

Writing Research Fellowship Applications

Programme

Morning: Things you Need to Know

- [Where to get a handout](#)
- Fellowships 101
- The Sales Pitch
- What Makes a Good Fellowship Application?
- The Magic Formula
- Sub-projects
- Application-Writing Strategy
- Writing Guidelines

Afternoon: Exercises

- Talks and Interviews
- Interview Question Exercise
- Elevator Pitch Exercise
- Fellowship Criteria
- Aims and Objectives
- First Sentence Exercise
- The Recipe

16:00 Close

Introduction

The workshop is designed to start you thinking productively and pro-actively about Fellowship applications. It starts from the fundamental questions about what fellowships are, why they exist, what is special about people who win fellowships. Then it discusses how decisions are made about fellowships and gets you to think about what you may need to do to turn yourself into a strong applicant and to prepare yourself to apply.

My delivery style is interactive, so feel free to ask questions throughout the day. This handout contains all the visual material to be used during the day with clickable links to the main sections in the programme (above) and to the full contents slide-by-slide (below).

Andrew Derrington

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What is a Fellowship?

...

- Personal support for an individual (The Fellow)
 - How much?
 - For how long?
 - To do what?

...

- Research expenses
 - Travel?
 - Slush?
 - Project Funding
 - * Equipment?
 - * Staff?
 - * Research Costs

Who offers Fellowships and Why?

Who? . . .

- Universities
- Research Institutions
- Funding agencies
- Charities

...

Why?

...

- To develop talent
 - MSCA, Research Councils, Wellcome Trust

...

- To attract talent
 - Institutions

...

- To steer talent
 - MSCA
 - Discipline-hopping
 - Industry -> Academia

...

- To exploit/reward talent
 - Superstar Fellowships

What kind of person are they looking for?

- Exceptional research talent
 - How can you make your talent exceptional?

...

- Discuss with your neighbour(s)
 - What are you looking for?
 - What kind of fellowship might provide it?

Case for Support as a Sales Pitch

The Sales Pitch for a Project has Two Components: Importance and Success

- Global Sales Pitch: **“The Project is Important”**

...

- – Introduction - Tell them the overall research goal & convince them you can deliver it.
 - * Tell them what makes the overall research goal important.

...

- Detailed Sales Pitch **“The Project will be Successful”**

...

- – Background/Literature review/Motivation
 - * Break the goal into 3 sub-goals;
 - * Convince the reader that the sub-goals are really important.
 - * Sub-goals can be expressed as RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS or HYPOTHESES.

...

- – Description of Project/Methods/Research Plan
 - * Describes the research activities in each of 3 **sub-projects** and makes it clear that they will achieve the sub-goals.
 - * Sub-projects can be referred to as “OBJECTIVES” or “WORK PACKAGES”.

...

- Matching the background to the description of the project creates a detailed sales pitch

...

- You should always match the background to the description of the project, even when they are entries on a form.

The Sales Pitch is delivered by the **Magic Formula**

What Makes a Good Fellowship Application?

Why you need a magic formula.

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A good case for support is designed for the decision process.

1. **What do funders want to know?**
2. **How do funders make decisions**
 - **What are the implications?**
 - **The Case for Support as Sales Pitch**
 - **The Magic Formula**

Fellowship Funders are looking for Four Things

1. A good PERSON

- Fellows are future research stars.
 - Potential
 - Achievements
 - Creativity

...

- Which of your achievements make you look like a future star?
 - What could you change to make yourself appear more stellar?

...

2. A suitable PROJECT

- As a vehicle for your development
- As a flagship for the funder.

...

3. A suitable PLACE

- Facilities
- Mentors
- Support

...

4. A good PROGRAMME

- New Techniques & Skills for the Fellow (and the Host)
- Experience
- Connections

The Decision

- Who decides?
 - Committee of successful researchers
 - Very busy people
 - Very successful
 - * Have their own grants
 - * And research groups
 - * And jobs
 - Not knowledgeable about your particular research area.
- Fellowships committees are usually broader than grants committees
- Often it's a 2 stage process
 - Paper then interview
 - Project then person

The Decision: what information do they have?

