



# The anatomy of a grant proposal

1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 / Lucy Parker, MaryCate MacLennan, Steff Hazlehurst

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# The anatomy of a proposal

- Some obvious elements
- Some variable elements
  - Funders vary – not everyone wants everything as separate documents
  - List may be a useful checklist of things to cover
- What does it all mean?
- Who can help?

# The obvious stuff

- The science
- The budget
- The application form
- CVs

# Read the guidance

- Make sure you are aware of everything that goes into the proposal
  - Don't rely on others to read guidance for you – it's your proposal – but ask for help in interpreting it
- Is your project eligible for funding under your chosen scheme and call?
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- Do you need REC (etc.) approval before submission of the proposal, or before commencement of the grant?

# Read the guidance

- Are there requirements about document length, font size, margin size? Check and respect them
- What is the submission deadline (date, time... timezone)? Do not leave it to the last minute!
- Who needs to sign it? Electronic workflow or wet ink? When are they available?

# The science

- Exciting, novel, important, useful, relevant
  - Grab the reader's attention – think about the title and the opening paragraphs
  - Why is it important and to whom?
  - How will the project make a difference, if successful?
- SMART, feasible, deliverable
  - Sensible sample size? (statistics)
  - Patient acceptability of intervention
  - Can you do it for the time and money available?
  - Experience
  - Contingency

# The science

- The research team – who and why?
  - Different clinical specialties
  - Other research skills
    - Research Design Service
- Referees and critical friends
  - Internal review procedures
- Think about the reader, follow the guidance



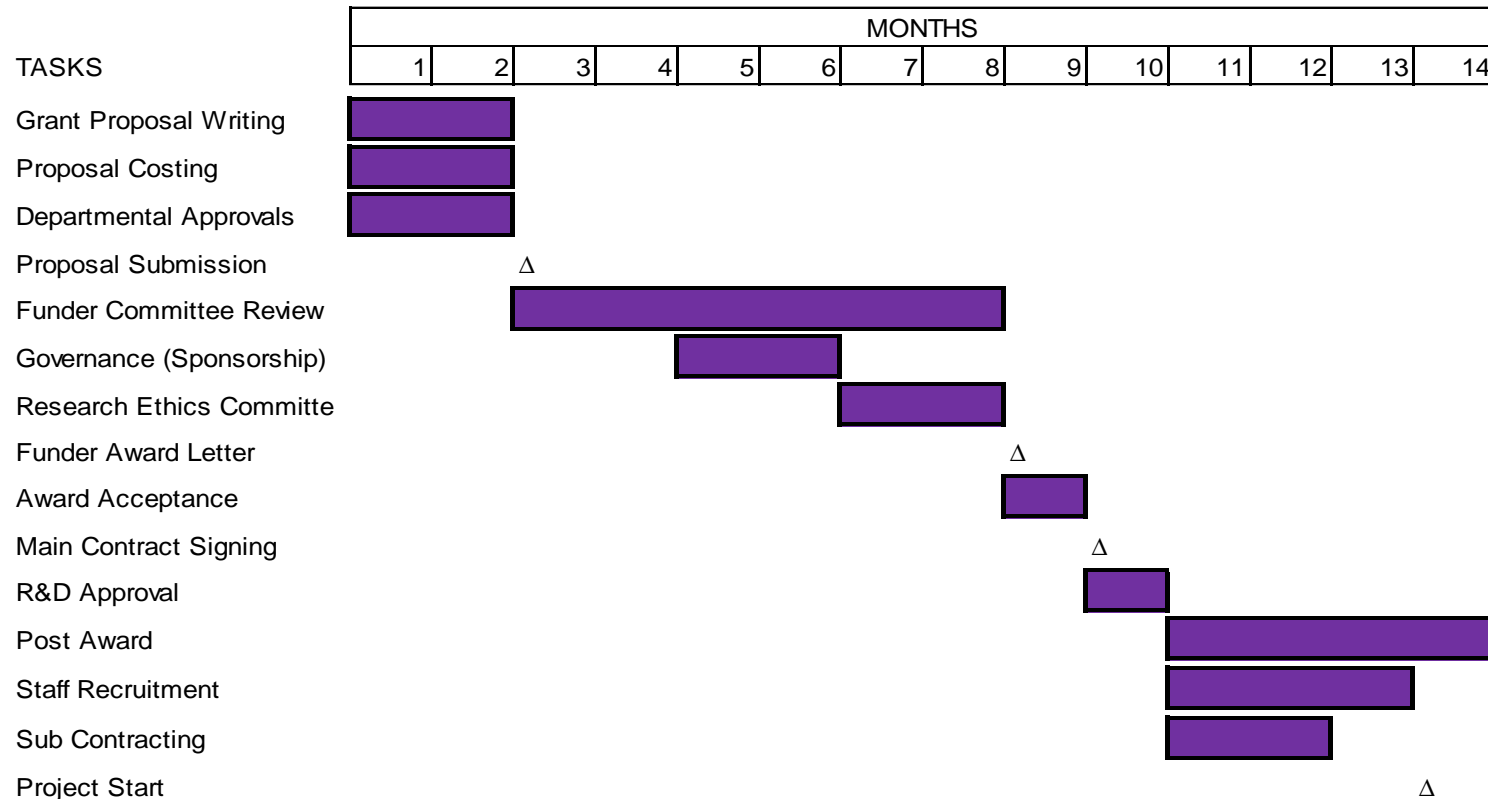
# The budget

- How soon can the grant start? (be realistic)
- How long will you need? (be realistic – allow for contingency)
- What level of staff will you need? (be realistic – the right grade for the job)
- What else will you need? (be thorough, don't assume you can get things 'free', don't assume everything will go right first time)
  - Consumables, (use of) equipment, use of facilities
  - Cost for recruiting patients (travel, refreshments, CRF, incentives?)
- Contact JREO early
  - at least 14 days before deadline
  - Earlier for help with rough costing

