How to write proposals – FAQ

Her you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for writing proposals. The main goal of the FAQ is to help you writing the proposal text. It is biased towards questions for the Horizon 2020 thematic program. However it can be used for all kinds of proposals and most of the text is general. In the future we will provide more specific questions related to different funding bodies and funding schemes.

Warning:

This FAQ does not substitute templates, call texts or instructions given for the specific call you write the proposal for. Always read all information given for your call again and again. Every word and sentence in the call text will give you essential information for writing your proposal.

Remember : You are the author. You are going to write a good, consistent story that will give you funding. From your idea to the use of your results there should be a coherent story about excellent science, its impact and the implementation of the project.

If you are writing for individual grants, national programs or other you may need to adapt some of the FAQ answerers to your scheme. But still there should be a lot of useful knowledge and inspiration for you here.

The FAQ is written by the OUS Research Support team. We will develop and maintain the FAQ list. Any feedback and suggestions are welcome (eu@ous-hf.no).

Contents

Why should I listen to your advice?

Mainly because we can give help in structuring your thinking and avoid pitfalls. Our advices will help you in remembering to answer "all questions" and give ideas on how to answer them. There is no single formula or recipe for writing a perfect proposal. It is up to you to create "a good story" that the evaluators will believe in and fund. And this is art and hard work.

We read a lot of proposals and the experience from the reading is reflected in our advices. Some proposals fill us with excitement and we immediately catch the good idea, others are irritating, hard to understand and unstructured.

We cannot help you with the scientific base for your proposed research. This is your responsibility. We are not the scientist, you are! However we can google. If Wikipedia has a better text than your SoA chapter and we find better solutions or issues not mentioned in your writing by googling for 30 min you are lost.

There are many training courses and experts out there willing to help. They may all be good. However none of them can guarantee you success.

Most important: You need to bring excellent research and create a good story worth funding.

Why should I listen to your advice?

Do I have a good project idea?

You need to ask yourself and discuss with colleagues:

- Does the idea match the call or what the founder is asking for?
- Is the idea unique?
- Is my idea a real challenge?
- Does it require national or European cooperation?
- Can I/we take the leadership in fulfilling the idea?
- Do I really want to do it?

At least you must have a YES to all this.

To check the uniqueness of your idea try it out on your colleagues first. Then proceed with some of the same as you will do in establishing the SoA. Check literature, earlier projects, patents and other relevant sources to see if and how this has been approached by others. Probably you will find a lot of scientific research similar or close to your idea. In writing your text, acknowledge this, and do not hide it.

What you must be able to argue for is how your approach is new or differ (to some extent/great extent) form previous research.

A 100% "new" or "never thought of idea" is not required. But it must have some newness aspects. New method, simplification, cheaper, new use of data, more efficient etc, etc may be sufficient for newness*.*

However it is your job to argue and present the idea as unique in one or more respects.

This is important. You must believe in your idea and write convincingly about it.

In evaluating your idea it is also important to consider impact, dissemination and use. A good idea will have great impact, it will be easily disseminated because all want to hear about it and it will be put into use for new research, as method, product or other. If this is not the case it is probably not a good idea.

You may also ask yourself about the need for your idea and how challenging it is for research? Someone must need your solution and you should know who they are. The scientific community should applaud your idea as a real scientific challenge to be solved.

If your idea can be solved at national level it is probably no challenging enough for an international project. To go international/European there must be a need for cross border cooperation to solve your idea.

When writing consider "the first sentence" question and be sure that your idea is refined and shown in the objectives to make a consistent story.

Does my idea fit into the call?

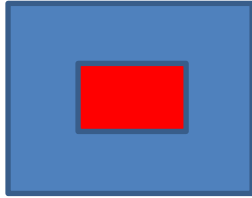First, read the call several times. Then do not panic.

Figure 1
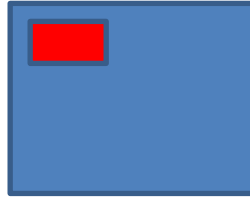
Figure 1
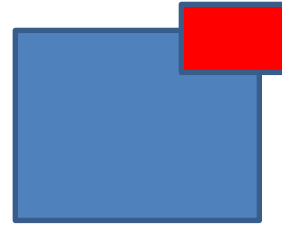
Figure 3

If your idea (the red square) fits the call (blue square) as in figure 1 and 2 it is ok. In figure 2 you will have to argue that you are within the call covering a smaller part of the total but an important one. If your idea is outside the call you must redefine it. You must cut away all aspect of your idea that is not within the scope of the call.

However for the thematic calls as in Horizon 2020 you will build a partnership that shall answer to the call text together as a project.
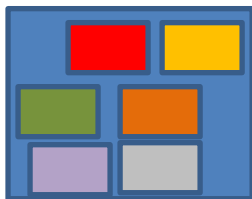
Figure 4
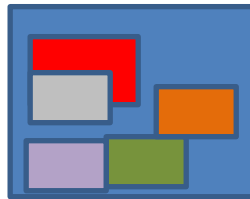
Figure 5
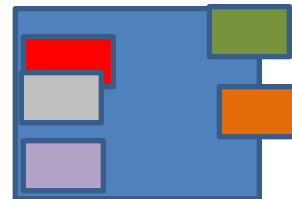
Figure 6

In figure 4 the 6 partners cover the whole project/call. This is a good partnership. *It also shows that even if you yourself only cover a smaller portion the consortium will cover the full call.*

In figure 5 there is possible problem as the grey and red partner covers the same part of the call. Either the contribution of the two partners must be adjusted or the grey partner must be taken out. Two partners doing the same are not wanted. (If you have good reasons it may be ok e.g. if you need two to verify the same to strengthen the results. But then you must explain this clearly).

In Figure 5 there is also a possible problem that a relative big part of the proposal is not covered (upper right corner). A new partner should be added.

Figure 6 lacks central partners and two partners are partly outside the call. You need central partners. And the two partners partly outside the call must either be taken out or their work must be redefined. Such a project will not be funded.

Remember:

- You do not need to cover the full call alone
- You can argue that you have a good focused idea even if it is not covering the full call spot on. (But you must argue strongly for such a position)

Why is the first sentence so important?

For you: Clarifying the idea and refining the message for yourself.

For the reader: Quickly understand what it is all about and getting the mind set for further reading.

Evaluators read a lot of proposals. Make it easy for them:

- If you tell them what it is all about in the start they get their mind set
- They do not need to go to page 10 to find out what it is really about
- They do not make their own expectations and get disappointed
- They get excited and not bored
- When they go to panel discussion the can refer to your proposal in one sentence

Remember:

- Do not start with a global problem description; "Cancer takes so and so many lives … Alzheimer is a growing problem…" Too many writers do this!
    - First present your solution. It is boring to read half a page about a problem everybody knows is a problem. Bring something new. Then you can tell how big the problem is and how good your idea is in solving the problem
- Do not start with me and my group (unless the template say so)
    - Listings of names and titles without knowing what these people are going to do is meaningless until you know the idea of the project
- The expectation you raise and the story you are going to tell must be consistent. What you say in the beginning must be answered through the whole text. You must not invent new ideas later on. Keep to what you said in the start. That makes a good story.

You have actually the first page to get the reader's attention. If you miss in the start it is hard to get the reader back on your side.

How do I use the template?

Most proposals shall be written by using a template. It is important that you:

- Read it again and again
- Answer all questions/fulfil all expectations
    - Use a marker and mark text as you have answered it
- Respect all page limitations for all sections (you are not expected to say more than there is room for)
- Use the correct and last version

And why you should follow the template strictly:

- In respect of the reader
    - The reader expects the logic of the template
    - The reader will have a much easier job finding the good points
- It easier for the reader to compare proposals
    - If two proposals compete the winning one is the one where the evaluators can find answers quickly. This is of particular importance in group/panel meetings

Exceptions:
- If there are points you do not answer say why
- You may add things. But be careful when introducing new themes that may be outside the scope. They also take up valuable space

Planning:

- Use the template for planning your work
    - It gives you a good idea of the volume of text needed for each section
    - You can sort out critical or non-critical text (some text is a do job other parts needs a lot of effort in finding references, asking people, polishing the objectives and problem formulation etc etc.)
- If you need input from others use the template to explain what and the amount of texts needed

How do I use the template?

How to understand the proposal logic?

A proposal text has these elements (in most cases):

- Idea
- Objectives
- Background (concept), need, what the founder want
- Current knowledge, SoA
- Your contribution/research
- Methods
- Work plan
- Resources, team partners
- Results/deliverables
- Impact; dissemination and use

The logical point: It is all about the same:

Idea = objectives = work beyond SoA = methods/work plan = resources needed = deliverables/results = impact

If you apply a logical understanding to this and follow it through your text and thinking everything gets much easier. The key is the objectives. Use them for all your thinking about the project logic.

