SESSION 3: Main Characteristics of Winning Proposals – Tips & Tricks

1. Overview

2. Steps and procedures

3. Why do we fail?

4. General advice

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'Research Project' – Definition

A series of activities (*PERT*) aimed at achieving specific objectives and results/ deliverables/outcomes (*LFM*) within a defined time-period (*Gantt chart*) using defined budget and resources (*Budget*)

A project should have clearly identified…

- Problem(s) to be addressed or opportunity(ies) to be realized

- Stakeholders, target groups and users

- Coordination, management, and reporting arrangements (Tec./Fin)

- Expected results, monitoring and sustainability

Everything is in the project idea

- The trademark of a competitive proposal is: well-defined project idea + good presentation of that idea

- Present your idea in the most comprehensive, simple and coherent way – avoid repetition, complex sentences, complicated words, unusual abbreviations

- Idea – alignment to the call/donor objectives and priorities

- Presentation of the idea – use templates and address evaluation criteria

Read all updated instructions carefully and follow them
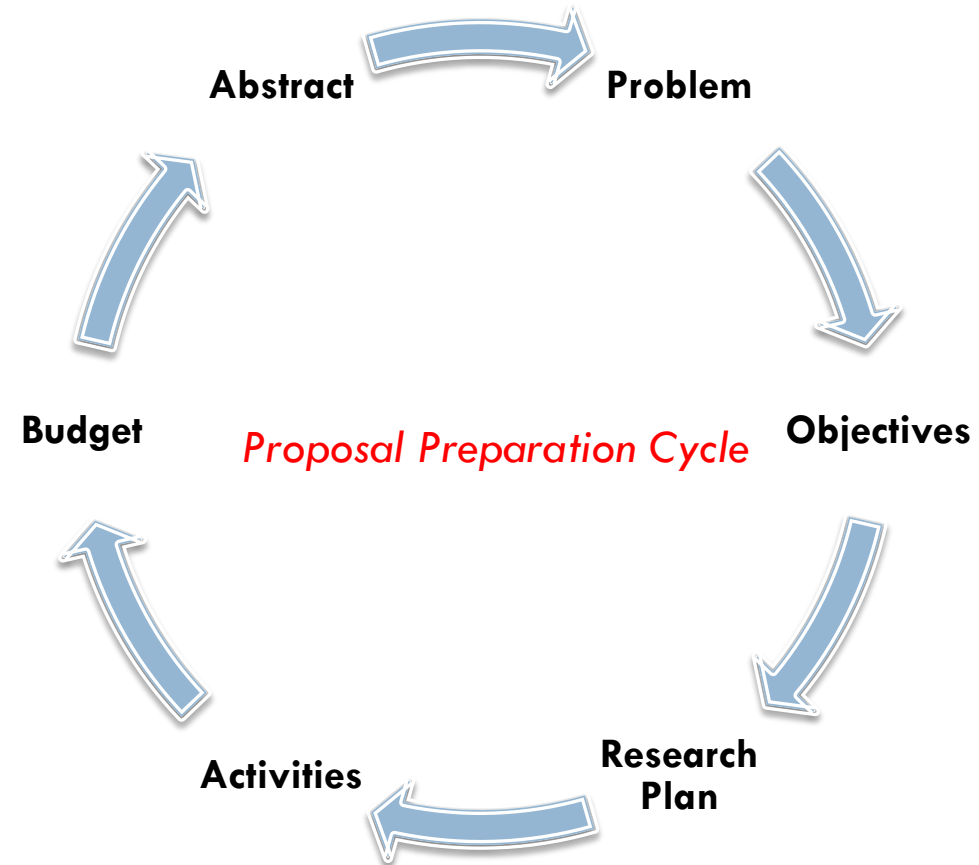
Typical Proposal Reading/Evaluation Sequence

- ☐ Cover page

- ☐ Abstract — 1st impression, no score

- ☐ Introduction and Objectives

- ☐ Problem Statement

- ☐ Impact/ Sustainability

- ☐ Research plans: Methodology/ Activities/ WPs / Deliverables

- ☐ Budget table

Typical Proposal Writing Sequence

- ☐ The problem or need
- ☐ Relevance
- ☐ Objectives
- ☐ Research plan
- ☐ Activities/ WPs
- ☐ Budget
- ☐ Abstract

Abstract → Problem → Objectives → Research Plan → Activities → Budget → Abstract

Proposal Preparation Cycle

ICARDA
Science for resilient livelihoods in dry areas

PRIMA
PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

Requirements for a Good Proposal

☐ Attractive **Title** and **Acronym**;

☐ Good and Comprehensive **Abstract**;

☐ Novel Idea and Clear **Goals**;

☐ SMART **Objectives, Results, Deliverables**;

☐ Clear Methodology;

☐ Defined Action Plan and Budget;

Title and Acronym : examples/Good or bad?

