



IJ4EU cross-border master class

How to prepare and write a great grant application,
February 15 2024



Hazel Sheffield & Trine Smistrup

www.journalismarena.eu

Purpose of this day

To give you a crash course in the work process of cross-border collaborative investigative journalism

==> leading to ==>

Making you able to write a killer grant application

Today's programme

- 9:30 Good morning, intros
- 9:40 The cross-border investigative work process – Hazel Sheffield
- 10:40 Break
- 10:50 Getting ready to apply, writing the application, the jury process and the answer – Trine Smistrup
- 12:30 End – unless there are more questions

Who are we?

- **Hazel Sheffield**, journalist and Arena networks coordinator, coordinated Money to Burn
- **Trine Smistrup**, journalist, co-founder of Arena, organizer of Dataharvest and 3 decades of experience with journalism grants

Arena for Journalism in Europe

- **Arena for Journalism in Europe** supports and facilitates collaborative journalism – journalists working with other journalists across geographical borders, and journalists working across professional borders with scholars, scientists, or civil society.
- Arena organises **Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference**, taking place each year in Mechelen, Belgium. Next is May 30 – June 2, 2024!

Arena for Journalism in Europe

- In the IJ4EU program, **Arena provides**
 - Master classes on cross-border journalism
 - Matchmaking – to find team mates in specific countries or with specific skills
 - Mentoring
 - The Collaborative Desk – secure digital work space (especially for freelance teams)

The IJ4EU grant

- IJ4EU will disburse €2 million:
 - **Investigation Support Scheme**, which offers grants of between €5,000 and €50,000 to investigative teams of all varieties. Managed by the International Press Institute
 - **Freelancer Support Scheme**, offering grants of up to €20,000 to journalists working outside of newsrooms. The freelancers will also get tailored assistance including mentoring throughout the lifecycle of their projects. Managed by the European Journalism Center.

What is "cross-border collaborative investigative journalism"?

- What are the first words that come to your mind when you hear "cross-border investigative journalism"?
- Please write in the chat

What is "cross-border collaborative investigative journalism"?

- Big leaks!
- Terabytes of data!
- Whistleblowers!
- Billions of £, \$ or €!
- Global!
- Political leaders and celebrities!

No need for a whistleblower or a big leak



Follow the money:

2 journalists in 2 countries,
big EU money, investigative
skills and curiosity

No need for a whistleblower or a big leak



Follow the money:

2 journalists in 2 countries,
big EU money, investigative
skills and curiosity

The team went through 300 public
procurements and filed FOI request
to more than 40 public authorities
– only possible in your own country

No need for a whistleblower or a big leak

- You need the right idea
- You need the right people
 - with the right skills
 - in the right countries
- You need to convince the jury that your team can do it

Who are you?

- Take a moment to write down your investigation idea. To win IJ4EU money you will need to make sure the idea is for a cross-border investigation.
- What does that mean?

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries

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2. decide on an idea of mutual interest

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3. gather and share material

What is cross-border journalism?

1. journalists from different countries
2. decide on an idea of mutual interest
3. gather and share material
4. publish to their own audiences

