



# Preparing a Successful MSCA COFUND 2025 Proposal: Insights and Recommendations

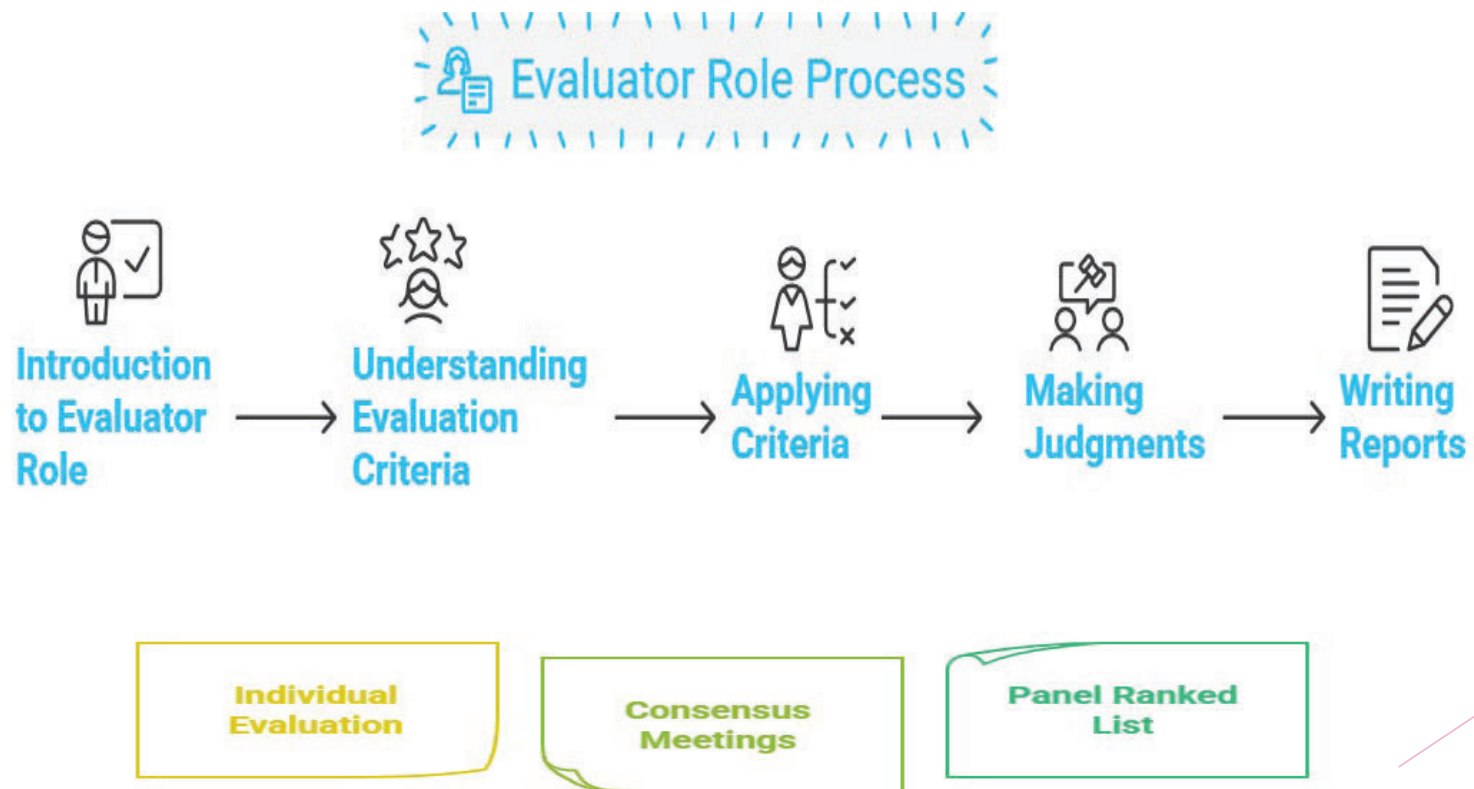
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# The Evaluation Process



