Writing Research Grant Applications

Programme

Things you Need to Know

- Where to get a handout
- Do you have a fundable project
- The Sales Pitch
- Why You Need a Magic Formula
- The Magic Formula
- Sub-projects
- Aims and Objectives
- Application-Writing Strategy
- Writing Guidelines
- How to Assemble the Case for Support

Things You Should Practise

- Goal Sentence Exercise
- Recipe to Create the Magic Formula
- Write the Detailed Sales Pitch
- Write the Project & Concluding Sentences
- Write the Global Sales Pitch

16:00 Close

Introduction

This half-day workshop is designed to teach you the things you need to know to follow a 'recipe' to write an application for a research project grant, such as a research council standard grant. Follow-on consultations may be available for you to seek feedback on your draft applications or advice on any aspect of grant-writing.

The things you need to know include the following:-

- Writing a grant application is very difficult unless you design a fundable project before you start. We will discuss how you can assess whether you have a fundable project.

- We will discuss how the case for support in a grant application can work as a sales pitch.

- We will discuss the way funding decisions are made and the unacknowledged requirements that the decision process imposes on the case for support in a grant application.

- We will discuss a 'magic formula' for a case for support that meets all these requirements.

- We will discuss a 'recipe', a step-by-step guide to constructing a case for support that conforms to the 'magic formula'.

- We will discuss how the requirements of a grant application dictate writing style, and some common academic writing habits that you need to eliminate from your grant applications.

- We will discuss how you can compose a set of aims and objectives that deliver your sales pitch.

My delivery style is interactive, so feel free to ask questions throughout the day. On the day I will show you where you can download a handout that contains all the visual material to be used during the day, with clickable links to the main sections in the programme and to the full contents of my presentation, slide-by-slide.

Andrew Derrington

Do you have a fundable project?

- 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.

. . .

- Do you have a more concrete goal that you will achieve completely?

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

. . .

- 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.

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- Say what makes the project important to your chosen funder.

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- What are you doing to ensure Impact?

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- 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.

Strategy

Your strategy must accommodate the likelihood of rejection

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

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- 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.

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- 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-goaln (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

Writing Guidelines

- No Synonyms

. . .

- – Pick the best term and use it repeatedly.

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- – Re-using a phrase from the sub-goal sentence in the sub-project sentence emphasises that the sub-project will achieve the sub-goal (tag phrase)

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- No Homonyms
  - Ambiguity is your enemy.

. . .

- Assert, then justify: make a statement, then explain it

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- – Key sentence at the start of every section
  - Start every paragraph with the 'Topic Sentence'

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- Short paragraphs (~6 paras per page)

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

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- No Adverbs

. . .

- - Pick the right verb (no nominalisations)

. . .

- Short Sentences (easier if you avoid adverbs & adjectives)
  - Health Check

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- Avoid value claims (state evidence instead)

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- 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)

Back to Programme

Nominalisations

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

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- 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 analisis of …

Case for Support as a Sales Pitch

- Global Sales Pitch: **"The Project is Important"**

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-
  – Introduction - Tell them the overall research goal & convince them you can deliver it.
    * Tell them what makes the aim important.
  – The rest of the introduction prepares the reader for the detailed sales pitch.

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- Detailed Sales Pitch **"The Project will be Successful"**

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-
  – 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

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.

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- Don't create a hostage situation.

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

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).

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

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- – 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.

Why you need a Magic Formula

What a Grant Application has to Achieve

Andrew Derrington

The Case for Support must persuade the funder to fund your project.

1. What do funders want?
   - This tells you what information the Case for Support must include.
2. How do funders make decisions
   - This tells you the requirements for the Case for Support.
     - It needs a magic formula.
   - The Magic Formula

Back to Programme

Grant Funders have Four Questions about the Project

1. IS THE PROJECT IMPORTANT (to Them)?

   - Direct Outcomes (discoveries)
   - Indirect Outcomes (training, career development, mobility…)

2. WILL THE PROJECT BE SUCCESSFUL?

   - Will it produce the direct outcomes?
     - Will they be put to use?
   - Will it produce the indirect outcomes?

