

Tips and suggestions for proposal writing

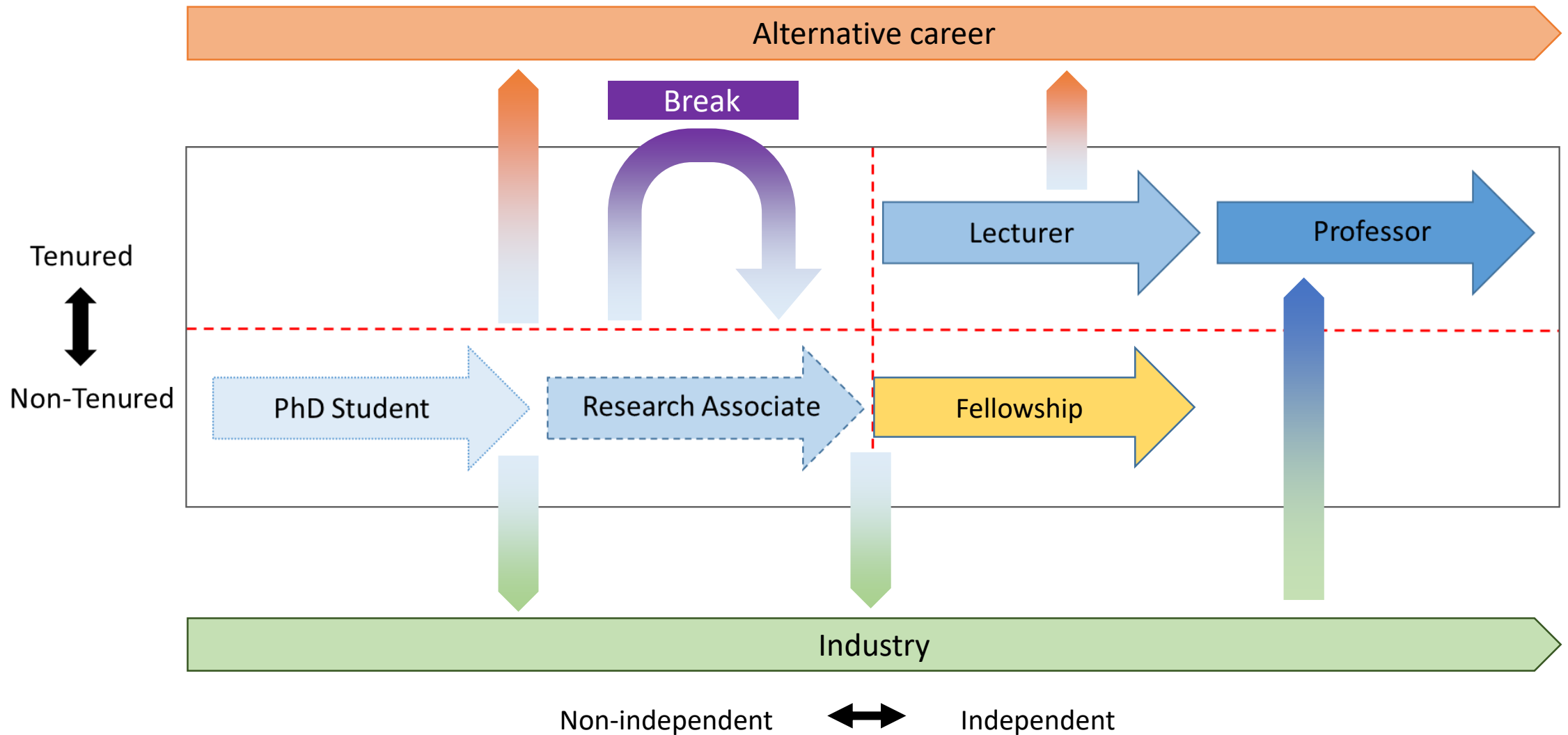
Dr Jarlath McKenna

Research **Funding** Development

What we will cover

- 1. What funders are looking for
- 2. The 3 Ps
- 3. Reviewer perspective
- 4. Preparing for success