- The idea matches the call and need of the funding scheme
- Based on your idea you set up the **objectives** that is what the project will achieve
- Background, concept and the need for a solution and the aim of call is answered by the **objectives** that are the project achievement.
- Current knowledge, SoA, is written closely related to the **objectives**. You should set a platform for your research and your **objectives** as precise as possible
- Your contribution or ambition in your project is to go *beyond* SoA. And that which is beyond SoA is your **objectives**. This is what you will do in the project.
- The methods you use must match the work plan and be suitable for activing your **objectives**.
- The plan for you work is the instrument to achieve the **objectives**. The Work Packages in a project should match the **objectives**. It is nearly one to one. You must have a plan that shows clearly that you will perform all the work needed for the **objectives**. But you should not do work not needed for the **objectives**. (if this is the case add/modify the **objectives** so the logic match)
- The resources, team and partners, must have the knowledge and capacity to fulfil the **objectives** i.e. the work plan. When you set up and describe the partners/team it is their competence relevant for the **objectives** you describe.
- The results of the project are the deliverables from the work plan. The results are your achievements i.e. the **objectives**. The deliverables list should therefore match WPs and **objectives**.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

- Impact is the effect of your results post project (or from late in project). Writing impact is telling that your results i.e. **objectives** will make a difference. What make the impact are the achievements.

Writing: The benefit of the logic:

- Help you focus your writing
- Help you keep the page limits
- Make your story consistent and easy to read
- Prevent you from writing about "everything"
- Help you when you are stuck
- Help you to get the right input from others
- Prevent you from logical errors in your thinking
- Ensure that you answer "all questions"

When writing you cannot follow the logic mechanically. You should write a good story and follow the proposal template.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

Where do I ask for funding?

This depends on your ambitions and the character of your research:

- Is it national or international?
- Must it be solved at an international/European level
    - Do I need international cooperation?
- Is it a big field requiring interdisciplinary research
    - Do I need several partners?
- Is it ambitious and challenging?
    - At what level?
- What is your ambitions and track record so far?
    - Internationally recognized?
    - International publications and cooperation?
    - At the start of your carrier or a senior
- Will the challenges be best solved by a centre of excellence or a project?
- What kind of resources do I have available?
- What kind of project management capabilities do I have?
- Can I and will I do supervision?

After a reality check you can calibrate your ambitions with available funding schemes.

ERC (European Research Council) and the big thematic H2020 Health Program projects obviously are more demanding and challenging than smaller national projects. We will not rank the funding sources here but you can make your own list and see where you fit in. If you get funding from one source you can climb and be more ambitious next time. If you do not get funded you can resubmit to another source. The work done for one scheme is not wasted; it may be adapted to other programs.

Remember:

- It may not be easier to get funded by the less ambitious programs. There may be too many applicants and the success rate may therefore be low.
- The effort needed to write a proposal will probably be similar for many of the funding sources and may not correlate with the ambitious of the program. Check for number of pages. H2020 thematic program proposals may be an exception as these are 60 pages and you need to manage several partners in the writing process.
- Read the call text and check funded project for your scheme before you apply. This will give you an idea of your chances
- For top notch, such as ERC, you can check your publication track record against statistics of earlier funded projects. You should be able to match this to win.
- H2020 thematic projects differ in size and ambition. What is required for a €4 mill project is different from a €40 mill project. The large projects are expected to have big global impact and the resources needed for this must be available in the form of research power as well as management structures. The smaller H2020 projects have a focused scientific aim and may be well suited for a small competent consortium.

How can I improve my text by using the right words?

Use the concepts and terms used by the call text, supporting documents, and the founding sources. Read their text a try to match your text with their vocabulary:

- It is easier to read and understand by the evaluator
- It shows that you have read the text yourself
- It give the impression of you as an "insider" close to the call
- It avoids misunderstandings and "not having addressed the questions"

If you want a strong and clear text try to avoid these words:

Background

Background is not used in the EC template for the thematic programs at all (except for previously own IPR). Most background chapter says something boring that sounds like a textbook. And everybody knows it from before.

Instead of writing about background describe current SoA. Go directly to current knowledge that is the base for your research. Then continue with how you are going to go beyond SoA. It is hard to write about how you will go beyond background.

Aim

Objectives or my main goals are much better.

If you want to do something: **Identify, find out, assess, deal with, clarify, new information, investigate, find new knowledge,**

All these words do not really tell what you will do and achieve. They are not really input to a work plan that can produce concrete results. At least words that are about exploring something should be limited to a first WP. You must be more precise about what you will actually do and that it will lead to something: Make, produce, prove, show, demonstrate, develop, etc may be better.

Literature search

In most cases it is expected that you have the needed knowledge before you apply for funding. Saying that you need to do literature studies tells that you dot know the field well enough. (Well in some projects literature studies may be fully accepted, but be careful). If you need to do more theory say; gain enhanced knowledge, structure current knowledge,

How do I write objectives?

Your project should be bases on an idea or vision. Typically what you may write this in the first sentences of your text. Sometimes the idea is called the concept or project concept.

The objectives are the achievements/goal of the project. You should tell what you will achieve to fulfil your dream – the project idea.

See also Proposal logic question

You write the objectives because:

- You will show the reader that this project will really bring something new
- You show the funding institution what they will get (before the project start)
- You give them a way to follow up and control your work (during the project period)
- You need to describe for yourself and your partners what goals you have set
- You will use them for
    - Writing the rest of the proposal
    - Doing your work in the project

Ideally objectives should be SMART:

- **S**pecific – What exactly will you achieve? Tell it in a clear and comprehensible way!
- **M**easurable – How to tell if the objective is reached? Provide clear indicators or parameters to measure the objectives?
- **A**ssignable – Specify who will do it.
- **R**ealistic – State what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- **T**ime-related – Specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Objectives are not activities! WPs and tasks are activities.

- The wrong question: What am I going to do?
- The right question: What do I plan to achieve?

When you write use the objectives as your guiding star:

- State of the art
    - Write the SoA closely related to your objectives. You do not need much general "background" text. Be specific.
- Method
    - Explain methods in the context of your objectives. How they are needed or must be developed to achieve the objectives
- Work Plan
    - Each objective should be covered in the work plan by the Work Packages. It does not need to be one to one objective – WP. However closes, showing that you will work on all objectives.

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- Results and deliverables
  - Should fulfil the achievements promised in the objectives
- Implementation and resources
  - Explain how partners, people and equipment will work/be used in the project to fulfil the objectives. And how their earlier achievements are useful for the objectives in this project. This should help you write a specific text about the resources without too much general stuff
- Impact
  - Impact comes from your results and the achievements set in the objectives. The impact text should therefore refer to objectives and results. This is what you are going to write about. Nothing else.

If you have problems writing a text that keep you very close to the logic of the objectives you may adjust the logic or the objectives. The most important is the good, logic story. A slight adjustment to the objectives putting them more in line with what you actually will do when all partner and competence are in place may be a good idea.

Remember:

- Be consistent, structure your writing based on what you set out in the start to achieve.
- Focus and do not deviate.
- If you get new ideas add an objective and restructure accordingly
- Do not put in objectives other than at the start of the text. Now new ideas on page 40!

What is the difference between aim, goal and objective?

In most templates and call texts these words are used for almost the same thing. It is about what you will achieve in your project. The different founding bodies use different terms and sometimes the translated texts between Norwegian and English may add to the confusion.

The overall idea of your project is most often referred to as:

- Idea
- Concept
- Vision

This is kind of the global thing that can be said in one or two sentences. It may be what you say it in the "first sentence" of your text.

In the next level you refine the idea and the describe your

- Objectives
- Goals
- Aims

Objectives often work as the most precise. Preferably use objectives to describe the project achievements. In the text you may use both goals and objectives.

BUT the goals and the objectives should be the same. DO NOT have one set of objectives and another set of goals.

When you refer to your goals or objectives in the text you must refer to the same.

You may aim at something. However in most texts aim makes what your project is all about less precise. So avoid using aim for you goals or achievements. Use aim as little as possible. Dot not use aim as the same as goals and objectives.

 Hypothesis

If your complete project is about testing a hypothesis you may use hypothesis in the overall objectives.   Otherwise hypothesis is in most cases best used where you do the work i.e. in the Work Packages. If you use hypothesis it should preferably be in the context of something that can be verified or falsified.

What is the difference between aim, goal and objective?

Are all applicants honest?

You will never know. However is does not exempt you from telling the truth. *You should of course follow the same ethics for your proposal as you do for your ordinary research.*

For two reasons:

- In cheating you steal research money from your colleagues
- If you get the money you will probably run into problems when you are going to implement the project for reasons like
    - You did not have all the competence you promised
    - You did not have all date or results you promised
    - You deliberately underestimated the work in the proposal
    - You did not have all the support resources you wrote into the proposal
    - Etc etc

Running a project base on a cheating proposal will never succeed.

In particular you should be 100% correct and honest with:

- CVs
- Previous research
- Preliminary results
- Access to external support and resources

However writing a proposal is not like writing a scientific article so you can do:

- Write in a more sales oriented style selling your idea
- Give an optimistic and powerful description of impact

Impact is what is going to happen in the future based on your results. So you should give an enthusiastic description of the use and exploitation of your results. Your research is high risk - high gain. Given success you will produce high gain and that you should describe.

