

# **Maximising Your Chances of Research Grant (GRF/ECS) Funding: Comprehensive Checklist and Actionable Tips**

Welcome! The webinar starts at 4 pm HK time.

Feel free to leave any questions you have about the topic in the  
Q&A box



Express Webinar:  
Maximising Your Chances of  
Research Grant (GRF/ECS)  
Funding: Comprehensive  
Checklist and Actionable  
Tips

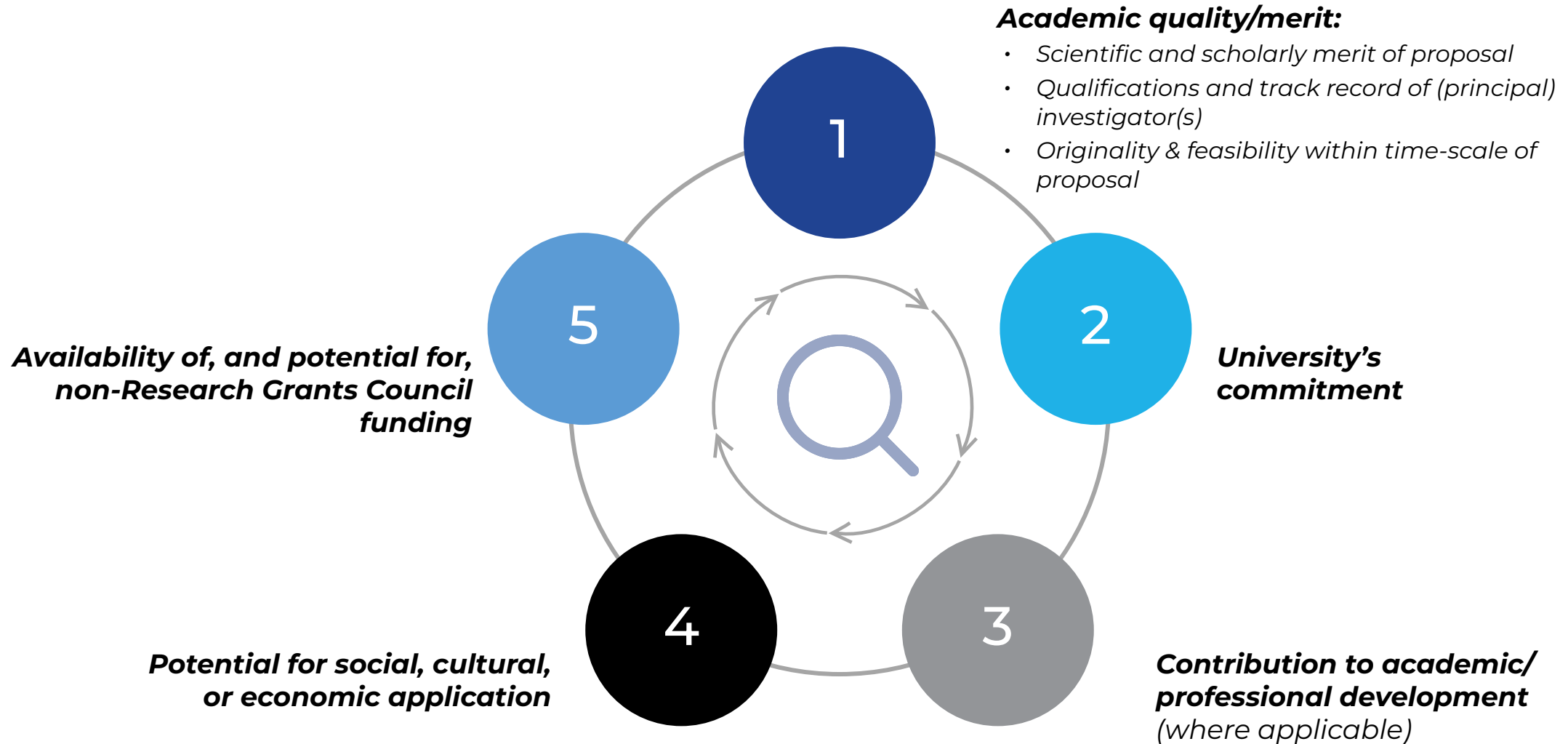
Dr Rachel Baron

28 September 2023

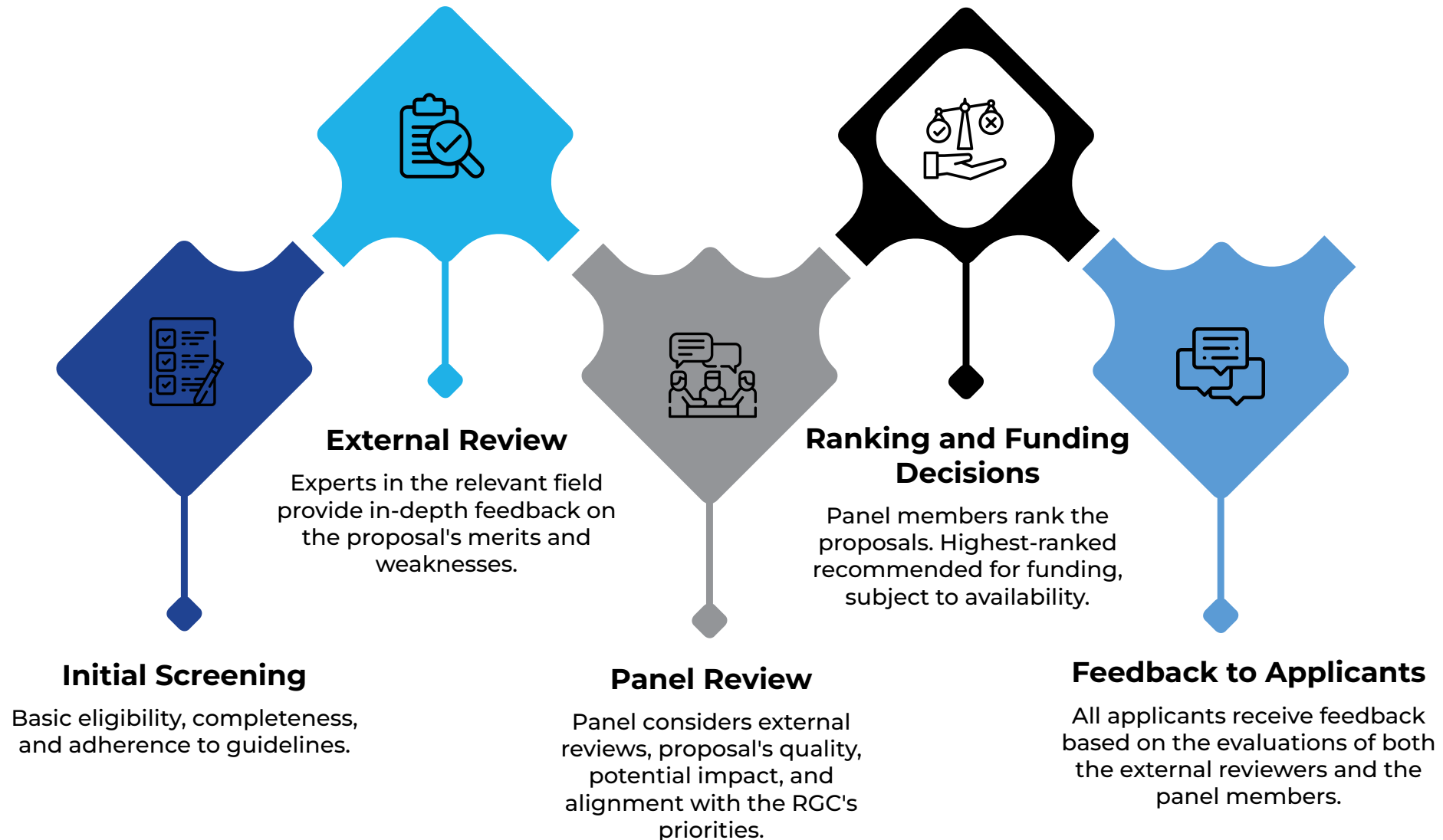
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# GRF Assessment Criteria



