

Writing a successful funding application: A workshop for early-career researchers



Dr. Julia Staykova-McKinnon for Scriptorium

Dear Participant, welcome to Scriptorium's annual grant-writing seminars held for Institut Curie! This seminar targets experienced researchers at the early career stage focusing on writing independent research proposals. The seminar includes 2 meetings of 3 hours each and will be held online on Zoom.

Content: We will address the key challenges in writing a competitive funding application. The ANR and CNRS application formats will serve as our main case studies.

Focus on the project description: meeting 1 and part of meeting 2

1. **Balancing between ambition and feasibility in the project objectives.** We will discuss the balance between “unfocused and overambitious” proposals on the one hand, and “incremental” proposals on the other- the two ends of the spectrum which will lead to a rejection.
2. **Articulating a clear project rationale and conveying the fundamental added value.** We will discuss the correct positioning of the project in relation to the state of the art: how to convey its relevance and importance, where to discuss novel aspects, and how to show clear focus on fundamental added value, in particular when the project is translational.
3. **Providing enough details on feasibility in the methodology and work plan.** We will discuss how far you should go in the analysis of risks and mitigation plans, and what broader factors should be addressed to demonstrate overall feasibility.
4. **Strong structure.** In a proposal, clear structure is the best way to convey your project management skills. We will discuss the budgeting of space, how to use formatting and chapter titles to grab attention, and where to place your key messages.

Focus on the candidate's profile: meeting 2

1. **Providing clarity on your past contributions and the recognition of your work in the community.** We will discuss the major aspects of your record where reviewers pay attention, and how to combine qualitative and quantitative presentation techniques in the CV. In particular, we will address the use of narrative to present your achievements to the maximum advantage.
2. **Conveying how the project advances your future research trajectory.** For an ‘excellent’ evaluation, it is vital to explain in what ways the project will advance your future research plans. We will discuss what to say, how long this statement should be, and where to place it.

Both meetings include Q&A periods and analysis of examples from funded proposals available online. The examples show best practice but do not represent the participants' fields of research.

For the lecturer's profile, please see the next page.

Julia Staykova-McKinnon, Ph.D.

Scriptorium Founder, Consultant



Profile

Julia has over fifteen years of experience as a lecturer and consultant in grant writing, interviewing skills in research, and research and innovation proposals developed for private investment. She consults on proposals submitted to Horizon Europe, including ERC (with an average annual of 12-15 proposals supported in the StG, CoG, AdG rounds and 2-3 Synergy applications), Erasmus+ Actions (European University rounds 2 and 3, EMJMD, SwafS), Marie S. Curie Actions (the former ITN/ETN, Doctoral Network, CoFund, RISE), and FET-Open/RIA calls. She also assists on proposals submitted to national agencies, specifically DFG and Helmholtz Foundation (Germany), ANR and IHU/PIA (France), FWO/FNRS (Belgium), SNSF (Switzerland).

EU academic institutions with regular consulting and teaching commitments. A selection of Scriptorium clients includes Freie Universitaet Berlin, German Centre for Neurodegenerative Research (DZNE), German Centre for Lung Research (DZL), Grenoble Neurosciences Institute (GIN), Institut Curie and Institut Cervaux-Paris, Institute of Clinical and Experimental Research (IREC)-Brussels, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC)-Berlin, Max Planck-Potsdam, University of Bordeaux, University of Grenoble-Alpes (UGA), University of Cote-D'Azur (UCA-Nice), University of Seville, University of Zurich and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (UZH, ETHZ, Switzerland).

Industry: Scriptorium has collaborated on training projects with Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals, Hengeler Mueller Partners in Law, HVB Banking Group, KPMG, and Servier Laboratories. With Janssen Pharmaceutica, Julia developed an innovative training programme implemented at KULeuven's Doctoral School.

Academic Background

Visiting Assistant Professor in language and cultural studies, University of Amsterdam (2010-11)
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow, Los Angeles, California (2009-10)
Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2007-09)
Ph.D. in rhetoric in the English Renaissance, studies jointly at Oxford University and Sofia University, defended at Sofia U in 2007.