You should be particularly careful if you let consultants write your proposal:

- You are still 100% responsible for the proposal text
- Consultants will probably not have the full scientific depth knowledge an may not be able to see pitfalls and wholes in your knowledge and data
- Consultants are not going to run the project. They may be overoptimistic about achievements and results. Be careful with what you promise to do

How to become a partner or finding partners for a project?

For funding a project must have a strong partnership. A weak consortium will never be funded so be sure that you are in company with the best partners possible. Do not waste time on lousy partnerships. The partners must:

- Have a track record and reputation for doing international research in their field
- Provide the necessary resources
    - Personnel with strong and relevant CVs
    - Have equipment and facilities relevant for their work and the project
- Have a clear roles in the project and cover all roles needed
    - Scientific
    - Dissemination and use
    - IPR
    - Project management
- Be complementary. You do not need more partners doing the same

Partners must be able to perform their work themselves by having the technical and financial resources needed to carry out their project work. I.e. if a partner must outsource or subcontract big parts of their job they are not a suitable partner.

If you are invited to join a consortium check that:

- The right partners are in or that they will join
    - Google the partner and the scientists
    - Check publication track records
    - Check patents applied for by the partners
    - Check previous projects they have participated in
- That the necessary proposal writing resources are available
    - Who is writing the proposal (name, track record and reputation)?
    - There must at least be one dedicate writer editing the proposal
    - That the time to submission is sufficiently long to write the text and build the consortium
    - That Work Packages will be written by the partner doing the work
- That the partner/coordinator has written proposals before and has got funding. If not, be sceptical.
- That your role and contribution is critical for the project success
- That you will get your fair share of the IPR

It may be flattering to be invited in to a consortium. However consider the above before saying yes. A coordinator that has no funding track record has small chances for success. If the partners are working in your field and you have not heard about them already they are not likely to be at a high international and European level necessary for funding.

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If you want to be the coordinator setting up your own project:

- Start early
- Aim at a high international scientific level
- Use friends and their friend to recruit the partners
- Use a one pager for recruiting that clearly present the project objectives
- Select partners that contribute to the objectives and success

What do I say about SoA and beyond?

State of the Art (SoA) is the current status of knowledge. It is crucial that you show that you know SoA. BECAUSE THIS IS THE PLATFORM YOUR PROPOSAL SHALL GO BEYOND.

By describing SoA you create the platform for your own research. When you have established the platform (this is what we know today) it is much easier to explain your own project. You are going to explain how you will go beyond SoA (no more, no less). You must build something on top of the SoA platform.

Space is limited. Be specific with the SoA you describe. It should relate directly to your own research and the project objectives.

In describing SoA you must show that you know:

- Current projects and work in the field (for EC check with the Cordis base)
- Literature; any relevant info of direct significance (references, references)
- Methods; all major and relevant methods used in your field
- Technology; any available and relevant
- Alternatives; if there are alternative that solves your problem by other approaches do not try to hide this. Say that you know this.
- Critics: If your approach is controversial show that you know the critic. Do not hide it.
- Groups and centres: Show that you know all groups and centres working in your specific field. You are seldom alone if you do something important
- Current practice. How is it done today? Any alternatives and practice known.
- Negative results. Show that you also know negative results in your field.
- Standard. If there are import standard mention them.
- Legal aspects and directives (EC base!)

When you have established SoA you are ready to go beyond. You can take all the points from the list and use for showing how you will go beyond (not literally or mechanically, find your form for writing the text.) But:

- Projects: Our project has not been done, it is different from all current projects, it builds on work in these projects…..
- Literature: We build on current literature/knowledge and will produce results that may confirm, strengthen, change, contradict, open new views….
- Methods: It may be a great plus if you can introduce new and innovative methods. Or used established data/methods in a new ways. Known methods to new problems may also be ok.
- Technology: How your technology is new and may lead to innovation
- Alternatives: Explain why you have chosen to solve the problem your way and why it is the best alternative or a very promising way of doing it.
- Critics: Respond to critics and explain how you will tackle the problem. (Critic is not valid for your approach, it still worth trying, we will do something that avoids the critic…)

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- Groups and Centres: How you differ or you will make use of their competence…
- Current practice: How you will improve…
- Negative results: Same as critic. Why you will do it better and not get negative results.
- Standards: If you contribute to new or improve standards it can be a great advantage.
- Legal aspects and directives: How you will relate.

BE VERY CAREFUL IN CRITICISING OR MAKING NEGATIVE COMMENT ABOUT OTHER APPROACHES, METHODS, ALTERNATIVES AND CRITICS. If you do you must explain why and have a real good documentation. Evaluators do not like negative comments about others. We see this in their evaluation reports.

It may be a good idea to summarise current knowledge, SoA, **in a table** and show your approach and where you will go beyond SoA. In this way you can show where you will contribute and where you will use current knowledge. Not all need to be new and beyond.

How high above SoA?

It depends on:

- Impact
- Accuracy/precision to the point/make a difference in the field (even small)
- Scientific field
- Etc

In your writing you must be 100% clear that your research is a major step beyond SoA. If you do not believe in it nobody else will.

What about methods?

We will not write you a textbook on methods. However there are some points you must address.

- You must give a full and good description of the methods you will use and how you will use them
- You must argue that they are suitable and the best for your problem and match your work plan
- You may need to defend your choice of method. This gives you a good opportunity to show that you know competing methods and that you have made a conscious choice. The text can be used also for the SoA section.
- *Your method may be the most valuable asset in the proposal, it being unique, new, better more efficient, above SoA etc. Write about this.*
- If your project is interdisciplinary and involve several partners you must show that the method(s) used are compatible and suitable across the full field of research and partners.
  - We often see evaluator comments on method use that leads to results that are not comparable or make inconclusive results.
- You must know your statistics. If not, seek help when you write the proposal. Too many proposal fails because of:
  - missing statistics
  - wrong use of statistics
  - too small datasets to conclude
  - incompatible datasets (brought in by different partners)
  - inconclusive results
- If you need to access registers and database ask for help and check that data will be available in a useful form. If you will combine data from several registers and bases this is even more important.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

What is TRL?

Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) are a method of estimating technology maturity. Several scales exist.

Technology Readiness Levels in the European Commission (EC):

Technology Readiness Level and description:

TRL 1:   Basic principles observed
TRL 2:   Technology concept formulated
TRL 3:   Experimental proof of concept
TRL 4:   Technology validated in lab
TRL 5:   Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
TRL 6.   technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
TRL 7.   system prototype demonstration in operational environment
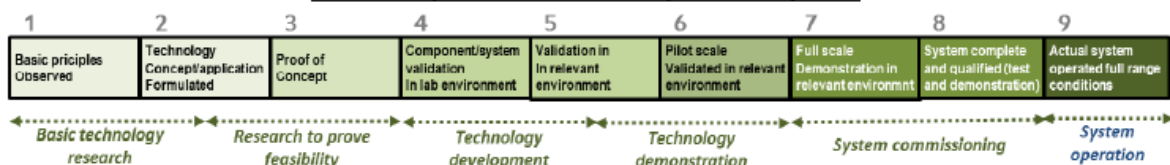TRL 8.   system complete and qualified
TRL 9.   actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)

You can google TRLs for health and will finds a lot of hits.

Figure 2: Adapted definition of the TRL scale used by the US Department of Health and Human services.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Review scientific knowledge base	Development of hypotheses and experimental designs	Target/Candidate identification and characterization of preliminary candidate(s)	Candidate optimization and non-GLP in vivo demonstration of activity and efficacy	Advanced characterization of candidate and initiation of GMP process development	GMP Pilot Lot Production, IND Submission, and Phase 1 Clinical Trial(s)	Scale-up, Initiation of GMP Process Validation, and Phase 2 Clinical Trial(s)	GMP Validation Consistency Lot Manufacturing, Efficacy Studies Clinical Trials3and FDA Approval	Post-Licensure and Post-Approval Activities

Figure 3: Adaptation of the TRL scale by US-DoE introducing 6 levels of technological development

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Basic priciples Observed	Technology Concept/application Formulated	Proof of Concept	Component/system validation in lab environment	Validation in In relevant environment	Pilot scale Validated in relevant environment	Full scale Demonstration in relevant environmnt	System complete and qualified (test and demonstration)	Actual system operated full range conditions
Basic technology research		Research to prove feasibility		Technology development		Technology demonstration	System commissioning	System operation

If you think of the TRL as a timeline or project plan using TRL can help you to:

- Asses your current knowledge and its maturity
- Asses your ambition and realism of your project
    - A project covering many levels will take time, need several types of competence and may be too big or ambitious. You must justify your choices.
- Position you results in time and maturity.