# Role of RGC and Review Process



# Convince the Reviewers

## 6 Prediction & Promise

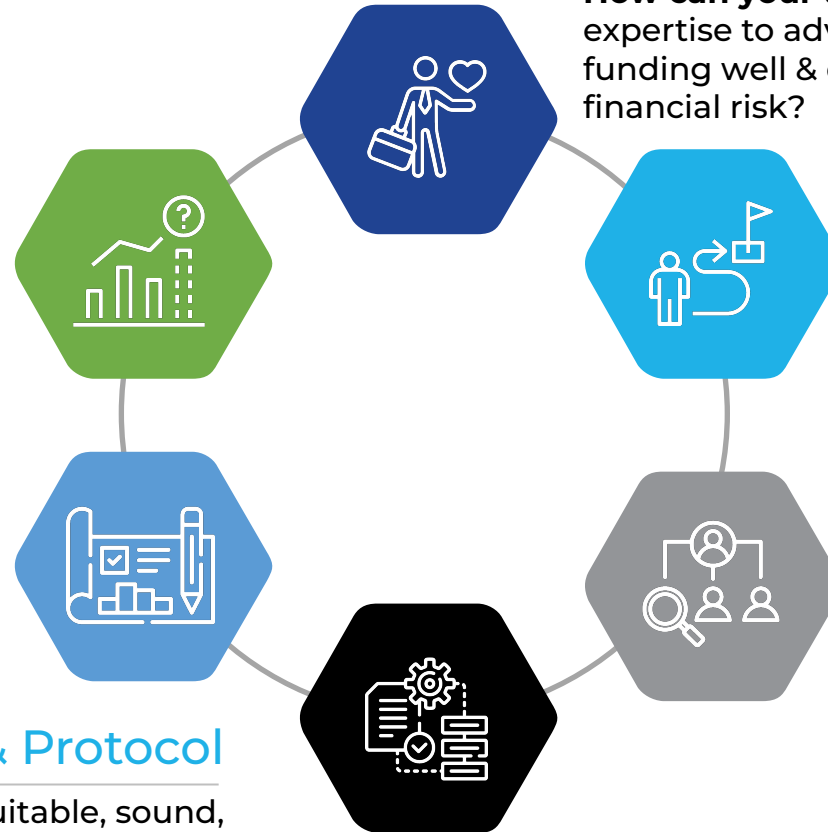
**What will be the results & benefits?**  
Who will benefit, when & for how long?  
How can your innovation be scaled up or commercialised, or promote collaboration? How will you make the funder look good?

## 5 Preparation & Precaution

**Is your solution feasible**, cost-effective & based on pilot studies? Will results be validated? How will you address limitations or funders' doubts?

## 4 Process & Protocol

**Is your solution original**, suitable, sound, ethical & better than others / your past rejected version, detailed to clearly explain methods & itemised budget (eg, Staff/Equipment/General)?



## 1 Passion & Prudence

**How can your team** enthusiastically offer its expertise to advance the field, help society, use funding well & deliver value, with minimal financial risk?








## 2 Purpose & Principles

**What is the main problem** that needs solving, what are key issues/ reasons/ factors & why should the funders care (motivation)?

## 3 Positioning & Pitch

**Why has the problem been ignored** or not (completely) solved? Why does it matter? What is the specific problem (technical, practical, analytical, conceptual) you can realistically solve?

