

Top 5 dos and don'ts of writing a Full Application for the 3RCC

The purpose of the 3RCC's grant programme is not merely to fund promising proposals. In line with our mission to promote education and support 3Rs-related projects and researchers, we want to help you write the best possible grant applications, yielding the best results for your 3Rs project.

Every application is, of course, unique. Nevertheless, there are a few general points that come up time and time again during the review of applications... so here are the top 5 "dos and don'ts" of writing an application for the upcoming Open Call 2019 – Full Application round.

Dos

1. **Know the 3Rs principle.**

Everyone's understanding of the 3Rs principle may be a little different. Take some time to read the [3RCC's definitions](#), and ensure you are referencing the appropriate "R" in your application. For example, if you "refine" your experimental design, this isn't necessarily a *Refinement* project. Keep your focus on the actual principles and remember that you don't need to *target* all three Rs.

2. **Be as specific as possible with metrics that assess the potential 3Rs impact.**

Using both institutional, national and international statistics, figure out just how many animals and which species/models are going to be affected by your research question. Try to give some indication how long it may take for your research to show this effect. We recommend you follow the NC3Rs' [detailed guide](#) on this topic.

3. **State your goals clearly and concisely.**

Define the primary and secondary outcomes that should be used to assess your project's success. This will help reviewers understand which parts of your project are critical, and which are auxiliary.

4. **Find collaborators both within and outside your institution.**

If projects are multi-centred, make sure that you indicate how you plan to coordinate your project (e.g. clearly define roles; schedule regular meetings; plan online platforms for sharing documents and data, etc.).

5. **Discuss your project with your institution's 3Rs coordinator.**

The 3RCC has 3Rs node coordinators at all universities in Switzerland. They are familiar with the specific guidelines of the application process, have experience with previous applications (both successful and not), and are motivated to help. You can find the name of your institution's node coordinator [here](#).

Don'ts

1. Don't ask for the maximum budget possible.

Try to build the expected budget from the bottom up, considering what you may need to complete the desired project in the allocated time frame. Asking for the maximum amount suspiciously looks like ad hoc justification. Due to our limited budget, we are more likely to fund the project requesting the lower amount if we must decide between two projects of similar scientific value.

2. Don't hesitate to adapt details from the Outline Application.

Your outline application got "your foot in the door", but in the meantime, you may have entered new collaborations; found more up-to-date research; or reconsidered the project scale. Ensure that the overall concept is the same but feel flexible to design a project that addresses the question in the best way possible. External reviewers don't receive any information about your Outline Application.

3. Don't neglect the aspects of communication and dissemination.

A critical goal of the 3RCC is to increase awareness of 3Rs-related topics both among researchers and the public. While other funding bodies may not consider these aspects, they are key assessment criteria for the 3RCC. Be sure to include information on how the project's outcomes could be implemented by other research groups in other settings, and how society may benefit from the knowledge gained. You may for example ask for additional funding to organise training at the later stages of your project.

4. Don't be afraid to submit applications for smaller pilot projects.

Just because the maximum budget is CHF 400,000 over three years, doesn't mean that your project must stick to this guidance. Some 3R-related projects may be quite risky because they explore novel approaches and methodologies or because your laboratory doesn't have a wealth of experience in a certain technology. So why not apply for a smaller amount to pilot some of the ideas? Successful smaller projects are *more* likely, not *less*, to receive further funding from the 3RCC down the road.

5. Don't be overly concerned with your project's *novelty* factor.

The 3RCC aims to fund projects that are not typically awarded by more conventional funders. The ideas behind many great 3Rs projects have been around for some time but have lacked the opportunity for implementation. For example, a project aiming to reduce the severity of well-known experiment with little additional scientific knowledge gain, may still be considered a project worth funding.