

# Research Support Office + Postdoc Society

Anders Wennström and Jeanette Bröms



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

# Today's Seminar:

What is Research Support Office  
Common problems in applications  
How to build your “story”  
Strategies when applying  
Think like a reviewer  
Funding for Early Career Researchers:  
where, what, how?



# Who are we?

## **Research Support and Collaboration Office**



Research Support Office  
Forskningsstöd



Collaboration  
Samverkan

# Research Support Office - Forskningsstöd

## **Research Support**

Dr. Anders Wennström

Dr. Jeanette Bröms

Dr. Karl-Erik Renhorn 50%

Dr. Erika Sörensson 50%

Dr. Bodil Formark 30%

## **Ethics**

Dr. Erika Sörensson 50%

## **Analysis**

Dr. Folmer Bokma 50%

## **Budget & Revision**

Sandra Karlsson

Sussi Mikaelsson

## **Legal**

Tina Nordström

## **EU expert**

Dr. Agneta Plamboeck

# Strategic Planning

## Welcome to SciVal



### Overview

Get a high-level overview of the research performance of your Institution, other Institutions, Countries and Groups of Researchers.

[Go to Overview >](#)



### Benchmarking

Compare and benchmark your Institution to other Institutions, Researchers and Groups of Researchers using a variety of metrics.

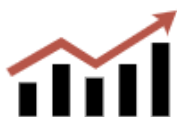
[Go to Benchmarking >](#)



### Collaboration

Explore the collaboration network of both your Institution and other Institutions.

[Go to Collaboration >](#)



### Trends

Get the current scientific trends to determine a new research strategy, find collaboration opportunities and rising stars.

[Go to Trends >](#)



### Reporting

Create rich Reports specifically tailored to support your institution's distinct research strategy.

[Go to Reporting >](#)

# Seminars & Workshops

## Seminars



### ERC funding

To prepare you for writing grant applications to the ERC



### Mari Skłodowska Curie Actions

Guide to how to find and understand calls, as well as how to handle both the application process and finances



National Institutes of Health

### US Federal Funding

To prepare researchers for writing grant applications to American foundations



### Sharpen your Proposal

How to write better applications

## Menu

## Seminars & Workshops

*Bookings – minimum 5 people*

## Workshops



### VR – writing a successful application

Analysing previous applications for success factors



### Writing effective abstracts & summaries

How to sharpen these short texts



### Early Career Researchers

To prepare younger researchers for competing for grants



### Research Funding outside the box

Expanding your search patterns

# Newsletter and Homepage

## Stöd under ansökan till svenska finansiärer

Till oss kan du vända dig för stöd vad gäller forskningsansökningar till alla svenska finansiärer. Vi har emellertid särskilt fokus på de statliga råden och Wallenbergstiftelserna.

Vi på Forskningsstöd kan hjälpa till med:

- + Feedback på din ansökan
- + Hantering av nomineringsprocesser
- + Budgetstöd
- + Mallar
- + Verktygstips



## Q and A

Where do I find...?

Can I apply for...?



What does it mean...?

I need a support letter...

# Feedback

## Basic

### Application Workshop:

- 30 min zoom meeting
- General review
- Government funders

### Suitable for:

- People new to application writing
- Testing an idea
- Early drafts, rejections
- Trying out RSO

## De luxe

### Writing support

- No time limit, iterative
- Feedback via email directly in text
- Focus on Government funders, EU, Wallenberg

### Suitable for:

- Developed drafts
- Feedback-friendly

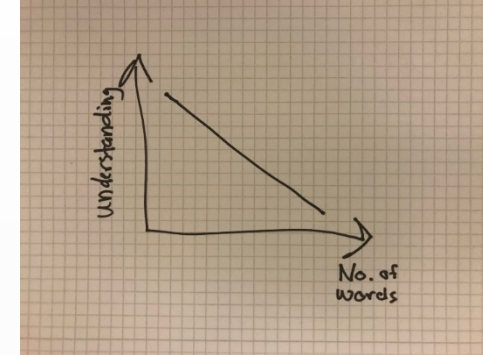
# We Focus on Traps to Avoid



Boring writing style



Unorganised



Too many words



Undefined goals



Jargon

It is certain that unforeseen circumstances will exceed those that are planned.