# Create an Effective Title

 Clear and Concise	<p>Title should be straightforward and avoid unnecessary jargon. It should give a clear idea of the research topic without being too wordy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ "The Role of Gut Microbiota in Type 2 Diabetes Progression"</li><li>✓ "The Effects of Urbanization on Bird Migration Patterns"</li></ul>
 Specific	<p>Should be specific enough to give reviewers a clear sense of the research focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ "Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Depression"</li><li>✓ "Evaluating the Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in Treating Adolescent Depression"</li></ul>
 Engaging	<p>Should be academic, but also capture the interest of the reviewers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ "Unlocking the Secrets of the Deep: Exploring Marine Biodiversity in the Mariana Trench"</li><li>✓ "From Farm to Table: Tracing the Journey of Organic Produce"</li></ul>
 Avoid Abbreviations	<p>Unless they are widely recognised, avoid using abbreviations or acronyms in the title.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ "Role of BDNF in Memory Formation"</li><li>✓ "Role of Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor in Memory Formation" (instead of "Role of BDNF in Memory Formation")</li></ul>
 Reflect the Research Question or Hypothesis	<p>Should give a hint about the main research question or hypothesis you're investigating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ "Does Early Exposure to Multiple Languages Enhance Cognitive Flexibility in Children?"</li><li>✓ "Investigating the Correlation Between Air Pollution Levels and Respiratory Diseases in Urban Areas"</li></ul>
 Avoid Sensationalism	<p>Avoid sensational or over-hyped titles. The title should reflect the serious and academic nature of the research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ "Solar Energy: The Ultimate Solution for Power Crises!"</li><li>✓ "Assessing the Potential of Solar Energy in Semi-Arid Regions"</li></ul>
 Avoid Technical Language	<p>Review panel might include experts from various disciplines. Title should be understandable to someone outside your specific field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ "Analysing the Cardiomyopathic Potential of Mutated MYH7 Genes"</li><li>✓ "The Role of Mutated Genes in Heart Disease"</li></ul>

# Abstract

- Word limit of 400 words – longer than for a paper
- Must stand alone and be understandable to non-experts
  - Avoid using jargon and technical terms
  - Avoid acronyms
  - No references
- Must convince the reader that the project is necessary, important, and achievable
  - Define problem/need/knowledge gap
  - Emphasise why it is important – what/who will benefit?
  - Promote your/your team's expertise
- State aims and objectives
  - Use key statements from Project Objectives and Research Project Statement
- Propose research question/central hypothesis/approach
- Define key variables, sample size, treatments, data sources and analyses, measurable outcomes
- Emphasise strengths of your study design, anticipated results, contribution to your field/specific populations



# Project Objectives

*Word limit: 800 words – bullet points*

**Aim:** To test how [independent variable] is linked to [dependent variable] among [group].

## **Rationale:**

- Define important problem/issue, unmet need, or knowledge gap; critique past solutions.
- Identify key variables; clarify specific problem and highlight solutions tried so far, a feasible new solution, and an answerable research question and/or testable central research hypothesis.
- Propose a feasible approach. Mention any pilot study/ collaboration.
- Propose a general goal, aim and study design.

## **Objectives:**

To achieve the study aim, we propose the following objectives:

- *Objective 1:* To determine/test/assess/evaluate/validate/examine...
  - Specific research hypothesis: X will affect Y... / Specific research Q: How does X affect Y?
  - Strategy/Approach: We will test this hypothesis / answer this Q by [Method]...
  - Deliverable: This objective will achieve/establish/generate... [Performance measure evaluation & any alternatives]
- *Objective 2:*...
- *Objective 3:*...

**Possible outcomes & impact:** The study will overcome past challenges in... and will provide information on... / identify/clarify... among [group]. The results will allow/elucidate/ improve/facilitate... and inform





# Pathways to Impact Statement

Demonstrable contributions, beneficial effects, valuable changes or advantages that research qualitatively brings to the economy, society, culture, public policy/services, health, environment, or quality of life whether locally, regionally or internationally; and that are beyond academia.

**Who** will benefit in the short (1–3 years), medium (4–10 years) and long (over 10 years) term?

**How** will they benefit? Objective, measurable benefits beyond academia

**What** will be done during & after the project to achieve the identified benefits?

# What is Impactful Research?



## Impact Type:

Better product, service, practice, policy, system, intervention, behaviour, skills...



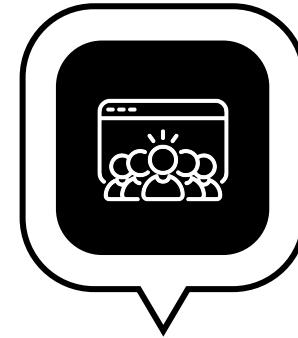
## Impact Area:

Economy, law, culture, health, medicine, education, media, environment...