# Practical Tips-Excellence

## ▶ Selection process:

- ▶ OTM-R/Follow principles Charter and Code. Show pieces of evidence!
- ▶ **Independent experts with no CoIs MUST BE involved in ALL STAGES** of the evaluation process. The members must have an adequate gender balance and relevant expertise.
- ▶ **Supervisors.** *Explain the Rationale for any potential contact with supervisors*
  - ▶ *No role in drafting/approval the proposal from candidates at application stage or in decision making during the recruitment process.*
  - ▶ Fellows should be allowed to select supervisors according to their needs and career objectives.

- ▶ **Employment conditions:** labour contracts (stipends must be very well justified); comparison with national standards.
- ▶ **Transparent budgeting** - Explain the rationale behind the figures in the proposal. Figures in Part A and B should coincide!
- ▶ **Quality of the research options**-Freedom of choice and attractive.

# Practical Tips-Excellence

- ▶ **Training/CDP:** comprehensive training opportunities beyond just writing a PhD or conducting research.
  - ▶ List details about the scientific/ transferable training offer (internal/external, additional funding, etc)
  - ▶ How the training offer and network-wide events are integrated in the training pathway of the candidates and CDP to ensure a strong career development.
  - ▶ Develop a Comprehensive CDP- Collaboration with supervisors/mentors to create a plan addressing training needs, transferable skills, and career aspirations.
- ▶ **Supervision** (MSCA Guidelines on Supervision)
  - ▶ Explain the experience and different profiles of the supervisors (nr. of thesis..), compulsory training, national/institutional regulation to become supervisor, Young supervisors supported by experienced one.
  - ▶ Supervision arrangements: How the supervision will be practically performed (mechanism in place e.g. supervisory boards, frequency of meetings, coordination among different supervisors, mentors, etc...)

# Practical Tips-Impact

- ▶ **Strengthening human resources good practices ...**
  - ▶ Impact at Institutional, regional, national **or** international level; **Vague argumentation and lack of specificity**
  - ▶ Principles set out by the EU for the human resources development (C&C an IDT): Mention logo HRS4R, how the institutions align with the principles (CA) by the program, if applicable explain how IDT principles are integrated into the program.
- ▶ **Credibility of the proposed measures to enhance the career perspectives/employability/skills development**
  - ▶ A comprehensive explanation of career perspectives in academic and **non-academic sector**.
  - ▶ Skills development- Link with the main elements of the program (training, mentoring schemes, networking opportunities, etc)
  - ▶ If possible, provide quantitative figures of the sector, quantify existing demand, employability of PhD students or researchers..

# Practical Tips-Impact

- ▶ **Measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts (dissemination, communication and exploitation)**
  - ▶ Explain 1) how both the program and the results will be effectively disseminated, communicated and protected; and 2) how the researchers of the program will be engaged (visit to schools, Citizens' Nights, podcasts..) and the activities integrated/monitored in their CDPs.
  - ▶ Provide details about the type of planned activities, target groups, channels, responsibilities.
  - ▶ Mention if training for enhancing dissemination and communication skills will be provided to supervisors and researchers.
  - ▶ Mention if there will some support/monitoring from dedicated units at the institution or external, particularly for IPR issues and exploitation.
  - ▶ Plan a mechanism for monitoring the activities (nr. of scientific articles, conferences, social media, events...)
  - ▶ Secondments- Researchers' IPR how it will be protected?

