

Writing Effective Proposals for FP7

How to improve your odds with
proposals that work



Welcome

- Your name
- Who you work for
- Experience with proposals
- What you hoping to get out of the day



What is a proposal?



What is a proposal?

spend money

make a change

A tool to...

take a course of
action

accept an idea

Exercise 1: Analysing a proposal

List some things that could be improved or that work in the proposal we hand out.



The five key elements of a proposal

- Clear focus a “you” focus
- Detailed solution – assume nothing
- Clear picture – explain benefits and value
- Provide proof – explain why you are the best team to do the job
- Connect – style, tone and layout



The credibility killers

- What do you think will damage your credibility?
 - The major credibility killers include:
 - non-compliance
 - poor spelling
 - incorrect grammar and punctuation
 - cluttered, unattractive, or illogical layout
 - long-winded sentences and complex language
 - too much information a data dump
 - the wrong tone
 - lack of connection with the client.



The 'you' focus — connecting with the EU



Exercise 2: Rational and emotional needs

You work as the project manager for a small company that specialises in intelligent transport systems and services. You recently attended an EACI info day, the European executive agency for innovation and competitiveness. You took lots of notes at the meeting. Now, you're preparing to write a proposal for them based on your notes.

Read Gary's notes and use them to identify different needs.



The importance of the right information



Exercise 3: Gathering information

List here as many different sources of information as you can that might be useful in preparing your proposal.

What information do you need to know, and where can you find it? Include printed, electronic, and informal information.



Exercise 4: What are your relevant policy areas and social pressures that are influencing the EU and evaluator?



How people make decisions on proposals



How people make decisions

- Confirmation bias – confirm our first assumption
 - In an experiment, some subjects were asked if other people were introverts or extroverts.
 - Subjects asked questions for which a yes answer was consistent with question.
 - Do you like to meet new people?
 - Subjects thus confirmed an original assumption



How people make decisions

- Joining the dots – the predictable world bias
 - We look for order in the world
 - This is most obvious in games of chance
- We seek the familiar - availability bias
 - We rely on information that is readily available to us
 - We overestimate based on recent media



How the EU will make a decision on your proposal



Practical tips on style: the importance of plain English



Plain English

- A plain English document conveys information clearly, concisely, and appropriately. Readers can easily understand the meaning after one reading.



Choose the better sentence

- Here are two examples of writing. Which example do you prefer? Why?
 - **Example 1**

A large portion of this funding is expected to be accessed by the school shortly to facilitate the development of a school hall.
 - **Example 2**

The school will probably use most of this funding to build a hall.



Why use Plain English?

- Plain English makes good sense.
 - Organisations that use plain English are more likely to gain their customers' satisfaction and loyalty, and save time and money.



Why use Plain English?

- When you write in plain English your readers are more likely to:
 - understand your main messages
 - understand what you want them to do
 - believe that you mean what you say, and that you are concerned with their needs
 - act on the information without needing to contact you.



Plain English

- When you write, pay careful attention to your choice of language and to the sentences and paragraphs that you use.
 - Build your paragraphs around a central idea
 - Write short straightforward sentences
 - Use appropriate words



Plain English

- Prefer the active voice
 - Use active verbs rather than passive verbs whenever you can
- In the active voice, the doer of the action is in *front* of the verb
 - The manager approved the procedure.
- In the passive voice, the doer of the action is *after* the verb (or is missing altogether).
 - The procedure was approved by the manager
 - The procedure was approved



Plain English

- For each sentence, decide whether the sentence uses the active or passive voice. (Ask yourself: Is the doer in front of the verb, after the verb, or missing altogether?)
 - The architect drew up plans for a new foyer.
 - We cannot service your oven until tomorrow.
 - The invitations were sent out by Lucy last week.
 - The receptionist will show you the training room.
 - Your phone has been disconnected.
 - The students were informed of their grades in December.



