TEN

HOW TO WRITE FOR FUNDING AGENCIES: LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Summary

This chapter explains how to write research grant applications that stand out against the competition. It provides a set of writing techniques that help make your research grant applications easy to read, easy to understand and convincing. The examples given throughout this chapter are taken from a series of successful grant applications, which illustrate some of the advice and guidance. You can find more information about each of these in Appendix 3.

Introduction

Well-written applications perform three functions for the referees and grants' committees who decide whether projects deserve funding. In brief, they must be:

1 Easy to read
2 Easy to understand
3 Convincing

These qualities are important success factors in tough research funding competitions.

It is perfectly acceptable for a grants' committee member to say, 'This one was so badly written that I could not work out what they want to do.' However, 'badly written' has a specific meaning in this context.

Unfortunately, researchers who write well for publication may not have impressive grant-writing skills. This is because other forms of academic writing, such as monographs, journal articles or PhD theses, have rather different aims. They are all written for specialist readers, who have the time and inclination to read them carefully.

In contrast, research grant applications are read quickly and the readers are not always specialist in your areas. The funding decision is made by a grants' committee that ranks applications against each other. Your writing style must suit this environment and help your application to stand out against the competition.

This chapter helps improve your grant-writing skills through a set of six core grant-writing techniques plus specific, additional advice on how to make your applications easy to read, easy to understand and convincing.

You do not need to adopt all of these techniques or aim for a bland, clinical writing style. Inevitably, some of them will suit you more than others. As long as you create applications that meet the three objectives, you do not need to follow every single piece of advice in this chapter.

In practice, each of following core writing techniques will help you meet the three writing objectives while refining the structure of your project proposal.

1 *Assert–justify*: how to tell readers the point of an argument before giving the detail of an argument.
2 *Priming*: how to give readers advance information that will make them likely to accept the key arguments and demands.
3 *Signposting*: how to tell readers what information is coming so that they are ready to read important information when it comes.
4 *Linking*: how to create connected arguments across the case for support.
5 *Labelling*: how to demonstrate a consistent and logical project structure.
6 *Summary*: how to create a strong project summary.

1 Assert–justify

The 'assert–justify' technique requires you to make an assertion and then justify it with evidence rather than argue your case and then make a conclusion.

This goes against the grain for many researchers, who are versed in a traditional academic 'argue–conclude' model. However, the nuanced and cautious approach of 'argue–conclude' does not suit grant-writing, where the emphasis needs to be on simple, direct communication.

There are three advantages to starting with an assertion and following it with the evidence:

- Speed-readers pick up all the main messages because speed-reading focuses on the bold propositions that begin each section
- Detail-readers are motivated to read on because the bold proposition at the start of each section tells them the purpose of the argument they want to absorb
- The assertions can be lifted out and used to write your summary

'Assert–justify' also has an important structuring function. You can use this technique to order your overall case for support, as well as each section of text and each paragraph. This is because each level of your application has its own internal structure, in which a message is first communicated clearly and then justified with evidence.

EXAMPLE 30

THE ULTIMATE 'ASSERT–JUSTIFY'

The next example – taken from a lengthy European funding application – shows an interesting and marked use of the 'assert–justify' technique. Each paragraph of the background section starts with a 'stand-out' assertion in bold, which is backed up by a paragraph of evidence.

The consortium will build on a strong software development platform.

The aim of the project is to introduce property-driven development into the software engineering process. Property-driven development can be used in a variety of programming languages and systems. The particular platform chosen for initial implementation of the project is Erlang/OTP (Open Telecom Platform), but a crucial aspect of our proposal is the dissemination and adoption of the approach much more widely, particularly into the model driven development arena (UML) and other implementation languages (C/C++, Java, etc.). Erlang/OTP has been chosen as the implementation vehicle because of its robustness and reliability within the telecoms sector; witness, for example, its success in the implementation of the AXD301 ATM telecoms switch by Ericsson, one of the project partners. Erlang is a practical language, designed from the start with practical application in mind. It also benefits from simplicity, and from being a functional language, which eases the application of theoretical results from the academic programming language community. We see Erlang as a natural common ground between researchers and the telecoms industry, providing a conduit through which research results can be quickly transferred to industrial applications, and hence into a wider industrial context. We see precisely this happening in this project. *Software Testing European Project*

This is an effective way of helping speed-readers navigate an application document that is over 100 pages long.

2 Priming: key arguments and demands

Priming is how you influence readers' reactions to key arguments by feeding them contextual information in advance. It is the single most important way that a research grant application builds enthusiasm among readers.