- Applications
 - Usually a set of 50-100 per meeting.

- Arrive 3-6 weeks before meeting.
- Everybody delays reading them as long as possible.

...

- Expert referees' reports
 - Written reports with evaluation and score.
 - Usually 2-5 per application
 - Usually arrive before the meeting but often after the applications
 - Often conflicting

...

- Designated members' reports
 - Oral report by 2 or 3 members who have read the application.
 - Usually lasts < 5 minutes

The Decision: what is the process?

- Designated members report on the proposal
 - Usually less than 5 minutes
 - Who, what, why, how, outcomes, strengths, weaknesses, summary of referees, how important and exciting, suggested score
 - One person may have to do this for 10 or more grants in a day.
 - Probably based on 30-60 minutes preparation.

...

- Discussion by all members of the committee.
 - Even though some of them may be reading it for the first time during the discussion.
 - * They will probably have read the summary beforehand.

...

- All members in the discussion can influence the score.
 - No matter how little they know.
 - And how little time they have spent reading your proposal.

Implications of the decision process?

- Referees will analyse your case for support in detail but:-
 - Most of the committee won't read it.
 - The ones who do read it probably won't understand it.
 - There will be about 100 other applications.
 - This imposes requirements on the case for support.

...

-
- It must make it very clear that your project
 - is important, and
 - will be successful
-

- and it must be easy:-
 - To analyse it at a deep level (Referee).
 - To know what's in it by skimming it (Committee Member).
 - For an outsider to understand its importance (Committee Member).
 - To grasp the big picture and remember the details (Designated Member).

...

-
- To endow your case for support with these properties you may need a [Magic Formula](#)

The Magic Formula

- The Key Sentence Technique
- Key Sentences
- Layout
- Tag Phrases
- Repetition

The Key Sentence Technique

...

- Create a skeleton of about ten '*key sentences*' that state the main points of the Case for Support.

...

- - the overall research goal,
 - what makes the goal important,
 - the sub-goals
 - the sub-projects that deliver the sub-goals
 - [Here's a full list](#)

...

-
- Use the key sentences as an organising framework for writing the Case for Support,

...

- - Each key sentence is the first sentence of a subsection of the Case for Support
 - * Rest of the subsection develops the point

...

- Use the key sentences as the [Summary](#)

...

- and as the [Introduction](#).

...

-
- Every Reader gets the same picture, no matter what they read

...

- – Summary only

...

- – First few lines of the case for support

...

- – Every word of the case for support.

The Magic Formula

The Key Sentences

Ten Key Sentences to Make the Case for a Project

1. **Goal:** States overall goal of project (AIM, Research Question, Hypothesis)

...

2. **Importance** Says what makes the overall goal important

...

3. **Sub-goal-1:** States G_1 (& why it is important)
4. **Sub-goal-2:** States G_2 (& why it is important)
5. **Sub-goal-3:** States G_3 (& why it is important)

...

6. **Project:** Introduces the project.

...

7. **Sub-project-1:** Says how sub-project 1 will deliver G_1
8. **Sub-project-2:** Says how sub-project 2 will deliver G_2
9. **Sub-project-3:** Says how sub-project 3 will deliver G_3

...

10. **Concluding:** Says what happens after the project. - Depends on funder & **Importance**.

...

11. Some funders require section on track record & environment
 - Add a key sentence saying what achievement demonstrates each important skill
 - And a key sentence describing each major component of infrastructure

The Magic Formula

Key Statements

Fellowship Key Statements Cover Different topics depending on the fellowship

- Outcome
- Institution's Strengths
- Fellow's Strengths
- Importance of Project
- 3 Research Aims and why we need them 'We need to know'

- Project summary
- 3 Research Objectives to deliver Aims “This will tell us”
- Dissemination / Impact
- Developmental Programme (How many parts?)
- Developmental value of Project

...