Use precise, familiar words

- Avoid using complex words or phrases. Change them to simpler alternatives whenever you can.
 - articulate - say
 - ascertain - find out
 - utilise - use
 - with the possible exception of - except
 - due to the fact that - because
 - until such time as - until



Use verbs instead of nouns

- Many writers use long abstract nouns like *decision, application, compliance*. Such words end with *-ance, -ence, -ion, -ment, and -ancy*. They are difficult for the reader. Try changing them into verbs: *decide, apply, comply*.



Use verbs instead of nouns

- **Before**
 - The parish have made a decision to undertake the development of a concrete parking area.
- **After**
 - The parish has decided to develop a concrete parking area.
- **Before**
 - This will lead to a reduction of traffic flow problems before the commencement of church services.
- **After**
 - This will reduce the traffic flow problems before church services commence.



Avoid redundant words

- Plain English removes redundant, or unnecessary, words.
- Try to avoid wordy phrases such as:
 - with regards to
 - by means of
 - until such time as



A plain English standard

- Big picture
 - The purpose of the document is clear from the start
 - The content supports the purpose
 - The order of the content is clear and logical



A plain English standard

- Language elements
 - The headings are informative and signpost the content
 - The paragraphs are mostly short and focus on one topic
 - The sentences are mostly short and straightforward
 - The words are precise and familiar
 - The tone supports the purpose of the document



A plain English standard

- Presentation
 - The layout helps the reader absorb the message quickly and accurately
 - The document is error free



A plain English standard

- Documents and your writing should follow a MADE structure
 - Main idea
 - Action statement (you or them)
 - Detail
 - Extra



The process for writing a proposal



Setting up your proposal team

Your team will operate on three different levels:

- 1.the core team for administration, writing, and editing
- 2.the work package leaders
- 3.the other participants.



Exercise 6: Identifying the requirements for setting up a proposal development team.

What requirements and challenges do you think you will have to consider when you build a proposal team?

Think about communications, structure, administration, and motivation.



Proposal teams roles and responsibilities



Managing a virtual team and collaborative writing



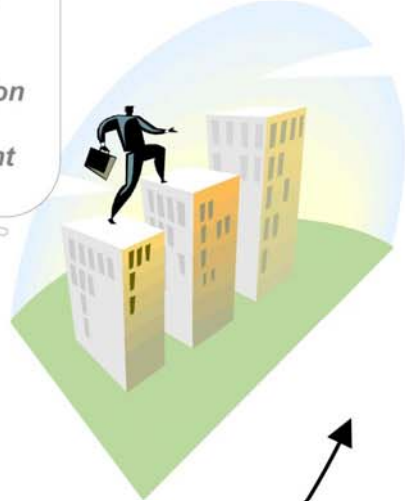
The Path to a High-Performing Team

Excitement!
 Wow - not enough hours in the day to have enough fun!
 Anxiety
 What's our vision?
 Where are we going?
 What's my place?
 What's the plan?

Push / Pull
 Who are we? Who am I?
 At last - change!
 Who's steering this ship?
 What process?
 What's in it for me?
 Another change?
 This is too hard.
 Not sure I can do it.
 Another screw-up?
 Who, me?
 Not sure we can do it.
 I'm tired. I'm depressed.
 I'm ready to give up.

Goals
 Processes
 Communication
 Involvement
 I get it!
 Commitment
 Respect
 Leadership
 Collaboration
 This is challenging!
 Unity
 Decisions
 Teamwork
 This can be fun!

Shared Vision
 Strategy
 Empowerment
 Accountability
 Self-directed
 Positive
 Conflict resolution
 Coaching
 Accomplishment
 GROWTH



Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

NOTE: Forming, Storming, Norming & Performing team description first developed by Bruce Tuckman

Exercise 7: Motivating a virtual team

You are running a virtual team, you are a team leader. There are two things that you can do.

