IJ4EU Cross-Border Master Class

How to write a great grant application, September 23 2024

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
– for the IJ4EU and other grants

Today's programme

- 14:00   Welcome, intros
- 14:10   The cross-border investigative work process – Hazel Sheffield
- 15:00   Break
- 15:10   Thinking about digital safety – Deborah Meibergen
- 15.25:   Getting ready to apply, writing the application, the jury process and the answer – Trine Smistrup
- 16.00   Q&A
- 16:30   End (unless there are more questions)

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
  - **Arena Climate Conference**, next in Bologna October 18-19, 2024
  - **Dataharvest – the European Investigative Journalism Conference**, taking place each year in Mechelen, Belgium. Next is May 22-25, 2025!

Arena for Journalism in Europe

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

Who are we?

- **Hazel Sheffield,** journalist and Arena networks coordinator, coordinated Money to Burn (nominated for the European Press Prize)
- **Deborah Meibergen**, IT coordinator, digital security and the Collaborative Desk
- **Trine Smistrup**, journalist, co-founder of Arena, organizer of Dataharvest, 3 decades of experience with journalism grants

The IJ4EU grant

- The IJ4EU fund supports cross-border investigations of public interest in Europe.

The IJ4EU grant

- The IJ4EU fund supports **cross-border** investigations of **public interest** in **Europe**.
  - Teams must have members based in at least 2 countries in the EU or Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, or Ukraine.
  - All rules https://www.investigativejournalismforeu.net/

The IJ4EU grant

- In 2024/25, IJ4EU will disburse €2 million in grant funding to watchdog journalism, along with practical, editorial and legal support:
  - **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.

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What is "cross-border investigative journalism"?

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

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

"The road to nowhere":

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

No need for a whistleblower or a big leak

The road to nowhere:

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

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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

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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2. decide on an idea of mutual interest
3. gather and share material

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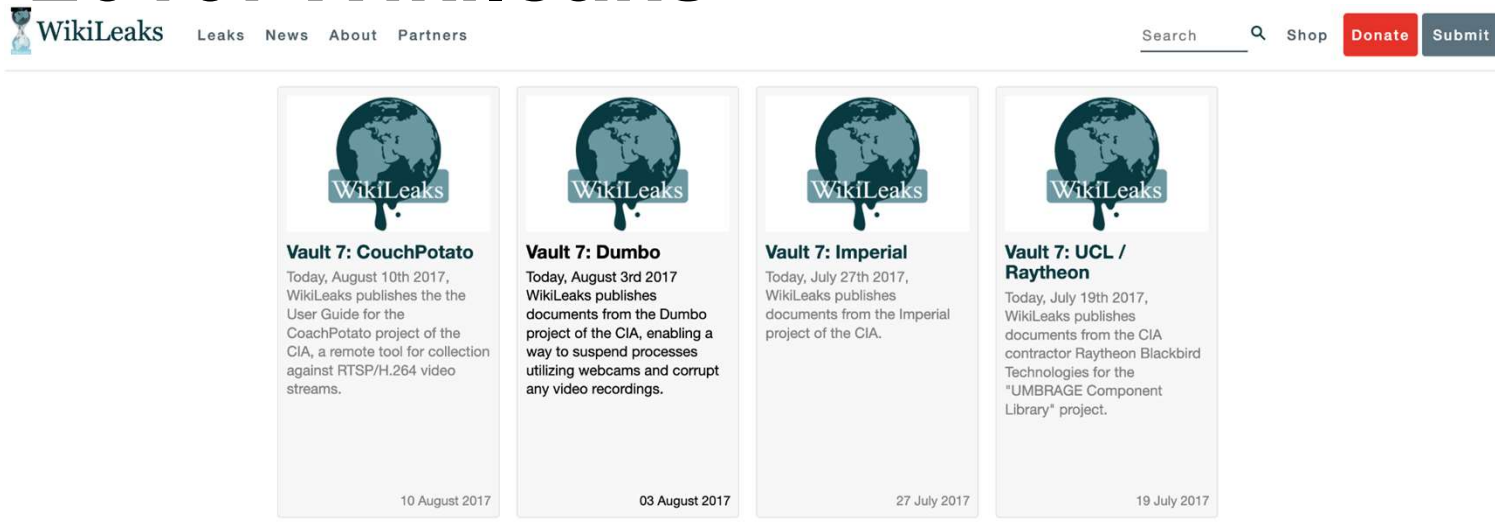
- Collaboration used to tackle major, global, complex, investigative stories in an affordable way.
- Journalists research together and publish in a coordinated way.
- Network coordinated by the US non-profit Center for Public Integrity, Washington.
- Publication has a global reach, but main focus on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

