



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

Writing successful funding applications

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A bit of background...

- ▶ **Jenny:**

- ▶ PhD 2010 in Cognitive Science, Johns Hopkins University
- ▶ Currently Professor of Experimental Linguistics, Edinburgh
- ▶ Selected Grants:
 - ▶ UKRI ESRC 'Connecting cognitive biases and typological universal' 2017-2022 (£498,451)
 - ▶ ECR 'Transforming theories of syntax through laboratory experiments' 2017-2024. (€1,425,440)
 - ▶ Scottish Funding Council International Science Partnership Fund grant, 2024 (£17,893)

A bit of background...

- ▶ **Vicky:**
 - ▶ PhD in Second Language Acquisition, Cambridge
 - ▶ Currently Professor of Bilingualism and Language Development, Edinburgh
 - ▶ Selected Grants:
 - ▶ British Academy, 'Multipic for minoritised languages'. 2025–2030 (£24,305)
 - ▶ Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2017-18, 2020-21 (£47,442)
 - ▶ Advanced Research Collaborative, CUNY 2016-17 (£45,000)

Grant writing first steps

- ▶ **Step 1: have an idea!**
 - ▶ All grants start with the kernel of an idea...
 - ▶ Talk through your idea with other people early on
- ▶ **Step 2: identify a funder**
- ▶ **Step 3: research funder priorities**
- ▶ **Step 4: read the funder guidance**
- ▶ **Step 5: refine your idea with 3 and 4 in mind**

Grant writing first steps

- ▶ **Step 1: have an idea!**
- ▶ **Step 2: identify a funder**
 - ▶ What kind of research are you doing? Is there more than one way to spin it?
 - ▶ How much funding would you need?
 - ▶ Are you funding just yourself? Do you want to employ people? Fund studentships? Do you need teaching relief?
- ▶ **Step 3: research funder priorities**
- ▶ **Step 4: read the funder guidance**
- ▶ **Step 5: refine your idea with 3 and 4 in mind**

Grant writing first steps

- ▶ **Step 1: have an idea!**
- ▶ **Step 2: identify a funder**
- ▶ **Step 3: research funder priorities**
 - ▶ All funders will have a list of priorities, and the closer you align with them the better
 - ▶ *KENET: ...address major issues of concern...such as; creation of a good and adaptable learning and research environment; access and inclusion in IT and digital transformation, changing regulatory developments, technological advances, cyber security as well as professional and technical competencies to drive the changes in the education and research agenda.*
- ▶ **Step 4: read the funder guidance**
- ▶ **Step 5: refine your idea with 3 and 4 in mind**

Grant writing first steps

- ▶ **Step 1: have an idea!**
- ▶ **Step 2: identify a funder**
- ▶ **Step 3: research funder priorities**
- ▶ **Step 4: read the funder guidance**
 - ▶ Information on what needs to go in each section!
 - ▶ Seems obvious but if you miss something...
- ▶ **Step 5: refine your idea with 3 and 4 in mind**

Grant writing first steps

- ▶ **Step 1: have an idea!**
- ▶ **Step 2: identify a funder**
- ▶ **Step 3: research funder priorities**
- ▶ **Step 4: read the funder guidance**
- ▶ **Step 5: refine your idea with 3 and 4 in mind**
 - ▶ Identify and enhance areas where your project aligns with funder priorities
 - ▶ Check all the elements you will need to include
 - ▶ Talk to others who have been successful with the scheme
 - ▶ Get feedback on drafts, give talks!

Writing top tips

- ▶ Start with a clear, concise, novel question/goal/hypothesis
- ▶ Consider short and long term goals
- ▶ Keep the introduction short: only include what is needed to motivate your project
- ▶ Three is a magic number
- ▶ Have some preliminary data
- ▶ Show you have thought through risks, contingencies, and alternative outcomes
- ▶ Justify your methods (right tool, right way)

Reviewer-friendly writing

- ▶ Make it easy to read! What does that mean?
 - ▶ Avoid jargon and acronyms
 - ▶ Short sentences, short paragraphs
 - ▶ Add structure and sign-posting
 - ▶ Most important information up front
 - ▶ Be specific, informative, non-redundant
- ▶ Write for the reviewer not yourself
 - ▶ Don't assume, be explicit (no jargon!)
 - ▶ Imagine a tired, busy reader, not in your field

Impactful writing

- ▶ **Reader must know early on what and why**
- ▶ **Why you?** Why are you the best person to do your project?
- ▶ **Why now?** What makes now the right time to do your project?
- ▶ **Highlight innovation** (methodology, population, etc.)
- ▶ **Active writing**
 - ▶ "An experiment will be developed..."
 - ▶ "We will try to develop and experiment..."
 - ▶ "We will develop an experiment."

Exercise #1

- ▶ **Your idea:** elevator pitch, max 3 sentences
- ▶ **Why you?** Why are you the best person to do your project?
- ▶ **Why now?** What makes now the right time to do your project?

Impact and outputs

- ▶ **Types of impact**
 - ▶ Impact to knowledge (within academia)
 - ▶ Impact to society (outside academia)
- ▶ **What change** are you trying to bring about?
- ▶ **Who** is your audience?

Impact and outputs

- ▶ **Types of impact**
- ▶ **Types of outputs**
 - ▶ Journal papers, books, conference presentations
 - ▶ Databases, corpora, questionnaires, diagnostic tests
 - ▶ Training/guidance/information for stakeholders
 - ▶ Policy recommendations
 - ▶ Career advancement/mentorship
 - ▶ Evidence of stakeholder engagement and change

Exercise #2

- ▶ **Academic impact:**
 - ▶ What change?
 - ▶ For who?
- ▶ **Societal impact:**
 - ▶ What change?
 - ▶ For who?

Project partners

- ▶ **Is all the relevant expertise covered by your team?**
 - ▶ If so, make sure you are explicitly highlighting this!
 - ▶ If no, consider additional project partners
- ▶ **Is someone else doing similar work?**
- ▶ **Types of partnerships**
 - ▶ Co-Is (e.g., on joint-funded grants)
 - ▶ Consultants (e.g., costed part-time, or no cost)
 - ▶ Postdocs
 - ▶ PhD students/RAs

Project partners

- ▶ **Identifying and securing partners**
 - ▶ Networking...
 - ▶ Volunteering...(get involved, give talks)
 - ▶ How (not) to contact outside partners...
 - ▶ You have someone here you has done this!

Exercise #3

- ▶ **Grant writing worksheet**
- ▶ **Looking forward to seeing your drafts!**