

Applying for a Fellowship How to write (a successful) Fellowship Proposal

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What makes a successful proposal ?

- Ideas ???

What makes a good proposal ?

- **There is no magic formulae**
- **Depends on the type of funding/funder**
- **Depends on how it is refereed and by whom**

Funders !

- Broad categories
- National agencies
- EU (Marie Curie – ERC)
- Charities/agencies
- Each have their own agenda and goals !

Funders !

- National agencies -- Aim to meet government agenda, local needs – *If you are not a national learn what they want from the host Strong science case*
- *Referees are commonly national – they know you and your group !*
- EU - Why is it good for Europe ? *Science is not the only requirement – indeed often only 40% marks – Need to learn Eurospeak – it is not easy !*
- Charities/agencies *Read carefully they have their own agenda – you can't just resubmit a proposal to EU/National agency*

Golden rules !

1. Give yourself time to write proposal – last minute bids FAIL >80% time
2. Get it read and commented upon – *no one is perfect !*
3. For you starting to write proposals – MORE time needed and more mentoring !

Golden rules !

1. Be clear !

Key points (**The 5 Ws**)

1. What do you want to do ?
2. Why do it now ? (Grand Challenge/big question)
3. What will be the result/impact ?
4. Where do you want to do it and why?
5. **Why are you the one to do it ?**

These are needed in first part of proposal/abstract for reviewers!

Golden rules !

2. Be aware who you are writing for

'Expert' referee / 'General' referee ?

How do people referee ??

Golden rules !

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'Expert' referee / 'General' referee ?

How do people referee ??

At home in evening/ weekend/ They are busy

**They have XX proposals – so catch attention
don't annoy them !**

How to annoy referees

- Complex text
- Poor layout (8 point !!)
- Abbreviations
- ‘Clever English’ – Particularly for EU !
- Cant find the message !! (at end of sections not upfront)
- Demonstrate you know the field (references !)
- Pictures and charts illustrate case – **picture worth a 1000 words !**

FELLOWSHIPS

- Are Different from other proposals
- They are personal !!!!!
- Seven steps to a Fellowship

FELLOWSHIPS

- You are selling yourself as well as science
- Why You ? **INDEPENDENCE** - particularly if you are staying at institution where you were trained (is this fellowship really a grant for your Professor??)
- So USE 'I' not 'we'

FELLOWSHIPS

- Fellowships are about career development
- LEADERSHIP – they want to fund the best !
- How will fellowship develop your career ?
- What is the future beyond the fellowship ?
- How is host supporting YOU – not the award ?

Layout

- **Abstract**

Many on a panel may not read more

Be clear about what you are asking for & why!

Practice on others – don't leave until last hours

Layout

- **Workplan**
- **Is this feasible on timescales ??** – Most young people try to do too much!
- Don't overclaim but don't be 'derivative' !

Layout

- Resources
- Are important !! – Get it wrong and you can't deliver
- But have to justify !!!

Fellowship rules

- You are applying for an independent Fellowship to continue research you have developed
- Write and abstract describing the research you propose to do Remember the 5 W's
- What do you want to do ?
- Why do it now ? (Grand Challenge/big question)
- What will be the result/impact ?
- Where do you want to do it and why?
- Why are you the one to do it ?

So you have been reviewed and now asked to attend the interview



With thanks for some slides from
<https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers>

Why interview ?

- Most Fellowship schemes contain an interview (not Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships)
- Check CV and ensure application is written by you.
- To ascertain skills (particularly communication skills)
- Jobs involve human interaction – *do you fit?*

How many interviews have you had?

- 1
- >1 <5
- >5 <10
- >10

What was your worst interview ?

- WHY ????
 - Did you leave feeling you had 'got the job'?
 - Why ?
- or
- Why not ?
 - **What did you do afterwards ?** (particularly if you failed)

Ok so you are short listed ..

- Called to interview
- Before you go read the application and think about what you are asking for and why.
- Be positive – body language tells a lot

BODY LANGUAGE

- **Dress smartly**
- **Shake hands** warmly but wait to be invited to sit down.
- **Smile!**
- **Eye contact**
- **Try to relax:** don't sit on the edge of your chair, but don't slouch.
- **Speak clearly** and not too quickly
- **Don't fidget**



PREPARE ANSWERS TO OBVIOUS QUESTIONS

- What makes you suitable for this Fellowship?
- Where do you see yourself in two/five years?
- Why are you the person to conduct this research?
- Why is this research timely?
- What will be the IMPACT of this research (on your community/ the public)?

COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS

- Describe a situation where you had to
- show leadership
- make a difficult decision
- overcome a difficult obstacle
- work with others to solve a problem

COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS

- **Situation/Tasks/Action/Result = STAR**
- **Start** by briefly outlining the Situation
- Keep the focus on your specific **Tasks** and responsibilities
- Say what **Action** you took, then try to summarise what you achieved. If it's a group task, make sure you define your own role and contribution. This is the biggest part
- Give concrete **Results** when possible. If you cannot be totally positive about the experience, say what you learned from it and what you might do differently next time.

PREPARE QUESTIONS TO ASK

ASK about training, career development that might be arranged as part of Fellowship? (often true in National agency schemes)

Ask about opportunities to apply for other funding (National awards may only pay your salary but you can apply for National projects)

If moving ask about removal expenses, travel home allowances, family support.

PREPARE QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How is performance at work assessed?
- What is a typical career path in this job?
- Can you give me more details of your training programme?
- What is the “work culture”? i.e. informal, formal, do people work autonomously, does everyone come in early, stay late?
- What are the challenges that your organisation is facing?
- What is your personal experience of working for this organisation?

FOLLOWING UP

- The interviewer will probably let you know when you'll know the result. If they haven't made this clear, ask!
- After the interview, make notes on the questions asked and what you could have done better.

Telephone and video interviews

Telephone and video interviews

- Increasingly common: eg Skype Zoom TEAMS
- Can schedule for any time/overseas and in covid world most likely
- Only difference from normal interviews is lack of eye contact: *“Have I told you enough or would you like me to tell you more”*.
- Don't speak too quickly
- Practice on your phone/ipad – see how you look/act
- What is in the background??
- Will you be interrupted (e.g. family and colleagues)

Summary

- **There is no magic formulae**
- **YOU WILL FAIL !!** But Have to try and you can win the 'lottery'
- **But good proposals and prepared interviews maximise your chances**
- **Be clear in what you want to do, why it is important and what YOU will deliver**

And now a personal experience from Ilko Bald, University of Potsdam

My ERC experience

- ERC Consolidator Grant Call 2017
- **Two-step process:** B1 & B2 proposals + Interview
- **Excellence:** Develop own ideas (high-risk, high-gain) and demonstrate your independence
- **Interview:** Typically short presentation (1-15 min) + \approx 15 min questions
- **Contact:** ilko.bald@uni-potsdam.de