Weak argumentation

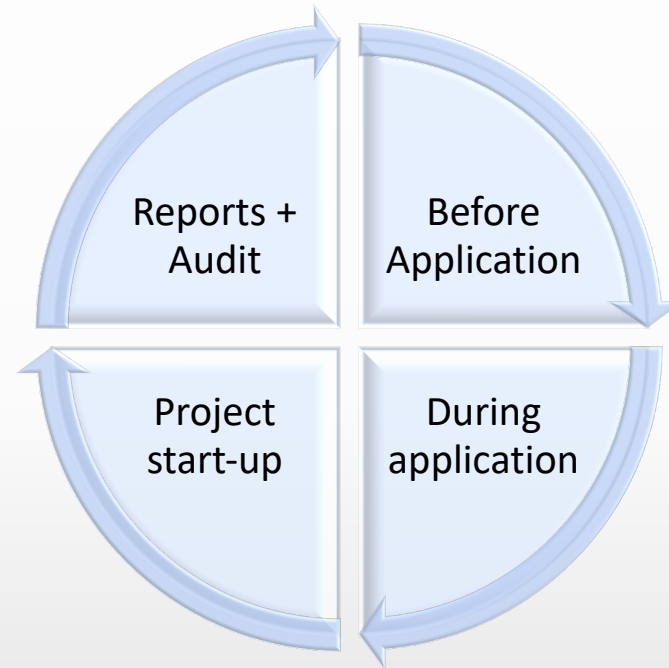


Feedback? No thanks!