2005: Farmsubsidy.org

The European Union spends around €59 billion a year on farm subsidies.

This site tells you who receives the money.

Recipients ▾   Search for Recipients...   Search

- 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

- 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.

The Algorithm Network

Launched in 2018, this network is now being coordinated by AlgorithmWatch

Read more

The Arena Housing Project

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.

Read more

The Climate Network

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.

Read more

The Arena Food & Water Network

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.

Read more

Reference – the European Independent Media Circle

Reference is a self-organised network of independent European news publishers.

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.

Read more

The Labour Network

This is our newest network, in the early stages of emerging. The Labour Network focuses on cross-border investigations into European labour issues.

Read more

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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.
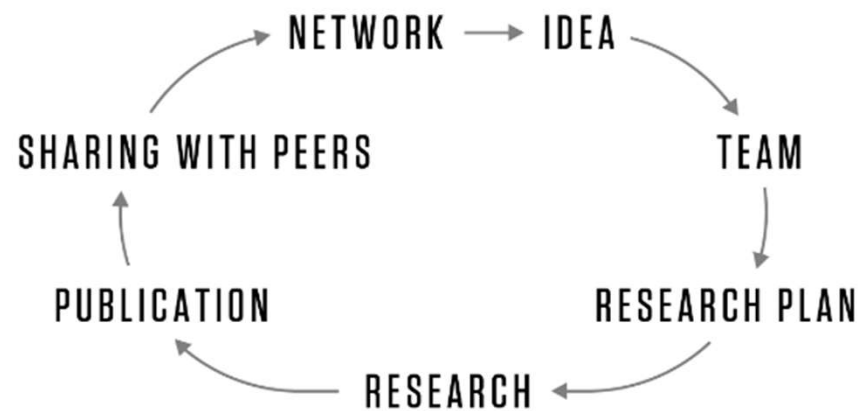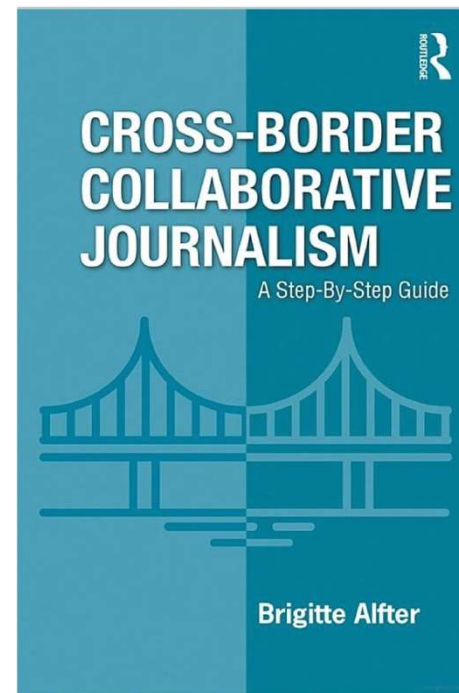

FIGURE 2.1 Diagram of the seven-step work process.

