

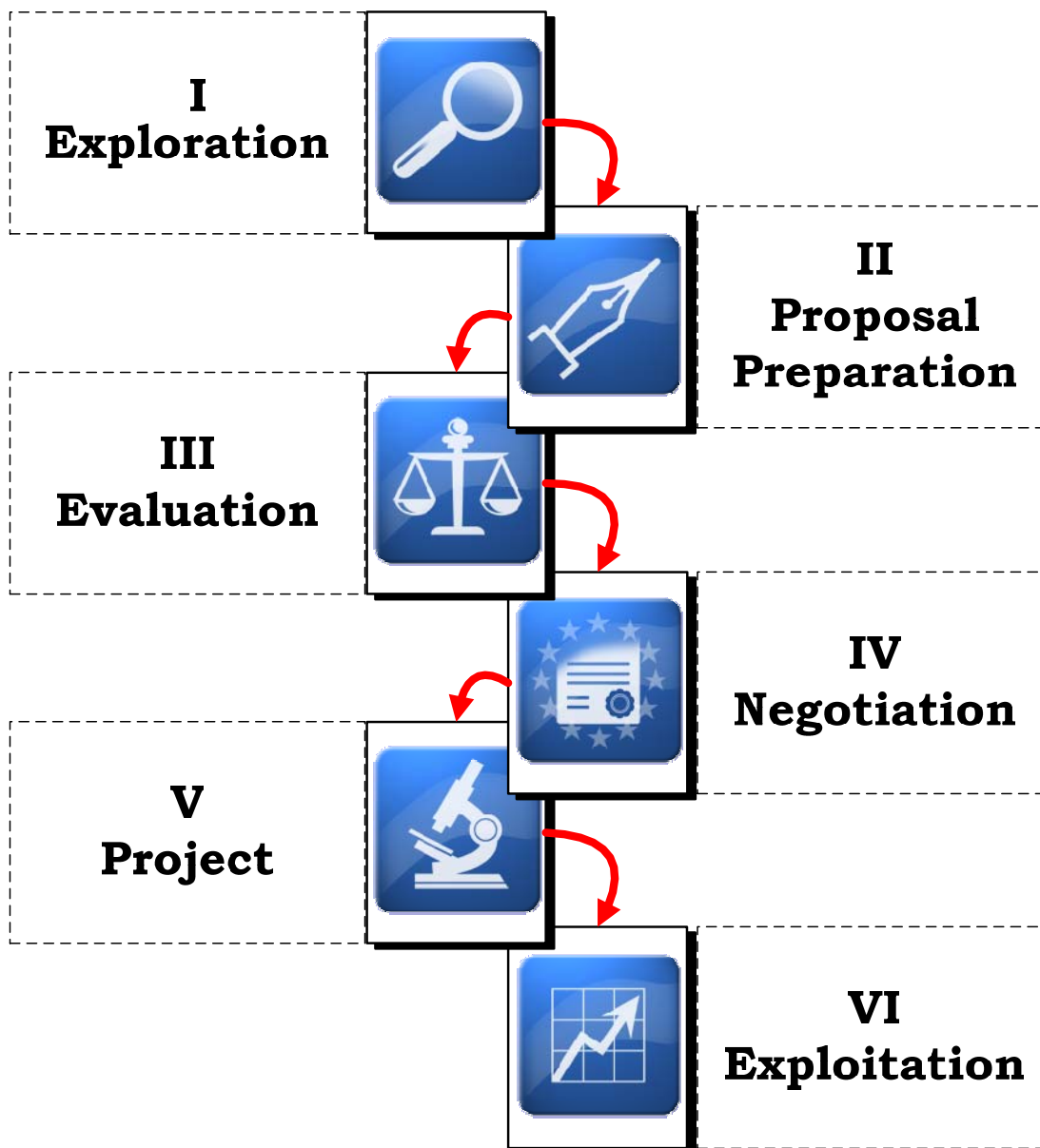
HOW TO WRITE A COMPETITIVE FP7 PROPOSAL

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FP7 Project Phases

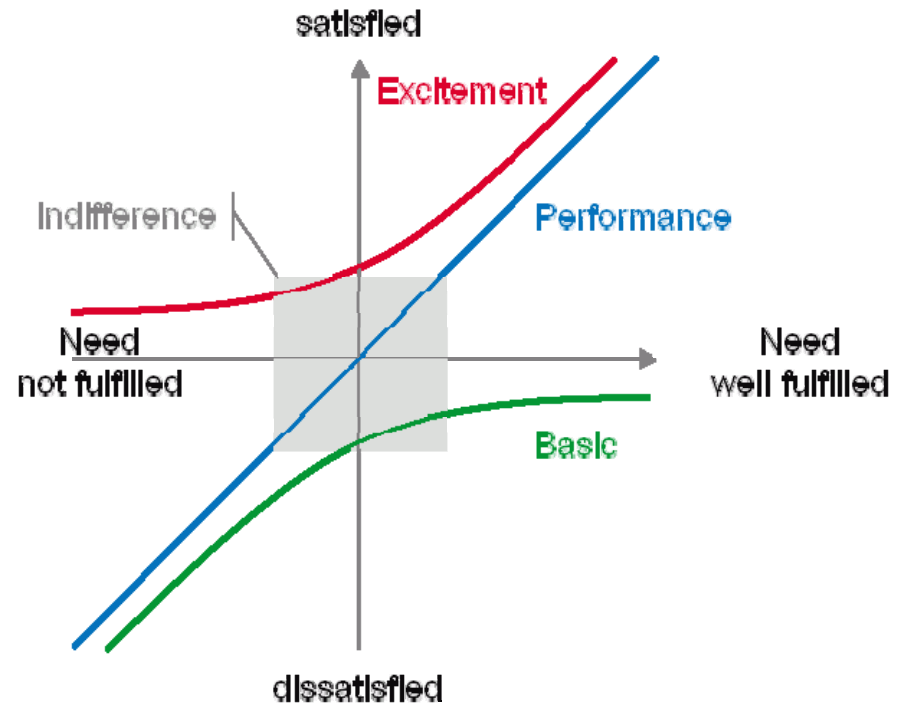
Exploration phase - Screening ideas

- Screen ideas on suitability to avoid investing time and money on proposals that have no chance
- Two-step procedure recommended
 - GO – NO GO aspects, like:
 - Does the idea fit with the organization's strategy?
 - Is FP7 the right mechanism?
 - Are the organization resources adequate to participate?
 - Identifying and assessing strong points (to be exploited) and weak points (to be elaborated)
- Be honest to yourself and have the courage to abandon an idea
 - Brainchilds are psychologically difficult to abandon

Exploration phase - Screening ideas

THE KANO MODEL

- Must-be / Must-have (Threshold / Basic)
- Satisfier (One Dimensional)
- Exciter / Delighter (Attractive)
- Neutral (Indifferent)



Exploration phase - Screening ideas

- **A little exercise**.... What do you think are the Kano attributes for FP7 proposals?
(must be/have; delighter; satisfier; neutral)
 - novelty
 - perfect English
 - large consortium with CEEC participation
 - low budget
 - breakthrough potential
 - huge impact when successful

Exploration phase - Screening ideas

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – **Must Have / Must Be**

- the Work Programme subjects open for submission under this Call
- the minimum number of participants
- type of eligible participants (e.g., commercial/non-commercial, SMEs)
- the deadline for submission
- the method of submission (electronically or on paper)
- typographic requirements such as font type, font size

Exploration phase - Screening ideas

NOVELTY

- Significant step beyond the *state of the art*
- The *state of the art* for products, processes, and services is a developed state of technical possibilities based on scientific knowledge, technology, and experience

Exploration phase - Screening ideas

TECHNICAL ROUTE BASED ON SOUND PRINCIPLES

- must be clearly identified and feasible
- ideally demonstrated with a **proof of principle** that suggests a solution can be accomplished

Note:

In cases where a proof of principle is not available, the technical feasibility must be convincingly demonstrated by sound scientific principles, e.g., the Laws of Physics.