# Practical Tips-Implementation

- ▶ **Work plan, management structures, assessment of risks and work packages to demonstrate the project's feasibility**
  - ▶ The management structure should be coherent with the size and complexity of the program (incl day-to-day/strategic/supervision activities).
  - ▶ Explain with enough detail the roles and responsibilities of the offices, boards committees, etc. Avoid inconsistencies with the Excellence Section.
  - ▶ If there are different hosting institutions, explain how Local program managers/offices will be coordinated.
  - ▶ Gantt Chart/Timeline-Include all the main activities (selection process, training, etc.), deliverables and milestones. Pay attention to inconsistencies with dates of deliverables/milestones/work packages. It should be readable!
  - ▶ Work packages: include details beyond the objectives to ensure an effective monitoring of the program implementation (tasks, responsible...)
  - ▶ The number of Deliverables/Milestones should be appropriate...
  - ▶ Assessment of risks: some risks should be always present! such as problems with progress, conflicts with supervisor or withdrawal, secondments, etc. The level of likelihood and severity and the mitigation measures should be credible!



# Practical Tips-Implementation

- ▶ **Quality/capacity/appropriate experience of the host institution(s) and participating organisations**
  - ▶ Highlight the experience managing similar programs (not necessarily funded with COFUND), or coordinating European projects/initiatives of the applicant/partners.
  - ▶ Mention key personnel/units involved if known (relevant experience..)
  - ▶ Explain the complementarity of the Consortium (if applicable)
- ▶ **Quality of the Hosting Arrangements**
  - ▶ Explain the support offered to the researchers through **existing or dedicated services**
    - ▶ Application/selection process - briefly mention as information is already provided in the Excellence section e.g., helpdesk, guides, etc..
    - ▶ Installation- what support services (internal/external units) will be provided to help integration of researchers moving to the host country (e.g. support with accommodation, visa, housing etc.)?
    - ▶ During the fellowship- e.g., welcome day, ombudsperson, buddy, supervisory support, social events, etc.)

