THE THOUGHT BOX

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Herding Cats, online.

5

Tips for developing multi-partner grant applications in a socially-distanced world

Quick Intro.

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What are we even talking about?

Social distancing measures mean hosting **physical grant preparation meetings** involving multiple consortium is out of the question. Online conference tools can help mitigate this social interaction gap if used in the **correct manner.**

Why does it matter for my proposal?

Experienced proposal coordinators must be adept at guiding multi-partner discussions, capturing and transforming their **disparate inputs into one coherent** and compelling bid narrative.

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No.1
Little & Often

No sane person willingly spends 8 hours on one conference call. Unlike in the real-world, organising full day proposal preparation sessions online simply doesn't work. As partners tire and attention spans drop, it becomes increasingly difficult to **hold meaningful discussion** on complex topics.

Consider **breaking up the usual "full-day" agenda** into a number of smaller, bite-size meetings, and spread them across a few days. If well prepared, 60 minute express meetings are often sufficient to present, discuss and take decisions on key proposal points.

As not every partner will be able to attend every meeting, start each online session with a **short recap** of the conclusions previously reached, and be diligent about taking and sharing minutes.

"I'm here for you, friend!"

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No.2
A personal touch

If you are the proposal coordinator, make sure you are in **regular contact** with individual project partners on a one-to-one basis, in addition to the interaction you have with them in group online sessions.

An impromptu phone call or short email once in a while is enough to ensure that all **partners are aligned** and up to date in terms of their individual tasks ahead of the submission deadline.

This approach is particularly important for **funding newbies** who are encountering the weird and wonderful world of grant application processes for the first time. Use your 1-2-1 sessions to walk them through the different procedural steps and troubleshoot any challenges they may be encountering.

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No.3
Create a roadmap

Similar to the work plan you include in the application, consider creating a proposal preparation road map. The road map document outlines the key steps and stages involved in developing and submitting a full and high-quality end product, and sets **clear control-points** for assessing progress.

Between online proposal development meetings, the roadmap document helps partners understand what their **immediate priorities** are, and what's coming up.

Ideally a draft version of the roadmap document can be presented at the proposal development kick-off meeting, where it may be modified prior to adoption by all partners. If your consortium has late joiners, the document provides a useful tool for quickly **onboarding the partner**.

"Aaaaattention!"

No.4
Get Everyone Involved

If you are moderating an online consortium meeting, make sure to **actively and frequently** seek out the input from all partners by periodically calling on participants who haven't contributed for a while. This can be done by interjecting with a simple *"Before we move to the next topic, I just want to check in with Partner XYZ to see if they have any final thoughts on item ABC*!".

Remember, good proposals require everyone's input. A secondary benefit of this approach is **keeping partners on their toes**. Knowing that their thoughts on a particular issue might be requested at anytime, will ensure they are not tempted to check their emails whilst another partner is presenting.

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No.5
Harness the power of visual

When interacting online with a group, many physical communication nuances are lost. This makes it more **difficult for audiences to follow**, often hastening a drop off in attention. This especially true if the content is very technical or complex.

To steer against this communication barrier, **use visual aids** to support the delivery of your message wherever it is practical to do so. A simple PowerPoint slide showing the questions you want partners to discuss, or a specific proposal paragraph you think needs sharpening can do wonders in holding your audiences' attention.

Don't get caught in the trap that every visual needs a highly sleek, polished design – **content is king.** Having some (to show during the meeting) is better than having none.

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THE THOUGHT BOX

THETHOUGHTBOX is an online collection of easy-to-digest tips, tricks, and tools for improving your next grant proposal application.

THETHOUGHTBOX content distils real-world experiences made by BOR&BAR consultant and guest contributors into bite-size actionable insights.

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A little about us.

BOR&BAR helps public & private organisations successfully engage with grant funding programmes.

In the last 2-years we have helped clients secure more than EUR 21 million in grant funding for their ground breaking projects.

From our Berlin office, our team of international consultants cover all major regional, national and European funding programmes.

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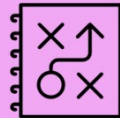
Design and implement grant acquisition strategies.

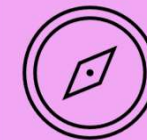Identify and qualify the most suitable grant programmes.

Deliver tailored training on grant writing & pitching.

Articulate 'investment worthy' grant applications.

Provide actionable feedback on your draft grant proposals.

Offer intelligence on customer and competition activities involving grants.