

Afternoon Sessions

Session 1: Grant applications: lessons learned

Session 2: Project implementation and project management: lessons learned

The afternoon topics are covered in unison.

- Generally as rule when you draw up an application and if this can at all be avoided - never end a project in December. This is an extremely busy work period with many people already busy with deliverables, support/finance busy with end of year activities and preparing to close the books, and one must take into consideration the Xmas/NY holiday period. No applications in July given this is the major vacation month of the summer in Sweden and there is very little support in the building during the month, unless you have specifically planned for or arranged support well in advance.
- From Grants Manager. - As soon as one has a concept and starts thinking about doing a grant application then flag this up and inform Lena immediately.
- From Editorial Dept. - Please don't even think about putting in an editorial publication line in a funding application without consulting with Joey to sign off on it.
- It is important that the respective roles within teams are clear and understood in terms of responsibilities for fundraising (see the respective JDs). The Programme Director is responsible for fundraising. For Researchers to learn the ropes and know what is involved in fundraising and be involved in deliverables is good for development but the lines of actual responsibility are clear. Research Assistants are not responsible for fundraising. Senior Researchers are expected to raise funds for their research, working independently or as part of teams according to opportunity, and are expected to provide advice to colleagues, especially junior ones, on fundraising possibilities and tactics.
- SMT are only involved if the application is of cross Cluster relevance or the area is particularly sensitive. However, it is worth repeating since the cluster structure was created that no contact with a funder can be taken up and no concept note sent out without the DOS signing off. This makes sure that there is nothing happening within the cluster others are not aware of. Furthermore, the DOS coordinates with the DOS from other clusters so there are no cross-purposes.

Lena Kappelin 27/3/2019 14:26

Comment [1]: Although I appreciate the generous thought, I think it may be difficult to avoid projects ending in December as many donors have the fiscal year ending in December.

- Experience has shown that successful funding applications are distilled right down to clearly being able to explain your subject and the what/why/how one is going to do a project. This is not just a pitch exercise but demonstrating one can explain in clear and simple terms a level of understanding and expert knowledge of your subject and objective that others can understand (Be able to explain it to your grandparents! ☺).
- If an application needs to be particularly tailored or you need to get a better understanding of what the funder actually wants then it's important to have good dialogue with them. Depending on the funder, one may need to use certain phrases or words in an application or have an appealing title to draw attention (Birdseed needed ☺). Linked to this is awareness for strategic attendance of events and to see this opportunity to engage with potential funders.
- Be careful not to over commit and promise too much but be realistic about what can be delivered within the timeframe requested. If possible try to build in some flexibility into your proposal. As you develop a project one might find that the way you conceptually designed it needs to change or the objective modified. You may need to change methodology so highlighting the possibility there may be changes well in advance either in your proposal or through maintaining good dialogue with the funder is important.
- Think and plan carefully through the timing of your deliverables and report launch. Linked to travel and dissemination activities one should always think strategically. For example, sometimes there may be a big event one would like to attend but there is no dedicated travel funding at SIPRI but if one were to plan a specific externally funded project side event at the same location and sequence the timing then one could take advantage to attend other events.
- On the budgeting side do keep in mind there are increases in prices and inflation over time and take this into account. For example, take into account salary costs can go up over time and also currency exchange rates fluctuate. Due diligence needed with regards how you plan reporting of salaries and respect the funders rules and one must be consistent with the same funder. Remember for funding proposals it's a functional budget not personal. Check always with the Grants Manager as you plan and prepare a budget.
- Realistic time management is important when planning and you need to be generous with the project management budget line and research budget line. Examine how projects have been implemented in the past and there is experience in-house. How much time was dedicated to a specific task or project? Take other core or work responsibilities into account - how much time is left for different projects? Also take into account the actual experience of a staff member assigned to a project, for example a Senior Researcher may have more experience and previously acquired knowledge and be quicker on task than someone more junior.

Lena Kappelin 27/3/2019 14:31

Comment [2]: It is also good to point out potential risks and how these would be taken care of to minimise delays and problems with deliverables.

Lena Kappelin 27/3/2019 14:33

Comment [3]: No budget may be submitted to a donor without having been checked by the GM or in her/his absence, the Head of Operations.

- Do bill your actual work time (consider time needed to keep up your expertise as part of a grant application) and even travelling to events. Try to build into your grant proposal, maybe not possible with every funder but you can then think ahead and do so. Calculate how you spend your time, tasks for the life of the institute and how much time you travel? Working more than 100% is an issue and if you need to say no, say no in advance.
- On travelling to events – be strategic, weigh up cost and benefits and evaluate: does one need to actually be there or should another colleague go?
- How we share information within the cluster is important. Share and we can learn from each other and it is important to have peer review. A suggestion is we can flag up at cluster meetings and get volunteers to review a project proposal.
- Things to think about when preparing a grant proposal – contact our Grants Manager Lena.

Lena Kappelin 27/3/2019 14:34

Comment [4]: Not sure where this goes but...
When deliverables include reports, launch events, conferences, seminars etc., always talk to Comms as well as Editorial. You want promotion for your publication/event.

Oh look! We have a SIPRI Intranet and guess what? **There's so much information there** and it even has the **A-Z of a grant application**. Please take your spoon and feed yourself:

<http://intranet.sipri.org/support/administration/finance-and-grants-2/>

Please see and read again!

<http://intranet.sipri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Armament-and-Disarmament-Fundraising-Workshop-notes-24-May-2018.pdf>

- On lessons learnt and following project outcomes it would be useful to share a brief report with Lena and others to give some feedback and Lena can add more information if relevant to the above. These notes will be shared with Lena.
- There are several project management tools software options freely available these days to help with project management. One such tool mentioned and used is Trello. This allows you to do lists and organise checklists and share with other team members. Perhaps, we can find a common tool that can be shown and shared with all?
- It is good practice to have a proper kick off planning meeting where you conceptualize, plan methodology and data collection, and clarify division of labour. Important to have regular follow up meetings. You can't plan for a perfect world so allow for a margin of error.
- How much external coverage should one have? There's not a straightforward answer but one should try to anticipate some bridge funding between external funding and core.
- Something to bring up at SMT - to review properly (i.e. YB chapter) takes a lot of time and not covered by a grant but perhaps it's possible to claim salary

Lena Kappelin 27/3/2019 14:36

Comment [5]: Following up on comments above: include comms and editorial in such meetings as well.

coverage for this. Or if you plan strategically as mentioned earlier one could tie in these core tasks to your grant project proposal (keeping up necessary expertise).

- On time sheets – there are pros and cons. The pros are if these are an internal planning document for the team and for the individual for planning purposes but anything beyond this is potentially problematic particular where work will be externally audited and can restrict how you work. Of course where funders require time sheets then keep time sheets.
- How do others archive? In AMEX we archive all the sources because we have to be able to demonstrate where our information has come from. In the SIPRI Handbook we are required to hand over our archive material to the library and problems can and have arisen when project files disappear or are unaccounted for. How should this be done for SIPRI? An institutional problem and IT and our Library need to be involved in this discussion but something much more efficient than RALPH is needed for just one Programme and a common digital central archive in an institute that promotes transparency should be a priority. Is it possible to get some infrastructural funding to get a system in place?
- **Project management summary – Plan, Adjust, Deliver.** Plan working backwards from the key deliverable date. Follow the plan along the way but beware that you need to adjust but track the change in your timeline. You must deliver otherwise you burn bridges and loose that funding opportunity and potentially other funders. Realistic planning is so important!