

# 12 (suggested) commandments of grant writing

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# Don't write an article, write a project outline

- Don't get so involved in your subject that you neglect to write about your own work and your own project
- Explain any even moderately technical or specialist terms, and do it the first time you use them
- Shorten your sentences and simplify your structures (and see below, 'Get your punches in first')

# Stage the project as an intervention, not just an enquiry

- How will your project's outputs affect future work in your field (or outside it)? What will be possible that isn't now?
- Think carefully about the verbs you use. If your project's goals are to 'complicate', 'problematise', 'look at', etc, it will sound less urgent than it should.

Say explicitly why the project is worth doing, aiming your explanation at someone who doesn't care about your field

# Show how the list of aims is more than the sum of its parts

- Each aim or objective should reinforce the others
- Beware of 'adding value' (actually adding confusion) through additional aims that don't support the central ones

# Explain why your project needs to be done *now*

- It doesn't have to be topical (eg. about migrant crises, relationships with Europe, or transgender identity)
- But it does have to be The Next Thing that Needs to be Done in your field. How will your project burst the dam that's holding back research in your area? How will it enable others to do important projects?

# Get your punches in first

- You're not writing a cliffhanger, so don't save the climaxes for the end. Get the big claims, the big ideas, the big features, in at the start of the application and the start of each section.
- Elegance of writing is not important to grant readers. Accuracy, clarity, and punchiness are.

Line any contributors or partners up  
before you write the application



In our field in particular, be careful  
how you move between history and  
literature: don't

- frighten readers who aren't used to combining the two
- or irritate readers who are very expert in doing it and aware of its difficulties

# Above all, go for a balance between reassuring and exciting

- Reassure with very carefully thought-through plans for timeline, exact places to be visited, resources to be used, names of conferences/journals/publishers for outputs, evidence of pre-existing expertise, resources, links to be drawn on
- Excite with original and important ideas that will open up future research projects by yourself and others

And finally... ignore the hit rates and when you get rejections, consult experienced colleagues, rework the proposal in the light of feedback, and resubmit to this or another funder.