## Beneficiary Sector:

General public, government, non-profits, business, industry...



## Beneficiary reach:

Practitioners, leaders, providers, administrators, communities, clients, populations...



## Scale:

**Short-, medium-, long-term**

**Local International**

# Pathways to Impact Statement

*Maximum two sides of A4*

## Summary:

Briefly explain the study problem, potential solution, new knowledge/insight and real-world applications.

### i) Potential beneficiaries:

- **Short term** (1-3 years): e.g., local practitioners/patients
- **Medium term** (4-10 years): e.g., global practitioners/patients
- **Long term** (>10 years): e.g., local & global health departments, hospitals, populations

### ii) Potential benefits:

- **Types:** e.g., cost-efficient practice, well-being, reduced hospitalisation
- **Extent:** e.g., long-term health, sustained reduced health spending, worldwide

### iii) Proposed activities / consultations / collaborations:

- **Link to project objectives:** make it clear how the activities link to the anticipated impacts
- **Engage stakeholders:** if possible, incorporate their feedback

### • Activities before/during project:

- **Activity:** e.g., focus-group discussions for service delivery improvement
- **Group/s:** e.g., practitioners & patients
- **Plan:** e.g., online meetings on satisfaction & attitudes; included in ethics approval
- **Deliverable/outcome:** e.g., recommendations to develop local service, self-help groups

### • Activities after project:

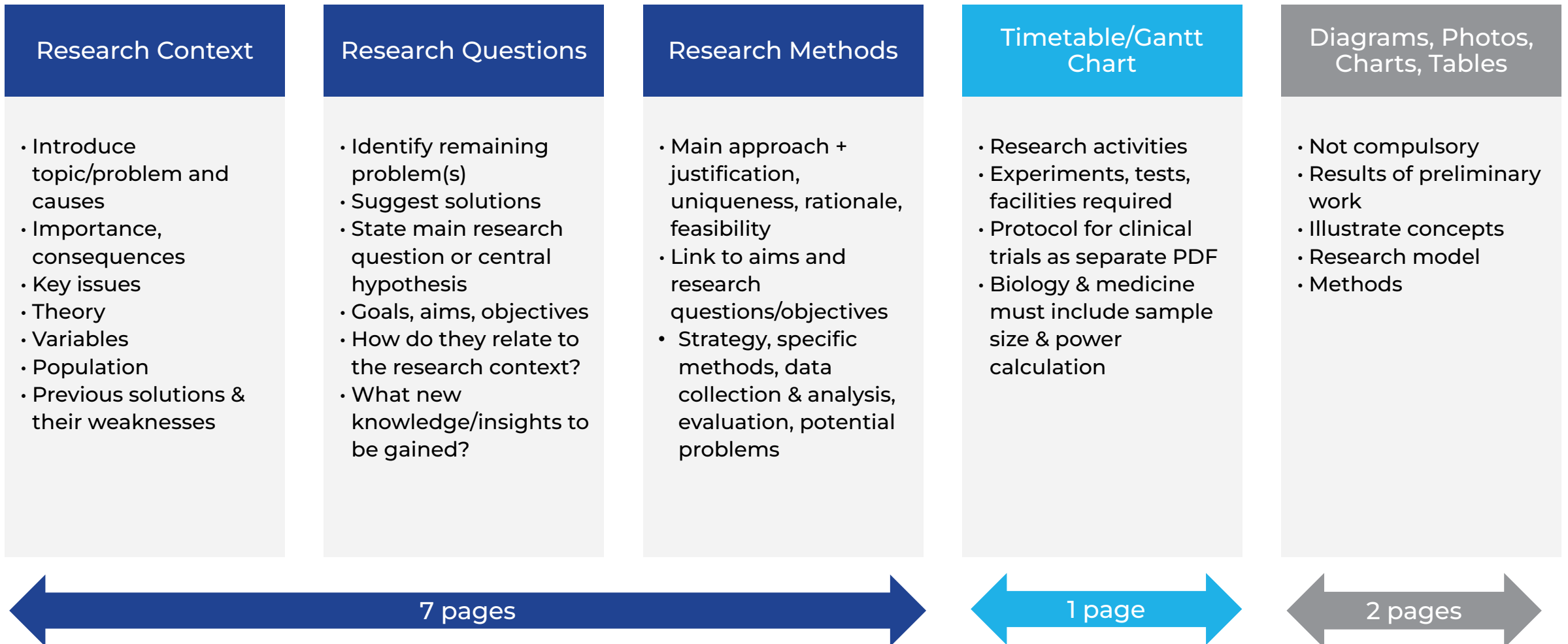
- **Activity:** e.g., consensus building
- **Group/s:** e.g., expert practitioners
- **Plan:** e.g., 5 meetings for systematic review & guideline production
- **Deliverable/outcome:** e.g., new methodologies, technologies, applications, consensus guidelines, global media promotion