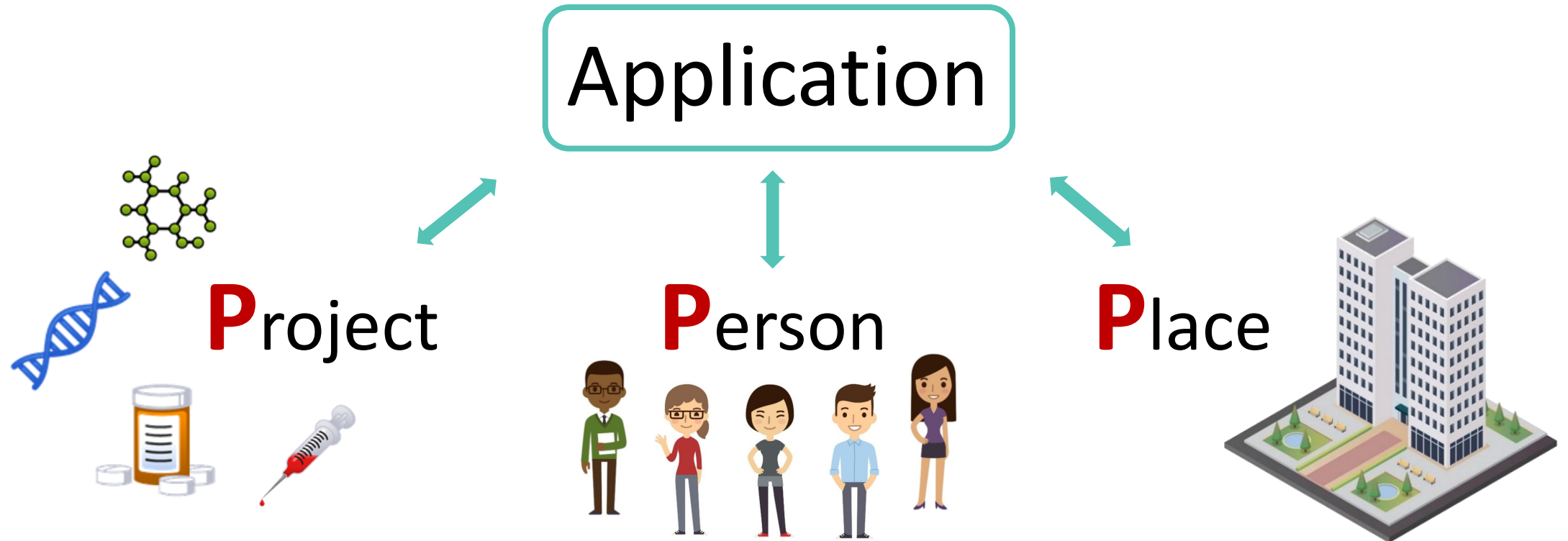
Simplified Researcher Career Path



What are funders looking for from Fellowships?



The 3Ps



3Qs

Person



Why me?

Project



Why Now?

Place



Why here?