- Start every section with a key statement that summarises it

...

- They introduce the detail
 - that convinces the referee /detail reader
- Re-use them in the summary

Use Layout to Communicate with Skimmers and Speed-Readers

- Message on first line of paragraph (ASSERT then JUSTIFY)
 - First sentence of para ASSERTS (topic sentence)
 - Remainder of para JUSTIFIES
 - * This is where you cite literature
 - * This is how you avoid citing too much literature.

...

- White space above each paragraph

...

- Readers' eye movements land on blank lines.
 - Speed-readers will read first line of every paragraph.
 - Browsers will only read first lines.
 - Detail readers will know what to expect in each para

Programme

Teach Terminology with Tag Phrases

...

Re-use a phrase from the sub-goal sentence in the sub-project sentence to emphasise that the sub-project will achieve the sub-goal.

...

Sub-goal-1, Sub-goal-2 & Sub-goal-3 Key Sentences

- ‘We need to know’ + tag phrase because...
- We need to know the relationship between the performance of single neurons and the performance of the whole visual system in order to establish the likely contribution of single neurons to perception.

...

Sub-project-1, Sub-project-2 & Sub-project-3 Key Sentences

- 'We will do this sub-project in order to discover' + tag phrase
- We will record single neurons during perceptual tasks and calculate sensitivity functions for neural responses and for task performance in order to characterise the relationship between the performance of single neurons and the performance of the whole visual system.

...

- Tag phrases provide meaning - link between aims and objectives
- Use them in headings (make them short enough)
- Key sentences and tag phrases start off messy and long-winded, like these.

...

- You have to edit them to make them effective.

Programme

Tag Phrases in Use

The perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We need to know the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1 in order to establish the potential contribution of V1 to perception. The potential contribution can be assessed using a range of perceptual tasks, such as visual pattern discrimination, object discrimination, and motion-detection. For any such task, we can infer the contribution of cortical area V1 to that task from the relationship between the perceptual capabilities of single neurons and the perceptual capabilities of the individual.

This is the start of a sub-section of the background. There will be a couple of pages of text (at least 3 subsections, each with its own heading) between it and the start of the corresponding sub-section of the description of the project, which follows here.

Measuring the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We will measure how neural response varies with stimulus strength during perceptual tasks in order to measure the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1. Stimuli from a set that covers a range of strengths will be presented repeatedly in random sequences under computer control. The computer will record responses during the presentations, and during equivalent periods when no stimulus is presented, for off-line spike sorting and analysis.....

Magic Formula

Tag Phrases in Red

The perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1

We need to know the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1 in order to establish the potential contribution of V1 to perception. The potential contribution can be assessed using a range of perceptual tasks, such as visual pattern discrimination, object discrimination, and motion-detection. For any such task, we can infer the contribution of cortical area V1 to that task from the relationship between the perceptual capabilities of single neurons and the perceptual capabilities of the individual.

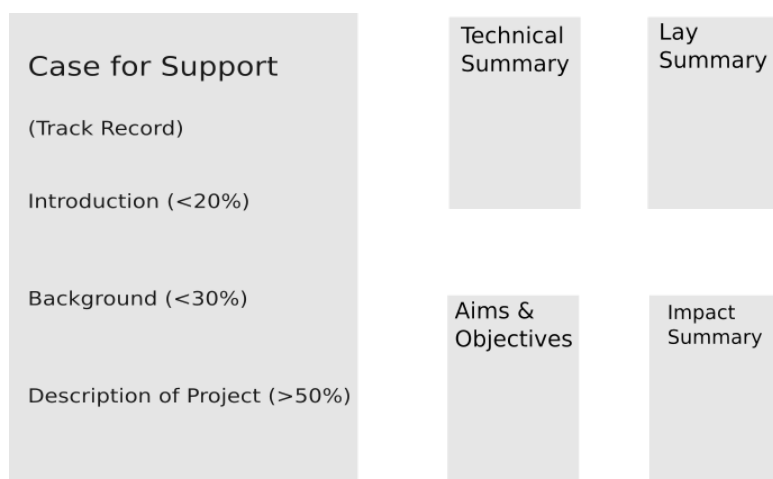
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Magic Formula

Re-cycle Text From Case for Support



- Repeat key sentences and tag phrases
 - to provide common structure, and
 - to link
- Maintain structure and order

Programme

Resources

What's been funded?