# Pathways to Impact Statement

- **Start with the Big Picture:** Begin by outlining the overarching problem or challenge your research addresses. This sets the stage for the reader to understand the broader context.
- **Be Clear and Concise:** Avoid jargon and overly technical language. Your statement should be understandable to a broad audience.
- **Quantify When Possible:** Use numbers, statistics, or percentages to give a clearer picture of the potential impact. For example, "Our research could benefit the 30% of the population suffering from XYZ."
- **Highlight Broader Impacts:** Discuss how your research can benefit society, the environment, the economy, or other broader areas. This could include creating new technologies, informing policy decisions, improving health outcomes, etc.
- **Include Potential for Innovation:** Highlight how your research might lead to new methodologies, technologies, or novel applications. Emphasize its uniqueness and what sets it apart from existing work.
- **Engage with Stakeholders:** If possible, engage with potential beneficiaries of your research (e.g., patients, policymakers, industry leaders) and gather their insights. Incorporate their feedback or testimonials to strengthen your impact statement.
- **Link to the Project's Objectives:** Make sure there's a clear connection between the proposed research activities and the anticipated impacts. This helps reviewers see the direct line from your work to the potential outcomes.
- **Provide Evidence or Precedents:** If there are previous studies or projects that have led to significant impacts, mention them as evidence that your research can achieve similar outcomes.



# Project Plan



# Project Plan Checklist

## Define specific project

- Well-grounded, convincing & important research Q or hypothesis; funder's past topics?
- Thorough literature search; what is new?
- Project size/scope, duration, location, setting; appropriate sample selection & size?
- Sound study design & protocol, ethical considerations, diversity/inclusion aspects?
- Reproducibility, validity/reliability, controls & replicates, bias/confounders, data handling plan?
- Clear criteria for success, cut-off values; limitations, contingency plan; expected results?
- Dissemination & impact esp. outside academia?

## Appropriate team/institution

- Principal investigator (PI), co-investigators (Co-Is), statisticians: specific study expertise
- Institution: well-equipped, support/approval

**Ethics:** conflicts of interest; no plagiarism, falsification, double-funding

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**Proposed timeline & budget:** realistic schedule & costs (with quotes)? Costs of data management, publication, knowledge exchange?



# Verb Tense



A proposed study has not yet been conducted so **always** use **future tense** when referring to it

