Framework Programme 7 Proposals

How to structure a project? Successful conceptual design of an EU-Project

What is this session really about?

- Being clear on your aims
- Choosing a focus in which you are strong
- Good practice in writing your ideas down
- Understanding the background to finding partners
- Structuring a project proposal to fit the Commission structure design
- Good practice in Project Management
- Aiming to meet the Commission's priorities
- Being pro-active NOW and taking control of project development

Project definition

Before you start writing, you should have a concrete and confined project idea

- What problem are you trying to solve and why right now?
- What are the project objectives and what are NOT the project objectives?
- How can you reach these objectives? – Define a rough work plan

One Page Proposal

Before writing a full proposal, summarize your project in a „One Page Proposal“!

- In the „One Page Proposal“ you are summarizing your project idea and getting it down **„on paper“**
- The „One Page Proposal“ is very helpful for **communicating with your partners**, for team building and for future partner searches
- The „One Page Proposal“ also serves as a **basis for discussions with your NCP and with EC Officials** (Scientific/Project Officers)

One Page Proposal

- Most important of all

- Writing the proposal will tell you if a
  European Research Grant
  under Framework Programme 7 rules is
  the right / best way for YOU
  to achieve your objectives

Structure of the „One Page Proposal“

- Content
  - Project Objectives (& Non-Objectives)
  - Background
  - Expected Results and Lead Users
  - Work plan/Phases of work
  - Consortium
  - Expected Costs
  - Expected Duration

Key questions for your „One Page Proposal“

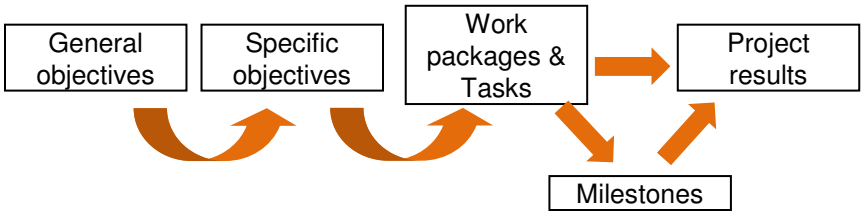
- **Project objectives** (What are the objectives? What problem are you trying to solve? What are NOT the objectives?)
- **Project background** (Is the solution already available? Will the project go beyond the state of the art? Is it a European priority or could it be solved at national level? Why right now? What would happen if we did not do this now?)
- **Expected results and Lead Users** (Which results are you expecting and who will use them?)

Key questions for your „One Page Proposal“

- **Rough work plan** / **phases of work** (How can we reach these objectives?)
- **Consortium** (Which expertise do you need to reach your objectives? Do you really need an international team or could you solve the problem on your own? Are you the best people to do this work?)
- **Expected project costs** / **duration** (Are these within the limits/rules of the Call?)

Project Objectives

- **Never lose sight of your general and specific objectives!**



What is a Project Objective?

- Almost all FP7 programmes aim to promote translational research – so an objective would mostly be *usable by others in the form developed by the project. It can also be dissemination, if this is done thoroughly.*
- Especially in the current financial climate, Europe wants to see its research lead to commercial success and economic growth as well as better health – *so an objective can be a step towards commercialisation, such as IP protection or marketing route development*
- An objective must work in the real world – dangerous pathogen detection kits may have to work at 20 metres, used by people in plastic suits with massive gloves, in any weather and environment
- Another example – food contaminant assays have to be very cheap because cost margins on food are so low. If not they will never be used.
- Management of the project is a means to an end – *the end is that the project avoids all risk of failure due poor planning e.g. time over-run, failure of science first time around because of the unexpected*

Definition of Project Objectives

➢ **Project objectives: Quality criteria „SMART“**

- **S** **specific**
- **M** **measurable**
- **A** **achievable, attainable**
- **R** **realistic, relevant**
- **T** **time-related**

Examples of Project Objectives

Objectives

- Development of a diagnostic test in a tested prototype form that can be licensed to a global company for commercialisation
- Proof of concept of a therapeutic approach to address an unmet medical need
- Establishment of coordination mechanism bringing together the epidemiological data for a disease from several sources

and Deriving some early conclusions of statistical significance

- Producing an array of accessible markers that cover a wide range of diseases and conditions, distinguishing easily between them
- Creating a network and support instrument for researchers into a particular field
- Protecting the intellectual property emerging from the project, in accordance with the consortium agreement, so that it can be commercialised successfully

Project Objectives?