Short history of the field

2000: ICIJ and Tobacco Underground



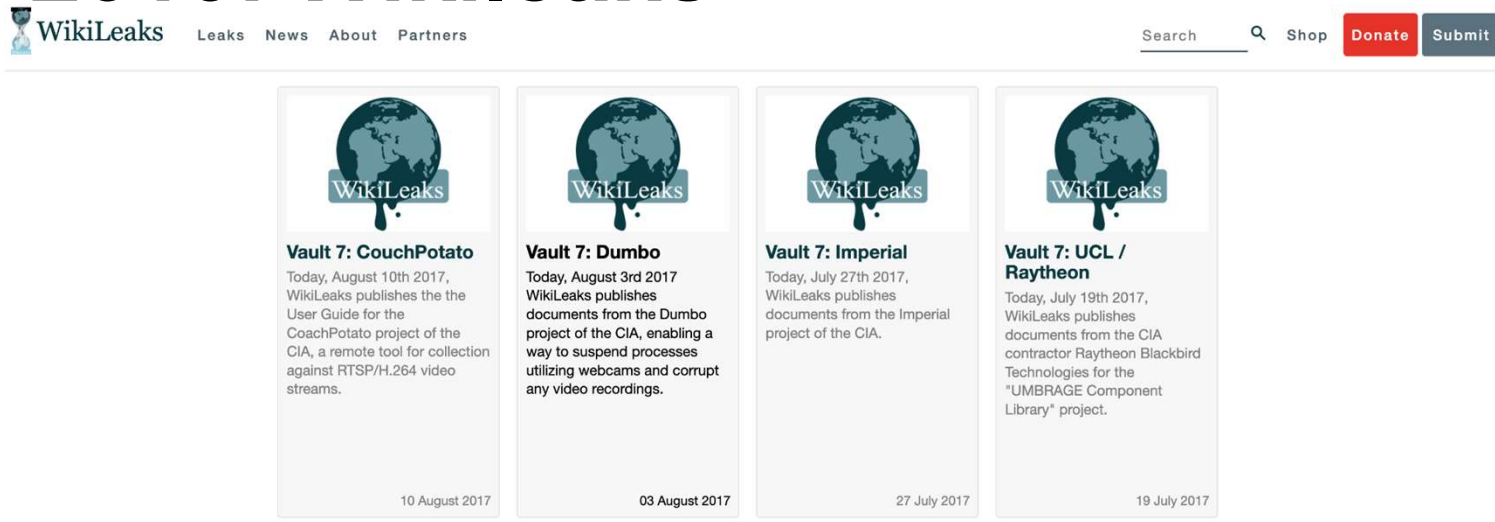
- Collaboration used to tackle major, global, complex, investigative stories in an affordable way.
- Journalists research together and publish in a coordinated way.
- Network coordinated by the US non-profit Center for Public Integrity, Washington.
- Publication has a global reach, but main focus on Europe, US, Latin America.

2005: Farmsubsidy.org



- Collaboration to put together a European dataset even if the EU-Commission denies access.
- Stories published as data is obtained – in the early years no coordinated publication.
- Loose network, driven by journalists, initially via UK non-profit, then via Belgian non-profit, later via German and Dutch non-profit (funding the data and Dataharvest conference respectively).
- Europe-wide reach, testing the claim that EU money going to poorest farmers.
- Origin of the first Dataharvest conference – Arena's flagship event.

2010: Wikileaks



The screenshot shows the WikiLeaks website interface. At the top left is the WikiLeaks logo with the tagline "Leaks News About Partners". To the right are navigation links for "Search", "Shop", "Donate", and "Submit". The main content area features four news cards, each with a WikiLeaks logo and a globe icon. The cards are titled "Vault 7: CouchPotato", "Vault 7: Dumbo", "Vault 7: Imperial", and "Vault 7: UCL / Raytheon". Each card includes a brief description of the leak and the date it was published.

Vault 7: CouchPotato	Vault 7: Dumbo	Vault 7: Imperial	Vault 7: UCL / Raytheon
Today, August 10th 2017, WikiLeaks publishes the the User Guide for the CoachPotato project of the CIA, a remote tool for collection against RTSP/H.264 video streams.	Today, August 3rd 2017 WikiLeaks publishes documents from the Dumbo project of the CIA, enabling a way to suspend processes utilizing webcams and corrupt any video recordings.	Today, July 27th 2017, WikiLeaks publishes documents from the Imperial project of the CIA.	Today, July 19th 2017, WikiLeaks publishes documents from the CIA contractor Raytheon Blackbird Technologies for the "UMBUDGE Component Library" project.
10 August 2017	03 August 2017	27 July 2017	19 July 2017

- A key moment when major media houses – the Guardian, El Pais, Le Monde – step in and embrace the idea of collaboration, which had previously been supported by foundations.
- Their primary motive for collaboration is protection from legal threats.

2016: Panama Papers



Panama Papers makes the technique so huge that the man on the street nods when you say it.

Leak-based with a global focus.

Team of selected media partners coordinated by the ICIJ.

Large published projects such as the Wikileaks cables in 2010 and the LuxLeaks and Panama Papers in 2014 and 2016 have inspired scholars to look into these new methods.

Now we have academic papers, university courses, training.







New networks emerge

- 2016: EIC.network. Set up by a journalist who was not part of ICIJ. A network like this was now considered "a competitive advantage". Elaborate structure that allowed for media partners and others to participate.
- 2016: Investigate Europe. A cooperative of journalists set out to address what they saw as an absence of cohesive, nuanced storytelling in Europe – a way of fact-checking the truth told by supranational organisations like the EU. As of July 2023, it is a 20-plus strong team based across 12 European countries.