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM
A Step-By-Step Guide

Brigitte Alfter

Looking for cross-border ideas
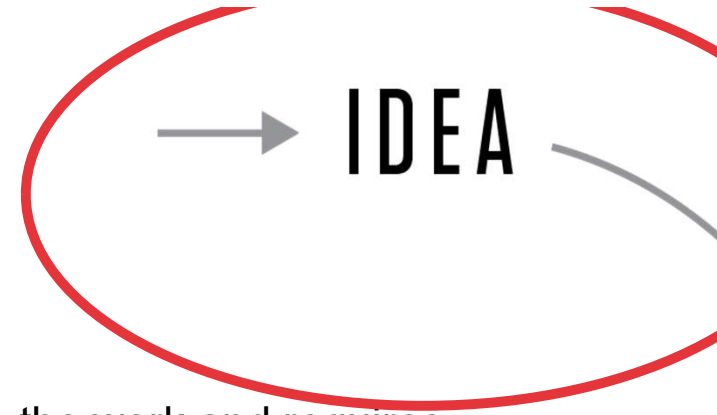
IDEA

- 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.
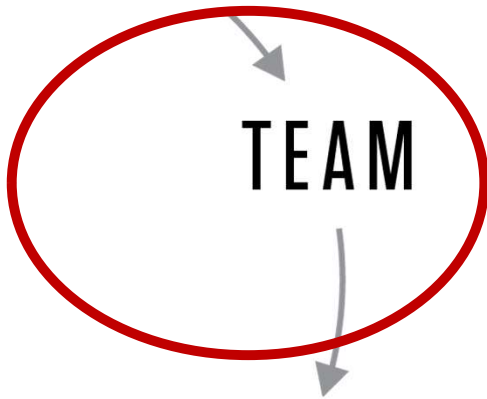
What to consider for a good team

- 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

TEAM

Enriching each other in the team

RESEARCH PLAN

RESEARCH
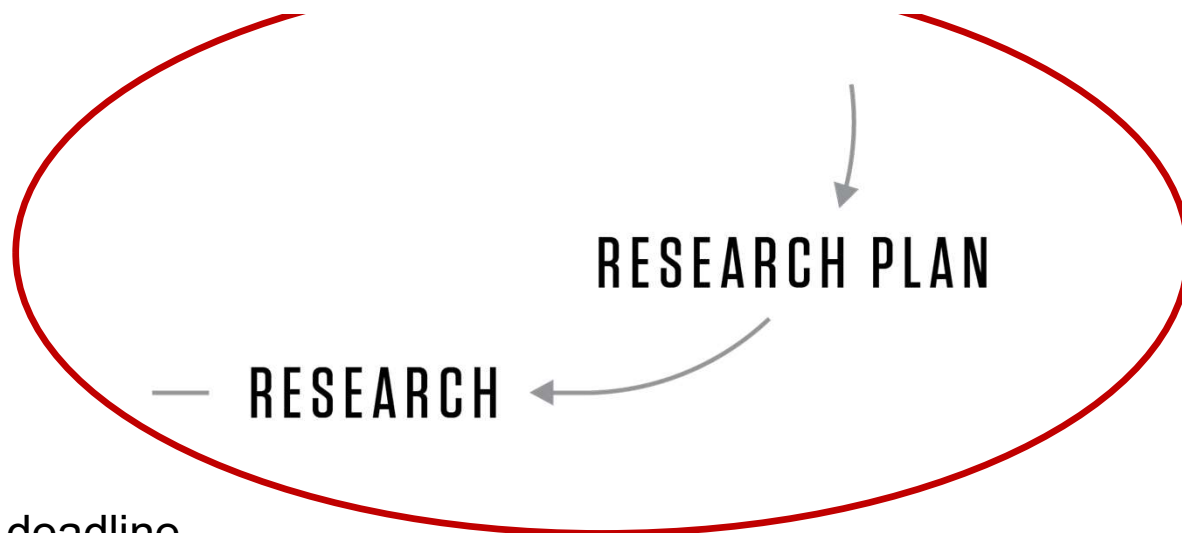
- Work backwards from your deadline