- [Research Council Project Summaries](#)
 - <http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk>
- [ERC Summaries](#)
- [Leverhulme Awards 2016](#)

Advice on writing:- www.parkerderrington.com/blog

- [How to construct a project](#)
- [The key sentences](#)
- [Catalogue](#)

Magic Formula

Sub-projects

What is a sub-project?

- You break your project into components (sub-projects) to make it easier to explain.
 - The sub-projects can be sequential
 - Or parallel
 - Or even different analyses of the same data
 - The main requirement is they produce different, important outcomes.

...

- Each sub-project produces an important outcome
 - Sub-project outcomes match research sub-goals exactly.
 - * You use the research sub-goals to structure the background of the case for support.

...

- - That way the explainer will give your sales pitch.
 - Because they will have read the background before the description of the project.

...

- The perfect number of sub-projects is 3, but 4 is OK.

...

- Don't create a hostage situation.

...

- - A sub-project that cannot be done unless a previous sub-project produces a result that it is not certain to produce.

Strategy

Your strategy must accommodate the likelihood of rejection

- Most well-written grant applications get rejected.
- Rejection can be a devastating experience

...

- If you need a grant, you should plan to write 5 or 6 based on the same set of ideas
- Never get down to your last rejection.
- If you get 6 rejections, it's time to develop a new set of ideas.

...

- You need to be able to multiplex grant applications
 - Different Outcomes?
 - Different Datasets?
 - Different Projects to Achieve the Same Goal?
 - Different Combinations of Sub-Projects
- You need to be able to write well and quickly.

Back to Programme

Should I use a successful application as an example to copy?

- The majority of successful applications are very badly written
 - Especially those from senior academics.

...

- Apply the following test

...

- Can you find single-sentence answers to the following questions in 10 minutes:-

1. What is the overall goal of the project?
2. What makes the goal important?
3. What are the overall research methods?
4. For each sub-goal (there should be 3 or 4):-
 1. What is the sub-goal?
 2. What pieces of research will answer this question or meet this aim.
 3. What makes it important to answer this question or meet this aim in the context of the project.

...

- If you can't answer these questions very quickly, it's not well-written.

[Back to Programme](#)

[Back to Top](#)

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

...

- Nobody is sure what Aims & Objectives mean, so you can write aims and objectives that deliver your sales pitch.
 - [How would you do that?](#)

...

- [Make the research sub-goals the AIMS](#)
- [Make the sub-projects the OBJECTIVES.](#)

...

- – The AIMS and OBJECTIVES deliver the detailed sales pitch.

...

- Always try and give both AIMS and OBJECTIVES, even if you are only asked for one of them.

...

- Can you deliver the global sales pitch as well?

...

- – [Make the overall project goal the overall AIM, that way you can give the global sales pitch by justifying the overall aim \(use the same words as in the IMPORTANCE key sentence\).](#)

...

- Be careful not to confuse the reader with multiple ways of breaking down your project and its motivation.

...

- – If your funder asks you to write about research questions (AHRC, ESRC) or hypotheses (EPSRC), **make it clear that the research questions or hypotheses match the AIMS.**
- If your funder asks you to write about Work Packages, make it clear that the Work Packages match the OBJECTIVES.

Principles of short talks and interviews

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General Principles

- Decide what message you want your audience to take away.
 - Learn it
- Use a good communication approach to deliver that message
 - Tell - explain - remind.
- Keep to time
- Be yourself.
 - The point of talks and interviews is to find out what you are like.