Arena: Networks

- We create and coordinate networks to promote and facilitate cross-border collaborative journalism.
- Our strategy is to focus on topics of particular relevance and to take advantage of the Dataharvest conference to bring together potential network members – investigative journalists, data experts, other researchers – around a specialised track about the topic selected by the editorial team each year.
- When possible, we join forces with existing organisations with the aim of spinning off the resulting functioning network.

 <p>The Algorithm Network</p> <p>Launched in 2018, this network is now being coordinated by AlgorithmWatch</p> <p>Read more</p>	 <p>The Arena Housing Project</p> <p>The Arena Housing Project is an open collaborative network for journalists and researchers working on housing across Europe. It was created following up on the 2019 Dataharvest conference to facilitate and promote cross-border journalism and research to investigate the transnational dimension of the housing crisis in Europe.</p> <p>Read more</p>	 <p>The Climate Network</p> <p>The Arena Climate Network is an open-access network by and for journalists. It is for those who want to focus on all aspects of the climate crisis and who want to do in-depth, investigative work.</p> <p>Read more</p>
 <p>The Arena Food & Water Network</p> <p>Launched in 2022, this network puts issues concerning food and water on the European agenda while at the same time establishing the connection with citizens on a local level.</p> <p>Read more</p>	 <p>Reference – the European Independent Media Circle</p> <p>Reference is a self-organised network of independent European news publishers.</p> <p>The network supports each other to address non-editorial organisational and business challenges, and advocate collectively for the wellbeing and financial sustainability of independent, public interest media in Europe.</p> <p>Read more</p>	 <p>The Labour Network</p> <p>This is our newest network, in the early stages of emerging. The Labour Network focuses on cross-border investigations into European labour issues.</p> <p>Read more</p>

What do we mean by collaboration?

Brigitte Alfter, the founder of Arena for Journalism, identified the seven-steps of cross-border journalism in her step-by-step guide.

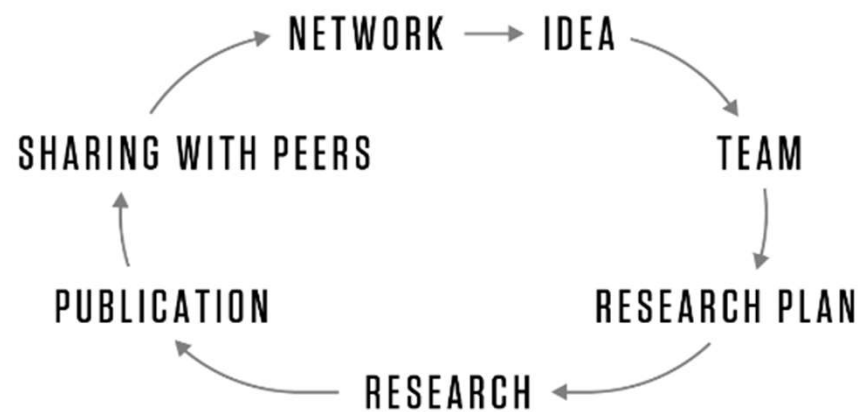
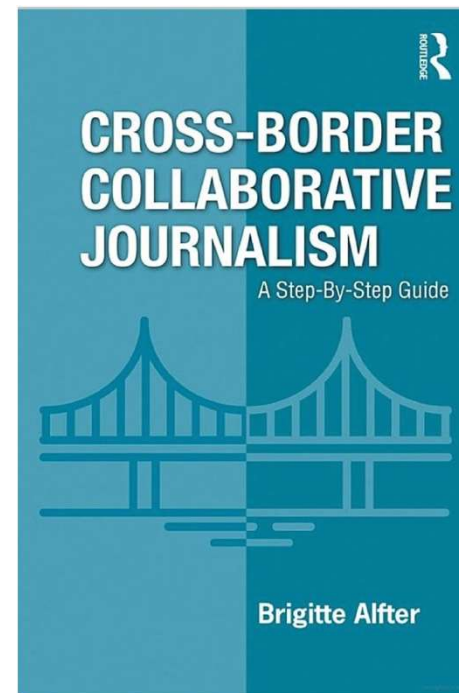
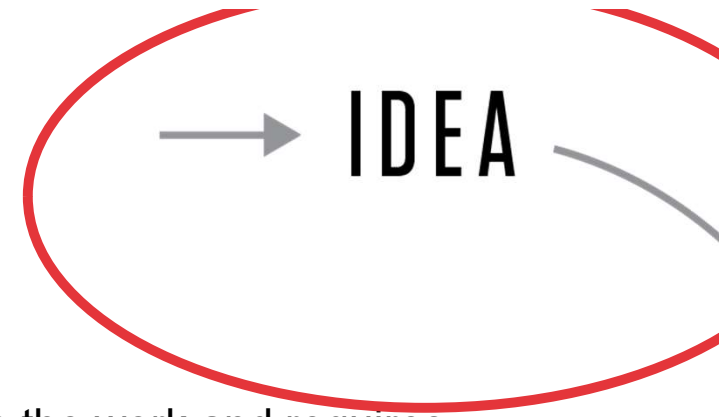