Have you noticed that two miles before every motorway service station there is a sign warning about driving while tired? Priming is widely studied by cognitive psychologists, and widely used as a sales technique. For example, you are more likely to buy an insurance policy if you feel worried about the likely disasters beforehand. An insurance company will make sure you feel these concerns before starting the sales pitch.

In brief, priming is about giving the reader the evidence that will make them likely to agree with your main propositions. Instead of describing your project as 'important' or 'exciting', you give the readers relevant information in advance and allow them to form their own judgements. By the time they reach the principal statement and discussion of your main propositions they will be easy to convince.

As you write, you should concentrate on priming your four key propositions, as follows:

The importance proposition: this proposal asks an important question

Use the 'we have a problem' section (however labelled by the funding agency) to feed readers with information that makes them worried that we do not know the answer, or excited that we could know the answer to your question. This primes them so that when they read the full statement of your research question and details of the activity that answers it, they are ready to support your demands.

EXAMPLE 31A

PRIMING AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

This example primes the applicants' main research question on how the extraordinary rendition and proxy detention of terror suspects has developed and whether they are US-led phenomena. In the second paragraph of the case for support, they state the number of individuals affected and provide evidence for rendition and detention as widespread practices. This primes the 'need to know' message of the research sub-questions later in the document.

US Congress provided a sense of the intensity of US involvement in the system of rendition and proxy detention in August 2006 when it reported that 14,000 people were being held without due process in secret locations by the security agencies of dozens of states worldwide, on behalf of the US (Quinn 2006). The current US administration continues to operate under authorisation granted by Congress in 2001 to use force against Al Qaida suspects anywhere in the world, force which includes indefinite detention by the US or its allies without due process (Roth 2010). *Rendition and Detention Project*

The success proposition: this project is likely to answer the question

The 'we have a problem' section of your case for support is also crucial to priming the likely success of your project. In this section, you introduce the list of things you 'need to know'. In providing evidence for why we 'need to know' the answers to your questions, you prime the plan of investigation.

When readers reach the detailed account of your research activity later in the case for support, they will be easier to convince. They should already agree that we 'need to know' answers to your questions and that your approach is likely to provide these answers.

EXAMPLE 31B

PRIMING THE PROBLEM

A further extract from the same funded application uses the Background section to prime three regional case studies that form the basis of the proposed research programme:

> Despite the widespread and well established use of rendition, scholarly work has tended to focus on its status in law (Parry 2005; Weissbrodt and Bergquist 2006; Sadat 2007). There has been no work to examine how the system has emerged and how it operates. Early evidence suggests that the operation of rendition and proxy detention may be much more diffuse. It also appears to be operating differently in the three regions most involved (Asia, the Middle East and Africa) (Cageprisoners 2006a). *Rendition and Detention Project*

The value proposition: the likely gain from this project is worth the resources requested

Use the 'this project is the solution' section (however labelled by the funding agency) to prime readers about your budget and justification of costs. As you describe each activity component in detail, make sure you mention all relevant project resources.

If you weave every budget item into the case for support narrative, decision makers are more likely to agree that the grant requested is necessary and sufficient.

EXAMPLE 31C

PRIMING THE RESOURCES

In this extract, the applicants use the 'Research Methods' section of their case for support to argue for the efficiency of conducting the research in person:

> Funding is sought for the PI and Co-I to undertake the research because we will need to be immersed in the issues with a detailed understanding of the background to each case before writing up the research findings, particularly as each case will be informed by disparate sources, and the material concerns sensitive subjects. The PI will work on Pakistan and Syria, since she has already undertaken some pilot work on these cases, and the Co-I will work on Kenya, as he has experience of analysing US foreign policy in Africa since 9/11 (Stokes and Raphael 2010). Both scholars are well versed in the foreign policy practices of the US, and in analysing security collaborations between the US and its allies, including in relation to the use of violence. This equips us well to analyse the data efficiently, which will help ensure the research is completed in a timely way, and while the issue is still current. *Rendition and Detention Project*

The competence proposition: the applicant and team are competent to carry out the project as described

Self-citation in the 'we have a problem' section is a way of priming readers to believe that your contribution to the field has been important and is likely to be so again. They can then turn to your CV or 'Track Record' section for a full account of your achievements.

