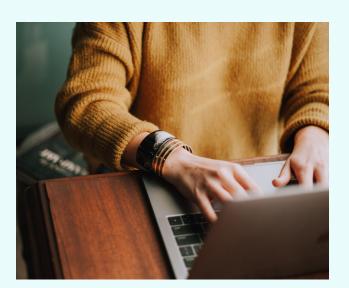# How to write a successful grant application

In a session at the Malaysia event in 2019, the participants discussed what makes a grant application successful in their experience. Their points have been summarised as follows:

1.

Writing a good application is a skill that can be developed with practice. To help develop this skill it is a good idea to:

- Read successful proposals written by others, especially those submitted to the funder the applicant intends to apply to.

- Consider feedback received on unsuccessful project bids and reflect on what could be done differently the next time.

- Use clear simple language that can be understood across disciplines.

Strong networks can help an applicant stay up to date with the state-of-the-art innovations in their field

2.

Read, re-read and then read again any advice and guidance provided by the funder, and make sure that what is written fits the guidance. This will require applicants to write and re-write their proposal. It is also a good idea to speak directly to the funder to ensure that the proposal fits with the funder's interests. Many funders provide examples of well written 'justification of resources' and 'pathways to impact' for example.

3.

The starting point for most reviewers is to be critical of a proposal. This is normal as they are being asked to sanction the allocation a considerable sum of money. To overcome this, it is necessary for applicants to ensure that a proposal provides the reviewers with confidence that, if they support your proposal, it will be money well spent. To cover all bases, applicants may:

i. Include a short summary at the beginning. This should be written in clear language that avoids jargon.

ii. Consider the 'big picture' – what is the issue and why it is important, for example a big picture might be 'building a resilient urban future'. For international research, the UN Sustainable Development Goals can provide a useful context.

iii. Explain what research needs to be done to address this issue and how the proposal fits in with this. Applicants should be realistic and not overambitious, avoid overstating and be clear as to why the work is important. Expressing the importance in terms of clear objectives or research questions may also help.

iv. Explain how the proposed research builds on what has been done by others.

v. Discuss what expertise and track record there is that makes them the best person/team/partnership to do this research. If appropriate, examples of previous successful collaborations can be beneficial.

vi. Set out what each member brings to the team/partnership and why the collaborations are meaningful.

vii. Provide a detailed explanation of: a) the methods that will be deployed to address the objectives/answer the questions, b) what data is available and its quality, c) the programme for the work and d) the costing of the necessary resources.

viii. Be clear about what the funder will get in return for their investment in the project.

ix. Explain the impact of the work and how this will be achieved.

4.

Developing a strong academic network is important. Strong networks can help an applicant stay up to date with the state-of-the-art innovations in their field. Getting this information via networking is faster than waiting for work to be published, as there is a significant time lag in the publication process.