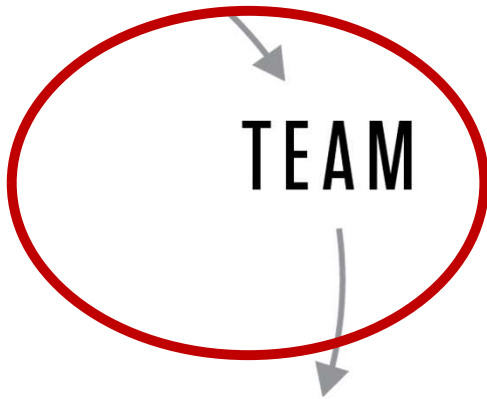
FIGURE 2.1 Diagram of the seven-step work process.



Looking for cross-border ideas



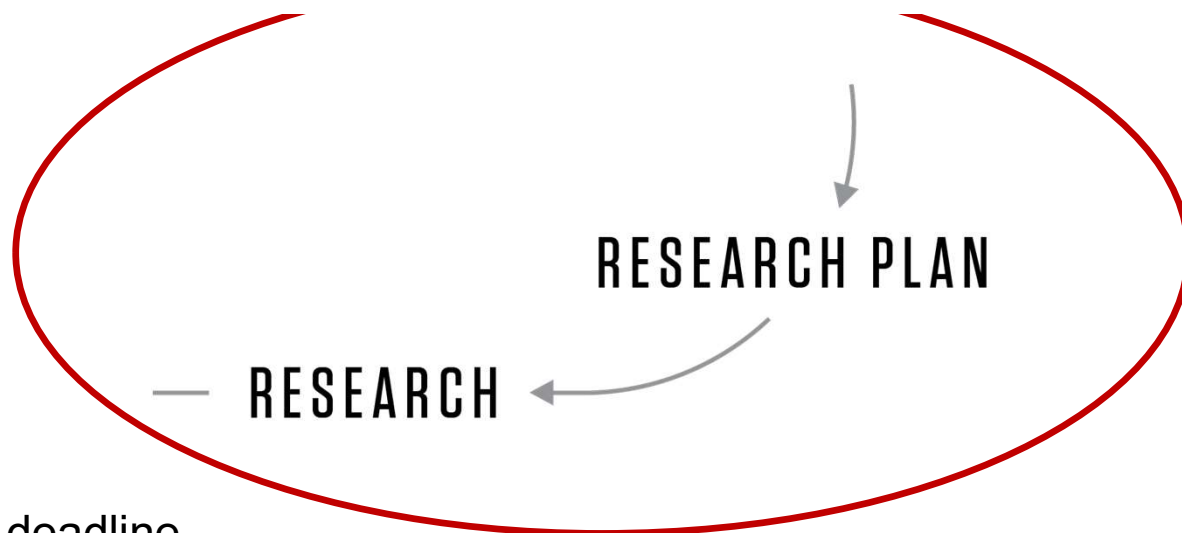
- Story ideas are hard to come up with! This is a key moment in the work and requires some deep systematic thinking.
- It can be difficult to figure out what kind of investigation you want to do. Your cross-border story will likely fall into one of these categories:
 - Current news events with international reach
 - Organisation stories involving international actors like the EU, NATO or the UN.
 - Chain stories, where a chain of events is taking place in several countries, connected through activities like trade or crime
 - Comparative stories where developments are occurring simultaneously in several countries but without any direct connection.