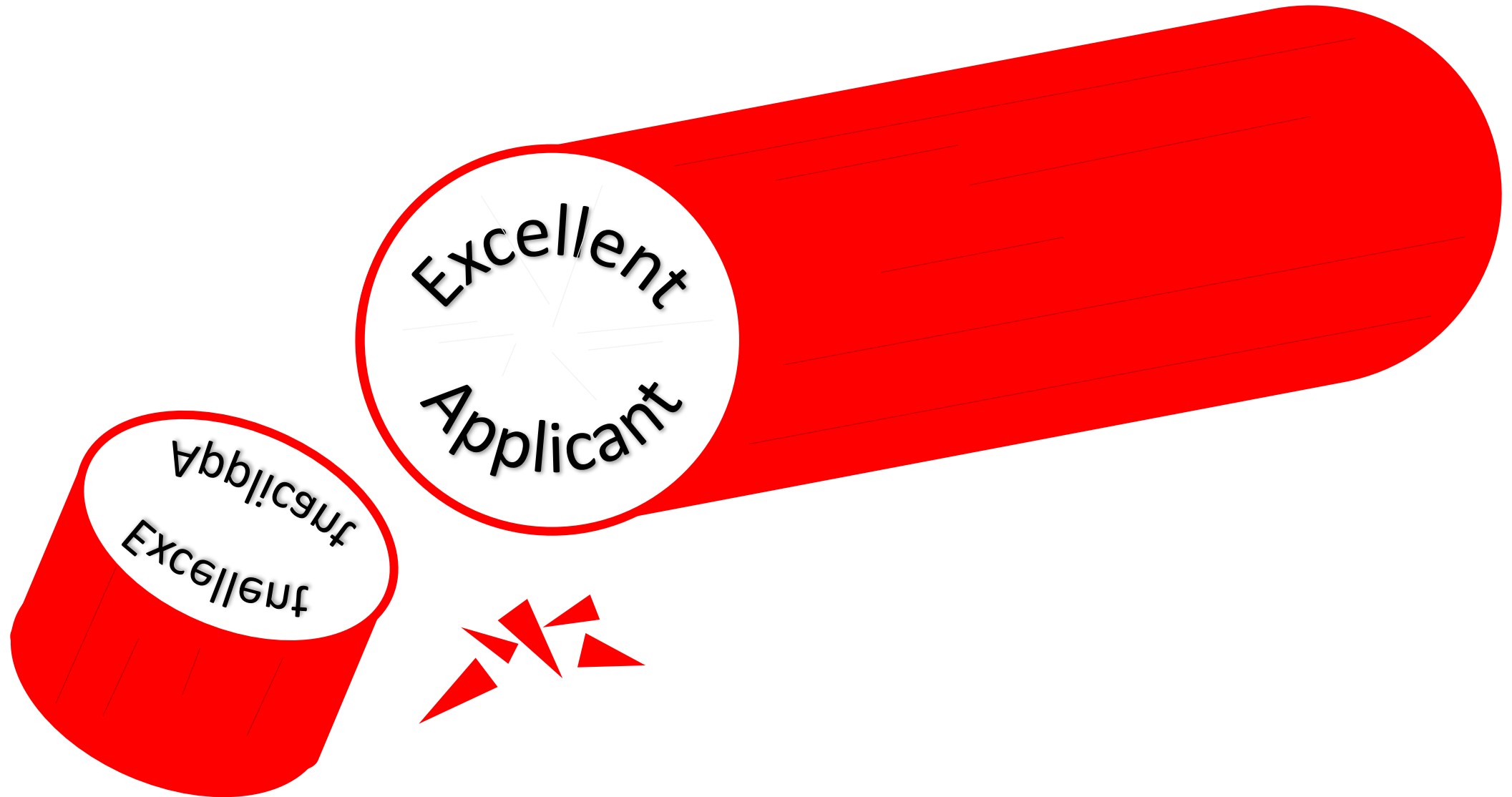
3Ps: Person

In addition to the all-important publications

- Travel grants, Prizes, Essay competitions
- Invited talks & Presentations, Collaborations
- Mentoring, supervision, research-led teaching
- Public engagement activities
- Entrepreneurial
- Vacation Studentships
- Eventually Fellowships, research grants



A complete picture: “Stick of Rock”



3Ps: Person

“I don’t need any training or development”



Myth



Development within a Fellowship

- Personal award and not a project grant, must show how you will develop
- Investment in the individual and their career
- What will this enable you to do that they could not as an RA

Scientific development: skills and techniques training, collaborations, equipment training etc..

Personal development: PI skills, person management, project delivery, finances, PPI/E etc..

Junior /
Immediate

Career
Development
/ Intermediate

Senior

3Ps: Project

NOW
IS THE
TIME



Excellence



3Ps: Project

“I know my project is excellent,
I don't need any help”



Myth



3Ps: Project



Peer review

3Ps: Place



3Ps: Place

“I need to move Institutions when
I apply for a fellowship”



Myth



3Ps: Place

Justification

Justification

Justification

3Ps: Summary

- Write clearly and to the point
- Give information upfront
- Sell the USPs and yourself
- Tell your story
- Evidence and justify