Talks

- Message size is 1 short sentence
 - Expands into 3 or 4 short bullets
 - * Each bullet expands into a section that makes the point

...

- Learn the message
 - Make it the first sentence of your talk
 - And the closing message too
- The body of your talk expands the message into 3 or 4 points
 - Explains each one
- Then draw the conclusion (= the message)

...

- And thank the audience

Communication Basics

- Remember: It's human-to-human

...

- Tell-Explain-Remind
 - Tell them your message
 - Explain it to them
 - Then remind them what you told them

...

- Try to like your audience
 - It helps with the body language

...

- Look at your audience and expect them to look at you
 - Or to shift their gaze and look at what you are looking at

Slides, Handouts and Scripts

- Slides illustrate or emphasise, not expand

...

- Must have very clear explanation of
 - What point the slide makes (short statement)
 - What is on the slide - use a pointer
 - How it demonstrates the point
 - Which point it demonstrates.

...

- No slides is fine if you are not showing pictures (job talk).
 - And impresses people
 - You can use 'prompt' slides on your phone
 - Make sure your prompts work for you

...

- Handouts
 - Only if teaching.
 - Never to expand the message - write a book!

...

- Scripts
 - Never

Interviews

- It's like several short talks with the topics chosen by the panel

...

- Prepare answers for the obvious questions
- Time is always a problem so give a short answer and offer to expand it.
 - Tell, explain, remind
- Practise speaking your answers.
- Learn your short answers.
- Look mostly at the questioner but also at the chair and the other members of the panel

Take Home Message

- Always know what your message is.
- And how much time you have to communicate it.
- Remember your audience is only human.

Thank you

Interview Question Exercise

- Imagine you are in an interview for your dream fellowship. The first question is “Would you tell us why you have applied for this fellowship?”
- Write a list of the points you would want to make in your answer.

. . .

- Compare notes with your neighbour.

. . .

- How would you begin your answer?

Marie Curie Criteria

- Excellence 50%
 - Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)
 - Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host
 - Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution
 - Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence

. . .

- Impact 30%
 - Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher
 - Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the action results
 - Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the action activities to different target audiences

. . .

- Implementation: 20%
 - Coherence and effectiveness of the Work Plan
 - Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources
 - Appropriateness of the management & risk management structures and procedures
 - Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)

. . .

▪

- Discuss with your neighbour the key sentences or headers you would need.

The Recipe

- Make sure you have a fundable project
- Prepare your Ingredients
 - Write the Detailed Sales Pitch
 - Write the Project & Concluding Sentences

- Write the Global Sales Pitch
- Assemble the Case for Support
- Write a Grant in 10 Steps

Sub-goal and Sub-project Sentences

- **Sub-goal** Sentences: “We need to know” (One per subproject)
 - Say what a SUB-GOAL consists of (& why it’s important)
 - “We need to achieve a SUB-GOAL for whatever reason”
 - Sub-Goal can be expressed in terms of Aim, Research Question, and/or Hypothesis
 - * Use the funder’s terminology.

We need to know the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1 in order to establish the potential contribution of V1 to perception.

...

- **Sub-project:** Sentences “This will tell us” (One per Subproject)
 - Says how a sub-project will achieve a SUB-GOAL.
 - “We will do the sub-project and it will achieve the SUB-GOAL”

We will measure how neural response varies with stimulus strength during perceptual tasks in order to measure the perceptual capabilities of single neurons in cortical area V1.

...

- Rookie mistakes
 - Different wording for the sub-goal in **sub-goal** and **sub-project** sentences
 - Failing to mention research activities in **sub-project** sentences
 - Describing the research activities instead of outcomes in **sub-goal** Sentences
 - Changing the syntactic structure unnecessarily.

Example

Project & Concluding Sentences

Project

- **Project** sentence summarises the project in whatever way is appropriate
 - If they only read 1 sentence about your project, it will be this one. What do you want it to say?

