Horizon Europe Hour

Evaluators Tips for Proposals

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Thank you to
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13 Common Mistakes - An Evaluator's Perspective

Consortium Quality

Proposal Authors'

Proposal Content

Abstract and Introduction

Planning for the Project

Mistake#13 – The Quality of the consortium is not adequately highlighted

rs attention

Scientific Story

Quality/efficiency Implementation

Appropriate Methodologies

Impact Section

13 Common Mistakes

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Mistake#1 - The project has not been planned out adequately

PLANNING

Mistake#2 – Not choosing the right partners

CONSORTIUM QUALITY

Mistake#3 – The flow of the proposal is disjointed due to the multi-author approach

PROPOSAL AUTHORS

Mistake#4 – Proposal written as though it was a scientific paper

Mistake#5 – Not using enough images/diagrams/tables etc

Mistake#6 – Construction of the proposal is not well thought out

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Mistake#7 – The abstract and/or introduction does not capture the evaluators attention

ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

Mistake#8 – The scientific story is chaotic and is not coherent

Mistake#9 – Principles of scientific ‘soundness’ has not been followed

THE SCIENTIFIC STORY

Mistake#10 – Not clearly stating the projects impacts

IMPACT SECTION

Mistake#11 – Methodologies not appropriate for a multi-researcher approach

APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES

Mistake#12 – Does not support the ‘promise’ of the Excellence & Impact sections

Mistake#13 – The quality of the consortium is not adequately highlighted

IMPLEMENTATION QUALITY/EFFICIENCY

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#1 - The project has not been planned out adequately

SOME HINTS – for planning your project

- Outline the work you intend to carry out in th project
- Produce a 'story board' – a 2-page summary
- Build your project around the storyboard
- Start with visualising what the end point of your project will be – the 'success' point
- Then create a pathway 'story' of how the journey to success will happen
- The pathway to success should include
  - The why
  - The what
  - The who
  - The when
  - The how

Planning for
The Project

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#2 – Not choosing the right partners

SOME HINTS – for choosing the right partners

- Previous collaborators – as you will know their strengths, expertise and relevancy to a new project
- Ensure that for a new project previous partners are integral to the project work and activities
- Provide justification to the evaluator that all partners have the right competencies for your project
- Justification for your chosen partners can be:
    - Previous successful projects
    - Other projects covering the same subject areas
    - Reference/scientific papers in which they have contributed
    - Books and Publications that they have written or co/written

Consortium Quality

- Reviewers will look at the partner profile in Part A of the proposal – so complete it fully
- State within the 'Excellence' chapter, previous collaborations with a partner – don't leave this until the 'Implementation' chapter
- The evaluator wants to know from the beginning the merit of the partners involved as it provides a reassurance of the project itself
- Consortium building can be bottom up or top down or both
    - Bottom up – partners you have already worked with, and you have trust and confidence in their work
    - Top down – you own the idea for the project, and you need to identify the right person to do the work/task
- In the 'Excellence' chapter mention the expertise that you are bringing together within the consortium
- In the 'Implementation' chapter you need to say how the consortium works as a whole and how they compliment each other

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#3 – The flow of the proposal is disjointed due to the multi-author approach

SOME HINTS – for improving how project authors can work together

- One person cannot write a project proposal!
- Identify the most qualified person within your consortium to lead on the writing of each of the following main chapters:
  - Excellent Science - a scientist?
  - Impact – a person who can provide details to a lay person?
  - Quality of the Implementation – the consortium lead and ?
- Each person should read each other's contributions to attain a seamless story
- Grammar is important – a badly written project can drop 0.5 point
- Where possible try and get someone who has English as their first language to bring it all together

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#4 – Proposal written as though it was a scientific paper

SOME HINTS – for improving how the project proposal is written

- For the **Excellent Science**, it is advised to get a scientist to write this section as this is something that should come naturally to that person, however, keep in mind **'THE DON'TS'**:
  - It should not be an in-depth explanation of the science
  - It should not be written as a scientific paper
  - The space be used wisely as there is limit on page numbers
  - Scientific formulas, and/or mathematical equations etc. should be scarce

- For other parts of the proposal, keep in mind **'THE DO's'**
  - Convince the evaluator of the concept of the project, and the feasibility of the idea
  - Provide a summary of the 'state of the art' i.e. the here and now as the baseline
  - Offer up the 'Big Picture' of your project early, otherwise you will be at risk of losing the evaluator
  - Convince the evaluator that the project will achieve its goals, by writing 'confidently' using the right words
  - Provide clarity and pertinence of the objectives/aims, and ensure these are totally aligned to the call topic
  - Take the SMART approach to provide a logical and structured proposal