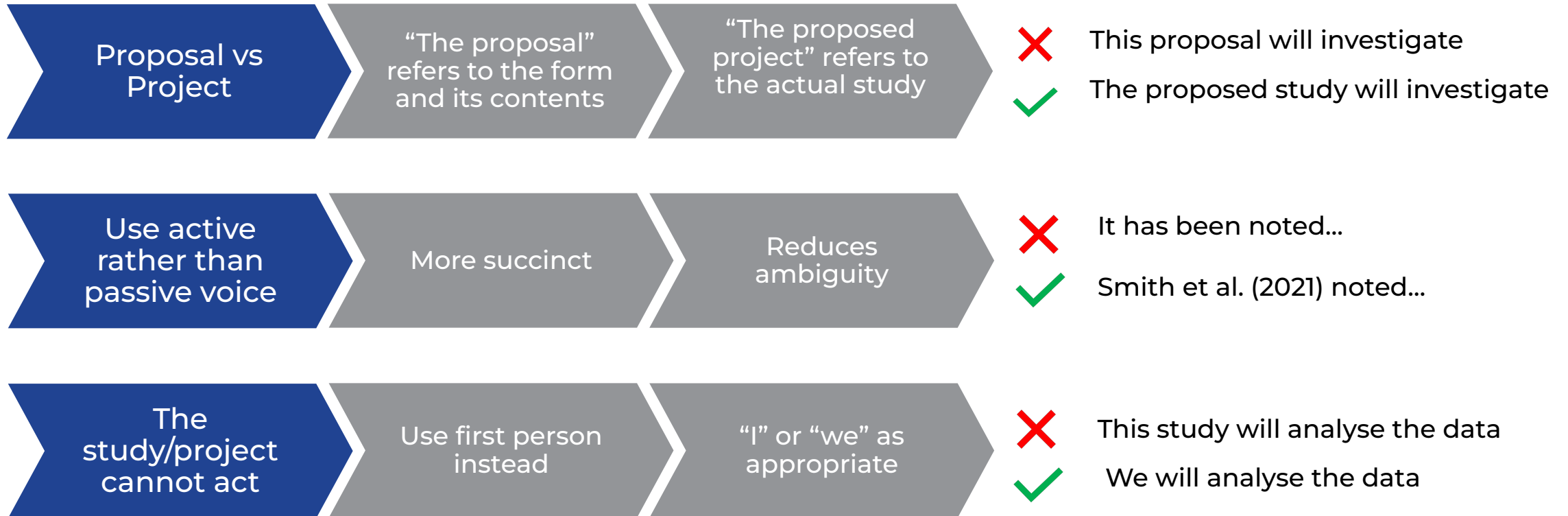
- The proposed study *will investigate*
- The aim of the study *will be* to
- Participants *will be* recruited



Things that are **already done** – e.g., descriptions of previous studies by you and others – should be in **past or present perfect tense**, or follow field-specific norms

- In our pilot study, *we found*
- A previous study (Smith et al., 2021) *showed*
- Our preliminary results *indicated*
- Several studies *have investigated*

# Avoid Confusing Language





# Avoid Confusing Language



✗ Traditional item response theory (IRT) might not be applicable

✓ Item response theory (IRT), a commonly used technique for analysing questionnaire data,....



✗ The performance of non-SOE firms is better than that of SOE enterprises

✓ The performance of non-SOE firms is better than that of SOE firms

# Use Figures, Charts, Tables



**Flowcharts:** Use these to outline the steps of an experimental procedure, the stages of your research project, or the flow of participants through a study.



**Graphs:** Display preliminary data, expected outcomes, or important trends relevant to your research. This can include bar graphs, line graphs, scatter plots, etc.



**Schematics:** These are especially useful for engineering or technical projects. They can show the design of a device, system, or experimental setup.



**Tables:** Summarize data, list experimental conditions, or compare different methods or studies side by side.



**Timelines:** Illustrate the projected timeline for your research, highlighting key milestones and deliverables.



**Conceptual Diagrams:** Use these to represent theoretical frameworks, models, or complex relationships between variables.



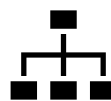
**Photographs:** Show preliminary results, especially if you've achieved something visually striking. Particularly effective for disciplines like biology (e.g., microscopy images) or archaeology.



**Pie Charts:** Illustrate the distribution of certain variables, such as budget allocations or participant demographics.