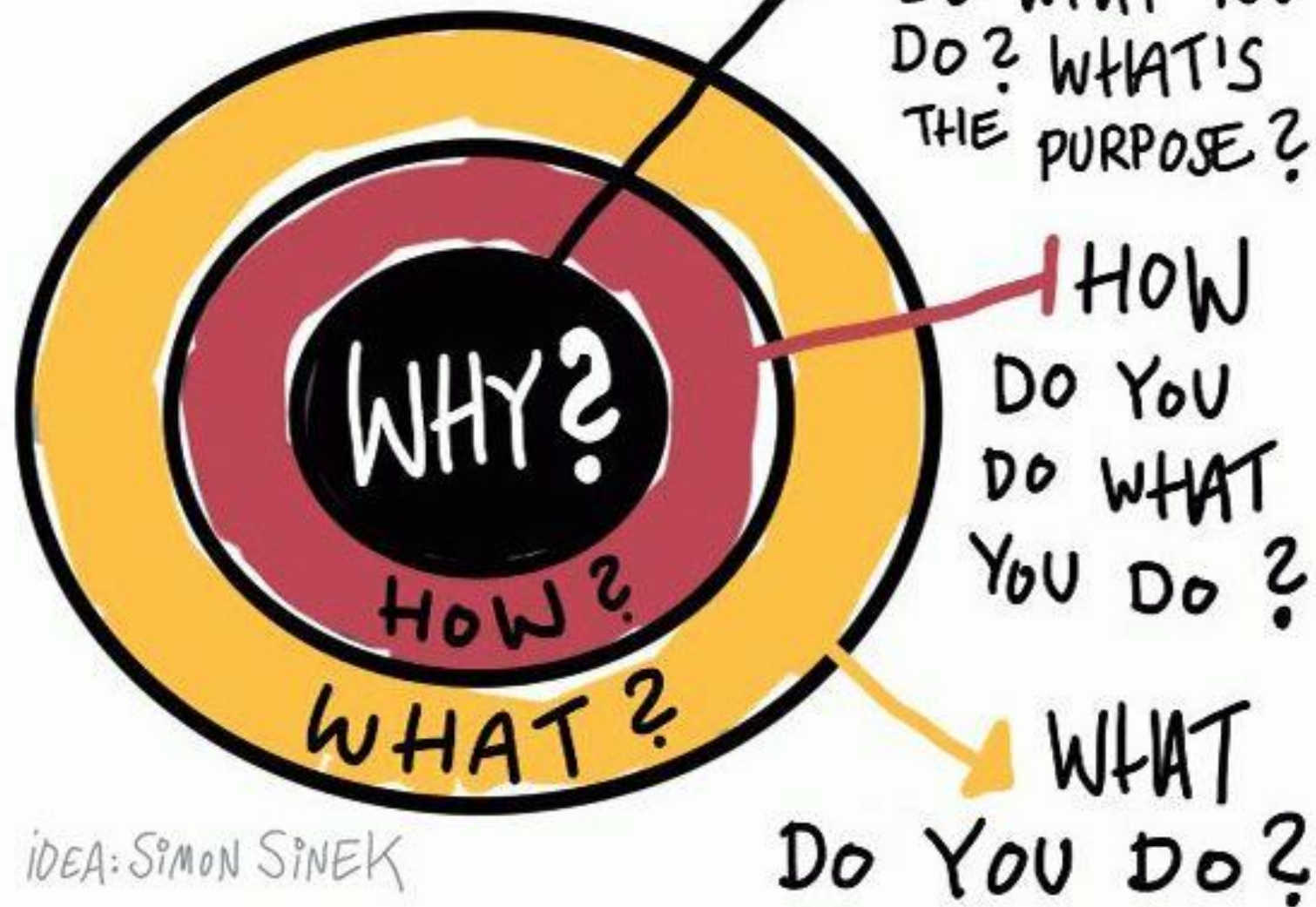
Proposal content & structure

Convey your genuine **interest**, **understanding** and **enthusiasm**:

- Who is your audience?
- What do you want to do?
- Why does it matter?
- How will you do it and why?
- 3Qs: Why now? Why you? Why here?
- What is the potential impact?



GOLDEN CIRCLE



IDEA: SIMON SINEK

Put yourself in your reviewers' shoes



Reviewer likes...

- Clear and concise writing
- Learn very quickly what the project is about and whether it fits the **program objectives**
- Solid **preliminary data** showing that approach has promise
- Evidence that the **PI is well qualified** to do the research
- Crisp, **specific** project description with well thought out research plan

Reviewer dislikes...

- Proposals that are **vague** and **unfocused** – takes too long to figure out what they want to do
- **Dense** academic prose – too much like a journal paper
- Lack of proof reading & **sloppiness** (special annoyance!)
- Incomplete response to programme call
- Writer does not understand the state of the art
- Project is **too ambitious**
- PI lacks proven **competence** to do research

Proposal checklist

- Read the **guidelines!!**
- Captivating opening **summary** – pull your reader in
- Appropriate **aim, objectives** & research hypotheses
- Well thought-out **research design** – fully defending it against critical appraisal
- Considered your research **environment**
- Addressed all **evaluation criterion** closely

Preparation for Success

If you're not ready to make your best possible application...

If you don't fit...

Take action until you do!



Preparation for Success

Build up your 'measures of esteem'

Start now

- High-quality **publications**
- Attend/present at **conferences**
- Apply for research **funding**, including travel awards
- **Prizes** and award nominations – recognition
- Develop your research **expertise**, exposure & **network**
- Take steps towards **research independence** (supervise students, manage projects, pilot work...).
- Develop **collaborations** (UK and internationally)
- Plan your long-term research **vision**
- Discuss your plans with **colleagues**

Preparation for Success

Continued...

Start now

- Develop links with **industry**
- Become a **reviewer** yourself.
- Secondments/placements – get **international experience**
- **Public science** skills and experience
- Transferable skills training
- Get connected – e.g. stakeholder meetings
- **Search for funding opportunities** that your supervisor can bid for and you can be part of

Summary

Be proactive &
use support available to you