- - o This is useful in explaining innovation as you can use TRLs to describe the next steps needed.
- Explain where you will be at project finish and the next steps needed from your results to market
  - o If your results are at Level 6 it is often obvious that you will not have a product in the market next year.
- Justify your choices and align your work with the expectation of the call text.
  - o If a specific TRL is ask for you must fulfil this
  - o If no specific TRL is specified you can justify the maturity of your work by stating where you finish and why and briefly outline the next steps needed outside the project.
- Know something about the characteristics of your results
  - o An early TRL will probably produce papers for further R&D
  - o A prototype or demonstrator means you have reach a certain level. However a prototype cannot be sold in the market.
  - o At TRL6/7 you will produce test results from clinical trials
- Align your work with the work of other partners
  - o With several partners you may cover more levels in a project by using input from one partner to the next and at the same time increase the TRL level
  - o Ensure that you do not set up a project where the partners operate at very different levels and that you will have TRL gaps in the project that cannot be bridged
- *Explain how you will perform the case of translational/ "bench-to-bedside" projects by using the TRLs to sort your work. With this approach you will cross many levels and this may be a challenge that should be explained*

The goal is not to cover as many levels as possible but to know where you start and where you finish justifying your choices and outlining next steps needed (post project).

What is innovation?

The successful exploitation of new creations which when *used* produces tangible *benefits*, satisfying needs and wants.*)

This means that if you have an INVENTION and EXPLOIT it then this is INNOVATION.

An invention in itself is not and invention. When a call text ask for innovation it is

- Not enough to describe that you have found or created something new and fantastic

You must also:

- Describe how your findings or creation will be used for the benefit of something or someone

Often texts fail by describing only the fantastic invention. But the invention must be used to make a difference. IMPACT is the benefits of the invention when it is used.

Innovation is about satisfying needs and delivering benefits. You should say something about what needs will be addressed (that is relevant to the call). Also tell what benefits will be delivered to whom.

In writing about innovation and impact you may clarify your text by distinguishing between:

- Innovation potential
  - How much benefit (innovation) can the project results deliver?
- Innovation capacity
  - How can the project results have the capacity to stimulate further innovation and/or increase benefits delivered
  - Does it have the potential to be used in other areas i.e. beyond the project objectives?
- Innovation management
  - The capacity of the project to manage innovation through all stages of the project
    - Dissemination
    - Communication
    - Business plans
    - IP protection/knowledge management
    - Commercialisation activities
    - Paving the way for further research and/or tests studies and/or approvals
  - Defined and dedicated roles of and innovation manager and his/her team
  - Person months in the work plan to perform innovation related activities i.e. a dedicated innovation Work Package

"Innovation management is a process which requires an understanding of both market and technical problems, with a goal of successfully implementing appropriate creative ideas."

*) From presentation by Iambic Innovation Ltd and IPR helpdesk

How do I write a business plan?

A business plan will often be ask for in Innovation actions of EC projects and in the more commercially oriented programs of the Research Council. Even if you are not required to write a business plan it may be useful to get an idea of what it is and how it can be written. You may use ideas in your impact chapter text. In particular the headings of each point may be useful. The example is taken from the business plan known as "The Business Model Canvas":

The Business Model Canvas reflects systematically on your business model, so you're freely to map each of its elements to your real business components. (That also means you don't have to define or enter all of them). The following list and questions will help you brainstorm the precise idea for your next business model innovation.

1. **Key partners**

    i.   Who are your key partners/suppliers?

    ii.   What are the motivations for the partnerships?

2. **Key activities**

    i.   What key activities does your value proposition require?

    ii.   What activities are important the most in distribution channels, customer

    relationships, revenue stream…?

3. **Value proposition**

    i.   What core value do you deliver to the customer?

    ii.   Which customer needs are you satisfying?

4. **Customer relationship**

    i.   What relationship that the target customer expects you to establish?

    ii.   How can you integrate that into your business in terms of cost and format?

5. **Customer segment**

    i.   Which classes are you creating values for?

    ii.   Who is your most important customer?

6. **Key resources**

    i.   What key resources does your value proposition require?

    ii.   What resources are important the most in distribution channels, customer

    relationships, revenue stream…?

7. **Distribution channels**

    i.   Through which channels that your customers want to be reached?

    ii.   Which channels work best? How much do they cost? How can they be integrated

    into your and your customers' routines?

8. **Cost structure**

    i.   What are the most cost in your business?

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    ii.   Which key resources/ activities are most expensive?

9.   **Revenue Stream**

    i.   For what value are your customers willing to pay?

    ii.   What and how do they recently pay? How would they prefer to pay?

    iii.   How much does every revenue stream contribute to the overall revenues?

https://canvanizer.com/canvas/business-model-demo-canvas

https://canvanizer.com/new/business-model-canvas

9.   **Revenue Stream**

What is the difference between dissemination, use and communication?

Dissemination is spreading the results of the project. It is all the activities you do to tell the world about what the project has achieved. Typically dissemination can start when you have some results and continue also after the project. However the main part of the dissemination activities is towards the end of the project.

Use or exploitation is how the results will used for a specific purpose. Typically use/exploitation is input to the scientific community for further research or for commercialization, by marketing, producing and selling a product. Use is closely related to impact.

Communication is an activity during the project where you communicate with users/stakeholders about your project; about ideas, getting feedback and preparing for results. Telling media that you have started a project is somewhat in between and may be part of you dissemination activities or just communication. (you decide)

What is the difference between dissemination, use and communication?

What does it mean: The overall structure of the work plan?

You should explain your rationale for your work plan i.e. the structure you have chosen and the scheduling including the milestones.

By describing your rationale and thinking for the work plan you show that you have a well thought out plan and a solid basis for achieving your objectives. If you cannot describe this you probably have an immature plan and you should do some more work on the plan.

You may strength your text by saying something about:

- Why it is smart or logic to divide the work as you have done
- Why you have organised the WP the way you have
- How this fits the objectives
- How it fits the partner and are efficient in achieving the objectives
- How it helps you to track progress and reach the milestones
- How it may related to risks and risk mitigation
- How you have set up the timeline
- Critical line
- Methods and available resources used in the WPs

Be aware: Some of the text here may overlap with other parts of your text

- Concept and approach
- Methods
- Consortium as a whole
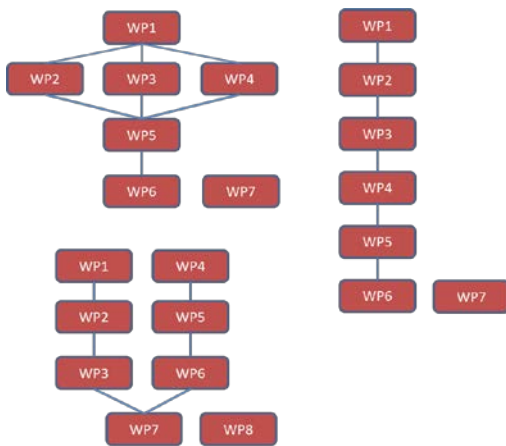
Be sure to say things only once.

How do I organise the project work?

You need a Pert Diagram and a Gantt Chart:

1) To organise your planning
2) To explain your work plan to others.

Make it simple and easy to understand. In a proposal it is wise to organise your work in Work Packages. In the WPs you have tasks.

Typical Perts an Gantts of WPs can be:

Work package (WP)	Year 1				Year 2			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WP1								
Task 1.1								
Task 1.2								
Task. 1.3								
Task. 1.4								
Milestone 1.1								
Milestone 1.2								
WP2								
Task 2.1								
Task 2.2								
Task 2.3								
Milestone 2.1								

Pert   Gantt

The important point with the Pert is the timeline; what must be done first, what can be done in parallel, will there be some integration of results at some point. You should organise the responsibilities of the partner so that they have their main responsibilities in distinct WPs. If all partners are in all WPs you will have an unorganised project that is hard to manage.

Use the Pert and Gantt to organise and reflect on your work plans. Most evaluators love to read Gantts because it gives a fast overview and easily shows faults in your planning.

You should use the Pert and Gantt actively to review your work. (The main point is that you think and used these tools actively in setting up the proposal):

Pert

- Do we need a WP1 to set the stage for the project (but be careful because you should know literature before you started and you cannot start planning again in WP1). However you can consolidate the scientific work, clarify methods and refine work plans etc
- Do we have work that can be done in parallel
- Do we need to integrate this in a WP afterwards
- What work must be done serially
- Based on the Pert alternative you chose; consider:

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- o What happens to integration if one of the parallel WPs fails? Write about it, get it into the risk plans, suggest alternative strategies
- o In a serial Pert what happens if one WP fails? Will the project stop? If so you are in great trouble. Write about it as above
- o Is it wise to work for a long time in parallel?

Gantt

- If you have a start-up/consolidation WP at the beginning it should last no longer than 6 months.
- What about the duration of the WP and task? (too long, too short?)
- What about effort and duration? (If resources put in to a task is 3 PM it should not last 12 months and if duration is 3 months do I have 12 PM in such a short period)
- Can you start earlier or must you wait until the previous task is completely finished?
- Where are the critical finish – start links?
- Too much or too little activity in periods?
- If a previous task is delayed can you start next on schedule?
- When will you start dissemination activities? (Maybe earlier than you think.)
- Have you started tests/trials early enough to integrate them with parallel work? And to write the reports?
- What about holidays? Any major work to be finished mid-summer or at Christmas??
- Have all partners agreed and committed themselves to the plan?

