HINTS FOR PREPARING ARC APPLICATIONS

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SCOPE

- Will focus on ARC Discovery.

- But the principles apply to other schemes especially DECRA and Linkage

REVIEW OF PROCESS

- Assessors' Scores (up to 6 mostly, but not only, experts in your area) - 50%

- Panel Score (2 people not experts in your area) – 50%

- BUT THE PANEL MAKES THE FINAL DECISION

CONCLUSION

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Therefore it is essential that you pitch most of your proposal – everything except Approach – to the two Panel members – who are not experts in your area.

And the pitch must be exciting!

IMPORTANT POINT

- Panel Members will be reading AND RANKING up to 150 proposals

- And they have day jobs!

- Do the maths.

SELECTION CRITERIA DISCOVERY

Track Record – 35%

Significance and Innovation – 40%

Feasibility – 10%

Benefit – 15%

CONCLUSION

- The single most important part of the Research Proposal is its SIGNIFICANCE

- No matter how good your Track Record, or the Feasibility, or the Benefit, if you do not score very highly on "Significance" you will not get past the post.

HINT

- The "Significance" of your proposal should pervade the entire proposal.

ASSESSORS versus PANEL MEMBERS ON "SIGNIFICANCE"

- For "Significance" Assessors scored 45% of proposals as being "A" – top 10%

- For "Significance", Panel scored 7% of proposals as being "A" – top 10%.

TWO VERY IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS!

- Applicants are very good at explaining the Significance of the proposed research project to experts in their area, but fail miserably to explain Significance to non-experts.

- Assessors' scores are not very discriminatory. The Panel will make up their own mind.

- THEREFORE – it is essential that you pitch your proposal to the Panel - non-experts in your area – ALL sections except APPROACH.

IT'S A COMPETITION

The Panel will RANK all proposals.

There are no absolutes!

Your proposal must be in the top 17% for Discovery; top 17% for DECRA; top 35% for Linkage.

WHAT DO THE ARC MEAN BY "SIGNIFICANCE"

They mean research that will rock the foundations of your area!

Isaac Newton

Charles Darwin

Albert Einstein

INNOVATION

- Is the SECOND-MOST important part of the proposal.

- What is INNOVATIVE about your approach?

- HINT – If this is such an important problem, why hasn't someone already solved it?

- ANSWER – we will use a new approach that will succeed where other approaches have failed.

THE APPLICATION

- Will focus on Discovery

- But similar headings and principles apply to other ARC schemes.

THE APPLICATION

- TITLE – should at least hint at the Significance of the proposal.
- SUMMARY – Again should briefly explain the Significance of the proposal
- AIMS AND BACKGROUND – pitch to the Panel
  - What is "the problem" to be addressed? – ½ page
  - Why is it an important problem to solve? – 1 paragraph
  - The AIM of this project – a SINGLE Aim - 1 sentence - **bolded**
  - What is Innovative about our approach? – 1 paragraph
  - Why are we the team to solve it – 1 paragraph

AIMS AND BACKGROUND contd

- HINT:-

- Include lots of self-citations – to emphasise that you are a world leader in the area.

- Put these "in the face" of the reader – use Harvard system of referencing.

THE APPLICATION (contd)

- PROJECT QUALITY AND INNOVATION
  - Describe in detail, in language that a non-expert can understand, the SIGNIFICANCE of the project

  - Describe, in language that a non-expert can understand, the INNOVATIONS in your approach

  - HINT – in both cases, use lots of literature references.

  - HINT – useful to use subheadings for this section

  - HINT – should be at least 1.5 pages!

FEASIBILITY

- Mainly Approach and Methodology but includes other topics.

- Break into subheadings

- JUSTIFY EVERYTHING – Approach chosen, Sample sizes, etc etc

ROPE

- Explain any awards, medals, other accolades

- For persons with interrupted careers – QUANTIFY the "lost time" – see article by Emily Nicholson in *Science.*

MOST COMMON MISTAKES

- Failure to explain the Significance of the proposed research to non-experts.

- Not telling a simple straightforward story – making it too complicated for a non-expert to follow in 15 minutes.

- Too much jargon.

- Acronyms!!!!!!

THANK YOU

- Questions