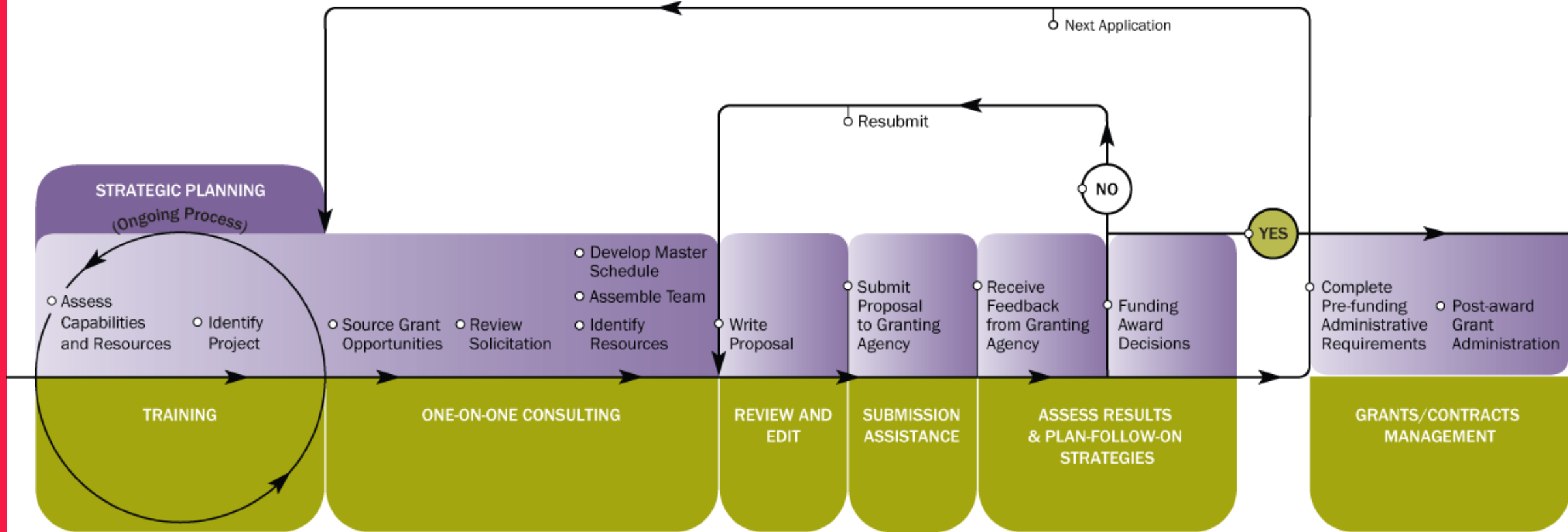


EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL WRITING

How to build-up a fundamental skill for
your career as a researcher

NO, GRANTS ARE NEITHER FREE OR EASY MONEY



NEVER FORGET WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

You need the money but the money is not yours
(and often is neither their one)



Your perspective (needs, innovation,
research frontier)

The public budget dimension as a
burden

Achieve durable competitive
advantages for your business.

Clear unique selling
proposition (USP).

Output v/s outcome approach

IDEAS ARE NOT PROPOSALS AND PROPOSALS ARE NOT AWARDED GRANTS



Grants are awarded through an increasingly competitive system that favors only the strongest proposals.

1. Write a proposal only when your project idea is already well defined, you have selected an approach and your target group. Get your thoughts clear before you write the project proposal.
2. Make sure that your project answers a need and a demand and that you have the resources to address it.
3. Be logical and coherent - there are some tools which can be used for that (see second part of the presentation)
4. Make sure to stick to the donor's mandate, values and criteria for appraising proposals (without compromising your own values and identity).

To put it in a nutshell: what you need is COMMON SENSE!