Title	Good or NOT
Protecting Crops via Bio-Control Agents in Organic Agriculture	
Effects of fertilizers on crops	
Impact of global warming on management of water resources	
Determining the mechanism of action of Bcl-2 family members in regulating apoptotic signaling complexes within the mitochondria leading to a cure in cancers	
Determining the mechanism of action of Vitamin B12 in regulating hormones activities that may lead to cancers in old people in the Mediterranean region	

Title and Acronym

- ☐ Use key words from the call itself

- ☐ The title = the idea + problem + objective

- ☐ Be as short and clear as possible – one sentence

- ☐ Brainstorm for key words, then puzzle it

- ☐ The acronym: easy to pronounce, easy to remember

- ☐ Avoid jargon – be specific

Example

SPRING: Mediterranean **S**cience, **P**olicy, **R**esearch & **IN**novation **G**ateway

EDUCAMP: **EDU**cation for sustainable development beyond the **CAMP**us

BioGuard: Protecting Crops via Bio-Control Agents in Organic Agri.

Abstract

- ☐ No score – high importance – short section

- ☐ Convince assessors at early stage – you have 60 sec. !

- ☐ Highlight the problem and why the project is necessary to address it

- ☐ Explain the objectives and their importance

General objectives

- ☐ The proposal should highlight how it will contribute to the general objectives of the programme to which it is submitted, but it also has to include the specific ones!

Specific Objectives

❑ They should be brief, focused, and <u>limited in scope</u>

❑ Each objective should flow logically into the next one - <u>bullets</u>

❑ Be realistic: avoid overestimation (capacity, budget, time)➔ <u>indicators/targets</u>

❑ **SMART**

 ❑ **S**pecific: limited in scope and responding to the topic/ call/ country

 ❑ **M**easurable: can be monitored for verification of progress

 ❑ **A**chievable: based on the available resources, expertise, budget

 ❑ **R**ealistic: not a dream

 ❑ **T**ime-bound: to be realized during the project timeline

Requirements for a good project - tips

- A good proposal (clear, coherent, logical, SMART);

- Project-Call alignment;

- Strong coordinator and consortium building on complementary strengths;

- Reasonable, justified budget;

- Avoid ethical issues, when possible;

- Be innovative (idea, methodology, management, writing..).

Requirements for a Good Project - tips

- **Project-Call alignment:**
    - Study the guidelines and templates carefully;
    - Read and analyze the call text → extract key words (practice, PRIMA CALL-2019);
    - Discuss with other involved partners, collect ideas → common understanding + vision of the proposed idea;
    - Translate brainstorming into a project brief, circulated, updated → draft CN;
    - Share the draft CN with external expert(s) → feedback and adjustments.

Requirements for a Good Project – tips

☐ **Strong Coordinator and Consortium;**

- ☐ Show high commitment;

- ☐ Diversity and comparative advantages: academia, industry, SMEs*, NGOs, public authorities, and stakeholders/lead users*, etc;

- ☐ Strong track record, personal and institutional, in the scope of the project/call, preferably in similar H2020 projects;

- ☐ Geographical coverage, when possible;

- ☐ WHERE? PRIMA website, keynote speakers of relevant international conferences, top-cited authors, PRIMA Statistical Analysis tool (Feb.2020).

*especially with calls of higher TRL/IA

Why do we fail: Most Common Reasons for Failure

- Weak project idea (novelty and applicability);

- Low relevance: unimportant problem – not aligned to donor priorities:

- Weak consortium, partners overlapping, unjustified;

- Lack of expertise (technical, management) and/or resources;

- Unfocused approach; vague objectives;

- Unrealistic: amount of work proposed, objectives, absence of clear indicators/targets (*irrelevant to PRIMA SRIA*);

- Uncertain long-term impact and/or lack of future direction;

- Over-/ underestimated budget;

- Poor/unclear language.

PRIMA – GENERAL ADVICE

Continued…:

- ❑ Register in the submission platform and update information regularly, do not wait until the last moment;

- ❑ Ensure that your contact details are up to date to facilitate correspondence;

- ❑ Prepare carefully your own check-list table;

- ❑ Provide ALL the information requested and ONLY the information requested;

- ❑ Check the PRIMA website regularly in case of updates/modifications (e.g. deadline extension).

END OF SESSION THREE

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