Concluding Sentence

- Introduces your discussion of what will happen after the research is complete
- It will depend to a certain extent on whether the importance is academic or practical or both.
 - e.g. State in about 40 words what you will do to maximise the benefit from the project.

Goal & Importance

The Elevator Pitch (Makes the Importance Proposition)

1. **Goal** Sentence should have 3 parts:-

1. What the project will achieve, in 'big picture' terms.
2. How it will achieve it (your research approach).
3. An example of your achievements using that approach, to show you are competent.

...

This project will develop a potential treatment for stroke, using an in vitro brain slice model to optimise synthetic metabolic inhibitors discovered in my laboratory.

...

2. **Importance** sentence says what it is that makes the outcome important. For example...
 1. Quantify the real-world problem it will help to solve.
 2. Say what it will allow us to do that we can't do now.
 3. Prepare to say which named priorities of your funder it contributes to, and how?

...

Caring for the 1.2 million UK stroke survivors costs over £1.7 billion a year.

Build the Structure

- Standard Structure: Key sentences as Introduction and Skeleton
- Variations
- ESRC Aims and Research Questions
- EPSRC Guidance
- Suggested Structure for EPSRC

Standard Structure

1. Introduction - Key Sentences 1-10, (Write this Last) - May express **Sub-goal** key sentences as research questions, aims or hypotheses - May express **sub-project** key sentences (& **Project** and **Concluding**) as Objectives.
 - 2. Background - 4 subsections - sells the project outcomes. (Write this after Methods)
 - **Importance** Say what makes the overall outcome important.
 - * Then justify in detail
 - **Sub-goal-1-Sub-goal-3** Say why we need each research outcome (AIMS) & add detail after each
 - 3. Methods. Describes the Project (Write this First)
 - **Project** Summarise the project. Then add detail.
 - **sub-project-1-sub-project-3** Summarise each sub-project (OBJECTIVE) & the AIM it achieves. Add detail after each.
 - **Concluding** Say what happens after the project (impact?). Then add detail.
 -
4. A separate section on track record is required by some funders (e.g. MRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, NERC) Write this anytime.

Alternative Structures

Some funders specify requirements that appear to be incompatible with the standard structure, but these can usually be addressed by one of three approaches.

...

1. Renaming components - e.g. Methods may be called 'Research Plan & Methodology', 'Description of the Project' etc.

...

2. Moving sub-components around
 - e.g. BBSRC require you to introduce the 'Research Plan and Methodology' with the Overall Aim & Specific Objectives. Can do this by having separate introductions for the Background & Methods sections.

...

3. Using composite titles to avoid repetition
 - e.g. ESRC ask both for aims and for research questions: [call each aim a research question](#).
 - EPSRC ask for 4 sections covering same topic 'Background', 'National Importance', 'Academic Impact' and 'Research Hypotheses & Objectives' [solution here](#)

ESRC Aims and Research Questions

- ESRC guidance suggests separate subsections for aims and research questions:-
 - "The introduction should set the aims and objectives of the study in context. It should briefly sketch"
 - "The detailed research questions to be addressed should be clearly stated."
- It is dangerous to give the impression that research questions and aims refer to different goals.
- This is a problem

...

- Readers will be confused if you give the impression that research questions and aims refer to different research goals.

...

- Make it clear that the research questions and the aims are the same; e.g.
 - "[We have three research aims which are expressed in our three research questions](#)".

...

- From that point on, follow the [No Synonyms guideline](#)

...

- – Use one term or the other.

EPSRC Guidance

- Previous Track Record (up to 2 sides)
- Description of proposed research and its context (6 sides)
 - Background
 - * Introduce topic and explain academic and industrial context
 - * Demonstrate understanding of related work
 - [National importance](#)

- * Contribution to other disciplines, economy & society.
- * Long term effects; relation to national strategic needs.
- * Fit with UK research & EPSRC's [portfolio, research areas & strategy](#).
- Academic Impact
 - * Describe academic impact
 - * Explain collaborations; justify Visiting Researchers
- Research Hypothesis and Objectives
 - * Set out your research idea or hypothesis
 - * Explain why the proposed project is novel and timely
 - * Identify the overall aims of the project, and the measurable objectives
- Programme and Methodology
 - * Detail and justify research methodology
 - * Describe the work programme & milestones for each member of the team,
 - * Explain how the project will be managed.