# Research Support Office

## **Support to Researchers:**

Advice  
Support/Coordination



## **Support to Researchers:**

Advice  
Start-up meetings  
Forms & Templates  
Setup of accounts etc

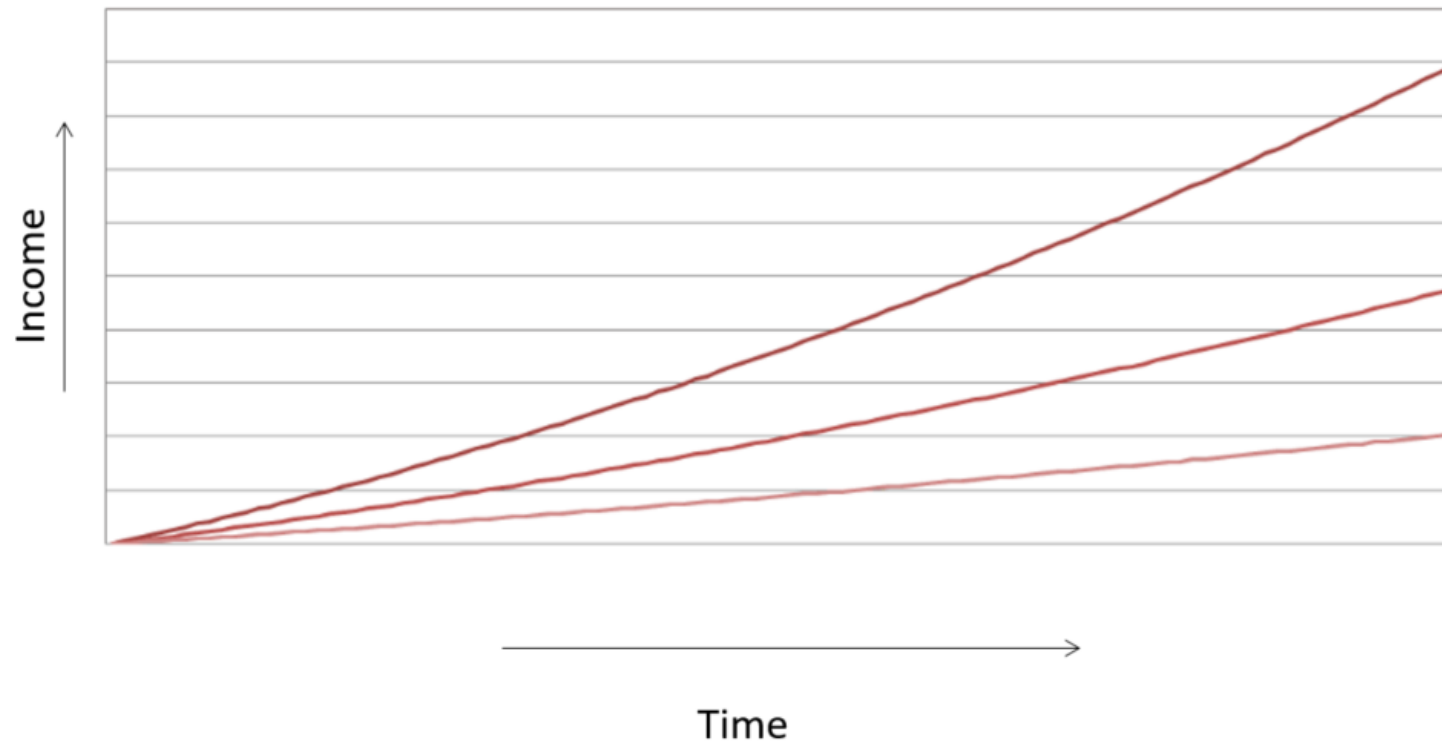
## **Support to management:**

Dissemination of information  
Collect information/Benchmarking  
Analysis/Strategic work

## **Support to Researchers:**

- Budget
- Writing support
- Templates
- Support letters

# Why Help Researchers?



# Contact



email: [rso@umu.se](mailto:rso@umu.se)

# **Grant Writing**

**- tips and available support**

**Anders Wennström & Jeanette Bröms**

# Who are we to tell you....?

From January – May, we handled roughly 60 proposals each

Proposals from all Faculties



# How to write a good and successful application?



*"Spare a dollar for some lab consumables, buddy?"*

# Planning is important

Build your  
name

Prepare

Tactics –  
when, and  
where

Think like  
a reviewer

Write  
application



# How to write a good application



In principle simple –  
But in reality - difficult

# Proposal writing



Proposal writing = Communication

# Language

How we speak  
Words we use  
Mistakes we make

If the language is wrong it can create  
confusion, anger or ...

Laughter



# What is everyone looking for?

Studies that make a difference  
Creativity (something unique)  
Clear project plan  
Trustworthy methods  
Goals that can be reached  
Uncomplicated written text  
A "good story"



# Bad Reviews

"The problem statement is too global showing no relationship to reality with no potential solution being indicated or even possible....."

"It is almost impossible to understand what the author wants to study or what the main theme is..."



# 8 traps

Traps researcher commonly fall into



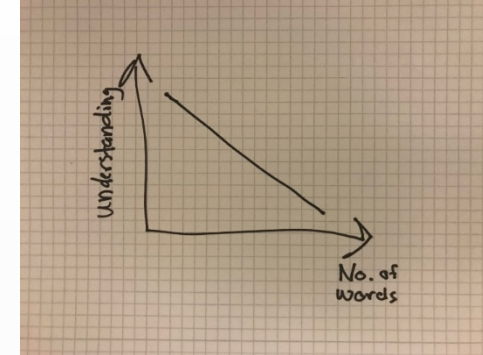
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Feedback? No thanks!

# Long and Boring Introduction

“Much of the excess material I collected during my doctoral studies also have the potential to be explored and published.”



# Poorly Organized Application

What exactly is the applicant planning to do?

Information under wrong heading  
Information spread out  
Duplication of information



# Weak Arguments

What measures will you put in place to support key relationships and sustain results?

It is certain that  
unforeseen  
circumstances will exceed  
those that are planned.

# Squeezed in Too Much

- Use standard page set up and font 11/12
- Make it look attractive in style (cf. novelists)
- Not too much information

