Writing a Good Proposal, Tips and Tricks

Julian Randall, PhD  National Contact Person ICT and Energy
Euresearch Head Office  julian.randall@euresearch.ch  phone +41 31 380 60 10
4 «golden» rules

- Fit to topic (6)
- Consortium (4)
- Award criteria (4)
- Guide for applicants (4)

Tips & Tricks

- Impact (6)
- Strong Proposal (3)

Note: numbers in brackets = number of slides
Rule 1 : Fit to Challenge : Basic Rules

- The EU Commission has identified the problems
- You provide together with your international consortium of experts the best solution to the identified problem
- One can only submit a proposal to a challenge in an open call
Example: ICT 4 – 2015: …low power computing

*Specific Challenges:* Trends, background, overall goals e.g. move towards low power computing, European competitiveness

*Scope:* Research & Innovation, Innovation Action, Coordination and Support Action

*Expected impact:* Reduction of energy consumption of servers by 2 orders of magnitude as compared to state of the art in 2013.

The challenge, the whole challenge and nothing but the challenge
Key questions before planning a proposal

1. Is the idea unique?
   - Discuss with colleagues
   - Yes: Continue
   - No: Stop

2. Is it a real challenge?
   - Check literature
   - Yes: Continue
   - No: Stop

3. Does it require European cooperation?
   - It cannot be carried out at national level
   - Yes: Stop
   - No: Continue

4. Can I/we take the leadership?
   - Yes: Continue
   - No: Stop

5. Am I willing to write the proposal?
   - Yes: Continue
   - No: Stop

6. Am I willing to sell my idea?
   - Yes: Set up project proposal
   - No: Stop
SET UP YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL

Core objectives defined? → Call challenge

Which competences needed? → Set up core Consortium

Find missing partners → Previous projects, web databases

Meeting with core partners → Communicate with partners

Finalise Tasks for Project and for Proposal writing → Guide for applicants/proposal template

Finalise budgets → Work package template

Agree on future decision making and IPR rules → Guide for Consortium Agreement

Announce pre-screening → Contact NCP

Pre-screening
At least 3 legal entities from 3 different EU MS/AC.
Question: Can I submit my project idea every year, just have to adapt it a little to the open call?
Rule 2: Consortium

What is important when setting up a consortium?

- Min. rule: 3 partners from different EU or AC
- Balanced consortium with complementary skills and as many as needed to carry out the work
- International/European approach must be evident
- Some partners should have past collaborations
Preconditions for a successful consortium

- Trust and respect between partners
- Common/compatible goals
- Clear definition of distribution of work
- Are all partners reliable?
  - Respect deadlines, provide information timely
Question: Does Switzerland count as an eligible partner?
Rule 3: Award criteria

Eligibility criteria/exclusion check

For all proposals

- Date and time of receipt
- Min. of eligible, independent partners
- Completeness of proposal, presence of all requested forms
Award criteria

1. **Excellence**
   - Ground-breaking nature (e.g. beyond the state-of-the-art, novel approach, addresses challenge..)
   - Clarity of objectives, credibility of approach
   - Sound concept; trans-disciplinarily considered, innovation potential...

2. **Impact […] extent to which project outputs contribute to:**
   - The expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic;
   - Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge;
   - Strengthening competitiveness & growth.; environmental & socially important impacts
   - Effectiveness of the proposed measures to communicate the project, disseminate and/or exploit the project results, and appropriate management of IPR.

3. **Quality and efficiency of implementation**
   - Effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources;
   - Competences, experience and complementarity of the individual participants, as well as of the consortium as a whole;
   - Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk management.
Question: the criteria that weighs most is the scientific excellence?
Rule 4: guide for applicants/proposal template
Structure of a proposal

1. Part
   - Official forms (A1, A2, A3)
   - Partner‘s details
   - Proposal summary
   - Costs
Structure of a proposal
(Proposal template i.e. Technical Annex)

2. Part

- Cover page
- Excellence (Objectives, relation to WP, concept & approach, ambition (innovation potential)
- Impact (expected impacts, measures to max. impact, dissemination & exploitation, communication activities)
- Implementation (Work packages, deliverables, milestones, management structure, risks, consortium as a whole, resources to be committed)
- Ethical & security aspects
Question: Is the proposal being evaluated in regards to its innovation potential?
Tips & Tricks

- Impact Section (mostly)
- Strong proposal
Impact

Expected impacts
What are “potential areas and markets & end users”?

- Specific customer/groups (user associations, elderly patients etc.)
- End users
- Increase competitiveness or growth of specific companies?
- Any socially important impacts?
Expected impacts

What are „potential advantages of the resulting technology/solution“?

- Advantage of your solution = product, technology or service
- Compare your solution with other available products
- Focus on the benefit of the user
  - Use: Is the solution easier to use, more convenient?
  - Price: Is the solution cheaper?
  - Life time: is the solution longer lasting than solutions already available?

- Which groups can (directly or indirectly) benefit from your solution, e.g.: Societal groups, Policy makers, etc.
Impact

Dissemination and/or exploitation of project results, and management of intellectual property

- Provide a plan for the dissemination and exploitation of the project results. The plan should address the full range of potential users inc. Research, commercial, investment, social, environmental, policy making, setting standard & educational training.

- Include a business plan where relevant. Describe the measures to increase the likelihood of market uptake of project results.

- Outline the strategy of knowledge management and protection. Incl. Measures to provide an open access.
What evaluators look for

- You fully answer to the challenge in the call
- Clear aims (motivation and hypothesis)
- Realistic objectives
- What is the current knowledge in the particular field (state-of-the-art)
- Who are the users and how will they benefit?
- Clear methodology
- Appropriate and relevant partners with necessary skills
What evaluators look for in Impact

- What is the added value of this project/how is it better than other proposals?
- What is the advantage of an EU approach?
- Impacts: Research, commercial, investment, social, environmental, policy making & educational (how will the outputs i.e. deliverables translate to impact)
Question: If SMEs are involved in the project, the impact for each SME and how to exploit its results does not need to be described?
What makes a strong proposal (1/2)

- An executive summary/abstract
- Ensure your proposed work meets the challenge addressed by the call
- Follow exactly the structure given in the guide for applicants
- Be as concise and precise as possible
- The consortium of partners must be excellent and appropriate for the tasks
- Do not overcrowd objectives and show how you achieve them
- Outline methods as well as collection, handling and number of patient and control samples
What makes a strong proposal (2/2)

- Ensure qualitative & quantitative deliverables
- Propose solutions to overcome potential risks and conflicts
- Describe the exploitation plan in detail and convincingly
- Nominate an Advisory Board for ethical and regulatory issues
- Give attention to ethical issues
- Address all 3 award criteria
- Help evaluators to find the answers to the evaluation criteria (incl. ref to other chapters)
- Respect the page limits and keep it concise
When reading your proposal, ask yourself:

- **What problem are you trying to solve?**
  (challenge in call = defined problem and your project is the solution)

- **Is it a European problem?**
  (can not be carried out at national level)

- **Why you? Are you the best people to do this work?**

- **Why this project now?**