Use Composite Titles to Comply with EPSRC Guidance

1. Track Record
 - If you don't need 2 pages for your track record, put pilot data in the track record section.
2. Background
 - Aim, Research Hypothesis and Objectives. This is a standard introduction that uses all the key sentences in order. The only difference is that it appears as the first subsection of the background rather than as a section in its own right. It should use terms like 'hypothesis', 'aim' and 'objective' either in the key sentences or in linking text.
 - National Importance and Academic Impact Subsection. This and everything that follows is the same as the standard structure. It uses the **Importance** Sentence followed by details that meet EPSRC guidance.
 - **Sub-goal-1** sentence & subsection;
 - **Sub-goal-2** sentence & subsection;
 - **Sub-goal-3** sentence & subsection;
3. Programme and Methodology. Everything is exactly the same as the standard methods section.
 - **Project** sentence & subsection;
 - **Sub-project-1**

 - **Sub-project-2**

 - **Sub-project-3**

 - **Concluding**; Sentence & Subsection
 - Give milestones and explain how the project will be managed.

Write a Grant in 10 Steps

1. You can start as soon as you have thought of a viable project.
2. Check that the project is suitable for your chosen funder and funding scheme.
3. Divide the project into sub-projects and assemble the information you need to describe what you will do in each subproject and to explain what makes it important to do it.
4. At this stage you should be able to initiate the costing process & institutional approvals in parallel with the writing.
5. Draft your Key sentences in this order:-
 - i. *Sub-project* sentences.
 - ii. *Sub-goal* sentences.
 - iii. *Project* and *Concluding* Sentences
 - iv. *Importance* sentence.
 - v. *Goal* sentence

If you will need a summary for a lay audience you should begin working to prepare and test it at this stage.
6. Use the key sentences as the skeleton and write the subsections of the case for support.
7. Add any funder-specific information or sections to the case for support.
8. Draft any required information on the project timetable and project management.
9. Assemble the budget and write the Justification of Resources
10. Finalise any attachments and summaries you need to submit.

What should the elevator pitch say?

- Why is this a good Person?
- Why is this a good project?

- Direct Outcome?
- Training Outcome
- Why is this a good place?

Gathering information for the elevator pitch

Ask your neighbour about their project. Try to understand and remember:-

- What will their project achieve?
- Would that achievement be important? Why - objectively?
- Why would they be a good person to receive a fellowship -
 - Get evidence rather than value claims.
- How will the project develop their career?
- Why would their chosen organisation/lab be the best place to hold the fellowship - objectively?

After 5 minutes, change roles and repeat.

Writing the Elevator Pitch

1. Imagine that you are trying to persuade a committee to give your neighbour a fellowship.
 - Write a short statement that will convince them to do so.
 - You have 5 minutes.
2. Imagine that you are trying to persuade a committee to give you a fellowship.
 - Write a short statement that will convince them to do so.
 - You have 5 minutes.

End

Writing Guidelines

- No Synonyms
- ...
- – Pick the best term and use it repeatedly.
- ...
- – Create tag phrases
- ...
- No Homonyms
 - Ambiguity is your enemy.
- ...
- Assert, then justify: make a statement, then explain it
- ...
- – Key sentence at the start of every section

- Start every paragraph with the 'Topic Sentence'

...

- Short paragraphs (~6 paras per page)

...

- Use Headings and Sub-Headings
 - Re-use phrases from the key sentences.

...

- No Adverbs

...

- – Pick the right verb (no nominalisations)

...