THERE IS A (RED) OCEAN OUTSIDE

ERC Starting Grant 2016 Submitted and selected proposals by domain



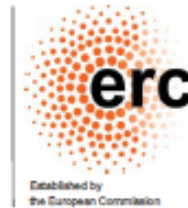
	Submitted Proposals	Selected Proposals
Life Sciences	869	121
Physical Sciences and Engineering	1288	180
Social Sciences and Humanities	778	89
Total	2935	390

Success rate ~ 13 %

THERE IS A (RED) OCEAN OUTSIDE

ERC Advanced Grants 2016 Submitted and selected proposals by domain

European Research Council



	Submitted Proposals	Selected Proposals
Life Sciences	746	73
Physical Sciences and Engineering	1096	108
Social Sciences and Humanities	562	50
Total	2404	231

Success rate ~ 9.6 %

THERE IS A (RED) OCEAN OUTSIDE

	Cut-off dates Phase 1				Cut-off dates Phase 2		
	18/06/2014	24/09/2014	17/12/2014	18/03/2015	9/10/2014	17/12/2014	18/03/2015
N° of proposals received	2666	1944	2363	1569	580	629	614
Above threshold	317	237	320		132	180	
Funded	155	178	259		60	74	
% funded	6%	9%	11%		10,5%	12%	
FUNDED ABOVE THRESHOLD	48.8%	75%	81%		45%	41%	

PART 1. METHODS AND BASIC RULES



1. UNDERSTANDING WHERE PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT FITS IN THE PCM
2. UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN PROPOSALS
3. UNDERSTANDING PROCESS-BASED APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL WRITING
4. ANALYZING REQUEST/CALL FOR PROPOSALS REQUIREMENTS

WHERE PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT FITS IN THE PCM

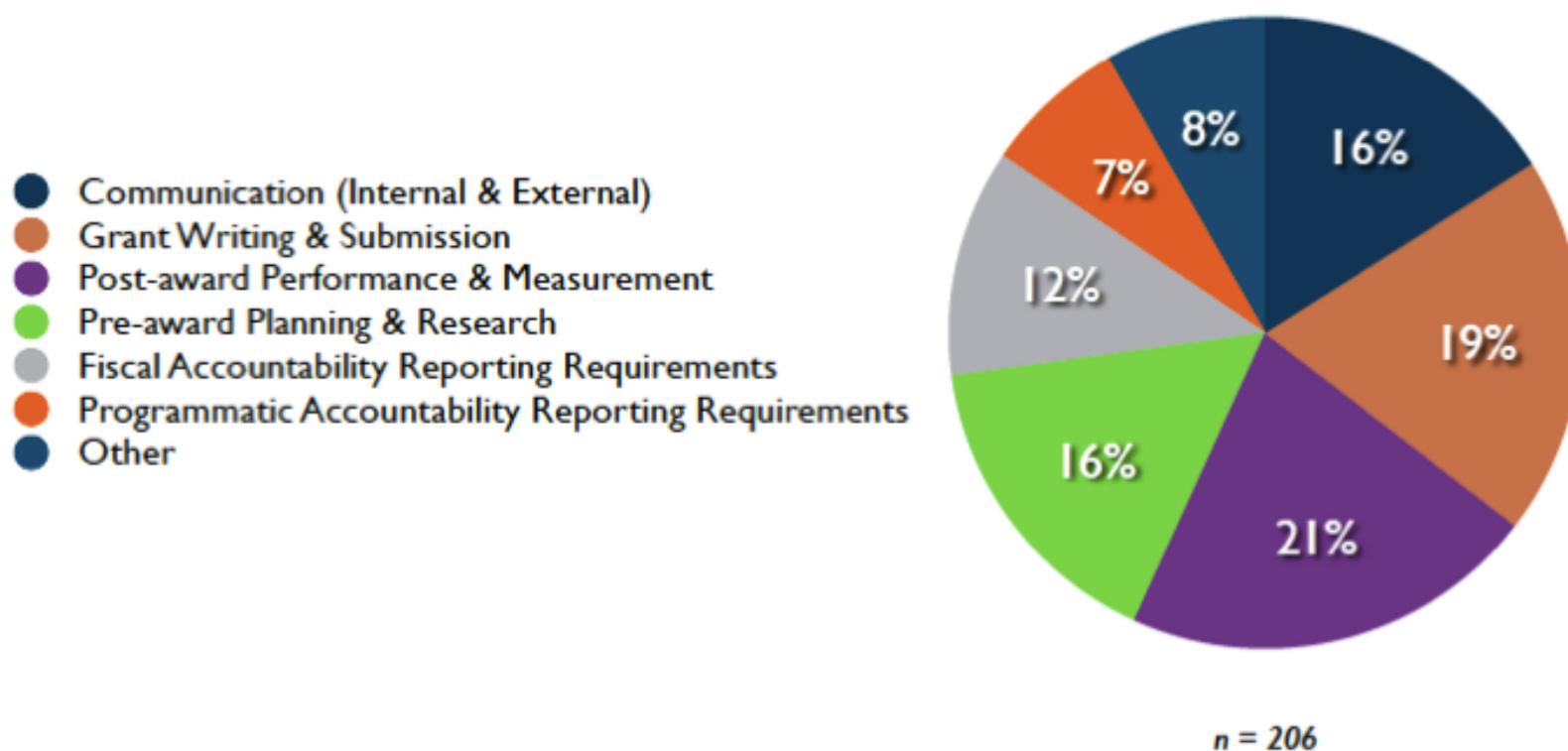
There is a lot more than proposal
writing