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#5 – Not using enough images/diagrams/tables etc

Mistake#6 – Construction of the proposal is not well thought out

SOME HINTS – for improving how the project proposal is written

- **Not enough images**
  - Images help the evaluator to better remember the proposal
  - Images help the evaluator to make 'sense' of the proposal
  - There are no rules for the number of images within a proposal
  - Make sure there is a balance – perhaps one image per two pages
  - Use appropriately - the right image for the right message
  - Images can be used to explain/illustrate a process, a set of categories, lots of figures/data sets etc
  - Make sure images are referenced in the body of the text and a good explanation provided

- **There is a lack of effort to make the story flow – the evaluator knows when effort hasn't been put into the proposal**
  - Put thought into what you write
  - Make each sentence of 'worth' – be clear - do not waffle – don't lose space through lazy writing
  - Trust in the composition of the writing, offers the evaluator 'trust' that the project will be properly undertaken
  - Craft your application by highlighting links/references within your proposal

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#7 – The abstract and/or introduction does not capture the evaluators attention

SOME HINTS – on how to capture the evaluators attention right from the beginning

- Make it compelling, exciting and gripping - use positive wording
- Have a great acronym and make it meaningful
- Start with a key message – what 'beyond state of the art' the project will achieve
- Explain why the topic is important in your field of work
- Make a statement about the present gaps, missing links, obstacles that are within the subject area
- Say what gaps/links you will be filling due to your project and how the project will overcome present obstacles
- Make sure your questions and aims are clearly put forward
- Provide an indication of your research methodologies you will utilise

Abstract and Introduction

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#8 – The scientific story is chaotic and is not coherent

Mistake#9 – Principles of scientific 'soundness' has not been followed

SOME HINTS – on how to improve the scientific story and scientific soundness

- Overall: **ESTABLISH, PROVE, CONVINCE**
- Your proposal should include:
  - A strong concept/theory/hypothesis
  - A clearly explained scientific story
  - Contextualisation of the scientific narrative
  - The reasoning why you needed to look for more information/data and:
    - Describe how you generated the data
    - Explain what your data means
    - Provide details to how the data fits within your work
    - Give a conclusion/opinion to what the potential implications of the overall study will/could be
  - A 'beyond state of the art' solution
  - A good design of the study – offer good data sets, facts and a conclusion
  - Say how you will undertake robust science using tried and tested scientific methodologies
  - Mention the competent partners with the required skills to fulfil the scientific narrative

Do not take for granted that the evaluator knows the science behind the research

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#10 – Not clearly stating the projects impacts

SOME HINTS – on how to improve the projects IMPACTS

- Evaluator likes to see the following items within the project proposal:
  - Scaled up expectations
  - Quantitative – economic impact – the use of figures/values
  - Qualitative – social, scientific, economic and technological impact
    - Economic - specific market areas, 'scaling up' etc
    - Science - what new science can be passed on to other researchers
    - Social – what improvements to society will be achieved
    - Technological – beyond state of the art
  - Significance of the Impact
  - Who the target groups are
  - How your project will make a difference to those target groups
  - Comparison of before the project and expectations after the project
  - What gap your project will fill
  - What positive change/s will be expected through the work of the project

Impact Section

Be realistic and do not exaggerate!

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#11 – Methodologies not appropriate for a multi-researcher approach

SOME HINTS – on how to improve the methodologies that considers all partners within the project

- The evaluator wants to see that methodologies used for research and/or data collection etc are designed to integrate a range of diverse scientists and innovators that are undertaking the work to successfully deliver the project
    - For example, a task that includes different experts such as an engineer, a social scientist and a digital expert, the methodologies should provide provision for all the experts to fully contribute to the output
    - Each participant of an activity has an important part to play therefore the intricacies of each of the disciplines must be understood by each of the participants of the activity
    - The proposal should make sure there are no gaps in the research and include:
        - A sound and robust methodology
        - A clear explanation of the methodology/process
        - The tools to be used such as: technology and/or humans