EXAMPLE 31D

PRIMING THE INVESTIGATORS

In this extract, the early career applicants (i.e. Blakeley and Raphael) use a section of text on project outputs to showcase their previous contribution to the three fields relevant to their project:

> The research will contribute to debates in International Relations in three areas:
>
> 1 **Security Collaborations**: it will contribute to our understanding of security collaborations that bring together security agencies from multiple states. In this regard the work builds on earlier work of the PI (Blakeley 2006, 2007, 2009) and of the Co-I (Raphael 2010).

2 **Critical Terrorism Studies**: it will contribute to the growing body of work on state terrorism, understood as the use or threat of violence by agents of the state to instil fear in an audience beyond direct victims, so that they are forced to change their behaviour in some way (Blakeley 2009: 30). Families and peers of those subjected to rendition are likely to suffer extreme fear about the fate of the disappeared, as well as the terror of themselves being subjected to rendition. Thus, it can be argued that rendition has a terrorising effect.
3 **Security Studies**: the research will contribute to theory building in Security Studies. As discussed below, three alternative models – the hierarchical model, the co-option model, and the diffusion model – have been identified by the PI to help explain how rendition and proxy detention have emerged and are operating. These three models, as well as their application in this research, will provide a helpful framework for further work in the Security Studies field on a variety of collaborative arrangements between security agencies that transcend state boundaries. *Rendition and Detention Project*

3 Signposting important information

Signposting is much more explicit than priming. Priming feeds the reader information in order to create a state of mind that will make them more likely to be convinced by a future argument. Signposting prepares the reader to process important information by telling them that the information is coming.

This technique allows readers to stay alongside your arguments. It tells speed-readers when they can safely skip a block of text and, more importantly, tells detail-readers when they need to pay close attention.

As with 'assert–justify', signposting can be used at various levels of your application document. For example, the 'Introduction' to your case for support or 'Background' section should be used to briefly state the overall research question, why it is important and a short summary of the project and its aims. Equally, as you take the reader into each new section, you should introduce your argument with a signpost sentence.

EXAMPLE 32

SECTION SIGNPOSTS

This extract uses two straightforward signposts within one paragraph (in italics):

> Existing work by consortium members is at the forefront of automated testing for concurrent systems, particularly in the telecoms sector. *In this section we describe* how this will be carried forward and broadened by the project, extending the state of the art in testing evolving systems, in monitoring system behaviour and in verification of concurrent systems. *We now set out the state of the art* in these areas, and explain how the project will deliver progress in all of them. *Software Testing European Project*

In contrast, this signpost uses a summary of the section content to introduce the 'Research Methods' section:

> These five behavioural experiments assess the impact of reconsolidation on the acquisition of words by capitalising on either the phonetic or meaning similarities between the reactivated and to-be-learnt competing knowledge. *Memory Research Project*

4 Linking: creating connected arguments

Linking is a technique that helps connect your arguments throughout the entire case for support narrative.

Funding agencies sometimes prescribe an elaborate structure and set of headings for the case for support. The effort of following this guidance correctly can mean that the overall narrative becomes disconnected.

As a result, referees and grants' committee members are left to make their own connections between your background, research questions, methods and research programme sections.

Leaving your readers to their own devices in this way is risky. On the one hand, they may make the wrong connections. On the other, busy referees and grants' committee members may find no connections and consider your project disorganised. Providing your own connections between different sections of your case for support is the safer route.

Linking helps you carry forward the key message of the previous section and show how it informs the argument of the next. If you link your case for support effectively, decision makers will finish reading with a clearer sense of all four key propositions.

Consequently, your ability to 'link' your project effectively is a good test of your project design and structure. This is because good links are dependent on all the various elements contributing to the overall design and structure.

EXAMPLE 33

LINKING COMPONENTS

This brief extract from a successful application shows the relationship between the outcome of one project component (an experiment that measures pain) and the next experiment in the series:

This will provide some practically useful behavioural measures related to pain, and so will help to refine endpoint estimates. However, these results may not necessarily inform on the animals' subjective perception and overall pain experience. This will be measured in approach 2. *Research Animal Project*

This link is particularly effective because it shows how the two experiments inform each other while demonstrating that the second is not dependent on the outcome of the first.

5 Labelling: consistent and logical structure

As discussed in Chapter 7, a well-designed project breaks down its overall research question into three to five things we 'need to know', which each match a project objective and component of research activity.

An important writing task is to emphasise this consistent structure by highlighting the themes that run across the application document.

The best way to do this is with a series of identical sub-headings and repeated phrases ('tag phrases'). These should be used consistently throughout the case for support to label each theme and show the connection between research sub-question, objective and component of activity. These labels make your text easier to understand while convincing decision makers that your project is well designed.