A crumpled piece of paper sits in the center of a notebook page. The page is covered in faint sketches, including a large circle, arrows, and the handwritten text "What?!". The background is a dark, textured surface.

“ A GOAL WITHOUT A PLAN IS JUST A WISH

ANTOINE DE SAINT EXUPERY
AUTHO

Most Frustrating Part of the Grant Process



PROPOSAL = POTENTIAL PROJECT

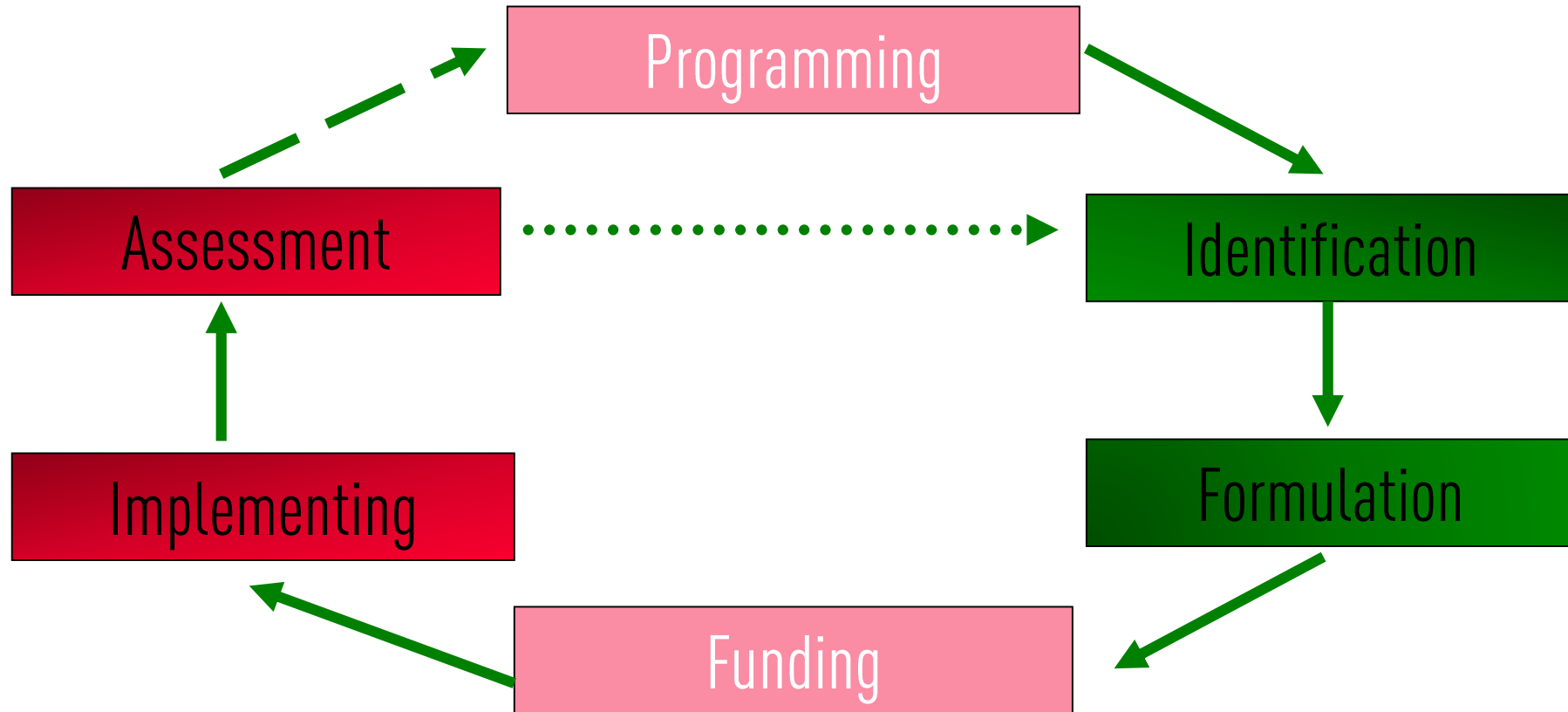
A project should always

- Be consistent with, and supportive of, broader policy and programme objectives, but
- Create/develop something 'new', rather than simply support ongoing activities

And should have

- A logic of intervention
- A sequence of well organized activities (workplan, tasks, work packages, milestones)
- Clearly defined objectives which address identified needs (goal, objectives, results/outcome, outputs, impacts)
- A clearly identified target group(s)
- Clearly defined management responsibilities
- A start and finish date
- A specified set of resources and budget

PCM: THE EU/WORLD BANK MODEL TO PROJECT ORIGINATION



WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN PROPOSALS

The PERFECTO rule in practice

TEN TOP CRITERIA

1

Do your research on the funder/programme you're approaching. Make sure the request you're submitting is appropriate for the foundation, corporation, or other grant program you're applying under. Read the guidelines carefully and thoroughly, and research past grants to make sure your request fits both in terms of the content of the proposal and the grant amount.

2

Don't wait till the last minute to start writing. Prepare your materials well in advance of the deadline, leaving yourself time to ask questions of the funder, to double and triple check your information with program officers, and to feel stress-free when you're preparing the proposal or application.

TEN TOP CRITERIA

3

Do thoroughly discuss your program. Write details of the who, what, why, when, where, and how of the proposed project. This will help show that your organization is prepared and capable, and that plans are in place to undertake the program. You want to show your ideas are not theoretical; prove they are real, well thought out, and practical and that you're ready to hit the ground running

4