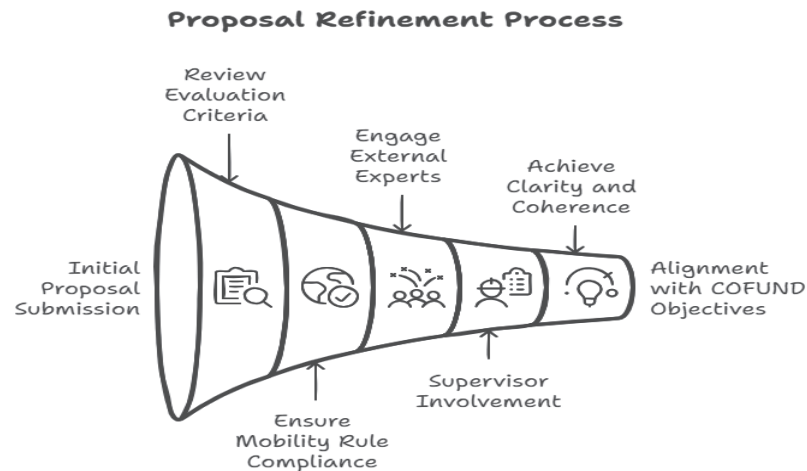
# Common Pitfalls to Avoid

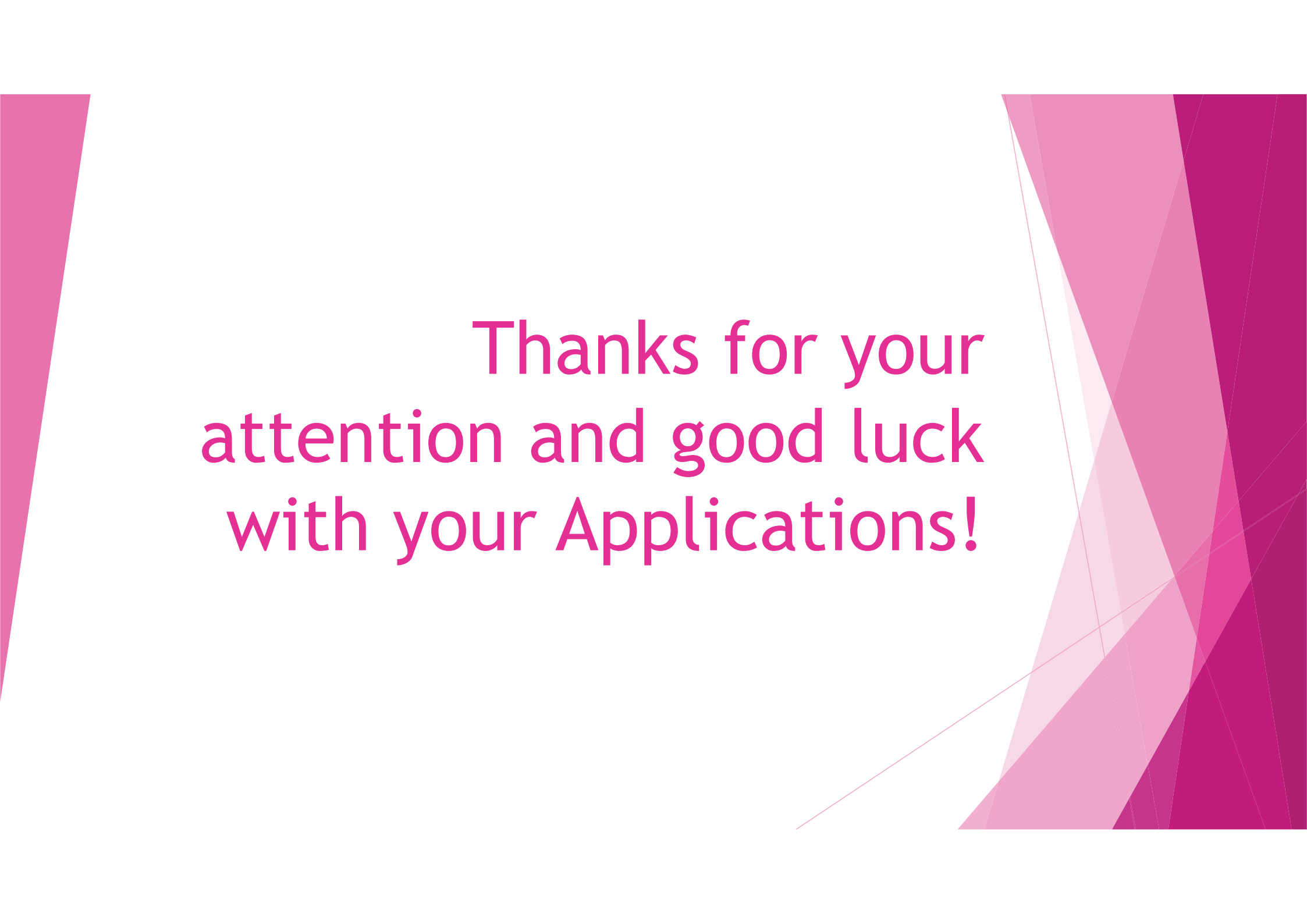
- ▶ Being good is not enough, proposals have to look good. **Do not disregard the formal aspects.**
- ▶ To be clear and **avoid ambiguities** which reduces the credibility of the proposal. Details are always welcome!!!
- ▶ Use simple clear text to be sure that it reads well and avoid long sentences.
- ▶ Avoid too much repetition. Reference to other parts of the proposal.
  - ▶ *Try to write a text that the evaluator will want to read, too much repetition may make the proposal less attractive/convincing to the evaluator and may not properly address the criteria or sub-criteria.*
- ▶ **Do not just copy & paste information** from other documents/websites/other previous proposals. Instead, tailor the information to fit your proposal. Ensure coherence!

# Conclusions

## ► Final Thoughts:

- Encourage to thoroughly review proposals against the evaluation criteria and the requirements, engagement of external experts, level of supervisors involvement, etc. Ask for feedback!
- Highlight the importance of clarity, coherence, and alignment with COFUND objectives.





Thanks for your  
attention and good luck  
with your Applications!