1. Start off by pulling all the group together, by being highly sociable ... and then moving to the task.
2. Start by really focussing on the task first, getting them to start working together ... and then socialising and bringing together.



The FP7 proposal development process



Things to think about

- Do not try to fit your project into the call text.
- Smaller focussed consortia are preferred
 - STREP 6-12
 - IP 10-17
- Read the guide for applicants carefully



Using the FP7 part B template

- The FP7 part B template is the template that you must use to describe your proposal. In this section we look at:
 - specific advice for presenting complex information
 - how to fit persuasive writing into the template
 - an overview of the sections of an FP7 proposal
 - each section in detail.



Proof reading tips

- Concentration is Key
- Put It On Paper
- Watch Out for Homonyms
- Watch Out for Contractions and Apostrophes
- Check the Punctuation
- Read it Backwards
- Check the Numbers
- Get Someone Else to Proofread It



Specific advice for presenting complex information

- Three things make information complex,
 - difficulty of concept or topic
 - volume of material
 - Terminology.



Difficult concept or topic

- FP7 proposals will cover hard topics, hard topics will be more difficult to understand than ones that uses the same language and construction to cover an easier topic. FP7 topics include,
 - ideas or concepts that are not familiar to the reader
 - topics that build upon other concepts
 - topics that require specialist knowledge (such as university-level science knowledge, or specialist industry expertise)



Volume of material

- The more information the evaluator has to wade through, the more difficult the evaluator finds it to follow the meaning, or to extract the relevant information.
- Last submitted proposal 38,759 words



Terminology

- FP7 projects are on specialist topics and will often use technical language or jargon.
- Technical language
 - Technical language is sometimes necessary. However, technical language presents a barrier to a reader who is not familiar with the topic.
- Jargon
 - Jargon tends to creep into proposals, particularly when written among a small circle of familiar readers.



Overview of the sections of an FP7 proposal

- Science and technology
 - concepts and objectives
 - progress beyond the state of the art
 - S/T methodology and associated work plan
- Implementation
 - management structure and procedures
 - individual participants
 - consortium as whole
 - resources to be committed



Overview of the sections of an FP7 proposal

- Impact
 - expected impacts listed in the work programme
 - dissemination and/or exploitation of project results, and management of intellectual property
- Ethical
 - any ethical issues or topics the project touches on



Exercise

- Can you remember the 5 key elements of a proposal?
- How do these fit within the FP7 part b template?
- Is it a perfect fit?



Ask yourself these questions

- What are the main objectives (objectives must be measurable)?
- Does it fit the topic described in the call?
- How is it unique?
- Whose problem does this solve?
- Why does it have to be your consortium working on this? Why can't others do it?
- Which consortium member will provide which skills?
- How will you know if you have succeeded - must be able to demonstrate research deliverables.
- Think about how the co-ordinator will monitor the work and how successful it is.
- How will measure your progress? Need to include clear milestones when doing the planning.



Case study reviewing 2 different proposals



SECTION 1: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Section 1.1: Science and technology

- First draft comes from your short summary sheet.
- Coordinator leads the development of section 1.1
- From your initial meeting onwards you are developing this section in detail
- Keep your focus on the call text and scope



Measurable objectives

- Project objectives need to be set out clearly and be measurable. To achieve this, objectives need to:
 - be specific
 - include qualitative and quantitative measurements
 - be agreed and understood by all partners
 - be time-bound.



Setting objectives

- **To improve the resilience** for communication and information access not just for processing and data storage in clouds
- **To enable the effective management of mobility contexts** from the mobile objects themselves that can be aggregated and customised information views, not just relying on contexts from a few fixed infrastructure sensors, e.g., to show this route tends to have this traffic speed on average at this time of day but today it is different;
- **To enhance privacy and trust in sharing mobility contexts and profiles** because the information collected about travellers has the potential to build detailed profiles of traveller behaviour which has both benefits and drawbacks that need to be balanced across different stake-holders;
- **To support data provenance** to provide evidence that data is from a reliable source, to control access to information to support commercial services etc.