Don't frame the proposal in terms of your organization's needs. You don't need money because you're out of printer paper. You need money because you are working to solve an important, pressing, dire problem, and without money to keep the lights on and buy that printer paper, this problem will go unaddressed and people in need—not your organization—will suffer.

5

Do use outside research to justify your project. Show that there is widespread, well documented need for the program you intend to run, and that that program draws on experts and scholarly research in determining the best course of action to meet that need.

6

Don't overstate or estimate your budget. Be precise with your budget numbers and don't build in money for contingencies. Ask for only what you need, and make sure that need is justified. Go online, find the exact price, and quote that price. When the proposal requests significant funds for equipment, it is helpful to consider alternatives and explain why the instruments chosen are particularly suitable for the project and why others, especially less expensive ones, are less suitable.

7

Do mention what work has been done in preparation for the project, and describe specific attempts that have been made to try the proposed improvement on a small scale. Evidence of preliminary work demonstrates planning and commitment to the project and often indicates the project's potential for success.

8

Don't forget to get advice from people who have been successful in the proposal process. When writing a proposal, look for previously awarded EU projects or work supported in other ways that are similar. The relationship of the proposed project to the work of others should be described. In addition, the proposal must give appropriate attention to the existing relevant knowledge base, including awareness of current literature. Results of previous projects may have been presented at professional meetings or published in journals, and EU regularly publishes abstracts of its recently awarded grants.

TEN TOP CRITERIA

9

Do organize a good working team. Distribute duties and develop a firm schedule of activities needed to prepare the proposal in time to meet the proposal deadline. Schedule proposal writing and information gathering activities over a reasonable time and carefully manage the schedule. Consider scheduling the writing in small, regular amounts of time. The effort needed to write a proposal might, at first sight, seem insurmountable. By proceeding a step at a time, you will be able to accomplish the task.