**Molecular Structures:** For chemistry or biochemistry proposals, show the structures of key compounds or proteins.

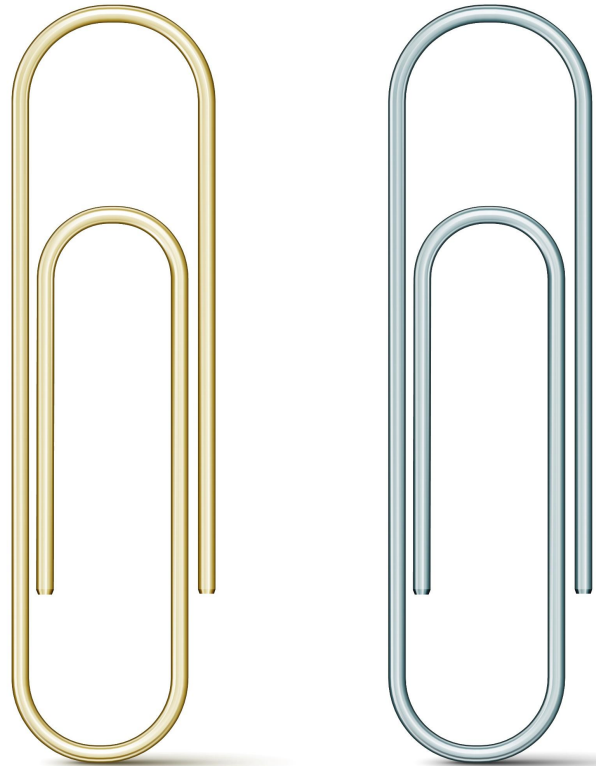


**Hierarchy or Tree Diagrams:** Show relationships in a structured manner, such as taxonomies in biology or system hierarchies in IT projects.



**Maps:** If your research involves specific locations (e.g., fieldwork, population studies, environmental research), maps can show where the work will take place or where samples/data will be collected.

# Allowable Attachments



- Appendix 1: Education plan (1 page)
- Appendix 2: Technology Transfer Plan (Optional)
  - (a) Activities to be undertaken to disseminate and realise the application of the R&D deliverables
  - (b) Potential industry partners for technology transfer / manufacturing.
  - (c) Associated / complementary technology development projects which may synergise with this project
  - (d) Future plans to apply for ITF to support the applied research component of the proposed project.
- Appendix 3: Letters of Collaboration
- Appendix 4: Clinical Fellowships Form and / or Ethics and Safety Approval Letters

**“Applications will be disqualified if the proposals have abused the purpose of the ‘Additional Attachments’ in this part. Applicants should not make use of this part to supplement the contents of other sections.”**

# Compiling the Form



## Format

12 pt Times New Roman

Single spacing

2.5 cm margins



## Instructions

Don't exceed the word count/number of pages

Complete every section – nothing should be blank (write “n/a” where necessary)



## Presentation

Prepare in Word then past into form

Check for spelling, grammar, consistency of terms

Make sure it is proofread/edited by someone neutral

# Final Checklist

1. **Scheme Overview:** Ensure you have understood the purpose, objectives, and types of academic research eligible for the scheme.
2. **Applicant Eligibility:** Ensure you meet the criteria for eligibility, including academic staff requirements, employment conditions, and other specific rules.
3. **Funding Thresholds and Duration:** Be aware of the lower and upper thresholds for funding and the typical duration of projects. Normally 1–3 years, max. 5.
4. **Assessment Process:** Understand the assessment criteria, including academic quality, institutional commitment, potential for application, and availability of non-RGC funding.
5. **Complete the Application Form Correctly:** Follow the specified format, page limits, and font requirements, and ensure all sections of the application form are completed.
6. **Particulars of the Project:** Provide details such as the name of the PI, project title, duration, and total amount requested.
7. **Research Areas and Project Team:** Detail the research areas and members of the project team. Include CVs, previous relevant work, publications, awards, patents, services (e.g., referee, supervisor).
8. **Details of the Research Proposal:** Include project objectives, research statement, pathways to impact, references, output dissemination plan, and other relevant details.
  - Is your project innovative, focused & timely?
  - Does it use valid, reliable & feasible technologies, methods, tools?
  - Is it a high-quality, ethical, and reproducible study?
  - Have you clearly stated your criteria for success, evaluation plan, contingency plan?
  - Is it cost-effective, efficient, and achievable within the time frame?
  - Have you made a convincing case for your team's qualifications & expertise?
9. **Project Funding and Resources:** Provide a detailed breakdown of the project's funding and resources, including cost justifications and any existing facilities or equipment. Note conditions and allowable limits. Ensure all items are mentioned in the Project Plan.

# Thank You!

Any Questions?