13 Common Mistakes – Let's Discuss

Mistake#12 – Does not support the 'promise' of the Excellence & Impact sections

Mistake#13 – The quality of the consortium is not adequately highlighted

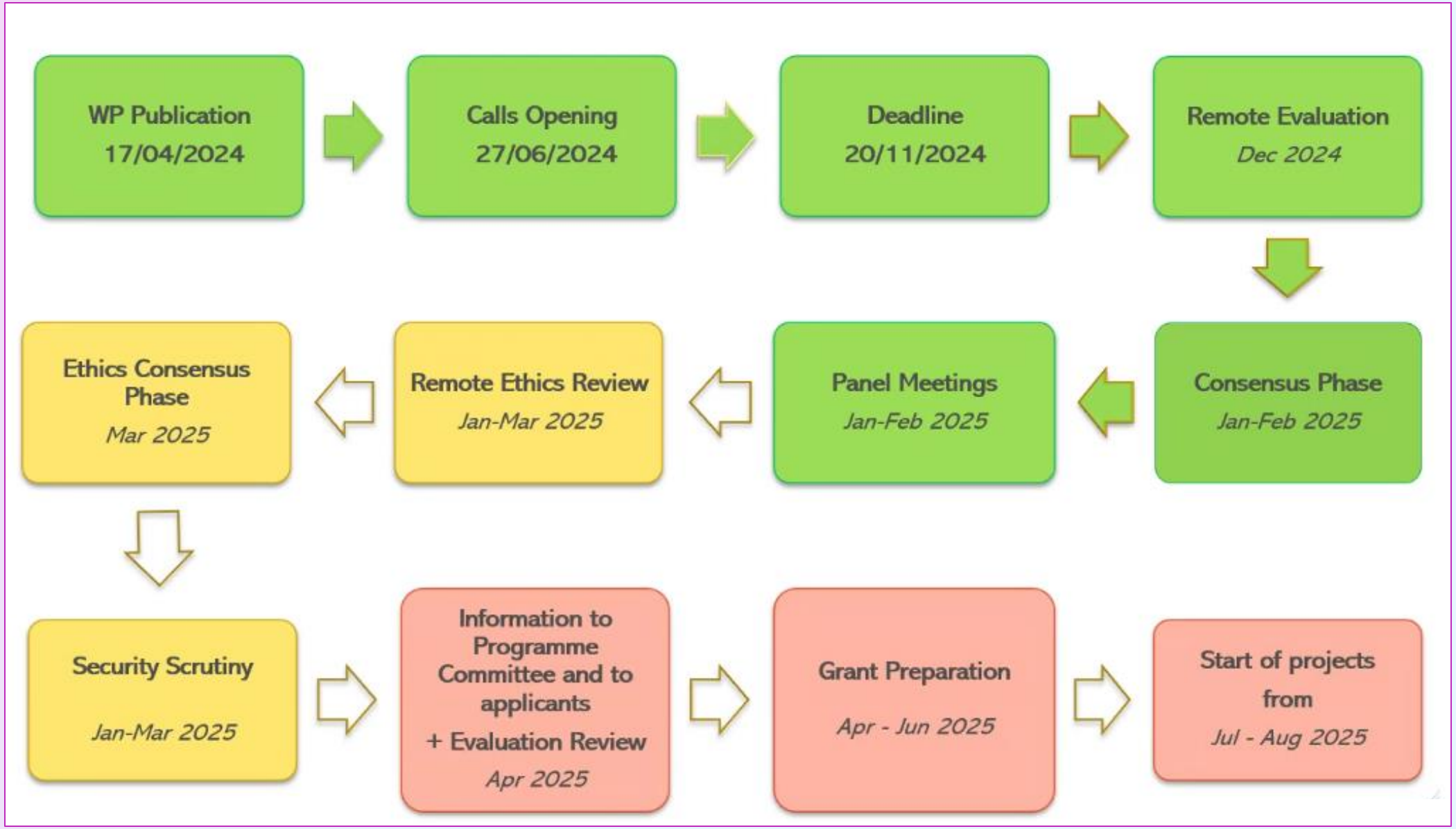
Quality/efficiency Implementation

SOME HINTS – on how to improve the 'Implementation' section of the proposal

- **The 'Implementation' section should provide:**
  - Support to the overall aim of the project
  - Support and expand on the project specific objectives
  - In depth descriptions of tasks and deliverables that fulfil the objectives
  - Good quality and effective work plans – Gannt chart
  - Quantified information so progress can be monitored
  - A logical and structured description of the flow of the work (for example regarding the timing of work packages)?
  - Description of the resources allocated to the work packages and must be in line with the objectives and deliverables
  - Critical risks table, relating to project implementation, and appropriate risk mitigation measures
  - Details of the partners appropriateness for the activities assigned to them

- **Also state within the 'Implementation' section:**
  - The quality of the consortium as a whole, including complimentary partnerships and disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge: (Note that important information on role of individual participants and previous experience is included in part A of proposal)
  - Details of the fulfilment of the participation criteria detailed within the call topic e.g. SSH, gender, open science,
  - Where required the industrial/commercial partner involvement to ensure exploitation of the results

2024 Evaluation – Example of Timeline of Main Steps



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Thank you