Setting objectives

- **Provide an architecturally resilient reference model** using a federated cloud to manage the interoperability of Intelligent ITS across many devices in an Internet-of-Things. This model will outline the technical operation of a high availability, resilient, secure, and interoperable federated ITS cloud framework.
- **Assess the requirements of the Information collectors/provider community and data users.** This assessment will take into account existing and new requirements and any new hardware and software services. It will produce detailed specifications of development processes, system architecture, and the services framework.
- **Develop and specify a Core Cloud shared resource framework** that enables cloud-based ITS services and resources to be elastically interoperable, integrated, shared, and accessed on-demand.



Setting objectives

- **Research the challenges in Cloud development that currently limit the transfer of Internet-of-Things ITS to a federated Cloud based model.** Solving these problems will advance the state of the art of Cloud development. It will increase resilience and performance, Cloud interoperability, security and privacy, and the context-awareness of user-centred service provision.
- **Validate the architectural reference model against the derived requirements** by implementing real-life use cases. These use cases will be implemented through a Federated Cloud 'pilot and developer zone' workspace. This workspace provides a programming model that enables cost-efficient development and pan-European (consider Trans-National) deployment of services.
- **Effectively disseminate and exploit the developed architectural Federated Cloud reference model** through community engagement and structured dissemination actions, including the development of a sustainable business model.



Setting objectives

- **By month 6, Provide an architecturally resilient reference model** using a federated Cloud to stimulate the interoperability of ITS across many devices in an Internet-of-Things. This model will outline the technical operation of a high availability, resilient, secure, and interoperable federated ITS Cloud framework.
- **By month 12, assess the requirements of the Information collectors/provider community and data users.** This assessment will take into account existing and new requirements and any new hardware and software services. It will produce detailed specifications of development processes, system architecture, and the services framework.
- **By month 18, develop and specify a Core Cloud shared resource framework** that enables Cloud-based ITS services and resources to be elastically interoperable, integrated, shared, and accessed on-demand.



Setting objectives

- **By month 36, research the challenges in Cloud development that currently limit the transfer of Internet-of-Things ITS to a federated Cloud based model.** Solving these problems will advance the state of the art of Cloud development. It will increase resilience and performance, Cloud interoperability, security and privacy, and the context-awareness of user-centred service provision.
- **By month 22, validate the architectural reference model against the derived requirements** by implementing real-life use cases. These use cases will be implemented through a Federated Cloud 'pilot and developer zone' workspace. This workspace provides a programming model that enables cost-efficient development and pan-European (consider Trans-National) deployment of services.
- **By month 36, effectively have disseminated and exploited the developed architectural Federated Cloud reference model** through community engagement and structured dissemination actions, including the development of a sustainable business model.



Exercise

- Identify the needs from the call text handout
- Read section 1.1 of the Smartfusion project
- Does the section follow the MADE structure?
- Can you easily identify the needs stated in the call text with section 1.1?
- Have the 5 elements been implemented in section 1.1? Try to mark them if possible.
- Any areas that are lacking?



Progress beyond the state of the art

- Remember MADE
- Summarise how you will take the art forward
- Carry out a complete information gathering information exercise
 - Current and previous projects ,national and international
 - Related this to your project, discuss the previous SoA and how you take it forward
 - A list of SoA is not good enough.



