

How to plan for an application

- Answer these key questions:
 - **Why this research?**
 - Why should this research be funded in place of some other research? What is so compelling and fascinating about your proposed research compared to what the person next to you is proposing?
 - **Why me/my team?**
 - Ok, so you've convinced me that this research is important and worth funding. Are you and your team the right people to lead it? How does your skillset fit the requirements of the project? Why should you lead this, as opposed to someone else?
 - **Why now?**
 - Is there a pressing need for this research to be done? Why will your research matter? Could it be deferred for a couple of years?



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- If the funding round requires meaningful stakeholder engagement, do this early. Meaningful relationships can't be built overnight.
 - Early engagement provides a meaningful opportunity for the input of stakeholders to shape the proposal
 - Read the RfP (Request for Proposals) carefully and consider if this is the funding avenue best suited to the idea that you want to propose.
 - If this is a government funding round such as the Endeavour Fund (Smart Ideas and Research Programmes) then also seek out the Gazette notice. This is the instruction from the Minister which the Science Board must follow.
 - Are the priority areas listed aligned with the idea that you want to pitch? What aspects of the funder's priority areas match what you want to do.
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- When writing, start by outlining your idea and how you plan to sell it at a high-level on a one-page summary
 - Use bullet-points, or a numbered list with as few words as possible
 - Distil your idea into key points and then flesh out the details around this skeleton
 - Once you have text on a page, it can be quite hard to change direction at that point – deleting swathes of hard-earned text is a challenge and what you have already written taints your thinking
 - Ideally, talk the idea through with a mentor or trusted colleague at the early stage. High-level input at this stage can be the most valuable
 - Peer review by someone who has experience as both an application and as an assessors has been the most valuable to me.

Building a team

- Consider the key skillsets needed to complete the research that you wish to do.
- What are you well-equipped to lead yourself?
- What are the key skillsets or areas of research that are needed for your research, for which you might not currently have the expertise?
- Consider potential collaborators and work towards a team with a good mix of complementary skills.
- Meet with potential collaborators and discuss the project. Get their ideas on the research topic and areas where they feel they could add value.

Working on the proposal

- Check to see if there is a publicly available scoring matrix. This is the document that assessors will be judging your proposal against.
 - In the absence of access to the scoring matrix, refer to the RfP and any other priority statements provided by the funder. This is the next best thing, and will likely inform what goes into the scoring matrix.
 - Don't be afraid to directly target the assessment criteria.
 - Don't rely on an assessor making the indirect connection between the research you are proposing and assessment criteria – take their hand and lead them to explicitly make the connection.
 - Don't write generic statements that anyone could write.
 - Read each sentence and see if that sentence could be copied and pasted into someone else's application.
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Working on the proposal

- Be very cautious about using domain-specific jargon!
- Assessment panels are often from diverse discipline areas and are unlikely to know specific TLAs or FLAs from your field.
- Have someone from outside your field read the proposal see if they can both understand what you are proposing, while also seeing the scientific merit of the research.
- Think about the order in which sections appear in the compiled proposal and the order in which things will be read by an assessor.
- **Finish strong!** The end of your application is the last thing that an assessor will read before reaching for their scoring sheet. Leave them with a feeling that you have proposed a well-conceived and meaningful application



Working on the proposal

As a mechanical engineer, with a strong research and teaching history in both mechatronics and structural engineering, I am uniquely positioned to lead an international multi-disciplinary team to perform this research. I have a track record for high quality science, translation to practice and have all the key linkages required to ensure successful outcomes and become an international research leader in this field.



Don't be discouraged by failure!

- Every one of us has, and will, fail with grant writing.
- Universities publicise successes, but (thankfully) don't publicise our failures.
- This unwittingly leads to the perfectly curated image of success.
- Success in grants is like a gold medal, not a driver's licence.
- Assessment is subjective and changes year-on-year. Failure in a given year does not mean that you can't succeed next year.
- Persistence and tenacity pays off! (source: Professor Margaret Hyland)
- You need a thick skin in this game.

Questions