Exploration phase - Screening ideas

EUROPEAN DIMENSION

- to address problems at the European level
- an impact on the European level
- participants established in multiple Member States (or Associated States). Usually, at least three States are required

Exploration phase - Consortium

BREED your CONSORTIUM

- A balance in **B**udget
- A balance in **R**oles in the project
- A **E**uropean balance
- A balance in **E**fforts
- A balance in the **D**istribution of the work

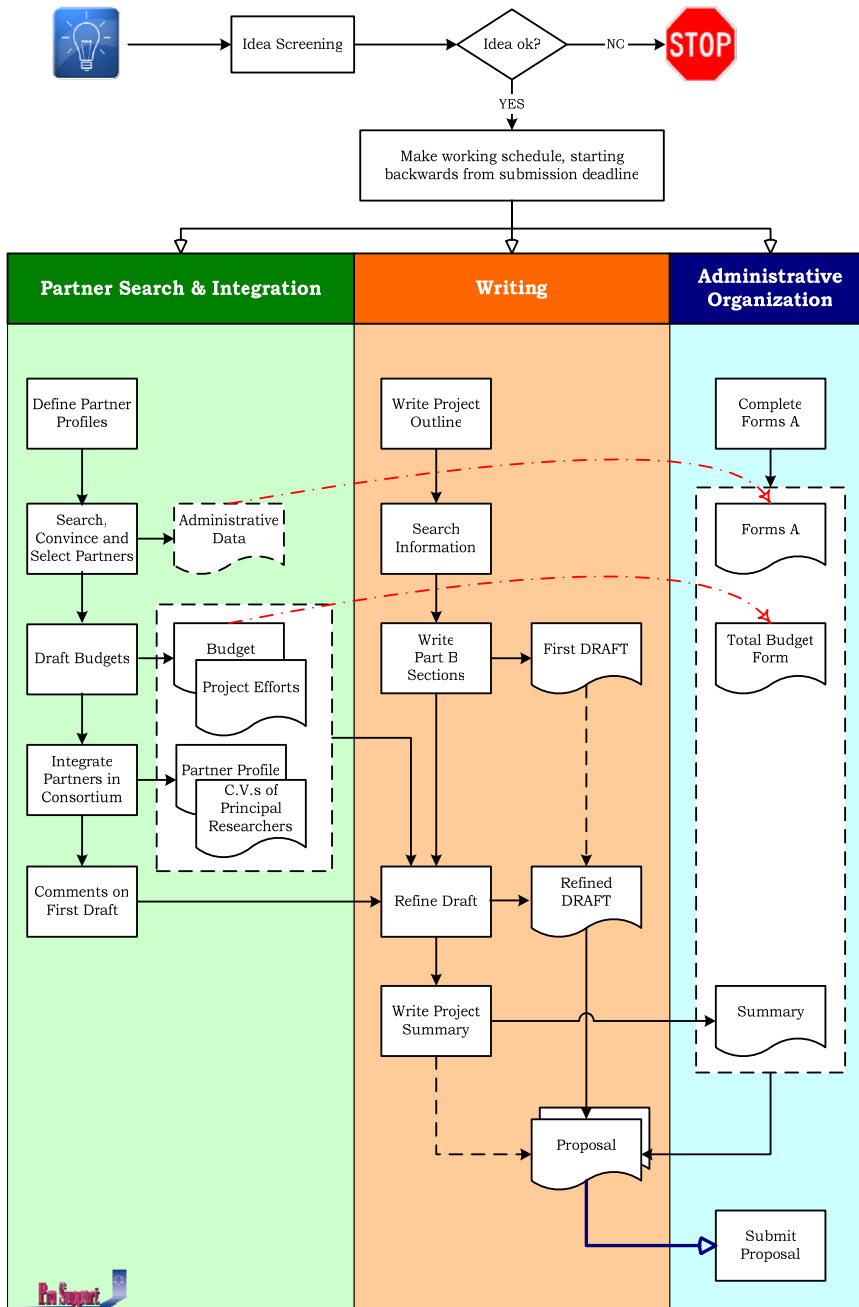
Exploration phase – Potential Impact

- Think over early in the proposal preparation planning
- Typical **commercialization** aspects are:
 - the forecasted market size
 - the expected, obtainable market share
 - the anticipated profit margins
 - possible synergetic effects to other business
 - further investments in market development, prototypes, and production set-up
 - the typical percentage spent on R&D in the concerned market segment
 - the expected time to market
- Non-commercial exploitation:
 - new knowledge
 - “quality of life” improvements
 - publishing research results in peer-reviewed journals

Exploration phase - Project size/budget

- The project size range will vary depending on the specific programme and type of project
- As a “rule of thumb”, Collaborative RTD projects range from €500,000 to €2,500,000