Det nya centrumet kommer inrikta sig på bred molekylärmedicinsk forskning inom cancersjukdomar, metabola sjukdomar som diabetes, sjukdomar i hjärna och nervsystem, samt allvarliga infektioner. Dessa forskningsområden är erkänt starka vid Umeå universitet och en mycket viktig länk och resurs för dessa forskningsområden är den befolkningsbaserade biobank som finns vid Västerbottens läns landsting, Biobanken norr, som tillsammans med patientdata och genealogiska data ger ett unikt forskningsunderlag. Till det nya centrumet bidrar Knut och Alice Wallenbergs Stiftelse med totalt upp till 175 miljoner kronor under perioden 2016-2024. Anslaget ska främst gå till karriärtjänster för unga forskare. Vi är mycket glada för att Knut och Alice Wallenbergs Stiftelse väljer att lägga denna långsiktiga satsning i Umeå. Satsningen innebär att vi kan rekrytera unga excellenta forskare och stödja dessa i utvecklingen till ledande forskningsledare inom molekylärmedicin. Eftersom det molekylärmedicinska centrumet i Umeå också ska verka i nära samarbete med övriga planerade molekylärmedicinska centrum i Sverige, får vi en rejäl nationell förstärkning av forskningen inom området, säger Lena Gustafsson, rektor vid Umeå universitet. Vid Umeå universitet finns i dag etablerade excellenta forskningsnätverk inom molekylärmedicin och en lång tradition av translationell forskning genom nära samverkan mellan universitetet och Västerbottens läns landsting. Tillgången till ett stort biobanksmaterial, avancerade tekniska plattformar och forskningsinfrastrukturer ger det nya centrumet möjlighet att nå den absoluta forskningsfronten inom molekylär medicinsk forskning. För att garantera att den forskning som bedrivs också får betydelse för patienterna ingår en mycket tydlig koppling till sjukvården i centrumets verksamhet. Utöver medlen från Knut och Alice Wallenbergs stiftelse kommer Umeå universitet och Västerbottens läns landsting under perioden 2016-2024 gå in med 80 miljoner kronor vardera.

# Jargon

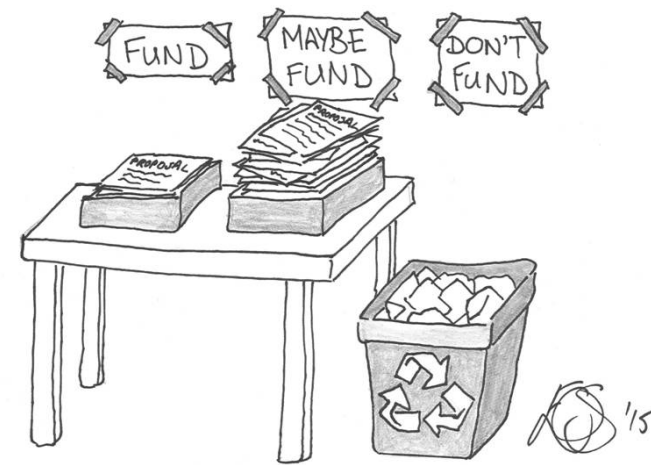
Avoid abbreviations and acronyms

Avoid language that only a few understands



....TGF $\beta$  type I receptor (T $\beta$ RI) undergoes proteolytic cleavage by ADAM17/TACE and active gamma-secretase which liberates its ICD. The T $\beta$ RI-ICD is translocated to the nucleus where it presumably acts in a transcriptional complex to regulate transcription of pro-invasive genes such as *Snail1* and *MMP*'s. The ubiquitin-ligase TRAF6 and aPKCzeta regulates the activity of the proteolytic enzymes (ADAM17/TACE) and PS1.