- Short Sentences (easier if you avoid adverbs & adjectives)
 - Health Check
 - Hemingway
 - Use similar syntax for sentences with similar function.

...

- Avoid value claims (state evidence instead)

...

- Bullet lists good, lists in sentences bad.

...

- NIUTEIISPOU is one of the seven deadly sins

...

- – No initialisations unless the expansion is in the same paragraph (or unnecessary)

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Nominalisations

- A nominalisation is a noun phrase constructed from a verb,

...

- which can be used with a general purpose verb to create a flabby, pompous, long-winded way of saying something simple.

...

- We will investigate X
 - We will carry out an investigation into X
- We will analyse
 - We will undertake an analysis of

...

- You can make it more pompous and long winded by using a few adjectives to describe the nominalisation:-
 - We will undertake a detailed, rigorous and searching analysis of ...

Do you have a fundable project?

- What is the overall goal of your project; what is it going to achieve?

...

- Split your goal into three sub-goals (or build your project from three sub-projects).

...

- For each sub-goal:-
 - State the sub-goal clearly (ideally as something we need to know).
 - Describe the research you will do to achieve the sub-goal.
 - Say what makes it important to achieve the sub-goal in the context of the project.

...

- What have you done that would convince a sceptic that you can do the project?

...

- What is the evidence that your project is important to your chosen funder?

...

- State the overall goal of your project in terms intelligible outside your research discipline.

...

- – Often this is a goal you will contribute to, rather than achieve completely.

...

- What are you doing to ensure Impact?

...

- You should have answers to the following questions.
 - Who will benefit most from this research?
 - What is their involvement in the development of the project?
 - How will they benefit?
 - What will you do to ensure that they benefit?

...

If you start writing a grant application without answering these questions, you might never finish.

Presenter



Andrew Derrington has in-depth experience of the research funding process. He obtained his first research grant, a Beit Memorial Fellowship for Medical Research, while he was writing his PhD. His research was continuously funded by fellowships, project and programme grants for the next 30 years. He served on research grant committees for The Science and Engineering Research Council, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. His book, *The Research Funding Toolkit*, which he co-wrote with Jacqueline Aldridge, research and enterprise associate in the School of Psychology at the University of Kent, is the definitive guide to grant writing for early career academics and research professionals. It is based on Andrew's analysis of how grants committees make funding decisions.

Andrew has worked in eight Universities including two in the world top ten.

He has also worked as a journalist. Over several years he wrote two successful columns in the Financial Times. *The Nature of Things* covered science - from astrophysics to zoology. *Psych Yourself Up* was a guide to the different psychotherapies available in the UK.

Andrew set up [Parker Derrington Ltd](#) in 2013. He now works as a consultant, writing research grant applications and providing strategic advice and training to individuals and organizations.

Testimonials

I had a fantastically useful time attending your recent workshop at Leicester University. Writing the 10 key sentences was a very useful exercise and I have, since, worked on them to discover they are a fab tool for any kind of writing really.

Dr Ranjana Das, University of Leicester

Andrew blends easy authority and extensive experience with humour and approachability. The result is a workshop full of practical, memorable advice on how to compete more successfully for research funding.

Professor Peter Clegg, Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool

I attended one of Andrew's workshops when I was a senior lecturer. The hands on advice about how to structure my applications in a really appealing fashion enabled me to win a grant of nearly →£600K the next year. I still implement the advice that I received in that workshop, and pass it down to junior colleagues. I find that Andrew's advice has a high success rate!

Prof Theresa Gannon, University of Kent

I still use the tips you gave me for my successful Wellcome SRF application. Your advice on "12 key sentences" is spot-on and helps people focus on the aspects of the proposal that are critical to success instead of getting bogged down in reams of text.

Prof Mark Baxter, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Andrew's grant-writing workshops teach you how to convince the world that it needs your research. They are the most useful training events I have ever attended. His advice about how to sell the big idea without compromising on the science was critical to the success of our →£9.3 million ESRC application.

Prof Julian Pine, University of Liverpool