This may sound simple. However inconsistencies, lack of logic, bad timing, too optimistic planning or waste of time appear frequently in Gantts? Be sure that you avoid this in your project. You should explain the plan and how you have been thinking. Use the risk plan to show risks in the planning and to explain how to control/overcome the risks.

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How do I write a work plan?

See also: How do I organise the project work?

The objectives should give to the structure of your work plan. The work plan is what you will do to fulfil the achievement set out in the objectives. You make a work plan because:

- You show how you will do the excellent work
- You need a plan for your work
- You need to explain to the evaluator and reviewer of your project what you plan to do and what you have done, including use of resources
- You need to divide the work between the partners in the project
- It is the bottom up input to the budget

In most projects it is useful (required) to divide the work in work packages. You further divide the work into tasks.

The WPs you set up must correspond to the objectives: To achieve something you need WPs where you do the work. You should not plan work that you do not plan to achieve in your objectives. Adapt WPs to objectives but there does not need to be a one to one relation between the two.

A WP is a major and distinct part of your total work. Each WP must have a WP leader that is responsible for overlooking and coordinating the work.

Do:

- Divide the work into WPs
- Assign the work to the partners and let the partner doing the work write the WP text
- Further divide the work into tasks
- Explain as precise as possible what shall be done in the WPs and the tasks
- Estimate the effort needed to do the work per partner i.e. how many person months will the work take in the WP
- Make a spreadsheet like an effort table: WPs in the left column, partners in a row at the top and fill in person months per partner/WP
    - This will give you an idea of the work load per partner and the total work load in the project
- Use this spreadsheet actively to balance the work in the WPs and among partners
    - If you very roughly use €10 000 as cost per person month you will get a first idea about the person months you can put in and the budget you have. *You will not use this for the budget but it gives you some idea of project size and available budget*
- Further divide the work (PM) per partner on tasks (you can do this late in the process)
- Organise the work with major parts of work for a limited number of partners in each WP. Do not put all partners in all WPs. This makes work hard to plan and follow up
- Consider how the work you have planned match the resources you have. Do you have the right partnership to do the job?

- - o If you start early you can make adjustments!
      - Competence not covered
      - Partners with overlapping competence
      - Too much work/too little work for some partners
- Take a second look at the call text and check how you work plan match the call
  - o Balance between the problems addressed/expected impact and your plan??
  - o All questions expectations covered?
- Assure that objectives, work plan and resources make a good match. If not:
  - o Modify objectives or plan
  - o Add or remove partners or change partner roles in project
- Adjust the effort plan to the size of the budget by fine tuning the person months per partner
  - o When you have a budget almost ready you can add, move or remove person months to optimize your work plan i.e strengthening some tasks or giving more to some partners

How do I write the deliverables and the results?

The results are the products of what you do in the WPs. The deliverables is the documentation or product (thing) that comes out of the WP work. The results make the impact.

Each WP should have a reasonable number of deliverables written/done by the leaders of the WP and/or tasks. If a deliverable is a thing/SW/product/etc you must describe how you made it and its designed, how it works or other in a deliverable document.

In Horizon 2020 deliverables are contractual. This means that you must write them to get the money. Delayed or not delivered deliverables are a serious issues that will cause to trouble in the cooperation with the commission, delayed payments, payments cuts, cancellation of projects, threats about breach of contract etc etc

Deliverables must:

- Be substantial
- Cover the full work of all WPs (you must document what you do for each WP)
    - But do not need to follow the WP/task structure
    - A deliverable can cover several tasks or just one
- Be written by a lead writer and a small number of partners (not all)
    - Avoid deliverables with input from everybody because it is so hard to get the input and organise the document
    - It is better to make more deliverables than one big
- Reflect the amount of work done i.e. the more person months put into the task/WP the more substantial. In short the number of pages you write should match the number of person months you have worked
- Follow closely the work progress and timeline. However
    - You must assure that you have some deliverables early in the project i.e. in the first period. The authority giving you money needs proof of you work in each period
    - Time the deliverables with the project periods. It is not a good idea to set a delivery month just after the period is finished.
    - Too many deliverables at the end of the project shows bad project planning and puts too much effort too late in the work plan.
    - Consider summer and public holidays in your planning. It is hard to coordinate work in these periods.
- Be both public and confidential
    - Impact and dissemination is important for the policy makers and they want to see some public deliverables.

Consider when looking at your deliverables list:

- Is this output worth funding?
- Will these deliverables show results with a real impact?
- Do we deliver what is expected from the call text?

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- Is it excellent research?
- Does it match the objectives and what we actually will do/have done?
- Have all the partners contributed to the deliverables?
- Can we deliver all this? Remember it is contractual.

The deliverables list is important in the evaluation process because only a quick look may reveal what your project actually will produce. And it shows the impact of your project.

Why do I need a work package on management and a work package on innovation related activities?

The management WP shall show that you have the needed resources and experience to lead the project.

What is a milestone?

The EC definition:

- 'Milestones' means control points in the project that help to chart progress. Milestones may correspond to the completion of a key deliverable, allowing the next phase of the work to begin. They may also be needed at intermediary points so that, if problems have arisen, corrective measures can be taken. A milestone may be a critical decision point in the project where, for example, the consortium must decide which of several technologies to adopt for further development.

Use milestones to structure and plan your work. Your work plans will be better and it is easier for the reader to understand your planning. You may also see the milestones in relation to risk plans. And remember to put the milestones into your Gantt table.

You must describe the mean of verification of your milestone so that it is completely clear that is has been reached e.g. the clinical trials finished, a laboratory prototype is 'up and running', field survey complete and data quality validated…

What is a milestone?

What is a risk plan?

An ambitious project most likely imply high risk – high gain. You project should have elements of risk to be challenging.

The points in making a risk plan are:

- You show that you know the critical risks
- You know how to fix them if they occur

The risks you list must be closely related to the objectives/achievements and expect results. This is to assure the reader that even if there are risks, you will be able to achieve your goals.

The risks are for implementing the project i.e. your work in the project period. Uncertainties about selling a product after the project is finished are not a risk to be included in the risk plan.

A risk plan is typically a table:

- Where you list the risks
- Connect the risk to the work plan e.g. in what WP the risk may occur or what objective it relates to
- Rate the like hood of the occurrence of the risk (probability)
- Rate the severity of the risk
- Describe how you will handle the risk (mitigation plan)
- Show who is responsible for the mitigation

Be careful to balance the risks you list with your capacity to fix them.

The measures to fix the risks should be:

- Realistic
- Concrete
- Achievable with the project resources available
- Achievable within the timeframe of the project plan
- A way around the problem so you can move on
    - Continue with less data/a smaller sample
    - Use prelim date
    - Use a black box (a PC) instead of finishing the instrument development
    - etc

Be careful with risk-mitigation measures that:

- May disturb you time schedule to much (too much delay)
- Suggest doing more work (it is unlikely that you have hidden resources that can work for free)
- Lowers the project ambitions too much

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- Changes the idea of the project

Why are standards important?

You may either *contribute to standards* in your work or you may *follow or comply with standards*. BOTH may be important for your proposal.

Contribute to standards:

- You (or your partners) should probably know about standardisation work or be part of standardisation bodies already. If you do:
    - Any contributions to standards may be seen as favourable for your work.
        - Relevance
        - Reputation
        - Best in class
    - Contribution to standards may improve impact
        - Your work will be used by many
        - The impact of your own work will be considerable and the innovation potential will be very strong
        - Dissemination will be powerful as the standardisation bodies that will communicate your results using approved well known channels

Follow or comply with standards:

- Your work procedure may follow certain standards
    - Improving quality
    - Required for later use of results
    - Ease your way following procedures already known and approved
- Your results may comply with standards
    - Needed for approval and use
    - Increase impact
    - Secure market access

Be aware: In addition to standardisation bodies, directives and other legislation may also be important for understanding and finding relevant standards

Failure to comply with standards and lack of knowledge or relevant standards may ruin your proposal. Be sure you include relevant standards in the SoA chapter.

Tip.: If there are standards for approval and marketing of your results you may use this in your "Use and dissemination plan". It will give you concrete steps in how to get you results out in the market. It may also give a good explanation of the time and effort it takes to bring things into commercial use.

How do I manage my project?

How you plan the project management depends very much on size and type of project. It is useful to see management in relation to the work that you will do and assign management roles thereafter. Ask research support for help. We will have some standard text you may use. But it must be adapted to your project!

Roles:

These are typical roles that you may want in your project:

- Coordinator/project leader (scientific or non-scientific leader)
- Scientific or work manager (typically manager of the Work Package leaders)
- Work Package leaders
- Project administrator (non-scientific) (this may be a helper or secretary to the coordinator)
- IPR manager
- Dissemination manager
- Innovation manager
- ++

It is important that the roles are assigned to named persons (get theses person and their names as early as possible in the writing process) and that you prove that they have the skills to fill their roles. Refer to earlier experience and track record of the individual persons. Roles may be combined and one person may have more than one role.