10

Don't plan on writing a final version in a first draft. Invest time running a pilot program and preparing preliminary versions of curricular materials prior to the actual writing of the proposal. The proposal should be written so that, if funded, it can serve as a blueprint for executing the plan.

ONE GOLDEN RULE

P

Pertinence = Coherence and compliance

E

Effectiveness = Outcome oriented

R

Relevance = Ambition and Innovation

F

Feasibility = Goals are achievable, management process well defined

E

Efficiency = Inputs/outputs

C

Consistency = Internal coherence and balance

T

Team = Complementarity and highest standards

O

Optimization = The leverage effect of the EU funding (EU added value)

 **REP-eat**

ONE SILVER RULE

FORMAL QUALITY

Deadline/ Templates/ Eligibility/ Fixed rates and amounts/
Forms and documents

SUBSTANTIAL QUALITY

Effectiveness (Project background and SWOT; target groups and outcomes; EU impact and consistency)

Feasibility (Partners' profile and overall consortium structure; logical and time sequence of activities; Budget coverage and distribution)

AESTHETIC QUALITY

Easy to read (layout, bullet points, paragraph length, symmetry)

Easy to remember (title, acronym, main outputs as bait and switch)

PROCESS-BASED APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL WRITING

Organize and win



“ IF YOU'RE WALKING DOWN
THE RIGHT PATH AND
YOU'RE WILLING TO KEEP
WALKING EVENTUALLY YOU'LL
MAKE PROGRESS

BARACK OBAMA

THE OVERALL PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT PROCESS



THE PROPOSAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Proposal Board, GM, CEO

- Works with Sales to validate client needs
- Identifies and assigns proposal team resources
- Approves proposed proposal approach and final pricing
- Reviews proposal prior to production
- Signs off on proposal