Non-objectives

- Inclusion of so-called International Cooperation Partner Countries into the consortium
- Bringing together diverse technologies to make a successful project

Design of the Project Structure

- **Division of the project into plannable and controllable Sub-Tasks**

➢ Essential part of the project starting phase!

➢ Creates a common basis and understanding of the project scope for the consortium

➢ Complete hierarchy of the work packages and project tasks

➢ In practice, the definition of work packages could be carried out through a brainstorming session of consortium members

Meeting of Minds for Project Design

- Avoid having one partner dominate the thinking
- Try to get to know your partners even before the call
- Discuss your separate ambitions and constraints
- Explore what extras each can bring to project preparation –
  - grants;
  - travel;
  - video-conferencing;
  - low cost project writing;
  - prior drafts of similar projects;
  - experience in bidding for FP funds

Design of the project structure - Participants

- Preferred that participants have a significant role and make a contribution of a reasonable size
- It must be clear what the benefits to each participant might be
- Each participant needs to have a corporate strategy that values the project and protects the priority into the future, against the time when funds could be available
- Ownership of the intellectual property and other commercial opportunities from the project should be agreed early on

Design features approved by the Commission

- Management can be a separate partner, fully funded. EC understands that partners have found project management is not their strength.
- Commercial partners are encouraged, even if they receive no grant funds because they are too large. This can help to commercialise after the project ends.
- Once you have the core three nations involved, other partners from almost anywhere in the world can receive funds from the project. Even US companies can join now, after NIH funds were made available freely to Europeans.
- If a partner drops out, you can submit a bid showing exactly what the partner would do, and recruit a replacement while the bid is being judged.

Will the scientific content be approved?

- Project must have novelty – external assessors will reject projects that cover fields already explored
- The topics in a call can be very specific. These may not include the them of your proposal. But you may be able to find an aspect of your proposal that matches another topic. You can ask advice from the Commission staff on ideas for doing this

Design of the Project Structure

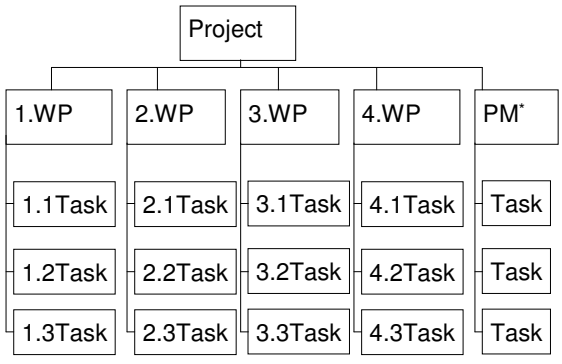
Commission has been writing guidance for over a decade.

Has its own language and analytical structure behind the process of bidding and of managing projects. If you can speak their language and use their structure, it makes it easier for everyone.

They require that you present your proposal in their way.

They publish the topics but proposals are judged by external assessors, with comments from the Commission. So think how it is going to look to both these audiences. Read the criteria for assessing bids.

Design of the Project Structure



*PM = Projectmanagement

Deliverables

- **Deliverables are project results!**
- **Possible Deliverables (a few examples)**
  - Reports (guidelines, SOPs,)
  - Prototypes, reliable new biochemistry processes
  - Data (statistics, data in databases, trends..)
  - Software (algorithms, codes, databases, systems..)
  - Marketing strategy
  - IP strategy
  - Publications (scientific journals, newsletters, conferences..)
  - Media (websites, videos, CDs..)

Milestones

- control points in a project where decisions are needed
- connected to work packages
- often start or end of a work package
- milestones refer to „project events“ / major results
- expected date of milestones
- means of verification of a milestone
- participants may need to collectively “sign-off” a milestone so they can move on

Work plans

- How do you want to tackle your work? => description in work plan
- Broken down into work packages (WPs) and tasks
- Be consistent! e.g. in descriptions and format
- Project objectives must be retrievable in WP
- Number of WP – clear structure
- Show interdependencies of WP

Scientific or technological planning

Be clear of critical elements that contribute to the end objective

Narrow the scope of these elements (work packages) to the endpoint (work package objective including deliverables) that contributes to the end objective

Now you can start to add well-defined additional elements that may minimise the risk, provide alternative routes and contingency plans, or increase the understanding that supports your final objective

Most research assumes instant success! Plan for initial failure and you may have a realistic plan. Use the ideas and constructive criticism of all project partners.