'Tag phrases' are also useful in relation to key technical terms or theoretical concepts that might challenge non-specialist readers. The repeated and consistent use of a complex phrase helps readers feel that they understand it. You should also use 'tag phrases' to label shorter pieces of text, such as individual research questions.

EXAMPLE 34

TAG PHRASES

The following list of examples shows how 'tag phrases' are used in practice by some of the funded applications in this book:

1 The *Detention and Rendition Project* uses 'hierarchical', 'co-option' and 'diffusion' as labels for three theoretical models and these can be found in the research questions, summary, background and methods section of the case for support. This gives the project logic and structure and helps the reader perceive the project as well organised and planned.

2 In the *Memory Research Project* the applicant uses several longer 'tag phrases' repeatedly and in prominent parts of the application document. This approach helps readers understand the project and the grants' committee members to formulate supportive presentations. The 'tag phrases' include 'traditional views of learning assume that new memories remain shaky for a short period', 'this project bridges the gap between animal neuroscience and psycholinguistics' and 'revising established knowledge shortly before learning similar information is ill-advised'. These are three important messages for anyone reading this project proposal.

3 In the *Research Animal Project* the applicants use versions of the following three phrases repeatedly throughout the case for support: 'humane endpoint', 'welfare assessment' and 'arbitrary guidelines'. The three tag phrases encapsulate the central argument of the project: 'arbitrary guidelines' mean that current 'welfare assessment' of laboratory mice do not necessarily result in 'humane endpoints'. This ensures that even the most casual speed-readers, such as the wider grants' committee, understand the main messages of the application.

6 High-impact summary

The first section of a research grant application that all referees and grants' committee members turn to is the 'Summary', 'Abstract' or 'Project Outline'. If you fail to gain readers' interest here, you are unlikely to succeed elsewhere in your document. Your summary has an essential role in making your project stand out against others in the same competition.

In addition, it may be the only part that the wider grants' committee reads properly. A well-written summary will make them believe they have read and understood your application. It will also help the designated member formulate their presentation at the committee meeting.

The summary provides a preview of your entire project in simple language. Like a news story, it should be both factual and compelling. In order to write a strong summary:

- Avoid adjectives or adverbs that do not provide factual information.
- Make no claims that your project is exciting or important – allow the evidence to speak for itself.
- Lead with either the research question (if it is easy to explain its importance) or the need that the research question will fill (if this is not obvious).
- Only use vocabulary that you would find in a quality national newspaper. Either place essential technical terms in inverted commas at this stage (and define them) or just use the definition and introduce the technical terms later in the document.

As well as providing an overview of the question, activity and outputs, the summary is crucial to helping readers to understand your project. It starts the process that enables them to grasp the research question, to appreciate its importance

and to understand how it will be solved by different parts of the research project. Although the summary opens your case for support, you should write it last and craft it carefully.

This does not mean it should be written in isolation. An application that is written using the 'assert–justify' approach will provide key sentences that you can transpose into your summary.

Some funding agencies provide a dedicated section of the application form for your project summary. This means that the case for support template may start with a different heading, such as 'Track Record', 'Introduction' or 'Aims'. Whatever the agency guidance, you should always open your case for support with some form of summary. The following examples from successful applications illustrate this.

EXAMPLE 35

CASE FOR SUPPORT SUMMARY

In the first example, the funding agency template requires a 'Research Track Record' section followed by 'Background'. In both cases, the applicants manage to include summary text in the opening lines:

1 Research Track Record

> We propose a collaboration between the Natural Language Generation Group of the Department of Computing at the Open University, and the BioHealth Informatics Group in the School of Computer Science at the University of Manchester, with the aim of developing a reliable Natural Language interface through which ontology builders and other users can encode metadata on the Semantic Web...

2 Background

> We seek a set of principles by which logic-based descriptions (especially ontologies on the Semantic Web) can be associated with transparent formulations in natural languages. By applying these principles, we will demonstrate a tool that allows subject-matter experts to edit and query metadata on the Semantic Web through a reliable Natural Language interface. *Web Authoring Project*

The second example uses a template with an opening section entitled 'Specific Aims'. The applicant starts this section with a straightforward project summary.

