Preparing competitive DECRA grant applications

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Structure

• Context
• Assessors’ gaze
• Abstracts
• Structuring the 6 pager
• Additional materials
Context

Competitive environment
Support early career researchers (i.e. competing against peers)
Consider a project:
- of appropriate scope and scale for a 3 year project
- with a trajectory
- going beyond being descriptive
- innovative (focus, approach)
Assessors’ gaze

- Plain English, well prepared and written
- Present your case crisply and in ways that are coherent and well supported
- Remember, those who review: read many (often long) applications
- Do not assume your assessors are familiar with (or interested in) your theoretical orientation or are from your discipline
- Avoid FIGJAM and/or exaggerating your track record
- Emphasise your trajectory (this investment will be worthwhile)
Abstracts

Positive, focussed and intentional: start with problem statement, but in a positive way

Abstract: This project looks at how researchers can learn to prepare competitive research applications. It will ... blah blah blah..

Abstract: Developing the capacity to prepare competitive funding applications is now a core academic competence. Using an analysis of both successful and unsuccessful applications, this project ... blah blah blah...

Suggestion: Look at the abstracts of successful application on the ARC web site
Structuring the 6 pager

Title: (descriptive and interest, but no question marks) e.g. Developing competitive granting applications: A core competence

First page: provide complete overview: i) key problem, ii) worth of project, iii) approach to investigation, including who is involved [1].

• Project (significance, innovation, methods, contribution to knowledge and benefit) [2-4]
• Institutional Support and alignment with national priorities [5-6]
• References: no more than 2/3rd page [6]
• Maximise space
Additional materials

• Be factual and give instances
• If you have citations, use them cleverly (e.g. annual rate of citations, h-index, )
• Include only pertinent and well argued material
• Again, avoid FIGJAM, support your contentions

Citations – check Harzings Publish or perish – Author impact – uncheck other disciplines
Final comments

• Great opportunity for you
• Work, rework, work it through again
• Strike the balance between cool science and engagement with audience
• Panel may not be experts in your field
• Avoid hackneyed phases and pop language
• Show you know the scientific conventions and academic discourse
• Get others to read for clarity, making sense and coherence

• ..................

• Questions, clarifications, disagreement etc etc