Proposal preparation



Proposal writing – Curse of Expertise

“**The curse of expertise**”

When people possess much knowledge about a particular subject, it becomes hard for them to imagine what it is like *not* to know

Proposal writing – Curse of Expertise

- Problem during proposal writing: proposal misses elements that are essential for understanding
- Many evaluators (“independent experts”) are generalists rather than specialists

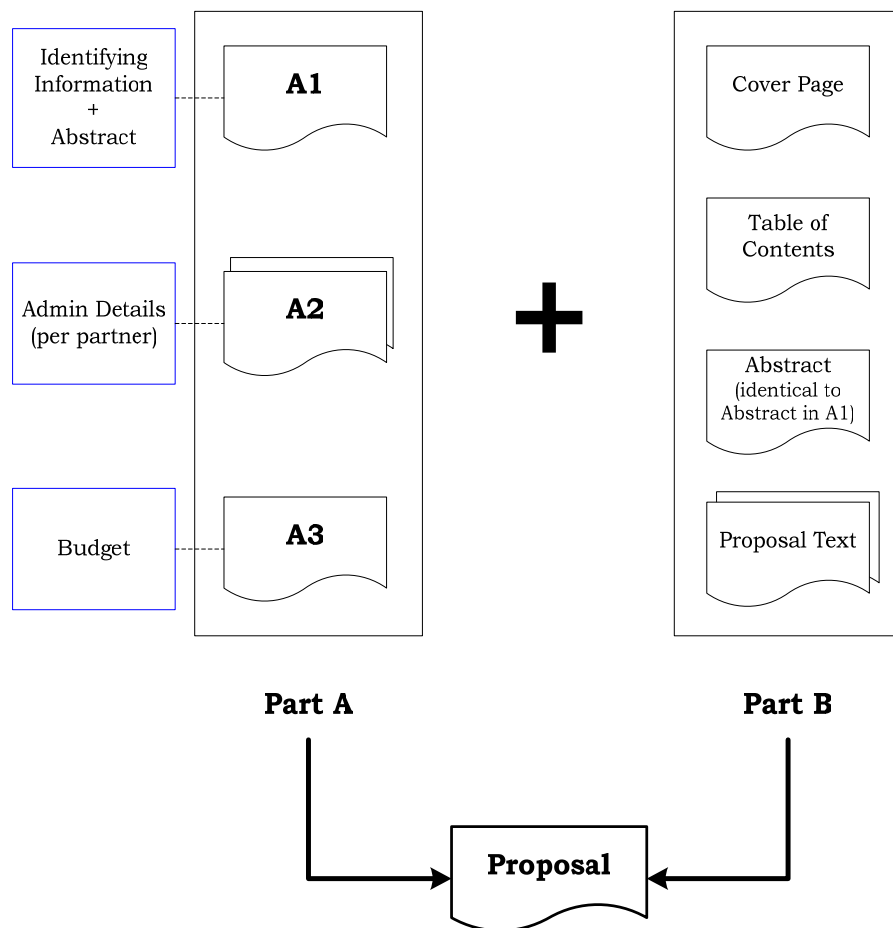
Proposal writing - Chain of Reasoning

- The “chain of reasoning” (“chain of thoughts”) is **logically linking the elements** of a problem - problem, solution and benefits/arguments
- Reflects the strategic thinking behind the proposal
- **PROSANA** model
 - **P**roblem
 - **R**oot causes
 - **O**mit
 - **S**olutions
 - **A**pproach
 - **N**ovelty
 - **A**rguments