What to consider for a good team

- Think about which competencies or skills you need. It might include the following:
 - Hard competences: experience with certain subjects, certain types of necessary sources or relationships, or skills with data.
 - Soft competences: trust, sympathy and the capability to cooperate.
- Not all countries have the same standards
- How will you handle differences? Use an MOU
- Not all team members will be involved to the same extent – hard and loose cooperation

Enriching each other in the team



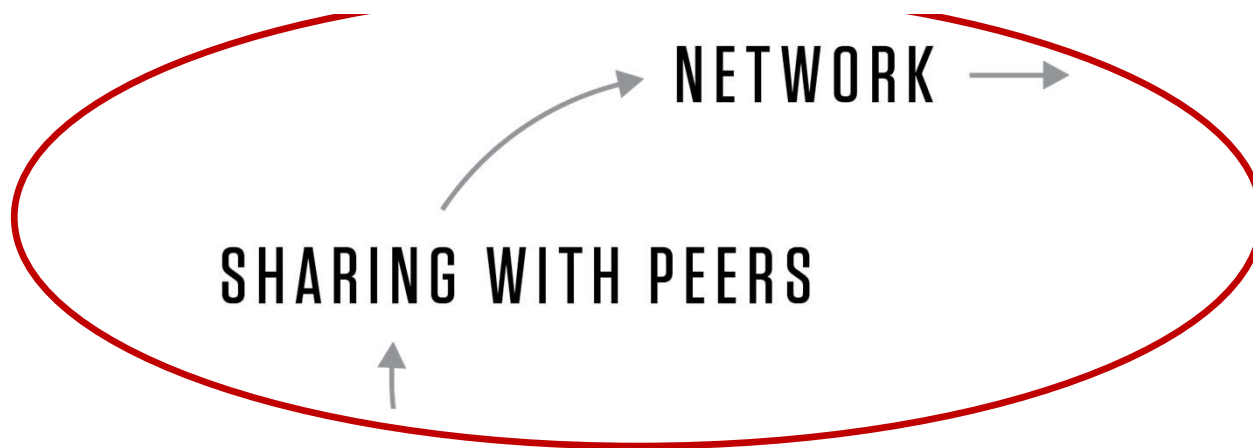
- Work backwards from your deadline
- Contact publishers early
- Use differences in access to overcome hurdles
- Who will keep an overview? Appoint a coordinator
- Fact checking and journalism ethics



PUBLICATION

The big moment...

- This moment can be stressful. Are you going to publish all at once, or when your stories are ready?
- Pressure points might include:
 - pressure to publish from sources
 - legal threats
 - one media partner breaking the embargo
 - other media partners dropping out
- Be aware of burnout – this is when it typically hits
- Communicate



Sharing, networking

- Sharing with peers
- Two main effects:
 - Cross-border journalists provide an analysis of the process and how it can be improved.
 - The journalists make new networks which can be the first step towards their next collaboration.
- In cross-border journalism, each journalist's network grows to include journalists in other countries and their respective networks.

Let's stretch our legs

Please be back in 10 minutes

Story idea and pre-research



So you have this great idea...

Is it the right grant for this idea?

or

What is a good idea for this particular grant?

Story idea and pre-research



So you have this great idea...

You will invest a lot of time in it

Do your homework, don't waste time on applying for the wrong grant.

Getting ready to apply: Pre-research

Your job now is to convince the jury

- That your idea is great and important
- That you know where to go to prove your hypothesis
- That you and your team are the right people to do it

Grant formalities: Check the criteria

IJ4EU Support Schemes:

- Teams must have members that live in at least 2 eligible countries (all EU countries plus Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Ukraine).
 - Team members from any other country welcome, as long as this basic criteria is met

=> If you are a team of 3 Germans wanting to report in Italy, this is not the grant for you.

Grant formalities: Check the criteria

IJ4EU Support Schemes:

- No restriction on topics
- No restriction on media formats
- Your topic must have cross-border relevance
- Your investigation must reveal something new

- Special attention to
 - underreported issues
 - stories/teams from countries where journalism is under pressure

Grant formalities: Check previous projects

- What has been supported before?
- With how big amounts?
- Is your idea really new and innovative?