# Not Fitting the Call / Not understanding the funder



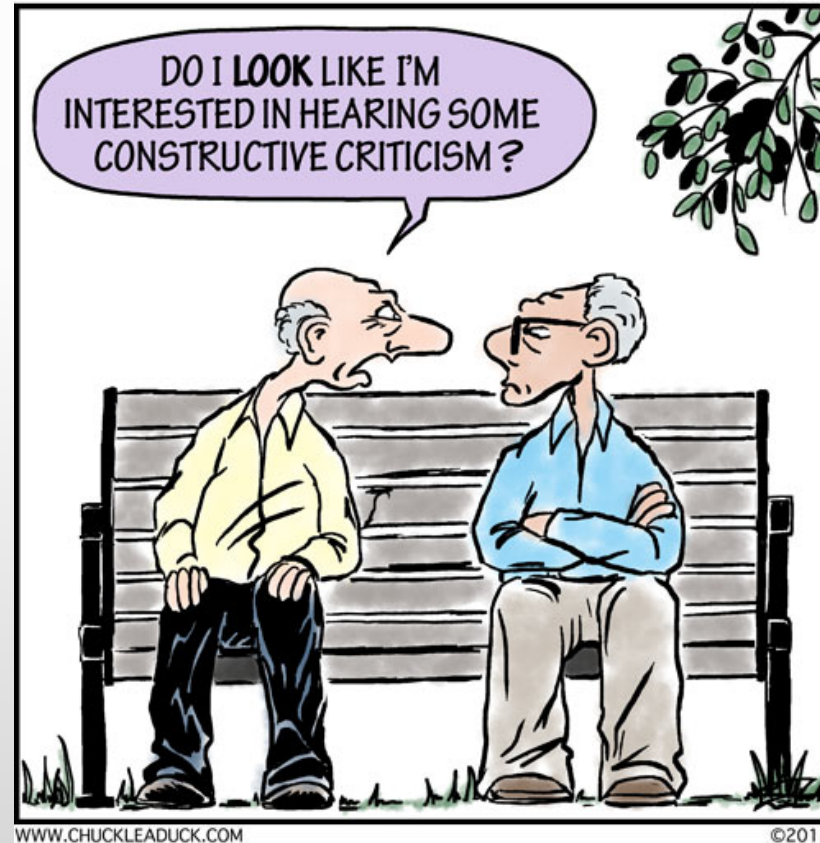
*Review panel categories.*

# Vague Goals

In sum, this project will contribute with the upcoming revitalisation of the counterurbanisation research area within population geography by nuancing counter-urban migration beyond the rural-urban dichotomy and widen the understanding of underlying motives by recognising lifestyle as well as the importance of daily life organisation in the local spatial context.



Not read by others



A good application is at times not much different from a children's story

**This is how a story normally is told:**

What is it about?

Prince looking for princess

What is the problem?

He is not allowed to meet her

What needs to be done?

Take away the sadistic stepmother

Why you?

I am a clever little mouse

What will you do?

Trick the stepmother

What will you deliver?

A plan for the prince to meet the princess

What will the impact be?

They live happily ever after and an heir will be produced

# This is how it often ends up

Statement

What will we do?

What will we deliver?

Why us?

What is it about?

What is the problem?

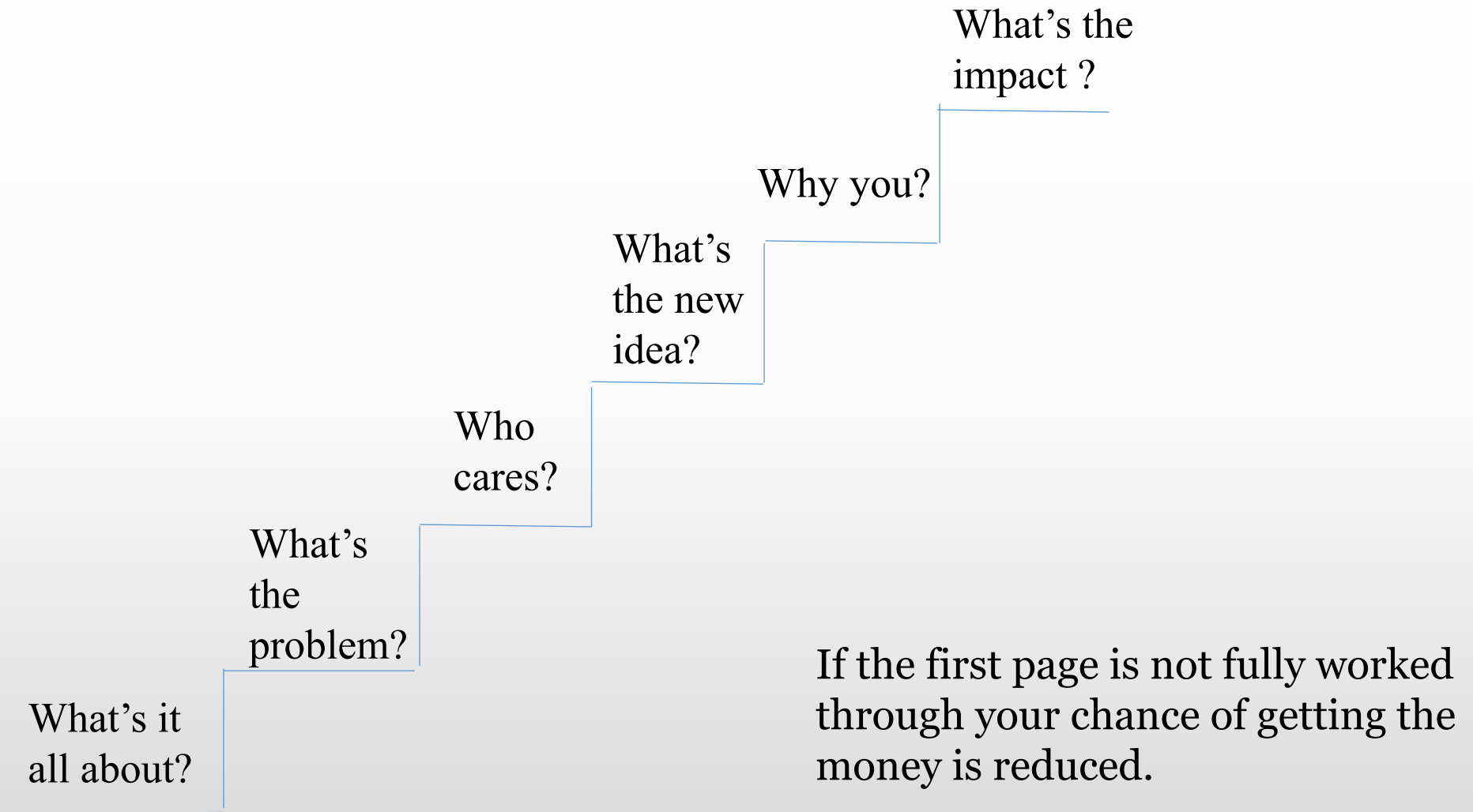
What is needed?

