Grant Proposal Writing Workshop

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Why are grants important for you?

• For your research ideas to be tested and realised you need bright people and state-of-art facilities – these cost money.

• For your academic career to progress you need to demonstrate that your research ideas are worthy of investment of public funds in you. Your need to succeed in the tough, very competitive environment of peer review and public funding.

• It is much easier to collaborate, nationally and internationally, work with the best, network effectively to build new collaborations, if you have funding.
Why are grants important for your School/College/University?

- Grant income pays for research, brings bright researchers and state-of-art equipment and facilities to Glasgow.

- Grant awards are a good indicator that your peers (reviewers) believe in the quality and potential benefits of your ideas and believe you to be worthy of investment of public funds.

- Grant income is a measure used in REF, league tables etc.
Why are grant awards important to the UK government?

- A strong and vibrant research base underpins successful economies.
- Both fundamental and applied research can eventually lead to impact – that means new and/or improved industries - jobs/sales/exports.
- The UK needs to fund the very highest quality research – and especially that enhances UK reputation, gives the UK an international lead, has the best potential for impact.
Why you? Why Glasgow?

Track Record:
This is a whole section (2 pages) to tell the reviewer
  Why you are the right person to do the job
  Why UoG is the right place to do it
Don’t write your life story – its not a CV
Do sell yourself without over-egging it
Do cite relevant papers and grants
Do tell them that you have/are in a good group and great environment
Pictures and data from your own prior-art can be helpful
Make it relevant to the proposed project!
What is the idea and discovery?
A bad proposal will NOT get funded
Even an extremely good proposal is NO GUARANTEE of funding
Tackle a problem of sufficient scale
Originality
Identifiable value/impact to end user
Eye catching
Feasible/achievable
Fits to funder priorities
Track record (your publications, achievements, etc.)
The correct team
Well written – think about your readers & look at the review form
Convey the vision

The audiences for your proposal are: Research funder, Reviewers, Prioritisation panel

**Write to them**

Start with a summary or abstract or vision statement – but make it really clear right at the start, in two or three sentences, what the vision is.

*We will discover, characterise and capture the interactions of ultrasound and tissue, to advance well beyond the state-of-art in ultrasonic orthopaedic surgical device design. Using new high-power ultrasound-field characterisation techniques and new active materials, we will create surgical devices which are game-changing in both their capability to cut tissue and to control the biological response at the cut site. We will demonstrate, in vivo, devices optimised for both precision surgery and healing stimulation.*
Read the guidance notes and follow the required structure
– be clear and consistent in style and language

If you bore the reviewer you are sunk

• This is not an exercise in writing all that you know about a topic. Very dense proposals make reviewers hearts sink.
• Proposals that rely on some arcane knowledge held by only a few are generally boring. Make it accessible to the masses.
• GET SOMEONE TO READ IT and ask them specifically to comment on how boring/exciting it is. If it is boring then don’t submit it.
What are the key components of a proposal?

UK Research Councils require a 6 page case for support plus 2 page track record.

The four part formula:

- Track record (2 pages)
- Introduction, problem statement, vision, background, feasibility, etc. (up to 3 pages)
- The Programme of Work (about 2 pages)
  - Normally comprises a series of interconnected work packages. Make sure the challenges and innovations are very clear.
  - Reviewer should be in no doubt that you have a plan
- Answer the remaining questions (1 page) – they are just as important
  - If reviewers can’t criticise the science, they will home in on management, national importance, etc. Funders and reviewers need to know the funding is in safe hands and that you recognise your responsibilities.
What are the pathways to impact?

EPSRC Delivery Plan: Delivering Impact

• Ensure the resources to achieve maximum impact are embedded within our standard investments

• Integrating clearly defined Pathways to Impact within all grant applications

• Encourage our key partners to align their strategies to a national agenda and priorities

• Embed public engagement within research
The day the reviews arrive!

- You will either feel like this ............
- Or like this ................
- Or like this ................

Be calm and reflective.
- Reviewers are not stupid or thick and they don’t hate you – they are us
- Perhaps the reason they got the wrong end of the stick is because you didn’t explain it very well
- Write a reasoned and considered response – don’t rant or be disrespectful, focus on the really important issues, make clear and strong rebuttals, compare and contrast reviews to help make your case.
At a panel meeting – Quality overrides everything else

An EPSRC Prioritisation Panel looks a bit like this ……..

- They are your colleagues, group leader, collaborators, friends
- They need very clear and helpful information to make good judgements
- They will decide on a rank order
- The funders will decide where the cut-off is
If your proposal fails - don’t go into battle with reviewers or funders!

- Look for other ways to get your ideas funded
- Look at reconfiguring your ideas – different sector, different collaborators …..
- Look at other funding bodies
- But be very honest and know when to give up and move on to the next great idea
Develop resilience!

- You will get grants rejected
- You will get your ideas trashed

But ..........
- You will also have some amazingly positive reviews
- You will have successes

So ..........
- Be resilient and determined
- Be reflective
- Remember you live in the most beautiful place in the World!
Thank you