IJ4EU application form

- Let's look at the questions you will have to answer, if you apply for the IJ4EU grant

IJ4EU application form

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://journalismgrants.awardsplatform.com/entry-form/entrant/start?formSlug=rXXK>. The page title is "Start application | My applicati...". The breadcrumb navigation is "My applications → Application form → Start application". A note states: "All questions must be answered, unless marked optional." There is a "Details" tab selected. The form contains a "Round - Category" dropdown menu, an "Application name" text input field, and a logo for "IJ4EU Investigative Journalism for Europe". At the bottom of the form are buttons for "Save", "Save + close", "Cancel", "Preview", and "Submit application". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 11:14 on 08-02-2024.

IJ4EU application form

Start application | My application

blank-pdf

https://journalismgrants.awardsplatform.com/entry-form/entrant/start?formSlug=rXXk

My applications → Application form → Start application

All questions must be answered, unless marked optional.

Details

Round - Category

- IJ4EU Freelancer Support Scheme
- IJ4EU Investigation Support Scheme

Investigative Journalism for Europe

Save Save + close Cancel Preview

Submit application

11:15 08-02-2024

Select and download template application form

IJ4EU application form

- Lead applicant
 - Individual or news organisation
 - Formalities such as address etc.
- Team description (tentative)
 - Names
 - Qualifications
 - Explanation of the composition – why will this team be able to carry out this project
 - Countries

IJ4EU application form

- Project description (tentative) – 500 words
 - Think "We want to tell that: "
- What **new** information will your proposed project reveal? – 500 words
- Project relevance: – 500 words
 - Why will this story (if proved and publishable) contribute to the public interest in the countries involved and/or in the EU more broadly?

IJ4EU application form cntd.

- Budget
 - Use them template provided
 - Be realistic but not greedy
 - The point of cross-border journalism is not travelling 😊
 - ...but do travel for kick-off meeting (and maybe other in-person meetings)
- Budget justification – 200 words

IJ4EU application form cntd.

- Research and publication plan. 500 words
 - Show that you know where to go for sources and data
 - Describe a realistic timeline for the investigation
 - Outline the broadcast, publication or dissemination plan for your investigation

IJ4EU application form cntd.

- Risk assessment
 - Digital, financial, legal and physical risks and how you are going to meet them
- Letters of intent
 - From publishers in at least 2 eligible countries
 - Go for large and respected media outlets

Where can you go for help?

If you need help to find team members or info in specific countries, reach out to:

- Arena for Journalism in Europe:
 - Dataharvest mailing list and other fora <https://dataharvest.eu/in-the-arena/>
 - Arena Networks <https://journalismarena.eu/the-networks/>
 - And not least matchmaking@journalismarena.eu
- Global Investigative Journalism Network email discussion list: <https://groups.io/g/GIJN-L>

And now to the jury

- You are ready to file your application. Who will be the readers?
- Jury members are
 - Senior journalists in the field of investigative, crossborder, data journalism / media personalities / investigators / media lawyers / ...
 - Have to read many applications (CVs, budgets etc)
 - Have to make tough decisions and clear priorities
 - Busy people

What juries may ask

- First questions:
 - How important is this to the European public?
 - Is cross-border the right method?
 - Will this project add something new to the public sphere?
 - Is the research plan realistic?
 - Does the team have the needed qualifications?
 - Will the results reach the right audiences?
 - Is it (too) dangerous?

What juries may ask

- Next considerations:
 - Geographical balance between selected projects
 - Thematic balance – many different topics is a priority
 - Different types of investigative teams – individuals, investigative groups, media houses
 - To support under-reported topics as well as investigative topics affecting local communities is a priority

Juries are people too...



Appease the ferocious rottweiler:
Make sure that you answer as many
critical questions as possible in your
text. Don't be afraid to point to
expected problems yourself – the
rottweiler will find them anyway.

Juries are people too...



Appease the pedantic poodle: Double-check your budget, your spelling, your layout. Mistakes, miscalculations and typos will make you look bad in the poodle's eyes.

Juries are people too...



Appease the lazy beagle: Be short. Be precise. Be concrete.

Make it easy to grasp what your story is and how you and your team are going to make it.

What to do if you get a 'no'

?

What to do if you get a 'no'

Your work is not wasted – find another grant:

<https://gijn.org/resource/grants-fellowships/>

Questions?