What will we do?

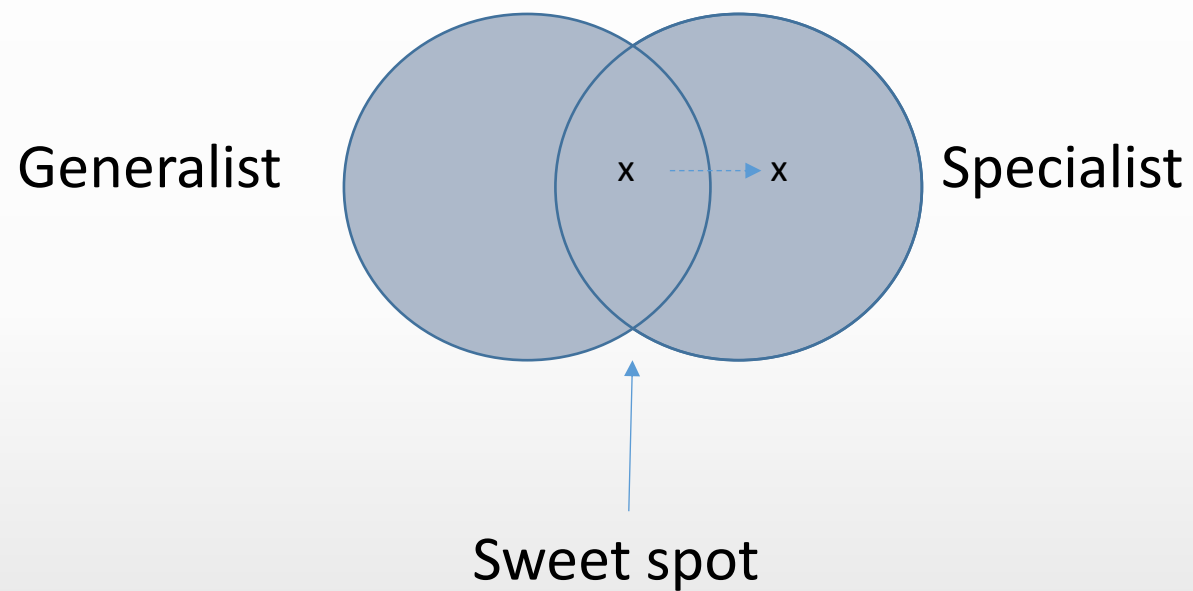
What will we deliver?

