.
- **What is your unique selling point?** Identify it and sell it!
- **Outline your idea clearly.** If the evaluator cannot understand your idea, they cannot get behind it.
- **Back it up with evidence and defined methodology.** Show you understand the field and how your project would contribute to it.
- **Show off your achievements.** Do not assume anything is known or understood.

Consult and Review

- **Peer Review:** Ask your colleagues to look at your proposal and provide feedback
- **Research Development Office:** We can review your proposal and make non-technical suggestions
- **Commercialisation Office:** They can offer advice on IP, business plans etc
- **Read the call again:** Have you addressed what was asked? Did you cover all the sections outlined? Have you addressed all the evaluation criteria?
- **Polish your proposal:** Make it easy on the eye! Don't forget about copywriting – check grammar, typos etc.

Submit and Reapply

- Submit early if possible (systems get clogged close to the deadline).
- Submit versions if possible, replace with newer versions close to the deadline.
- If you are not successful, use your idea to apply for other schemes (make sure that you tailor it).
- Use your feedback to improve your proposal for next time.
- **Don't be discouraged!** Research funding is an ongoing process. You will have to make a number of applications over the course of your career, successful researchers learn from their mistakes and move forward.

One page Proposal

- Put a complex idea on paper
- Tool for discussion with Supervisor/Mentor
- Enables an idea to be discussed with support staff (e.g. RDO, NCP)
- Helps the researcher to focus
- Self assessment (What do I need to work on? What sections need to be stronger?)

Time for you to work!!

How summary is written

1. Funding Body / Work Program (if applicable) / type of project / funding
2. Results/Impact
3. Background to the project
4. Title and ACRONYM
5. Objective of the proposal
6. Outline phases of the work
7. Consortium
8. Expected budget/Duration

Results/Impact

1. Expected results - what will come out of the project?
2. Who will use the results? Who are the end users?
3. Why do they want to use the results?
4. How will you transfer the results? Do you have an exploitation /dissemination plan?
5. What will be changed post project?

Background

1. Why bother? What problem are you trying to solve?
2. Is the solution already available?
3. Why now? What would happen if we did not do this now?
4. Why you? Are you the best people to do this work?

Title and Acronym

- Title should be based on the Impact
- Acronym should make sense and be memorable
- Examples:
 - **G**aming for **P**eace (GAP)
 - **R**ebuilding an **I**nclusive, **V**alue-based **E**urope of **S**olidarity and **T**rust through Social Investments (RE-InVEST)
 - **W**ater - **S**ustainable **P**oint-**O**f-**U**se **T**reatment **T**echnologies (WATERSPOUTT)

Objective of the proposal

- This should be the second last paragraph written
- The aim of the proposal is to...
- The key research question/challenge is to...

Phases of the Work

- How the work will be done?
- Who will do it?
- Talk about the science in simple terms

Thank you!

Questions?

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