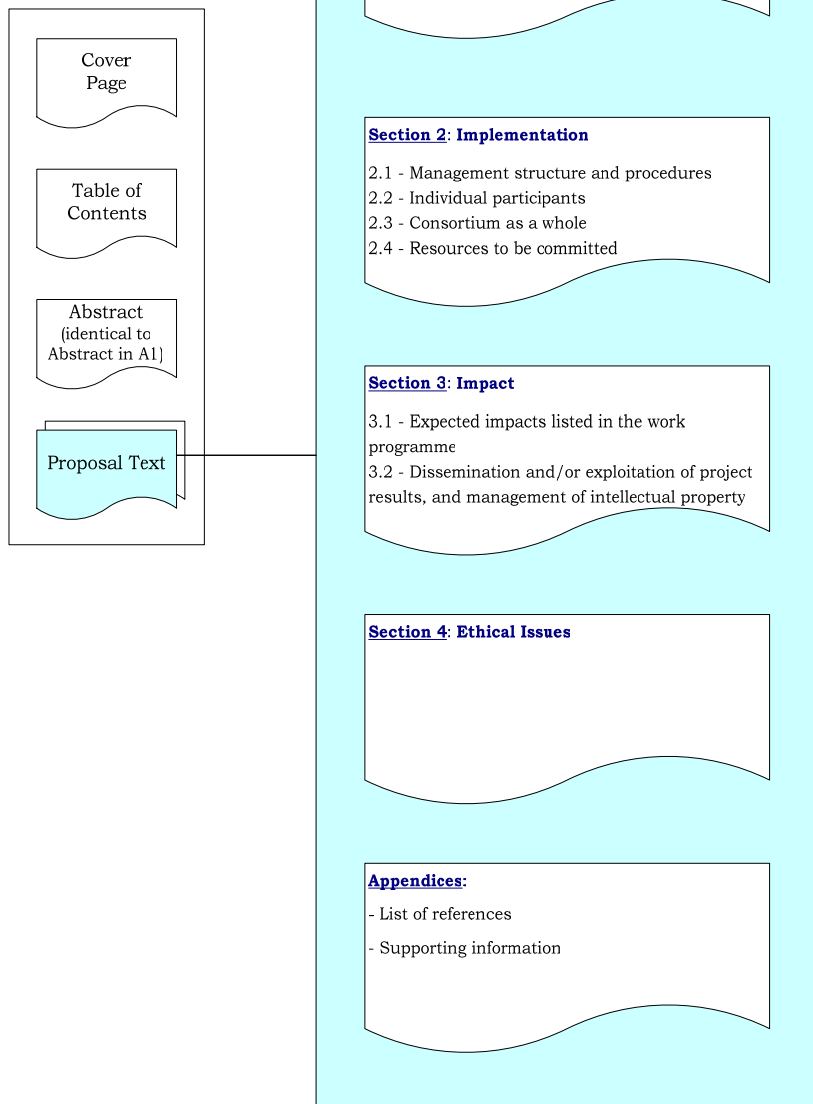
Proposal writing - PROSANA

- Use Powerpoint to organise your thoughts
 - It forces to discriminate between major and minor issues
- Prepare a five-minute slide presentation for your boss and/or colleagues
 - Use one page/slide for each of the seven steps in the PROSANA model
 - Write down the main issues, using one sentence per issue
 - Use bullets to organise the points/sentences
 - Reorder the points as appropriate

The structure of an FP7 Proposal



Part B



Proposal writing - The structure of Pt. B

- 1 - S&T Quality
- 2 - Implementation
- 3 - Impact
- 4 - Other Issues

Proposal writing - Formal aspects

- cover page
- table of contents
- abstract
- sections
- format aspects
- number of pages
- page margins, line spacing, font types, and font sizes
- tables, figures, and graphs
- colours

Proposal writing - Objectives

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Avoid generalisms and “aspirations”
- Must be **S M A R T**
 - **S**pecific
 - **M**easurable
 - **A**ttainable (also, called *achievable*)
 - **R**elevant
 - **T**ime-related (also, called *timely*)

Proposal writing - Novelty

- A description of the **state of the art** provides essential background for demonstrating the novelty of the proposal.
- **Novelty (innovation)** is a core issue in FP7 RTD projects
 - needs to be explicitly described in the proposal
 - logical next step beyond the state-of-the-art
- The state of the art paragraph says where the technology is now
- The novelty refers to where the technology will be after the project
- The proposal needs to describe **clearly** and **convincingly how** the project will contribute to advancing over the state of the art

Proposal writing - Impact

- The Impact has now more emphasis than previous FPs
 - a challenge for researchers!
- What will the project bring about:
 - market
 - proposers' benefits
 - economic justification
 - added value to the society
- Upcoming European legislation is a strong project driver with obvious impact