If you have a scientist leading the project it is advisable to add a role of a non-scientific administrator to support the scientist. If the coordinator is a scientist you may consider combining the role with the scientific manager. For administration of bigger project you may also mention that you are heavily supported by the organisations research support team. It is important to show that your project has the sufficient management capacity. Do not underestimate the importance of this.

You add the roles of IPR, dissemination and innovation managers to strongly point out that you take these activities seriously. This is also important for strengthening your impact section. These persons may also be WP leaders. To further strengthen the work on these activities and the roles mention that these managers will cooperate with the organisations legal department/advisers, the commercialisation unit (e.g. Inven2) and the press/publication/web responsible in the organisation.

In H2020 innovation is a key issue. Be sure to assign a role as innovation manager to thematic program projects.

Structure:

You must also outline a structure for the management of the project. It may look like the figure below. But you must adapt this to your specific project. Smaller projects will have a much simpler structure. It is also advisable to check the text in the consortium agreement you will use because there will be a description of your management ion the CA.
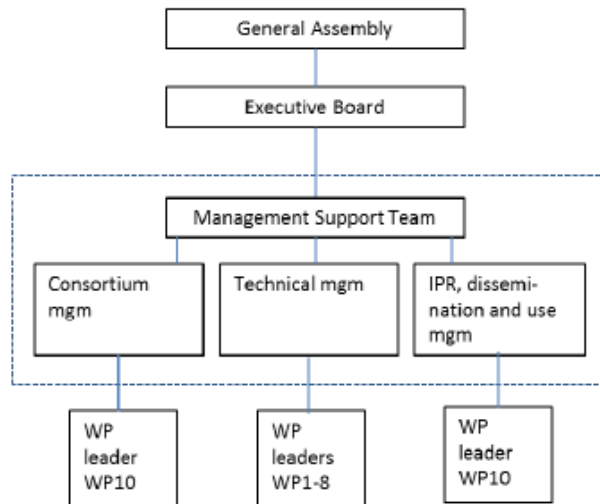
Figure 4: Project management structure

Decision processes and voting:

Ask for input to this part and make it in line with the consortium agreement. It is important that rules for decisions, how conflicts are handled and the voting mechanisms are clearly described.

How to I set up the budget?

Seek help for the technicalities of the budgets. These are specific for each funding scheme. Research support have spreadsheets for simulating work and costs exactly. However you can do your homework by planning your work and estimate the time it takes to do it. You must also list the costs you will have for consumables and travel ++.

Do this:
- Plan the WPs and tasks
- Estimate work load per person (person months)
  - Planning the work, doing the work, fixing problems, report writing, travel time etc
- Make a list of any Other costs; equipment, rentals, depreciation costs, publication, patents
- For clinical trials; Cost per trial including personnel and equipment
- Travel costs; years, no. of meetings, kinds of meetings, no. of persons travelling

Considerations:
- Is it enough time to do the work properly?
- Is it a fair share of available resources in the project?
- Do we have the resources to do the work?
- Do we need to subcontract work?
- Do we need to hire new personnel?
- What about publication cost and Open Access?
- What is the funding rate 100% or 70% or 50%? What then?
- Do we need to pay for an audit?

To get an idea of how person months relates to costs: €100 000 equals 8 person months of work in an EC funded project (very average and may vary but if gives you an idea). A travel to any place in Europe costs €700 to €1 100 per person.

Remember:
- A budget is a budget
- You will later report your real costs
- Do not spend too much time on details
  - In most projects you get a pot of money and you will have great freedom in how you use the money
  - Transfer between cost categories is allowed i.e. you can transfer work money to travel etc. etc.
  - It is OUS who gets the money. How we split or use the money internally is not a case for the funding part in most schemes.
- Most critical is costs for personnel hired specifically for the project. You must ensure that your budget covers 100% of such costs.
- During the project you must adapt the use of resources and costs to what you have got i.e. if you have much money you can go more into detail, do more trials, spend more time on

reports and publications, do you have less money you can do less and still fulfil the obligations

- Projects that are not 100% funded and projects requiring in kind: Seek help in the budgeting process.

Who are the users - user input?

Who:

- Individuals
  - Useful as informants if they have a particular experience, competence or interest
  - If you chose individuals it is best if they differ in some way so they can cover a wider view
- Groups/organisations
  - Associations or member organisations representing a specific group
  - In international projects try to get the European organisation and all its members on board. If you cannot get the European organisation, you select the members from their web page of the mother org. and try them
  - Groups organising professionals may also be useful
- Advisory board
  - This is an expert group that may/should include users

Types of users:

- Scientists/colleagues
  - Remember professional users of your results is also important
- Other professionals
  - Someone that will work with your results
- Public or private institutions
  - Politicians, community representatives, people from a specific area
- Typical end users
  - Just any
  - With specific problems/needs
  - Family members of someone with a need

User may:

- Give input and ideas during the project period
- Be the receivers of the results of your project

What you can do with users:

- Communicate with them during the project to learn more
- Get feedback on pre-lim results
- Let them test early results/ask for opinions
- Prepare them for the results and get attention
- Use them for dissemination activities
  - This is particularly powerful with Associations and member orgs that can reach all their members

How do I describe my project partners?

Your partner(s) are in the project because they are needed to do a particular task or WP. You must therefore describe the partner(s) in a way that link them to the job they are going to do. And you must show that they are the right partner(s).

You should describe:

- The partner profile and their overall competence in the field
- What they are going to do (refer to tasks/WPs or objectives or results)
- Their competence related to their work
- Why their competence is the best/most suitable for doing the job

Then you go on with the profile of the persons that will do the job:

- CVs of person doing the job
- Who will do what and their responsibilities
- A short track record per person
- A list of publications and/or achievements (in H2020 max 5 publications per person)
- You must also indicate the gender of each person or write a sentences saying that partner a will participate in the project with y male and x female researchers
- For persons with specific roles in the project e.g. Coordinator, innovation manager, WP leader, dissemination manager etc. you must describe their skills and experience relate to the roles they have been assigned

You must also show that the partner have experience in the field by listing previous projects (in H2020 max 5 projects) relevant for their work in this project. If you can link the persons above to the project it is even better.

If the partner will provide or have infrastructure and/or equipment significant for performing the work in the project you should describe it.

Check:

- Do the partners and their descriptions cover all the project tasks (no blanc spots)
- Do they fulfil the objectives
- Do I have all the right people on board? Do CVs and tasks match properly?
- Have I linked the competence to the work?

Do not write or copy long and general texts about the partner or the persons. Keep it to the point linked to work in the project.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

IPR

IPR

How do we share ownership to project results?

Results are:

- are any (tangible or intangible) output of a project e.g. data, knowledge or information — in any form or nature
- it is a result whether it can be protected or not
- it includes any rights attached to it, such as intellectual property rights

For **ownership to results** there are two options:

a) Ownership by the partner that generates the results
b) Joint ownership by several partners

In a) the results are owned by the partner that generates them.

In b) two or more beneficiaries own results jointly because:

- they have jointly generated them and
- it is not possible to:
    - establish the respective contribution of each partner, or
    - separate them for the purpose their protection

The easiest is that each partner owns their own results. If this is not possible or if joint ownership is wanted by the partners, the joint owners must write an agreement about how they will use their joint ownership.

Best practice: To avoid or resolve ownership disputes, it may be smart to keep documents such as laboratory notebooks to show how and when you produced the results.

Tip:

When you write about impact it may be smart to look at the results. It is logic that a partner that creates and owns a result is involved in dissemination and use of that result.

Remember:

The use (and value) of your results may depend on access rights to knowledge created or owned by others in the project. It this is the case you should have an understanding of what the "fair and reasonable conditions" means in your case.

What is background?

In the context of IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) back ground is:

'Background' means any data, know-how or information — whatever its form or nature (tangible or intangible), including any rights such as intellectual property rights — that:

> (a) is held by the beneficiaries before they acceded to the Agreement, and
> (b) is needed to implement the action or exploit the results.
>
> <div align="right">(from EC Model Grant Agreement)</div>

This means that knowledge you have *before* the project starts and that the project *needs to do the work* is defined as background.

Before a project starts you must identify your background and declare it in a Consortium Agreement or other document. Because:

- This makes it clear what knowledge you had before the project
- There will be no doubt that you also have all rights to this knowledge after the project
- If you have not specified the background your knowledge maybe taken as results in the project and it may no longer belong to you alone
- If your background is needed for using the results after the project you can specify on what conditions this shall be i.e. you may claim a compensation

You may declare background as what you will give the project access to and or what you will not give the project access to. (positive or negative list)

Think about what you have and ask Research Support for advice before you list your background.

What about other partners background?

There may be cases, however seldom, where the other partners' background is subject to legal restrictions or limits that can cause trouble after the project is finished and someone wants to use the results. If in doubt seek advice.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

What are access rights?

Access rights means rights to use results or background under the terms and conditions that the partners have agreed to.