Work Plan Flexibility

- Commission accepts that projects will evolve over time, even between the first bid and the contract
- Research projects cannot predict their results; so the second phases can be written to depend upon earlier phases
- However, it is vital to allow more time than you could need for the early phases – things can go wrong (e.g. partners can go out of business)
- Take full advantage of the Commission's flexibility and ask the Commission staff how you can write flexibility into your bid

Table 1.3 a: Work package list

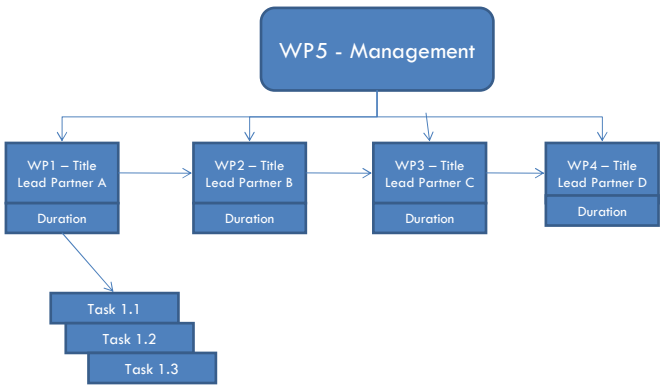
Work package No	Work package title	Type of activity	Lead partic no.	Lead partic. short name	Person-months	Start month	End month
	TOTAL						

Table 1.3 c: Work package description
For each work package:

Work package number		**Start date or starting event:**			
Work package title					
Activity type					
Participant number					
Participant short name					
Person-months per participant					
Objectives					
Description of work (possibly broken down into tasks), and role of participants					
Deliverables (brief description and month of delivery)					

Table 1.3 d: Summary of staff effort
Table 1.3 e: List of milestones

Work plan - PERT



PERT - **P**rogramme **E**valuation and **R**eview **T**echnique

Work Plan - PERT

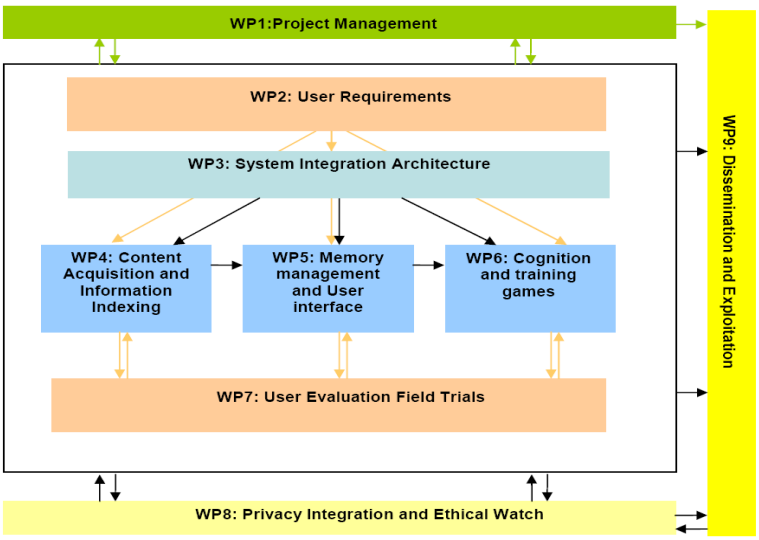
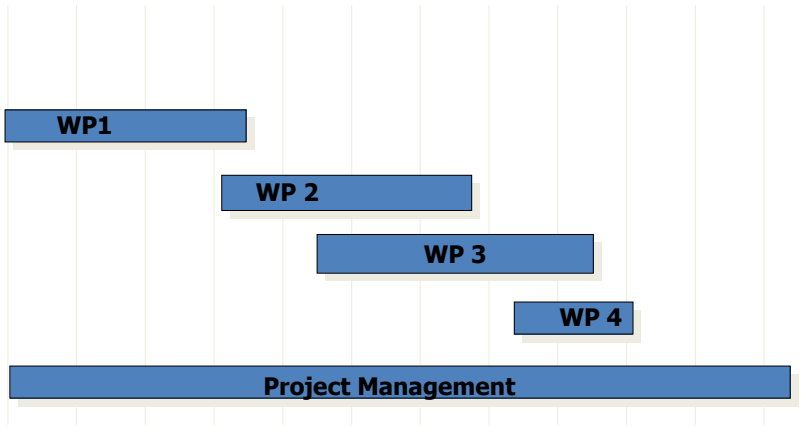


Figure 3: PERT Diagram

Work plan - Gantt Chart



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