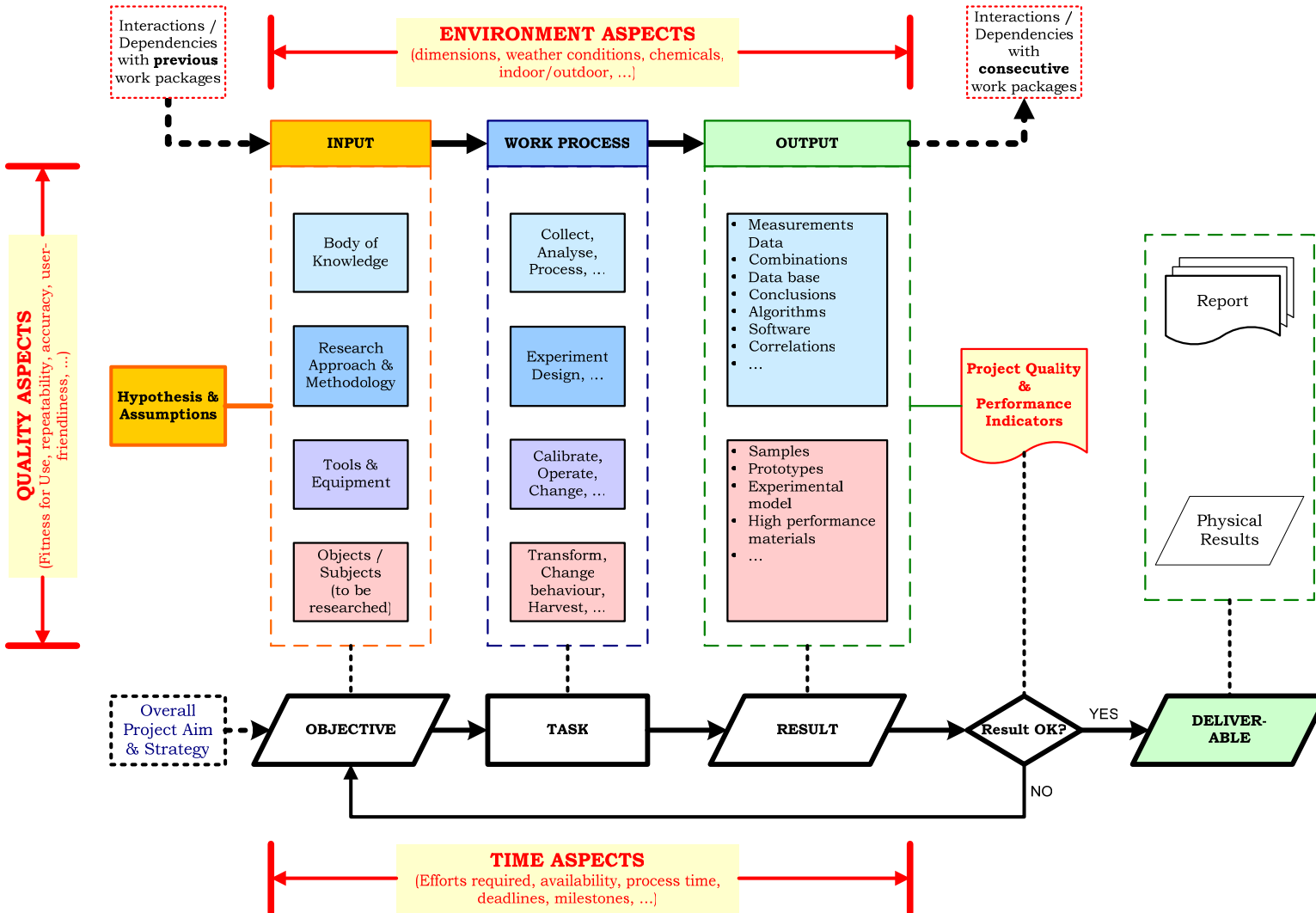
Proposal writing - The Consortium

- Quality of the consortium
- Complementarity
- Description of each organization
- Fit to the work to be done
- Qualifications of the researchers / personnel
- Reputation and track record

Proposal writing - The Work

- Work packages
 - related items of work that together provide a conceptual structure for the complete project
 - a logical grouping of tasks necessary to accomplish the same objective
 - don't make work packages per partner
 - deliverables oriented, rather than discipline oriented
- The work flow (flow chart)
 - in what order the work is performed
 - what work is foreseen to be carried out in parallel
 - at what points crucial decisions are to be taken

