

# Training PhD students

## Session: Grant-writing exercise

---

### Skills and competencies

grant-writing, analysing a call for proposals, preparing a research-project budget, managing teams, uploading a proposal, giving and receiving feedback

### Duration and scheduling

Groups work on a proposal for the duration of the week, with these input sessions:

- Introduction to developing a proposal in teams
- Team management and group dynamics (2–4 hours)
- Budgeting a research proposal (2–4 hours)
- Proposal evaluation and feedback (6–8 hours)

---

**Video:** <https://youtu.be/iKkjdhg418Y>

### Outline

Students work in multidisciplinary teams to develop a fundable project. A fictitious or mock call for proposals serves as the basis for interactive group work as small groups compete with each other to develop the most promising proposal. The exercise involves the whole process from the germ of an idea through to having a proposal ready for submission. Writing a grant as a team means increased productivity, innovation and efficiency.

## Session: Introduce proposal development

### Preparation

#### *Facilitators*

Select or design a mock call for proposals

Source or develop presentations to:

- outline the structure of a proposal
- introduce planning tools

### Steps

Distribute the mock call

With the assignment in mind, discuss project cycle, logframe and milestones, budget, timeline, milestones, M&E

Share and explain planning tools

Form groups of four or five students from different institutions

### Outcomes

By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Distinguish between the different phases of a project life cycle
2. Utilize planning tools for the development of a project

## Session: Team management and group dynamics

### Outline

“The whole is more than the sum of its parts.” When individuals collaborate in unison, they achieve more together than they could individually. What makes an effective team? Working groups and teams are dynamic constellations that go through different phases in order to work together as effectively as possible. Whether in short-term project teams or long-term working groups, the effect of a team is reflected in, for example, quicker work processes or the improved quality or more personal responsibility.

Success depends on various factors and tasks:

- leadership
- setting of goals and procedures
- decisions making
- distribution of roles
- mutual cooperation and collaboration
- handling of difficult situations

Introduction to group dynamics and teamwork  
Conflict management – Perception and handling conflicts  
Theoretical frameworks of human behaviour and their application to teamwork  
Self-reflection and self-assessment of team dynamics and effectiveness at Fellows' own work place to identify knowledge gaps and further training needs  
Building blocks of effective team management  
Communication and feedback techniques

## **Preparation**

### *Facilitators*

Find or prepare presentations on  
effective teamwork  
conflict management  
theoretical frameworks of human behaviour, in relation to teamwork  
group dynamics (dealing with feedback, cultural differences, resistance)  
Find or create and distribute worksheets on individual strengths

## **Steps**

### 1. *Strengths and experience*

Introduce the topic of effective teamwork to the full group

Working groups and teams are dynamic constellations that go through different phases in order to work together as effectively as possible. Success of teams depends on various factors such as: proper leadership, how goals and procedures are set, decision-making, role distribution and attitudes towards cooperation and collaboration

In pairs in break-out rooms, students identify personal strengths, available resources, and previous experience in groups and teams

Pairs report back in plenary.

### 2. *Working culture*

Introduce the topics of conflict management and theoretical frameworks of human behaviour re teamwork

Students reflect on and assess team dynamics and effectiveness in their own workplace

They share these points in groups of four

Around their group table, each student introduces the strengths of her/his neighbour

### 3. *Group dynamics*

Introduce the building blocks of effective team management, communication and feedback techniques, diversity and dimensions of cultural differences, dealing with resistance

Discuss challenges and success factors – including working as a virtual team

### 4. *Code of conduct*

In their project groups, students develop a team code of conduct on a flipchart or powerpoint

The code sums up the way the team proposes to work together effectively and deal with any conflict

A team spokesperson presents the code of conduct for each group

## **Outcomes**

By the end of this session, students should be able to:

- Identify their personal strengths, available resources, and experiences in groups and teams
- Analyse and integrate their own working culture into the work of their proposal teams
- Identify group dynamic processes and success factors for effective teamwork
- Evaluate the relevance of effective teamwork and possible challenges of working in teams

## **Assessment**

Team-management presentation

## Session: Budgeting a research proposal

### Outline

This session equips students with the skills and knowledge to deal with budgeting issues relating to grants and grant proposals.

### Preparation

#### *Facilitators*

Source budget template/s, video/s and PowerPoints on this topic

#### *Students*

Read the budget requirements for the mock call for proposals

List any queries or questions for discussion

### Steps

#### 1. Introduce the budget

The **budget** is a key element of a grant application, itemising the projected costs of a proposed project.

The **budget plan** indicates to prospective funders how you will organise the project and spend the money over a given period. They can see where their money would go.

The **budget justification** demonstrates that your project is well conceived. It minimises the risk that sponsors will arbitrarily reduce or eliminate budget categories. Sponsors/ funders have a good idea of what a project should cost, so they can generally tell if you are over or under-budgeting.

#### 2. Identify the necessary resources

In the call for proposals, and in any additional guidance by that funder, read and discuss the sections on resources and costs.

Invite students to raise any queries they have.

Share any additional resources (video, PowerPoint)

Groups

#### 3. Work in groups

In their grant-writing groups, students discuss:

- Budget template for the grant call

- Budget items

- Budget costing

Groups fill in the budget template for the call

### Outcomes

By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Identify the resources needed for research

2. Estimate costs of identified resources

### Assessment

Facilitator/s review each group's budget

## Session: Proposal evaluation and feedback

### Outline

Students learn about the proposal-evaluation process and how to receive and handle feedback from reviewers.

### Preparation

#### *Students*

Submit the research proposals they have developed in response to the mock call

### *Facilitators/ guest reviewers*

Review the group proposals

Provide feedback on each proposal

Find or prepare “indicators of a winning proposal”

Identify a winner

Invite three people from among the proposal reviewers and facilitators to participate in a concluding Q&A / panel discussion on grant proposals

### **Steps**

#### 1. Review feedback

Share and discuss in plenary the feedback on each proposal

Explain the most significant points in each set of feedback

Invite and respond to students’ questions

#### 2. List indicators of a winning proposal

Invite students to begin a list of indicators in their groups, drawing on the feedback on their proposals

In plenary, combine the lists

Suggest any missing items

Share a final list

#### 3. Conclude the assignment

In plenary, raise and discuss broader issues around grant application

Introduce a three-member panel of reviewers and facilitators to respond to students’ questions about grant applications

Announce and applaud the winning proposal

### **Outcomes**

By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Describe the evaluators’ criteria for assessment.
2. Identify best practices and lessons learned for proposal development
3. Explain how they will develop successful grant proposals in their future research career

### **Assesment**

Grant proposal (groups)

Participation in discussions and group (individuals)

Internal or guest facilitators judge the proposals and give feedback