Normally this is agreed between the partners in this way:

- **During the project**
  - Access to background is on a royalty free basis
  - This is for background needed to perform a partner's work in the project

This means that the partners share for free their knowledge needed to do their work during the project

- **After the project**
  - Access to background for using own results is on fair and reasonable conditions
  - Access rights to results for internal research activities is on a royalty-free basis

This means that a partner needing knowledge that belongs to another partner for using own project results can do so on conditions agree upon. But for further internal research access is free.

 "Fair and reasonable conditions" can mean any condition agreed upon in advance or negotiated later and can be:

- For free
- For a licence fee
- Any conditions or price agreed upon

However the point is that it should be fair and reasonable. Given that the partners have worked together in a project and produced results together this phrase is accepted in most agreements and the partners trust each other in that they can agree on the terms to everybody's satisfaction.

 Agreements may also have clauses on how the rights are handled towards affiliated companies/partners or third parties i.e. if the rights can be extended to other companies/institutions that a partner has relations to. This may heavily complicate the agreement text.

To get access you must request it (in writing) from the other partner(s).

The important thing to consider is:

- Does it matter for me how another partner handle the project results towards affiliates or third parties
- Do I want to share my results with affiliates or third parties

You may ask yourself if a scenario where the background you gave to a project partner on fair and reasonable conditions is now used by another company in totally new settings will be ok. Or if you have affiliates or third parties that you see as potential users of your results.

Granting of Access Rights

	Access to background	Access to results
Project implementation	Royalty-free	Royalty-free
Use of results	Royalty-free, or on fair and reasonable conditions	Royalty-free, or on fair and reasonable conditions

Is the evaluation fair?

In general; yes! In most funding programs your proposal is read and scored by individual experts (3-5) and discussed in a panel of experts giving a final score. All proposals are then ranked for funding in a meeting of all the panels. The number of proposals funded depends on the budget; money is given to proposal from top of the list and down.

In this process you may consider:

- In the first stage you need to be loved by the expert so that you get a high score
- In the second stage the individual experts fight for their preferred proposals. In this stage you must not lose points. The expert loving your proposal must be able to defend it. You must help him/her with this by showing no shortcomings in your text. It is therefore important that you have answered all questions fully.
- In the third stage all proposals are ranked and final adjustments done. Here it is important that your proposal idea is remembered and easily communicated between the evaluators. You need to stand out to be able to move up on the list. Again the first sentence, the abstract and a clear problem/idea is important. At this stage all that can give arguments for moving you up the list is important. The evaluators need something concrete to move you up. What can give you extra points here may be; gender aspects, user involvement, innovation management, SME participation, a good risk plan or anything else from the call text or work program that goes in your favour.

The EC H2020 criteria for 5 the highest score is:

5 — Excellent: the proposal successfully *addresses all relevant* aspects of the criterion; *any shortcomings are minor.*

So your strategy for writing the proposal is:

- Create excitement, get loved
- Show no weaknesses
- Offer something extra

Do not get disappointed if you are not funded. The competition is very hard in all programs. Do not blame the evaluators. If you did not get funded your idea was not good enough or you did not present it in an excellent way. Learn and try again. Even if the process is fair you need a little bit of luck to get funded…

What contracts should I use?

Use standard contracts and modify them as little as possible. Standard contracts have been written and tested by many projects before you and they probably will also satisfy your needs. *If you are a partner in a project always try to get the coordinator/project leader to use DESCA or Forskningsrådets standard contracts.* It speeds up the control and signature process and makes life much easier for all of us.

By modifying the standard contracts and by adding text there is a risk that the contracts will be inconsistent. So be aware of what you are doing. However certain point must be edited see "How do I read and modify contracts?"

EC projects:

- Grant Agreement is the standard EC contract between the project and the EC. You cannot modify this. However it is important that you check that all information about your organisation is correct. This includes the budget and the DoW/Anneex1 (The work plan i.e. the modified proposal text that has become the work plan).
- Consortium Agreement is the contract between the partners. Use the DESCA model for you project. You can get it here: http://www.desca-2020.eu/ . DESCA is used and known all over Europe and will cover your needs.

Norwegian funded projects/Forskiningsråds prosjekter:

- Use NFR/RCN standard contracts for the contract with NFR/RCN.
- Use Samarbeidsavtale/Konsortieavtale for the cooperation and IPR between partners.
- You may find the templates here:

    http://www.forskningsradet.no/no/Kontrakt_og_rapportering/1183468209165 and

    http://www.forskningsradet.no/no/Samarbeidsavtaler/1253992589820

If links do not work: Go: http://www.forskningsradet.no/ and then "Søke om midler" menu «Kontrakt og rapportering» and «Samarbeidsavtaler» or use the English pages for contracts in English

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA):

- Before starting cooperation with a partner it may be useful to sign a NDA. This will prevent the partners from revealing information to others.
- If an NDA is needed must be decided for each project or cooperation.

How do I read and modify contracts?

You must check the following in the contracts:

- Formalities; organisation details and addresses
- Who is signatory? Is it the right person? Has this person the power to sign on behalf of the organisation?
- The budget and payments. Is the budget as we agreed on and how will we get the payments?
- The work plans or DoW/Annex1 is part of the contract:
    - Are the milestones and time plan ok?
    - Have I got the resources as agreed (person months and payments for consumables and travels)?
    - Are my deliverables ok and as agreed?
    - IPR; is it equal to what is in the Consortium Agreement (there should be no conflict between the two)?

You must provide text for following in the consortium agreement:

- IPR; describe your background (what you have before entering the project) and your rights to the results of the project
- The defaults are:
    - The background you have before the project is yours also after the project
    - Background access is limited to what is needed for doing the project work
    - The results you create in the project is yours
    - Access to background is free for performing the project work
    - Access to background post project is on fair and reasonable conditions

Any deviations from the above: Seek advice and do not sign before you understand the conditions.

Dissemination:

- The project should not delay publication by more than 45 days i.e. doing internal reading of your text
- If there are no comments within the period of 45 days you should automatically be free to publish
- The project should only review and control formalities and possible problems to IPR e.g. patenting.
- Do not accept that the project shall approve your scientific work before publication

Obligations and responsibilities:

- Check that the obligations and responsibilities do not have unwanted or unfair consequences for you:
    - In the case of failures and delays

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

- o In the conduct of clinical trials
- o Handling of material
- o Responsibilities for own and others' personnel regrading conduct, safety and other
- o That there are no unwanted/unfair economic consequences
- o Your responsibilities towards third parties

General:

- A contract/consortium agreement should be fair and balanced so that obligations and rights apply equally to both/all parties. Be aware of industrial partners and coordinators opting for unequal opportunities.
- Do not get paranoid. If consequences of accepting an agreement cannot harm you or cause loss of major opportunities in the future, accept the agreement without too much fuzz.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

[Patents](#)

Why is it important to consider IP in

H2020?

⬚ The Rules for Participant establish best efforts commitment of participants to exploit their own results.

⬚ IP and exploitation issues are subject to evaluation regarding impact and feasibility of the proposal.

⬚ A convincing outline of IP management and exploitation strategies on individual and consortium level

within the proposal is a relevant matter.

⬚ Results of research and development activities require further and often substantial investments to take

them to market, which is appealing if the results are well protected through intellectual property.

⬚ Properly managing IP in the projects, helps participants to avoid future conflicts among the consortium.

What is the difference between GA and CA?

Most projects have to contracts:

- One with the funding body
- One between the partners

The contract with the funding body is called the Grant Agreement (GA) in Horizon 2020 projects. In other projects most often just the Contract.

The contract between the partners is called the Consortium Agreement (CA).

The GA will take primacy over the CA. This means:

- The Consortium Agreement must not contradict what is said in Contract
- Rights, obligations and roles written in the project plan (which is often part of the Contract) will rule over what you later put into the CA
- You should be aware of this in the so called contract preparation phase and do adjustments then if possible
- The CA and GA should as far as possible be harmonised i.e. IPR, roles and obligations should be similar and not conflict

 A

CA

A legal document that regulates the internal work of the Consortium

• Mandatory for the majority of projects

• Legal basics: Grant agreement (+ Annexes)/ RfP

• Implements the provisions of the Grant Agreement/programme rules

• May in no way contradict the prerequisites laid out in the EU Agreement/programme rules;

the latter always take precedence!

• The CA should be worked out during the "time to grant" at the latest ; be prepared!

• Consortia are responsible for set up the governing rules;

the Commission has no binding model, but… see participant portal

▯ DESCA (Development of a Simplified Consortium Agreement) model;

Different options/modules, i.e. related to software development

IPCA - ICT industry; EUCAR – Automotive industry

Can I risk that information in my proposal goes public?

In general this is information will be available public:

- Your project title
- The project abstract
- The project partner names (institutions)

The abstract is used in the evaluation process. It is therefore important that it presents your project work precisely and to the full. You can avoid revealing info by using more general terms than in the full text and by presenting more on impact than on the scientific work. Impact is usually less sensitive and at the same time evaluators and potential users/customers will we appreciate a focus on impact.

The proposal will be treated confidentially.

Can I risk that information in my proposal goes public?

What happens after the project?

The periods in a project may be described differently in by the funding sources.