Specific Aims

> Understanding language is one of the most fundamental human cognitive abilities. It plays an important role in normal development, and is the major means for acquiring information in many domains. A number of psychological disorders (e.g., schizophrenia) can disrupt the normally impressive functioning of this system, greatly exacerbating the negative consequences of these disorders.
>
> Psycholinguists have made significant progress in clarifying the structures and processes that underlie language comprehension. Despite this progress, much remains to be learned about how words are represented in a person's 'mental lexicon'. Critical remaining issues in this area revolve around questions of lexical representation, and lexical access. Theories must specify how the presentation of a spoken word leads to a particular lexical representation becoming activated, and what the effects of such activation are: What effect does one active lexical representation have on others, and on units at other levels of representation?
>
> The current proposal includes a large set of theoretically-driven empirical studies of lexical activation. The experiments use a range of different methodologies, in order to assure correct theoretical inferences through converging operations. The empirical investigations are organized into three interlocking groups of experiments. *Spoken Word Project*

In both cases the applicants appreciate the need to gain the readers' interest in the opening lines of their case for support as well as follow the agency guidance.

You can read all of the summaries from the successful applications used in this section in Appendix 3.

The easy-to-read application

Adopting the core techniques (especially *Assert–justify*, *Linking* and *Labelling*) goes a long way towards creating 'easy-to-read' grant applications. However, the following simple writing techniques will also help referees and grants' committee members read your application with fluency.

1 Use adjectives sparingly

Multiple adjectives may add flourish but they do make your text harder to read and understand. Try to stick to one adjective and only use them when necessary to your meaning. They slow the reader down and make them process several words in order to grasp one concept. In addition, only use adjectives that provide a factual qualification of the noun. Avoid adjectives like 'exciting', 'significant' or 'profound'. If you want your readers to find your project 'exciting', then you need to provide evidence rather than adjectives.

2 Use adverbs even more sparingly

Use adverbs even more sparingly than adjectives. It is better to use the right verb.

3 Do not use typography to emphasise too much text

Do not use typographical features (bold, underlining, italics) too often within blocks of text. Information that is this important must always come at the start of a paragraph and needs no further emphasis. It is irritating to read blocks of text that include too many typographical variations.

4 Use bullet points and numbered lists for multiple examples or concepts

If you need to list three or more examples, elements, events or reasons, use a numbered list or bullet points. This shows the reader that the piece of text is to be read differently from a paragraph that develops an argument.

5 Keep your paragraphs short

Use short paragraphs – try to make six lines your maximum. Anything longer becomes harder for the reader to follow and means that they are liable to skip information. You may feel that you need longer paragraphs in order to squeeze more information into your case for support. This is a false economy. You may squeeze more information in but the reader is less likely to understand or remember it.

6 Keep your paragraph structure simple

Front load the key information to the first sentence of each paragraph rather than building up to it. Do not bury important messages halfway through a paragraph so that they can only be found after careful re-reading. Use the rest of the paragraph to explain your important messages. This also makes your application easier to understand.

7 Use simple punctuation

Avoid colons and semi-colons as far as possible. They are usually a sign that your sentences are too long. Use every punctuation mark as opportunity to split a long sentence into two short ones.

8 Keep your sentences short

Keep your sentences short. They are easier to read, especially for busy referees and grants' committee members. If you use lots of complex sentences, your readers are unlikely to understand them after one reading. As a rule, sentences that include more than 20 words are too long. Ten-word sentences are ideal. Long sentences should be rare.

9 Keep your verb structures simple

Try to use the present tense in its active form. As you revise your application document, take time to simplify the verb structure. This will save on word count and makes your application easier to read and understand.

For example, 'this project asks' can replace any of the following:

This project will ask...

The question to be asked by this project is...

This project is asking the following question...

It is expected that the project will ask...

The easy-to-understand application

If your application is easy to read, then it is halfway to being easy to understand. The core techniques (especially *Signposting*, *Labelling* and the *High-impact summary*) also help ensure that referees and grants' committee members understand your research design, project structure and follow your arguments.

In addition, you may find that the following simple writing techniques prevent readers from becoming confused or lost as they work through your applications.

1 Avoid new or specialist acronyms

Unless an acronym is in common use and comprehensible to everyone within your wider research field, spell it out in full. Frequency of use within your discipline or field is not sufficient justification for including it in a research grant application. Spelling a phrase in full on first use (with the acronym in brackets) is not enough. Referees and grants' committee members do not have time to pause and remember the significance of your acronyms. If you employ acronyms because you do not have enough space, you have written too much. Some research communities like to use slightly jokey acronyms as short versions of their project titles and there is no real harm in this.

2 Avoid new or specialist abbreviations

As with acronyms, do not coin abbreviations to save space. If you run out of space you need to edit out whole sentences and paragraphs, not condense your text. Unfamiliar abbreviations confuse, irritate and bore readers in the same way as unfamiliar acronyms.