...plus some more information

# How to build your story



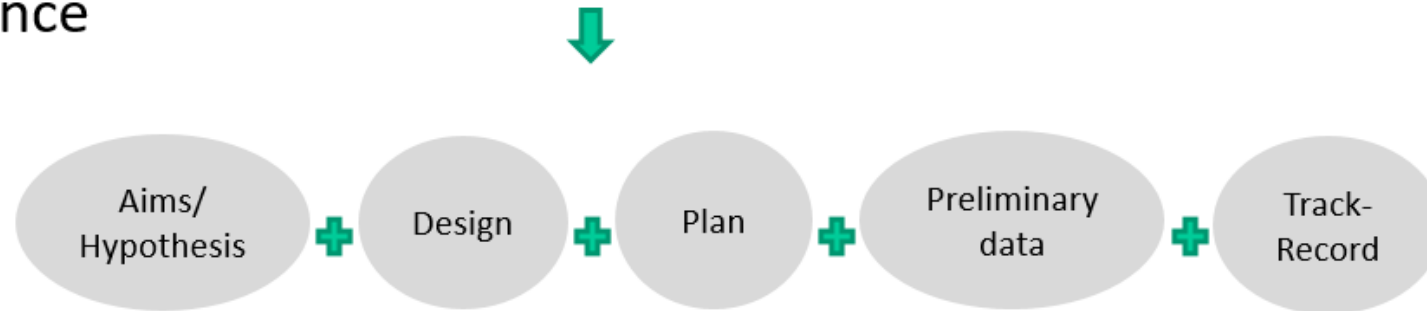
# Who to write for?



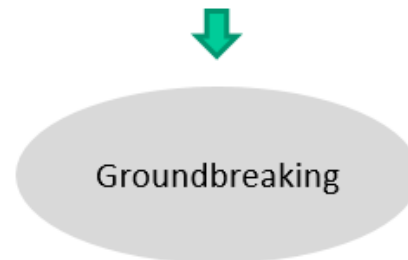
Inspire



Convince

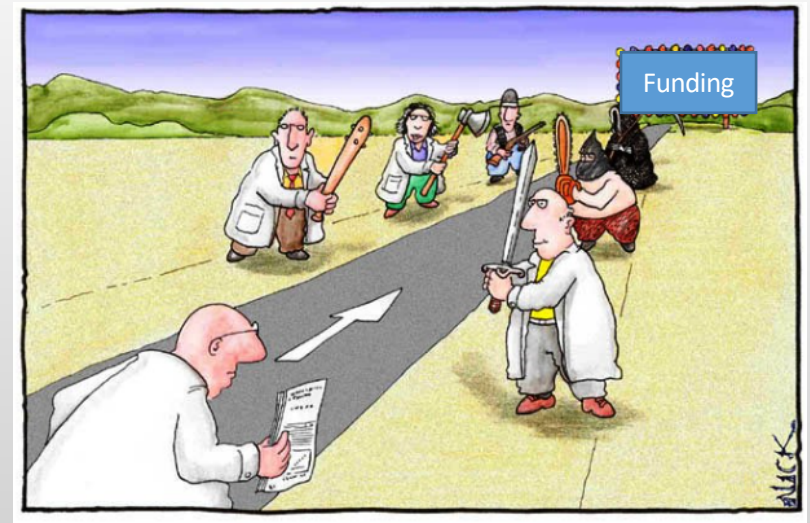


Intrigue



# How to Start

- Who took your money
- Who evaluates? Check panels
- Contact former evaluators
- Understand the funder





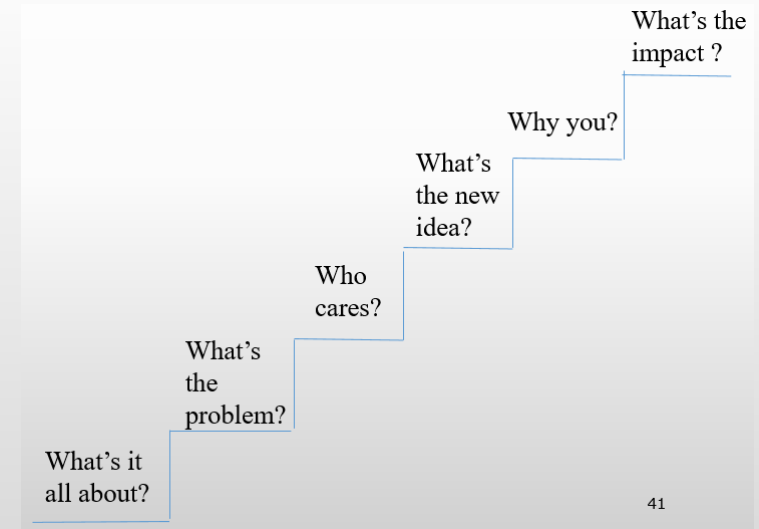
Supports research of the highest quality within all scientific fields



“Forte's business is based on our vision of a more sustainable society. Forte funds research of the highest scientific quality and greatest societal benefit.”

