

A HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK FOR GRANT FUNDED PROJECT DESIGN

Questions and Concepts

pt.



INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to help researchers and programme developers seeking third-party funding, specifically in the context of the European Research Council (ERC), but also applicable to other major, high-value funding programmes.

Grant writing is more than just informing the funding body of what you want to do. It involves careful, creative design of project goals, benefits, impacts and innovation, and it involves writing about these articulately and persuasively.

Combining modern grant writing theory with classical rhetorical invention, this handbook provides you a framework for thinking about your project ideas, challenging you to think 'outside the box'.

By carefully considering and reconsidering your answers to the questions set out in this handbook, you will be in a good position to construct a well-considered grant proposal that goes beyond your taken-for-granted scientific expertise.

GRANT PROPOSAL COACHING

This handbook can be used in conjunction with grant proposal coaching and copywriting. An expert grant writer can bring an outsider perspective to your proposal content and support you in the development and drafting of a persuasive and competitive grant application.

Benefits of Grant Proposal Coaching

- In-depth questioning to probe the boundaries of your project idea
- An external perspective and sparring partner
- Drafting together with an expert English language copywriter
- Persuasive texts written with sophistication and flexibility

If you are inspired by the framework set out in this handbook and wish to work together with an expert grant proposal coach and copywriter, be sure to contact us by email at office@paultalbot.at or visit our website www.paultalbot.at.

Grant Writing: Theory and Concepts

Effective grant writing - in English or any other language - builds on ideas and concepts rooted in a range of rhetorical functions. Research on grant writing has shown that successful grant applications tend to cover the following 10 rhetorical functions.

Territory

Explain where the research / project places itself? What is the topic and what are the 'real-world' issues?

Previous Research

Report or refer to earlier research in the field that you are building on with this project.

Gap

Indicate that there is a gap in the knowledge (or a problem in the territory).

Goal

State the aim or general objective of the study. What does the project intend to do?

Achievements

Present anticipated results, findings, outcomes or other specific deliverables.

Benefits

Highlight the intended benefits, their value or potential application to the wider world.

Importance

Clarify why the proposal is important or topical. Why is it needed? Why is it urgent?

Means

Describe the methods, practices, plans of action, tasks, etc that are planned to help you achieve the goal.

Competence

Demonstrate that the researchers are suitably qualified / experienced and capable of carrying out the tasks.

Compliance

Show how you meet any policy, technical, ethical or other sectoral standards.

These functions are not only a checklist of 'things to include' but can provide a useful heuristic framework for conceptualising a creative and innovative project idea.

The questions on the following pages are designed to stimulate concepts and ideas that may help push you out of your current 'thought zone' and challenge your creativity. The sources and tools in the right hand column will help you develop these ideas more systematically - especially when approached together with a grant writing coach.

Move	Questions for Consideration	Sources / Tools
Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does the research place itself? • What are the real-world issues? • What are the causes of these issues? What are the effects? What are the impacts? • What is the motivation to pursue the project? 	Literature Personal Experience
Previous Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you or other researchers already done in this area? • How can this project build (innovatively) on existing research? 	Literature
Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we not know enough about? • What is the problem to be solved? • Why is this a problem? • For whom is it a problem? • How would you describe the severity of the problem? 	Literature Personal Experience Exploratory Research
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the project intend to do? • What is truly ambitious about the project? • What is truly innovative and beyond the state of the art? • What novel concepts are introduced by the project? • What novel approaches or methodologies are developed through the project? • How does the project establish new bridges between or across disciplines? • What unrealistic dreams do you have about the project and how could they be made reality? What are the boundaries of feasibility? 	Creative Thinking Idealistic Concepts

Move	Questions for Consideration	Sources / Tools
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What results, findings, outcomes or deliverables will the project produce? • What data do you expect to generate? • What publications can be expected? • What networks, co-operations or partnerships will come into effect? • What pedagogical resources could stem from the project? 	<p>Maximum Idea Generation</p> <p>Affinity Networking</p>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will benefit from the achievements listed above? • What benefits will they enjoy, and how? • What are the interdisciplinary benefits of the project? • How will you develop new talent? (i.e. younger scholars, Masters / PhDs / Post-Docs) • How valuable are the benefits beyond the immediate scientific community? 	<p>Stakeholder Analysis</p> <p>Affinity Networking</p>
Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this project important or topical? • Why is the project needed right now? • How would the world 'be worse off' if this project is not implemented? 	<p>Creative Thinking</p> <p>Personal Experience</p>
Means	<p><u>Scientific / Methodological Approach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the project intend to achieve the project goals scientifically? • What are the feasible scientific approaches to achieving the goals? • What are the appropriate methodological arrangements for achieving goals? • Can the project build on multiple methodological approaches? • What does your approach allow you to achieve that would not otherwise be possible? 	<p>Literature</p> <p>Personal Experience</p>

Move

Questions for Consideration

Sources / Tools

Means (Cont.)

Risk Management (High-Risk / High-Gain)

- What risks are involved in your project?
- Could you categorise your risks? (Strategic, operational, financial, hazard, regulatory?)
- How significant are the risks?
- How probable are the risks?
- How can you turn the risks to your advantage?
- Which risks are associated with the highest gains?
- What could stop you from achieving these gains?
- Who is responsible for managing each of the risks?
- How will the risk be identified and predicted?
- How will the risk be assessed?
- How will you prioritise different risks?
- How will you mitigate risks?

Risk Scorecard
Fishbone Diagram
Creative Thinking

Project Management and Implementation

- How will the project activities be managed?
- What milestones do you have in place?
- How would you describe the stages between each milestone?
- Who is involved in each of these stages?
- How will you transition from one stage to the next?
- How are decisions made?
- What feedback mechanisms are embedded in the project?
- How can timescales, resources and PI commitment be planned to maximise efficiency and productivity?

Network Diagram

Move	Questions for Consideration	Sources / Tools
Means (Cont.)	<p><u>Impact Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the long-term impacts of the project on your career? • What are the long-term impacts of the project on your field or discipline? • What are the long-term impacts of the project on stakeholder organisations? • How will results and outcomes be disclosed to the public? • How will the project continue to provide value / impact beyond the end of the funding? • Who are the potential end-users / beneficiaries of the project? • How will end-users / beneficiaries be able to adopt or apply the project outcomes? • How can these end-users / beneficiaries be convinced to adopt the project outcomes? • How can the project outcomes be mainstreamed through institutional actors? • How can the project outcomes be used in further research / teaching activities? • Can project outcomes be used to develop or market a product / service / process? 	<p>Stakeholder Analysis</p> <p>Idealistic Concepts</p>
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the professional and academic background of the principal investigator (PI)? • How has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research? • How has the PI provided evidence of creative independent thinking? • What specific expertise does the PI have to execute the project successfully? • What value does the host institution bring to the project? 	<p>C.V.</p> <p>'Should-Is' Analysis</p> <p>Mission Statement / Start with 'Why'</p>
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What policy, technical, ethical or other sectoral standards does the project meet? • How will you ensure open access to published outputs? • How will you ensure open access to research data and data-related products? • How will you manage data in line with the FAIR principles initiative? 	<p>Compliance Analysis</p>

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