# The budget – when will the project start?

- What does the funder say about decision times?
  - Is this a one-stage decision process, or outline & invited full applications?
  - When does the committee meet?
  - How long do they usually take to notify applicants?
- What things will need to be done between notification of award and starting the grant? How long will they require?
  - Recruiting staff
  - Ethics/MHRA approval
- Add these two together to get your earliest start date. It can easily be a year after submission!

# When will the project start?



# AcoRD guidance

- Health Research is considered a core NHS activity
- AcoRD is the mechanism for attributing research costs in the NHS
  - Research Costs – answer the research question
    - Funded in FULL by Research Grant Award
  - NHS Support Costs – additional patient care costs
    - Additional support through Clinical Research Network
  - Treatment Costs – patient care costs
    - Standard NHS processes
- Often need CRN support letter – allow time

# The budget – justification of resources

- What are you asking to be funded?
- Why is it necessary? (what will the person do/how will the resource be used)
- How do you know it's the right amount? (right grade, right amount of time, right quantity of stuff)
- Value for money
  - VfM doesn't mean doing things as cheaply as possible

# The application form

- Review the form
- Understand the questions
  - Buzzwords and jargon
- Understand the constraints
  - Word/character counts

# The other stuff

- Project management plan, Gantt chart
- Lay/plain English summary
- Data management plan
- Patient and public involvement
- Dissemination plan, impact summary
- Intellectual property protection, commercialisation plan
- Letters of support

# Project management plan, Gantt chart

- Demonstrate to the funder that the project is carefully thought out and that they can be confident it will be delivered on time, on budget and with sufficient sample size
- Simple Gantt chart in Excel, more complex with specialist software
- Drawing out the project plan may help you planning it



# Lay/plain English summary

- Not 'make or break', but...
- Used to publicise research to general public
  - Charity communication and fundraising strategies
- Get a lay person to read it and see if it works!
- With enough time, JREO staff can help

# Data management plan

- Data collection
  - Documentation and metadata
  - Ethics and legal compliance
  - Storage and backup
  - Selection and preservation
  - Data sharing
  - Responsibilities and resources
- 
- <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans>
  - <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data>

# Patient and Public Involvement

- Active engagement of patients/public/users/beneficiaries in the design and delivery of the research
- Enabling involvement
  - Needs of these participants
  - Skills of research team
  - Costs
- *Next session*

# Dissemination plan, Impact summary

- As well as traditional academic routes (journals & conferences), how will results be shared?
  - Who do you want/need to reach?
  - How will the benefits be realised?
  - Important, useful, relevant
  - Costs
- What *might* the outcomes be, beyond academia?
- What will you do to maximise the (positive) impact?
- Public engagement (cf PPI) in dissemination

# Intellectual property protection, commercialisation plan

- What IP might arise from the project?
- Funders expect IP to be actively protected and managed; financial benefits are likely to be shared with funders
- JREO Enterprise team can help
  - Identifying potential IP that may be generated
  - How it might be protected
  - How it might be exploited
  - Work/costs involved

# Letters of support

- Necessary and appropriate or nice to have?
- Properly presented (letterhead & pdf), recently dated
- Institutional support letters
  - Reasonable & realistic promises?
    - More costly promises need more lead time
  - Signed by? (HoD who is a Co-I should not sign!)
  - JREO (pre-award) can help with drafting

# Obvious things to check

- Does it all hang together, is it internally consistent?
  - If late-stage changes have been made in one document, e.g. reflecting budget revisions or feedback from internal reviewers, are they picked up everywhere?
- Are there requirements about document length, font size, margin size? Check and respect them
- What is the submission deadline (date, time... timezone)? Do not leave it to the last minute!
- Who needs to sign it? Electronic workflow or wet ink? When are they available?
- Is it spell-checked (principal investigator), clearly written and well-presented? (be nice to the reviewers)

# Put yourself in the shoes of your reviewers

- <http://patthomson.net/2015/04/27/the-ten-habits-of-highly-unsuccessful-research-bid-writers/>
- <http://hopejahrensuresurecanwrite.com/2014/06/02/how-to-turn-a-good-proposal-into-an-excellent-proposal-in-eight-admittedly-arduous-steps/>
- <http://conservationbytes.com/2015/05/04/twenty-tips-for-writing-a-research-proposal/>



# The anatomy of a proposal

- Read the guidance
- Understand the requirements
- Plan the contents
- Ask for help early
- Respect the reader