Proposal writing – Work packages



Proposal writing - Deliverables

- Deliverables are the **tangible results** of project task activities, directly linked to the project objectives
 - task-related
 - usually reports
- Deliverables are important qualifiers for an RTD project
 - The Commission uses deliverables to monitor progress
 - Organise the project with a focus on deliverables:
 - keeps the researchers focused on achieving deliverables, rather than simply completing a task
 - avoids the trap of doing research simply for the sake of research
 - keeps creative researchers focused on the exploitation goal

Proposal writing - Milestones

- Milestones indicate points in **time** when important deliverables need to be finalized, so important decisions on further work can be made,
 - go/no go
 - decision to pursue route X or Y
- Milestones often coincide with deliverables
- Means of verification: indicate how the milestone accomplishment will be demonstrated
 - “patent search completed”, “scientific model validated” or “prototype manufactured”
 - When possible and appropriate, use quantitative indicators, e.g., “field testing with 1000 test runs completed”

Proposal writing - Risk Assessment

- Risk assessment is a systematic way to evaluate the potential problems associated with a task, system, process, safety, etc.
- Risk is a function of consequences (“effect”) and probability of occurrence
- When a risk is identified, measures must be defined to bring the risk back to an acceptable level

Proposal writing - Resources to be Committed

- Essentially a budgeting exercise
 - Many researchers don't know how to do that
 - The Commission will **never** increase the budget
 - The Commission may reduce the budget, so don't budget too tightly
- Value for money
- Estimating costs and preparing the budget
 - Understand difference between direct and indirect costs
 - Majority of the costs are for personnel (time x salary)
 - Overheads are not allowed on subcontracting costs

Budgeting - Eligible Costs

- incurred during the project
- directly linked to the objectives of the project and the execution of the work as defined in the grant agreement
- actual, i.e., really incurred and paid for
- determined according to usual accounting and management principles
- consistent with the principles of efficiency and effectiveness
- exclusive of non-eligible costs (e.g. VAT)

Budgeting - Direct Costs

- Directly attributable to the work in the project such as:
 - salaries for people who work directly on the project
 - costs for materials, components, and consumables that will be purchased solely for the project
 - costs for equipment, i.e., for the percent of time that the equipment will be used for the project, provided that it has a book value
 - travel and subsistence costs within reason