3 Define technical terms and use them consistently

Technical terms are sometimes unavoidable, especially for scientists. If there is no everyday synonym you will have to use them. When you introduce a technical term to your application document, provide a clear definition in everyday terms. Ensure that you then use the phrase consistently (and in full) so that it becomes familiar to your non-specialist readers. Consider making it a tag phrase. Do not tax their memory or understanding by using abbreviations.

4 Avoid within-discipline jargon

Technical terms sometimes have their place in research grant applications but within-discipline jargon is always confusing, irritating and boring. However, applicants often get a sense of security from using jargon. You may even find it hard to tell whether you are using it in the first place. Once you identify the offending words or phrases, provide simple synonyms (e.g. 'gap' for 'lacuna').

5 Repetition is good

In the context of a research grant application, repetition is good. Word count restrictions and the impossibility of saying everything you want to about your project will prevent endless repetition. However, communicating with busy, non-specialist readers means that you should repeat key information at more than one point in your application document. You should also convert essential technical terms into repeated 'tag phrases' (see *Labelling*).

6 Avoid synonyms (because repetition is good)

If you need to refer to the same thing more than once, use the same word or phrase throughout the application. If you use a different word or phrase at later points, you will confuse the reader. Using a different word sends the signal that you mean something different. The speed-reader must understand what you mean instantly.

You may feel that your writing becomes dull if you do not introduce some variation. However, elegant variations make your text harder to understand. Either use a direct repetition to reinforce your message or edit it out.

7 Use descriptive titles

Do not rely on numbers to describe the activity in your research programme. Use something that is descriptive of the content (see *Labelling* earlier in this chapter for more information). 'Research Question 1', 'Experiment 1', 'Phase 1' and 'Study 1' are harder to remember than descriptive labels.

8 Use natural syntax

Try reading a draft of your application out loud. Can you do this easily? Or do you use elaborate sentences and vocabulary? If your application is hard to read in this way, referees and grants' committee members will also find it hard to understand.

The convincing application

The *Priming* and *High-impact summary* core techniques are especially effective in convincing readers that your project deserves funding. If you have followed the advice in previous chapters and structured your case for support well, with plenty of impressive evidence to back up your arguments, your application will already look convincing.

There are two additional points to bear in mind.

1 Avoid hyperbole – show rather than tell

The minute you start describing your project as 'enormously significant' or 'exceptional' you raise doubts in the minds of the reader. While you will need to guide them through your argument, you need to give them evidence rather than quality judgements. They will not judge your project 'exceptional' just because you describe it in those terms.

2 Check your grammar and spelling

Spelling mistakes (such as 'principle investigator') or typographical errors are not acceptable and make your application less convincing. However, journalistic

conventions are preferable to pedantic attention to correct grammar. Quality national newspapers often publish style guides and these are useful reference points for research grant applicants.

Conclusion

After reading this chapter, you should have a set of effective grant-writing techniques. These will help you create applications that are easy to read, easy to understand and convincing. The next chapter shows you how to test your draft applications and work out whether they are ready to submit.

ELEVEN

HOW TO TEST YOUR DRAFT APPLICATIONS

Summary

This chapter looks at how to get valid feedback on your draft applications in order to improve your chances of winning a grant. As well as describing how and when to seek feedback, it discusses the categories of colleague and associate best qualified to help you.

You may also like to read Appendix 1, which describes a set of useful workshop activities. Meanwhile, this chapter focuses on tests that you can easily organise yourself without help from administrators or your institution.

There are 12 Tests in this chapter. Each is appropriate to a particular stage in the development process and helps assess a specific element of your research grant application.

Test	*Purpose*
1 Reality Check Test	Whether you and your project are right for the target scheme
2 Project Design Test 1	Whether your project design is sound
3 Project Design Test 2	Whether your project design is sound
4 Readability Test	Whether your application is easy for a busy person to read
5 Easy-to-Understand Test	Whether your application is easy for a non-specialist to understand
6 Blueprint Test	Whether your application includes enough information about how you will carry out the research
7 Memory Test	Whether your application is clearly structured, labelled and memorable
8 Propositions Test	Whether you make and justify the key propositions needed to convince decision makers
9 Rejection Test	How to predict referees' comments
10 Speed-Read Test	Whether your application suits the needs of speed-readers
11 Review Panel	How to test your application under grants' committee conditions
12 Referee Report Test	How to read and understand feedback on rejected applications