3. ARE THE APPLICANTS COMPETENT?

   - Can they carry out the project?
   - Can their institution support it?

4. WOULD A GRANT BE VALUE for MONEY?

   - Are the resources requested Necessary, Sufficient, and Proportionate (for the project)

Back to Programme

Answers to Funders' Questions

- IMPORTANCE (evidence)

  - Evidence about direct outcomes in literature review
  - Evidence about indirect outcomes in details of project, institutions, & investigators

- SUCCESS (project details)

  - Research activities in relation to outcomes?
  - Impact and dissemination plans.

- COMPETENCE (evidence)

  - Evidence that the team has the necessary skills in publications (quality and authorship).
  - Evidence that PI and institution can deliver the project in track record & facilites.

- VALUE for MONEY (project details)

  - Mention how grant resources will be used in the project.
  - Mention institutional resources needed for the project.

Back to Programme

Which question do you start with?

- IMPORTANCE?
  - Pick an important question
    * Start the literature review
    * ……

Back to Programme

That's how you write a zombie grant...

- If the description of the research is less than 50% of the case for support it is probably a 'zombie'.

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.

- May have 'user' representation

- Supported by secretariat

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.

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- 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

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- 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.

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- ■

- 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).

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- ■

- 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

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- ▪
- 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

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- Use the key sentences as the Summary

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- and as the Introduction.

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

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- ▪ – Summary only

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- ▪ – First few lines of the case for support

. . .

- ▪ – Every word of the case for support.

The Magic Formula

The Key Sentences

The 10 sentence skeleton of a case for support

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

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

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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

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

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Magic Formula

Re-cycle Text From Case for Support
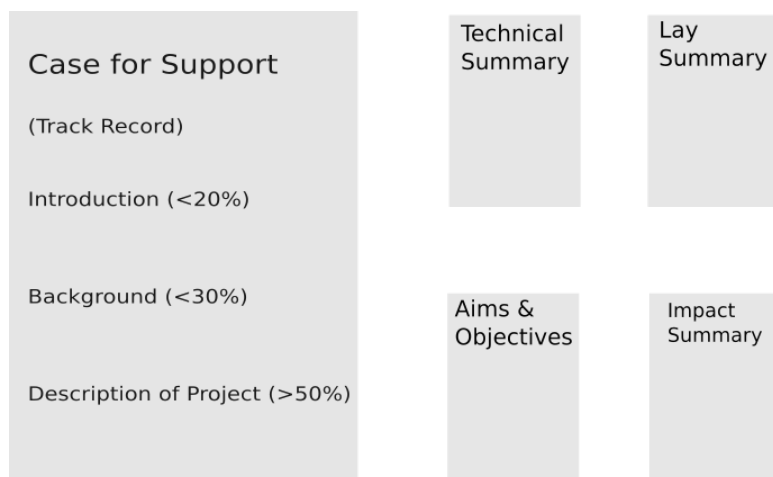
- Repeat key sentences and tag phrases
  - to provide common structure, and
  - to link
- Maintain structure and order

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

Back to Top

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.

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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.

Example Key Sentences

1. The project aims to enable improvements in training social workers by analysing the role of writing in social work practice using an integrated ethnographic and linguistic methodology that we have previously used to analyse the practice of police work.[REF].
2. Social work practice is dominated by writing, from formal assessment reviews to informal notes, emails and text messages, but writing is not part of the social work curriculum. Social care costs 27 billion pounds annually in the UK and problems arising from errors in writing increase the risk of harm to service users.
3. We need to survey the writing practices of professional social workers.
4. We need to survey the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work.
5. We need to analyse how writing practices shape the nature of professional social work?
6. The project uses an integrated language methodology, including ethnographic description, discourse analysis and tracking the production of texts.
7. We will carry out an ethnographic study, in order to establish the writing practices of professional social workers
8. We will analyse texts and explore how writing is managed alongside other commitments to characterise the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work.
9. We will use discourse analysis and track texts relating to specific cases to discover how writing practices shape the nature of professional social work.
10. We will develop effective writing practices that will significantly improve training and practice of social work.