Section 1.3 work plan

- Your project structure comes from your objectives.
- Consider the normal project cycle,
 - Initiation, Delivery, closure
- Ensure your work packages deliver one or two objectives at the most.
- Clearly say how each work package works to deliver your objectives
- Clearly show how they are dependant



Section 1.3 work plan

- Your Gantt chart – resist the urge to make many tasks and work packages in parallel.
- Milestones – are key points in the project that need to be completed to continue
- Deliverables – no more than 2, maximum three per work package



Section 1.3 work plan

- **Defining tasks**
- You must define clear tasks in your work plan descriptions. Do not write solution statements. Instead, make sure you are using verbs and action statements:
 - we will do
 - partner A will build
 - we will design.
- Show any outcomes or dependencies clearly in your task descriptions and include who will work on the task and their role.
- ‘We will build a house based on the architectural drawing coming from work package 1. Manfred construction will oversee the building works. Jones electrics will provide all the wiring material’



Approach to risk management

- Maintain register
- Assign an owner
- Assign a strategy to manage each risk
- Follow up consistently



Section 2: Implementation

- Within the implementation section you will need to specify:
 - management structure and procedures
 - individual participants
 - consortium as a whole
 - resources to be committed.
- Remember it is easy to lose marks in this section



Section 2: Implementation

- What management groups do you think you will need?
- How will you resolve conflict and change?
- How will you make decisions?
- How do you approach quality checking?
- How do you keep on track?



Section 3 impact

- Covers 2 areas
 - Expected impacts listed in the work programme
 - Dissemination and exploitation of project results, and management of intellectual property



Building a budget

- The principle behind European funding is co-financing. Not all your project costs will be reimbursed.
- The maximum refund rates for the costs of a project depend on the funding scheme, the legal status of the participants, and the type of activity.
- **Legal status will dictate funding rate**
 - The standard refund rate for research and technological development activities is 50%. Certain legal entities can receive up to 75% (non-profit public bodies, SMEs, research organisations, and higher education establishments).
- **Activities are also funded differently**
 - For demonstration activities, the refund rate may reach 50%. For other activities (consortium management, networking, training, coordination, dissemination etc.), the reimbursement can be up to 100% of the eligible costs.



Building a budget

- Budget items
 - Salary costs
 - Overhead
 - Travel
 - Subcontracting
 - Equipment
 - Funding requested
 - Audit costs
- Do not include VAT, taxes, company accounting



Building a budget

- Working out the amount of funding.
 - Direct costs (salary, travel, equipment) + indirect costs (Overhead) multiplied by the funding rate
 - $(10,000 + 2000) \times 75\% = 9000$
- Overhead models
 - Flat rate, STFR, Actual



Building a budget

- Balancing resources
 - A budget also has to look balanced
 - Coordinator will always have the largest amount of man months
 - Then work package leaders
 - Then participants
 - Avoid small man months



Proposal Submission Form



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
7th Framework Programme on
Research, Technological
Development and Demonstration

Collaborative Project

A3.1: Budget

Proposal Number Proposal Acronym Participant Number

In FP7, there are different methods for calculating indirect costs. The various options are explained in the guidance notes

** Please be aware that not all options are available to all types of organisations.

The method of determining indirect costs is set in the Proposal setup page.

If you would like to modify this information, you have to do it from the proposal set-up page.

Special transitional flat rate

**My legal entity is established in an ICPC
and I shall use the lump sum funding method** yes no

(If yes, please fill below the lump sum row only.

If no, please do not use the lump sum row)

	Type of Activity						Total	
	RTD	Demonstration	Training	Coordination	Support	Management		Other
Personnel costs (in €)	325518	0	0	0	0	19515	0	345033
Subcontracting (in €)	113839	0	0	0	0	4095	0	117934
Other direct costs (in €)	105800	0	0	0	0	0	0	105800
Indirect costs (in €)	327094	0	0	0	0	11727	0	338821
Lump sum, flat-rate or scale of unit (option only for ICPC) (in €)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total budget (in €)	872251	0	0	0	0	35337	0	907588
Requested EC contribution (in €)	654188	0	0	0	0	35337	0	689525
Total Receipts (in €)								689525

Validation Errors

No Validation Errors

Save Form

Validate

Nodos

Final wrap up and Q&A



Thank you

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