Grant Review Process – Feeding the Reviewer

The world of competitive grants offers different funding schemes that vary in formats, number of review stages, number of reviewers, and more. Additionally, the nature of different grants also varies in concept, type of project, scope, etc. Once you have chosen the specific grant you are after, you will typically spend a few months compiling your proposal and writing away. During this time, it is important to make sure you write a proposal that meets the requirements of the reviewers during the review process. In this post we will discuss exactly how to make sure your proposal meets the requirements of the reviewers.

When writing a project proposal, one should always keep in mind the **specific review process** and more specifically the **reviewers' experience** in the process. It is always good practice to structure the text in a logical manner. This helps to convey the messages clearly, concisely, and to maintain the text flow. Generally, this helps to facilitate a **pleasant reading experience**. After all, what stands between you and being awarded with the grant you are after is the review process. Make sure you present the reviewers with **exactly what they are looking for.**

Therefore, the Holy Grail in grant writing is conveying to the reviewers the right message in the right place. This enables them to fully appreciate your excellent project concept during the review process.

Before we discuss the best way to convey the message to the reviewers, it is important to understand three key points about the review process:

1. **The reviewers are limited in time when reviewing your application.** It is reasonable to assume that they have more than one proposal to evaluate on the same day (it may even be 2-6 proposals per day). Generally – their motivation is to complete their proposal review tasks as soon as possible.

2. **The reviewers may not actually read your entire proposal text.** Given the time constraints, reviewers typically do not read everything. They read what they have to in order to complete their evaluation task. This brings us to the final point…

3. **During the review process, the reviewers receive a list of pre-defined questions to answer in an electronic form.** They are required to provide a mark per question and a short feedback text. This means they may be satisfied by looking for specific answers to the specific questions in specific places in your application.

Understanding the above constraints during the review process, our goal becomes very clear. We must make it as easy as possible for the reviewers to find answers to their questions in the text without spending too much time reading the entire proposal.

Our main focus is to present the project in the most efficient way to the reviewers.

Top Tips for conveying the right message to the reviewers during the review process:

- **Adhere to the template.** The first guideline is to follow the proposal template and avoid altering it. Pay attention to the headlines of the various sections and their meanings. Carefully read and follow the template's instructions. It is imperative to address the various elements of a proposal in the right dedicated places. A typical mistake is to confuse the messages addressing the "What am I going to do in the project" – the project concept, with "How am I going to do that" – the project implementation. The reviewers are looking for specific information in specific sections – give it to them.
- **Counterintuitive order.** The requested structure and order of sections could, in some cases, be counterintuitive. Follow the requested structure no matter what. At the same time, make sure you keep a logical framework to the text, despite the constraints that may derive from the template.
- **Get to the point.** Another typical mistake is writing a lengthy background and literature review in the opening texts. Although many grant applications and other writing tasks do require this, in Horizon 2020 and ERC grants, it is best to keep

the background concise, to the point and in the appropriate sections. Excessive texts generally do not serve your application well, even more so if they are wrongly positioned in the application document.

- **Avoid "patch work".** It is very important that the project presentation is consistent and coherent. A typical mistake is structuring the project presentation from a collection of inputs and texts from various sources (consortium partners, previous proposals, etc.). The right way is to consolidate all these inputs, by the lead writer(s), only if relevant and in line with the overall message. This ensures a unified voice and a smooth flow that is free of repetitions and redundancies.

Following the tips above can ensure the reviewer will have an easier time with your proposal during the review process. If you'd like to receive more extensive consulting, consider our [Deep Dive service.](#)