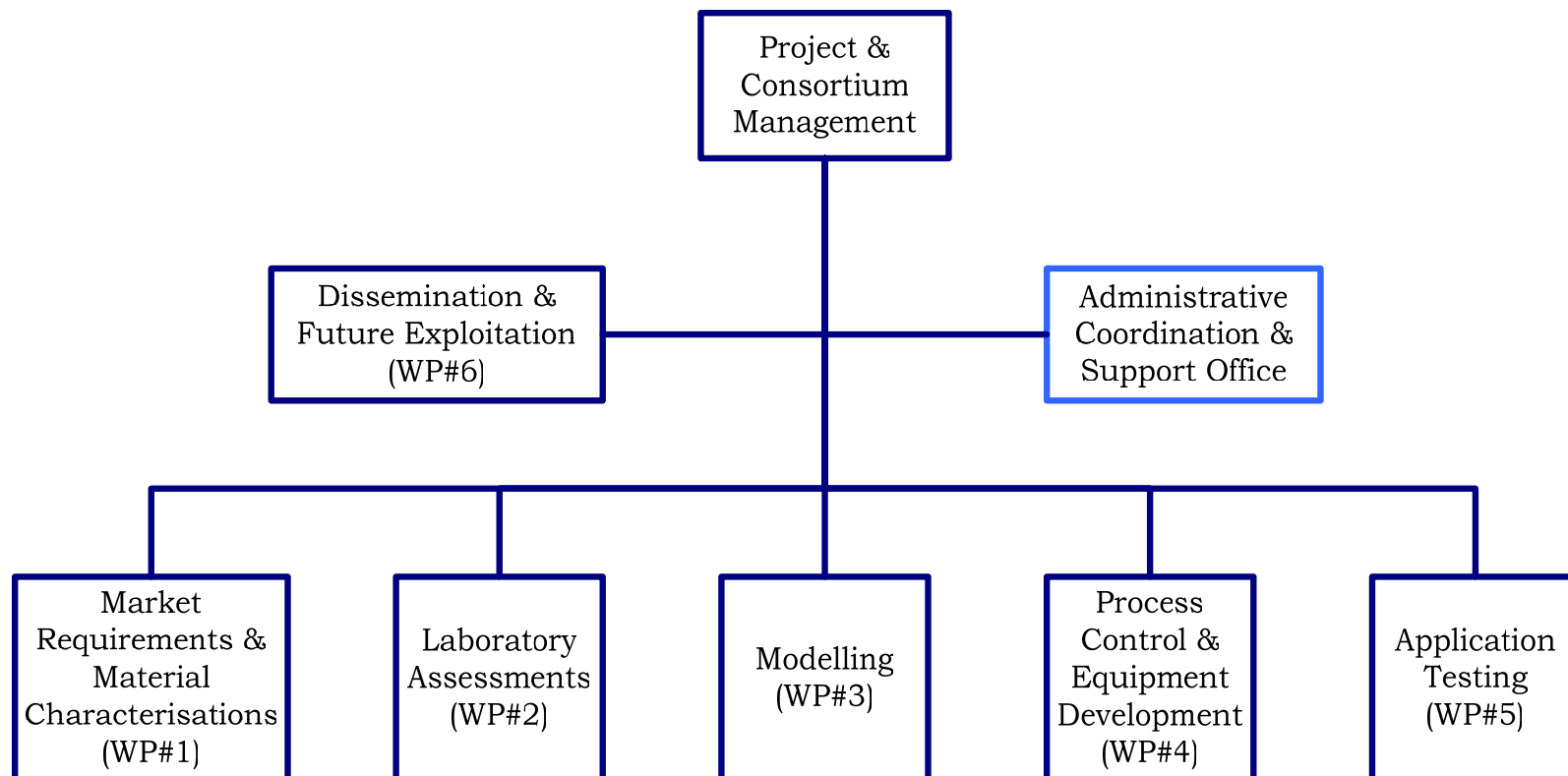
Budgeting - Indirect Costs

- Indirect costs (Overheads) are not directly attributable to the work in the project but are necessary to support the overall project, such as:
 - Salaries for support personnel that provide general services
 - Facilities costs including rent, insurance, utilities, IT infrastructure, etc., and
 - Equipment not used directly in the project work

Proposal writing - Project Management section

- The management capability of the coordinator is **critical**
- Describe aspects:
 - project organization and decision making structure
 - communication between partners
 - progress monitoring
 - project documentation

Proposal writing – Project Management Structure (example)



Proposal writing – PUDF

- PUDF = **P**lan for the **U**se and **D**issemination of **F**oreground
 - A kind of Business Plan what to do with the results
 - exploitation (using the results)
 - dissemination (spreading the results)
- The Commission puts a lot of emphasis on use and dissemination of the project results
 - If weakly described, the applicants suggest that the project is proposed for academic satisfaction purposes, and this is not where FP7 is for!

Partner search – Introduction

- The importance of reliable and performing partners
 - The principle of “jointly and severally liable”
 - No longer in financial respect
 - The consortium as a whole is responsible for the work
 - A defaulting partner hurts the entire consortium
- How to find good partners?
- How to motivate another party to join your idea?

Partner search – Type of partners

- Core partners vs. Contributing partners
 - Core partners are essential for the tasks to be performed
 - specific expertise
 - highly relevant for the project
 - their role is mission-critical
 - Contributing partners are important but often alternatives can be found
 - test institute
 - industrial end user
- Avoid “Cosmetic” partners

Partner search – Search strategy

- “Bucket” vs. “Searchlight” approach (after Karl Popper)
 - “Bucket” approach
 - Quantity focused
 - Acquire data and information
 - Construct a picture based on the findings
 - “Searchlight” approach
 - Quality focused
 - Know in advance what you look for
 - Approach a selective number of prospective partners

Partner search – Search strategy

- Most NCPs use the bucket approach
- Usually the “searchlight” is most effective
 - Make a clear profile of the “ideal” partner
 - Probability of getting a fitting partner that agrees is 40%
 - the bucket approach usually gets a response rate of 1% or worse.
 - The party approached will never feel the proposal as a waste of time, even if it declines the offer

The FP7 Coach: vehicle to success

<http://www.fp7coach.eu/>

**I wish you good luck with
your FP7 applications!**

Henk van Ekelenburg

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