- 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
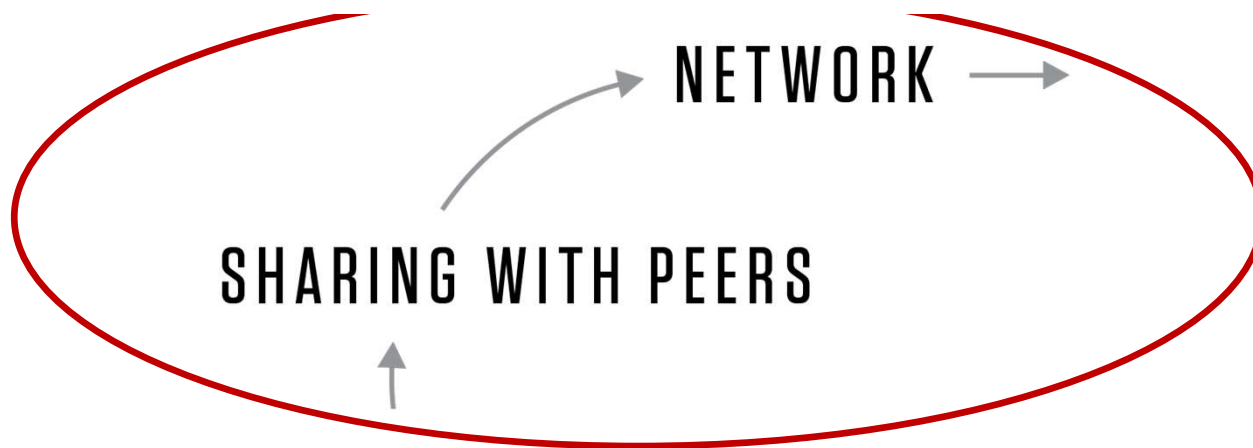
Sharing, networking

- 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

Think about digital safety

What (digital) threats could you face by investigating and publishing the story? We help with assessing this by:

- Risk assessment (assessing (digital) risks linked to a particular story)
- Threat analysis (Who might be interested in your work?)
- Open-source tools (self) hosted on secure, independent infra)
- Security awareness (basic measures to enhance security practices)

Collaborative Desk

Secure tech infrastructure	Digital Security assessment	Support & Mentorships	Arena networks
We are offering a secure digital workspace tailor made for journalists who want to collaborate across borders including open-source tools for communication and knowledge management.	Together with the team we conduct a needs and threat analysis as basis for the customised setup of their collaborative desk and tools.	At the collaborative desk we accompany the team throughout their project and offer technical support as well as mentorships in security awareness, crossborder collaboration and coordination.	Through the Arena Networks we help teams to connect with journalists across Europe in search for team members or publication partners.

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Think about digital safety

The Collaborative Desk offers open-source tools for:
- Secure document storage and collaboration (Nextcloud, OpenProject)
- Secure communication: encrypted chat (Matrix), video calls (BigBlueButton)

Training and mentoring:
- Risk assessment and threat analysis
- Security awareness training
- Cross-border mentoring

Story idea and pre-research

So you have this great idea...

Is it the right grant for this idea?

Do your homework, don't waste time 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 <u>live</u> in at least 2 eligible countries
  - 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 topic must have European relevance
- Your investigation must reveal something new

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

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Grant formalities: Check previous projects

- What has been supported before?
- With how big amounts?

- Is your idea really new and innovative?

Preparing the application

- The IJ4EU application form can be downloaded from the Good Grants platform, including budget template.

- Most application platforms will ask the same questions

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 the template provided
  - Be realistic but not greedy
  - The point of cross-border journalism is <u>not </u>travelling ☺
  - …but do travel for kick-off meeting (and maybe other in-person meetings)
- Budget justification – 200 words

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

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

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/
    - Find team members 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 topics from countries where investigative journalism is under pressure

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?