The EC way is:

- Objectives:
    - What you will achieve in the project period
- Implementation:
    - How you will do your project in the project period (i.e. this is not impact)
- Results:
    - The product of your work; deliverables in the project period
- Impact:
    - Communication: All you do to inform about and get attention to your **project during the project period**
    - Dissemination: How you spread the results of your project **from the first results and beyond the project period**
    - Exploitation and Use: Use and effect of your results **from the first results and beyond the project period**
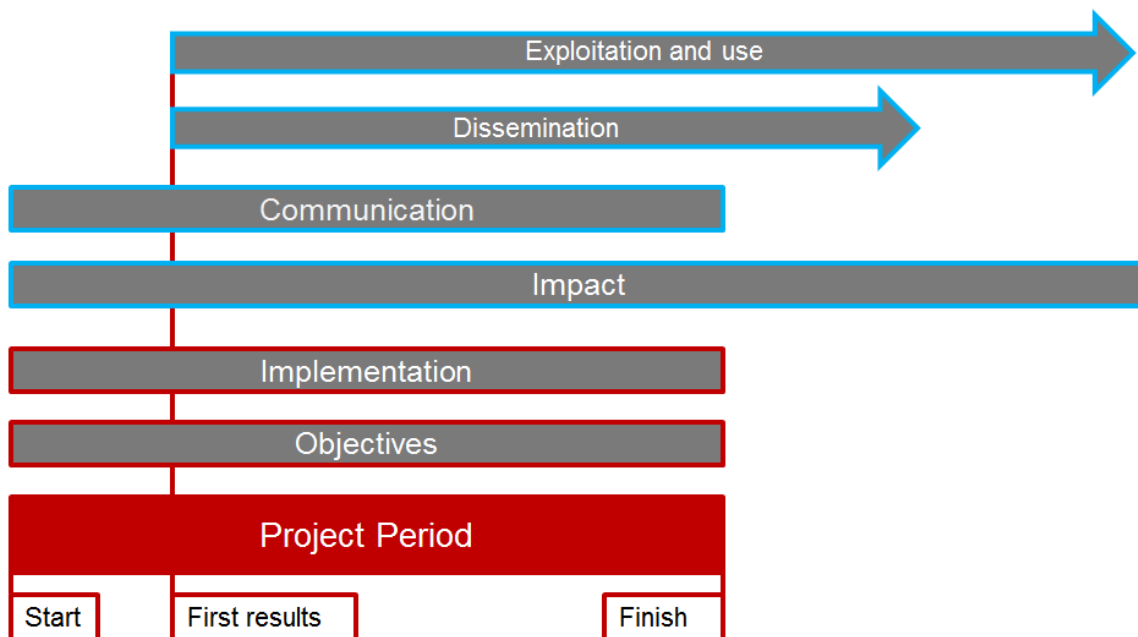
Observe:

- You write the objectives for what you will do in the project
- You write implementation for how you will organize your work and resources in the project period.

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

- Impact is the only part that goes beyond the project period and where you write about what will happens post project (dissemination of results/use of results). Communications is how your increase impact in the project period.

Non – EC funding schemes:

- Short/long time goals or objectives may mean: Short within the project period and long after the project period.
- Implementation may include impact and go beyond the project period
- Communication may not be used or have another meaning, not as specific as in the EC framework

Be careful and try to understand the respective definitions or uses in the different schemes. If in doubt you may define these in the best way yourself and stick to that.

Is it smart to use an external consultancy company to write my proposal?

It can be useful to get external help. Several consultancy companies offer their products. So yes, it can be useful and it can save you time and effort. You will get the best out the consultants if you also involve yourself heavily in the writing process. Research Support offers help and support of high quality internally and that is free. However capacity may be limited in periods.

Choose a consultancy company that:

- Has written proposals that have been funded in H2010
- Have written proposals within health
- Offers a dedicated person with a proven track record

Consider also the following:

- The scientific content for the State of the Art chapter is probably best written by you and your science partners. At least you must supply very precise content and drafts for the consultants.
- The work packages i.e. what you will do in a project should be written by you and your partners. It is you who is going to do the work afterwards not the consultants.

This means:
- That you must contribute with considerable resources to the proposal
- You will get a better more precise text because you know the science
- When you and the partners write the work packages you have a much stronger commitment to the work when you get the project funded
- Your contribution should affect the price you pay

The budget requires knowledge of OUS yearly salaries, socials cost etc and this is probably best handled by Research support. It is also Research Support that will calculate costs when you report the project. This process is much easier done if they have also done the budgets.

You should NEVER agree on a fee to the consultants based *on a percentage of what you get in funding.* It must be either a fixed price or pay per hour.

You should NEVER make any arrangements where the consultants pay is dependent on work, management or IPR in a funded project. The engagement with the consultants should end when the proposal has been sent in.

If the consultants offer help in the contract negotiations or include that in their offer say NO to this. When you get a project funded it is best handled internally. It must then be included in the internal accounting and approval procedures.

Do I have to follow your recommendations?

Hopefully it will increase your chances for funding if you follow our advice. However there are no single way to success and funding. Many funded proposal deviate from our formula. So there is no one way to success. Nothing beats a good story. After having tried to follow all kinds of advice try to see your text in a broader context and with new eyes:

Lean back and read it again and ask yourself:

- Is it a good story?
- Do I believe in it?
- Have I expressed myself clearly?
- Have I fulfilled the reader's expectations?

If you see your text I a broader perspective you may get good ideas for improvements.

In improving your proposal do not be afraid to delete text. Probably you are the only one that will miss it.

A thing that is too complicated and too hard to explain is probably bad text.

If you need more pages than the template allows for in a section you are saying the wrong thing.

How can I budget clinical trials?

If you are doing clinical trials you may budget this per unit i.e. per patient. You calculate the cost of one patient and multiply that with number of patients. The beauty of this is that you do not need to use timesheets and document cost of equipment used during the project. What you do is to calculate a unit cost before the work starts i.e, you stipulate the cost in the proposal:

- Last year's yearly average salary (+social costs) of doctors divided by 1780 hours worked per year = hourly rate
- Same calculation for nurses, technicians and others
- Multiplies hourly rate by hours need for doing the job on one patient
- Cost of consumables, medical equipment and services for one patient

This makes the unit cost. You can now use this cost the whole project. You only need to multiply by number of patients treated.

If *the same procedure or treatment* is done by several partners in a project they must agree on the *amount of time needed for doing the job* and *the kind of consumables and equipment to be used e.g number of syringes type of medical devices* so that the time spent and consumables used are the same. The hourly rate and price for the consumables/equipment are calculated per partner.

Based on Commission Decision C(2014) 1393[1]

Unit costs are:

- a <u>fixed</u> reimbursement amount
- for <u>each study subject</u> enrolled
- in a given <u>centre</u>
- calculated according to a **defined methodology**
- based on <u>historical costs</u> of the beneficiary/third party
- for the entire funding period of an action.

[NOT a flexible tool, adjustments during the time course of an action are not possible.]

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/legal/unit_costs/unit%20costs_clinical_studies.pdf

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

How do I manage the proposal writing?

Coordinator: Writing a full proposal - you are the editor

- You need 150 to 400 hours to do the writing
- You need one principal writer or editor - plus a writing team (2-3 persons)
- You must organize input from the partners
    - Input to objectives
    - Input to SoA from their specific fields
    - Input on available data and methods to be used
    - Get each partner to write their own WPs and tasks including resources needed (PM)
- Find external readers that can give you feedback on draft text (different people see different things so you need more than one)
    - Idea development and overall understanding
    - Logic, structure; objectives-SoA-WPs-results-partners-impact
    - Science, references, data and methods
    - The text itself (This is the most time consuming)

Writing the proposal

- Use the writing team; spread the work load. In particular get help on the non-time critical parts
- Get an overview of how much text you need to produce for each section, it is surprisingly little, in most cases a page or two max. (How to eat an elephant)
- If you ask for text from partners be clear on the page limits and max length needed for each piece of input
- Get help on the budgeting
- Get help on EC formalities and online systems

Practicalities

- Keep a strict control on doc versions save old versions and go to a new version frequently
- Do backups, the easiest backup is sending the document to yourself or a colleague by mail
- Use a simple formatting, do the final formatting late in the process, wait with page shifts
- Use Word features for headings and references
- If you copy from other docs do not import their styles and formatting if you can avoid it
- Keep all budget data in a single spreadsheet where all data is linked and the source is put in once

Coordinator: Non-time critical issues

Things you can do independently of the time critical writing (do it asap - don't wait):

- Gather all background information needed; references, articles, legalisation and directives, standards
- Deal with ethical issues, and write necessary text, get approvals

FAQ – How to write a proposal?

- Gather budget information i.e. salaries and personal costs of partners, gather info for consumables costs, clinical trials costs (unit costs), cost of lab facilities and other costs needed
- Set up advisory board, organize supporting letters
- Get CVs, partner presentations, publication lists, project references; write chapter 4 and 5 of the proposal
- Fix all formalities in your own organization; approvals, signatures, resource issues regarding extra personnel
- Patent searches and freedom to operate issues