Example Aims and Objectives

Our project has three aims, (which can be expressed as research questions):-

1. What are the writing practices of professional social workers?
2. What are the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work?
3. How do writing practices shape the nature of professional social work?

. . .

- Our project will answer the three research questions by pursuing the following three objectives:-
    1. We will carry out an ethnographic study, in order to establish the writing practices of professional social workers
    2. We will analyse and quantify texts and explore how writing is being managed alongside other commitments in order to characterise the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work.
    3. We will use discourse analysis and track the trajectories of texts relating to specific cases in order to discover how writing practices shape the nature of professional social work.

. . .

- The central aim of the project is to enable improvements in training and practice of social work by analysing the role of writing in social work practice using an integrated ethnographc and linguistic methodolody.
- Every part of social work practice is dominated by writing, from formal assessment reviews to informal notes, emails and text messages, but writing is not part of the social work curriculum.
- Check for Tag Phrases.

Example Tag Phrases

- Our three aims are to answer the following three research questions:-
    1. What are the writing practices of professional social workers?
    2. What are the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work?
    3. How do writing demands and practices shape the nature of professional social work?
- Our project will answer the three research questions by pursuing the following three objectives:-
    1. We will carry out an ethnographic study, in order to establish the writing practices of professional social workers.
    2. We will analyse and quantify texts and explore how writing is being managed alongside other commitments in order to characterise the institutional writing demands of contemporary social work.
    3. We will use discourse analysis and track the trajectories of texts relating to specific cases in order to discover how writing demands and practices shape the nature of professional social work.

How the Structure Works

(**Key Sentence Names** are **Bold Font**)

. . .

1. Introduction (summarises whole case for support using all key sentences)
    - **Goal, Importance, 3 Sub-goals, Project, 3 Sub-projects & Concluding**

. . .

2. Background (Literature review=> GOAL is Important; Subgoals are criteria for success)
    - **Importance:** Sells GOAL => *IMPORTANCE PROPOSITION*
    - **Sub-goal-1:** Explains & Sells G_1
    - **Sub-goal-2:** Explains & Sells G_2
    - **Sub-goal-3:** Explains & Sells G_3

. . .

3. Methods / Research Programme (Project is value for money & will be successful)
    - **Project:** Introduces the project.

- **Sub-project-1:** How sub-project 1 will deliver G_1
- **Sub-project-2:** How sub-project 2 will deliver G_2
- **Sub-project-3:** How sub-project 3 will deliver G_3
  - Mention resources used in research $=>$ *VALUE for MONEY PROPOSITION*
  - Explain how Project delivers Subgoals $=>$ *SUCCESS PROPOSITION*
- **Concluding:** Says what happens after the project.
  - Expectations depend on funder & on importance proposition.

. . .

4. Some funders require section on track record & environment
   - Track record demonstrates all necessary skills
   - Environment describes all necessary infrastructure & support
     - $=>$ *COMPETENCE PROPOSITION*

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.

Goal Sentence Exercise

Why is the first sentence important?

. . .

- It has to be good enough to make the reader read on

- They will have 99 other applications.

  - They know most of them are headed for the shredder.

- They also have a TV.

- What will make them want to read your application?

. . .

1. A project that is likely to advance an important area of knowledge.
2. A project that is likely to be successful.

3. Evidence that you are competent to carry out the project.

The Perfect Goal Sentence

Three Elements

. . .

1. What the project will achieve, in 'big picture' terms.
   - A project that is likely to advance an important area of knowledge.

. . .

2. How it will achieve it (your research approach).
   - A project that is likely to be successful.

. . .

3. An example of your achievements using that approach.
   - Evidence that you are competent to carry out the project.

The Exercise

1. Interview your neighbour (3 mins)
2. Swap roles and interview again (3 mins)
3. Write a sentence for your neighbour's project (2 mins)
4. Write a Sentence for your own Project (2 mins)
5. Optimise and discuss.

. . .

Interview to get information for the sentence that you want to write:-

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.

Research Goals

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 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