# How to Continue

- Write a one page proposal – ask for feedback
- Contact partners if needed
- Write your CV – Publication list



# How to Write

- Active voice, (I will..., we)
- Short sentences, max 15 words
- Each sentence must follow logically from the one before
- One sentence - one idea
- Use highlights to stress important messages (don't overdo)
- Help the Evaluator with arguments (educate!)

## Review process



# What do Reviewers say?

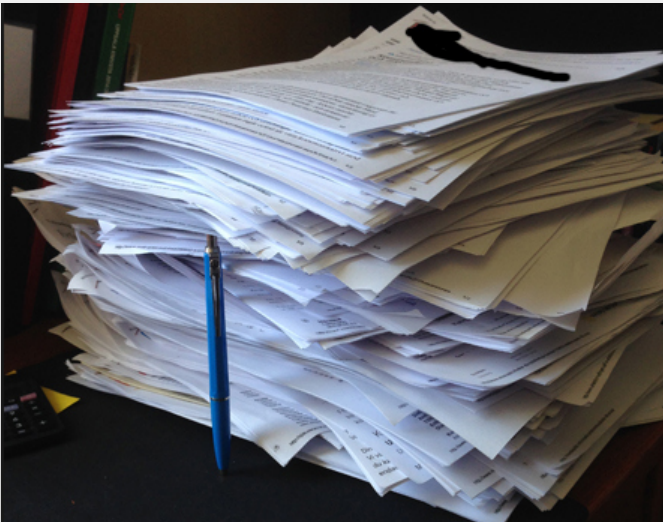
- The science is, of course, important, but I learned that, even if the science is strong, poorly written proposals generally don't fare well.
- Clear, concise, well-written proposals that identify an interesting problem or question early and frame it in terms of the fundamental science fare better than proposals that are vague and unfocused.”



# The life of an Evaluator

## Evaluators

- Many applications to read....
- Limited time (patience)
- Follow criteria
- Rarely an expert...but no fool!



## You

Be brief and concise in your writing!

Write simple, logical and inspiring

Know the criteria

Who is the Evaluator?



# Example of Review Criteria

guiding questions



## *The scientific quality of the project:*

- Will the project, if successful, significantly advance our understanding of the field?
- Is the research proposal relevant for medical research and the definition of the problems and proposed solutions clear, convincing and compelling?
- Does the study design, its research questions and hypotheses, meet the standards of highest scientific quality?
- Are the hypotheses clearly defined and based on the appropriate literature and/or preliminary data?
- Are potential problems and alternative strategies identified and presented? Does the program present preliminary data to support the hypothesis?
- Are there relevant scientific collaborations?
- Are methods for data analysis and statistics well described?

# Review Criteria

## *Novelty and originality :*

- Does the project extend or challenge current understanding, opinion or practice in its field?
- Is the project built on a unique combination of ideas, preliminary data, and different methodologies to create novel approaches to address the question at hand?
- Is there potential for creation of new knowledge, novel technologies, or new directions for research and advancement of the field?
- Will completion of the aims improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice?
- Does the researcher propose a line of research that has the potential to significantly advance current knowledge in the field or is he/she simply adding details to existing knowledge?

# Review Criteria

## *The merits of the applicant:*

- Does the applicant have sufficient research experience, expertise, level of independence and scientific network for implementation of the proposed project?
- How does the applicant's academic qualifications and achievements relate to his or her career stage and active time for research?
- Does the applicant have a documented independent line of investigation?
- Does the publication record suggest a coherent line of investigation? Does the applicant report publications as senior author? (most relevant and important publications and reports)

## *Especially for Starting Grants:*

- Has the applicant shown the ability to work independently of former advisors?
- Has the applicant shown the ability to work in new (international) research environments, for instance during postdoctoral work?

# The Summary/Abstract

Should make it easy for reviewers to comprehend and evaluate your proposed project according to the review criteria

A strong abstract touches on all the sections in the proposal, including the introduction, where you should give some information about the issue and why you chose it. Do not go into detail about the problem, but state what issue your project will address,

**Tip: write it last!**