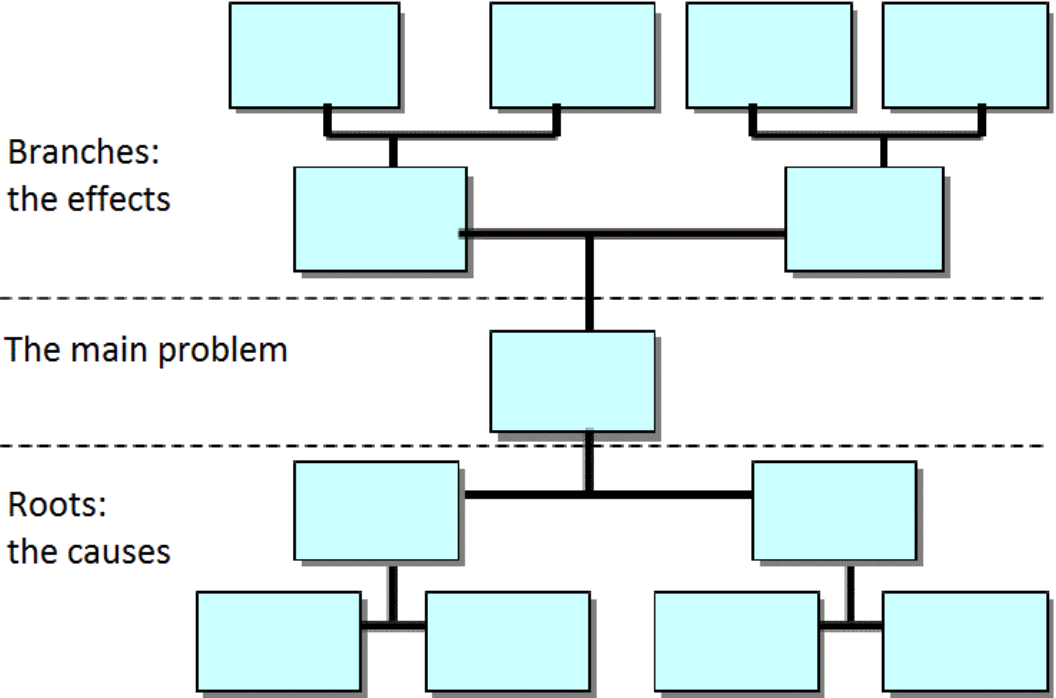
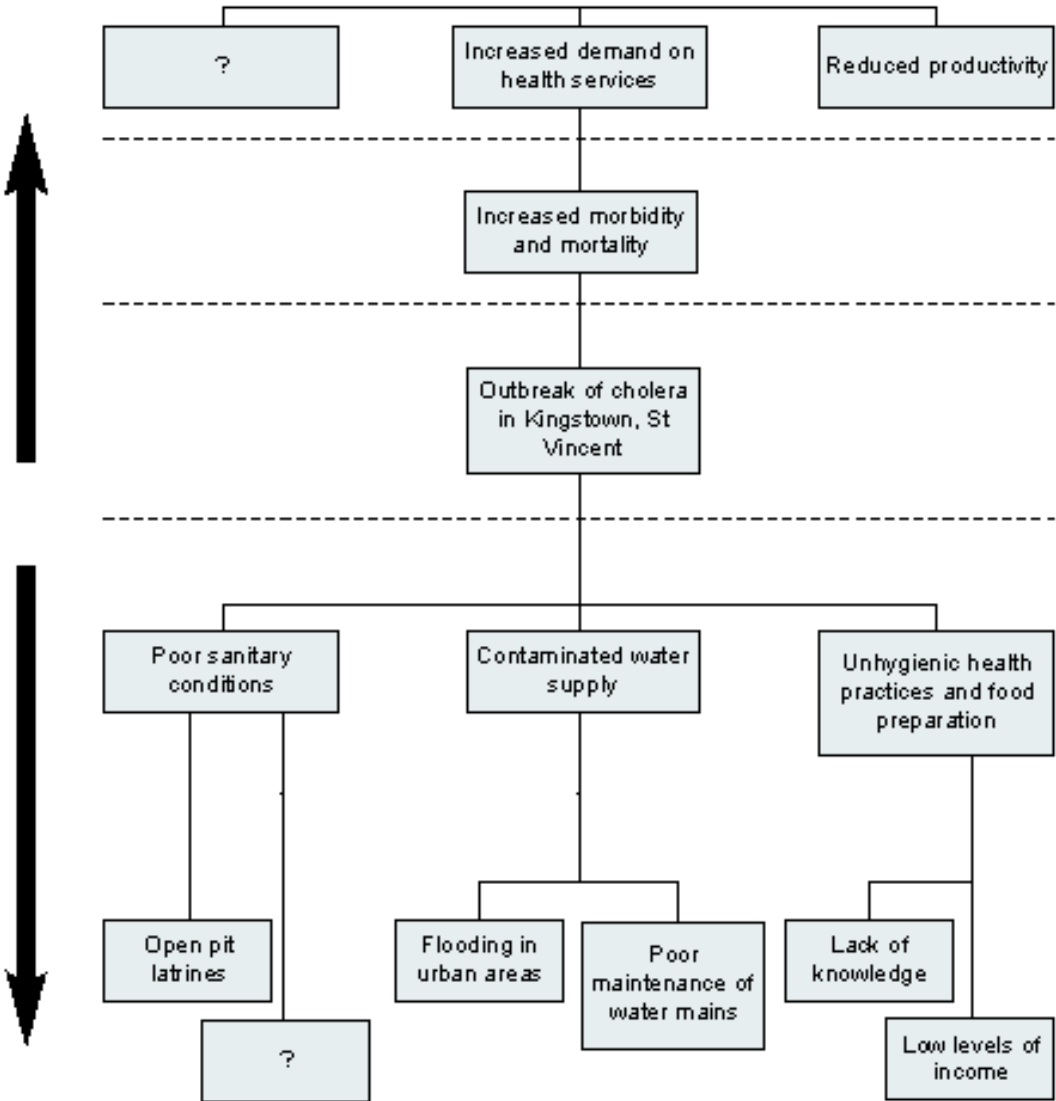
Proposal Manager

- Day-to-day management of the proposal team, sections, and production
- Sets schedule and delegates assignments
- Ensures completion of proposal tasks and overall proposal quality
- Owns the proposal creation process and works with General Manager to create themes

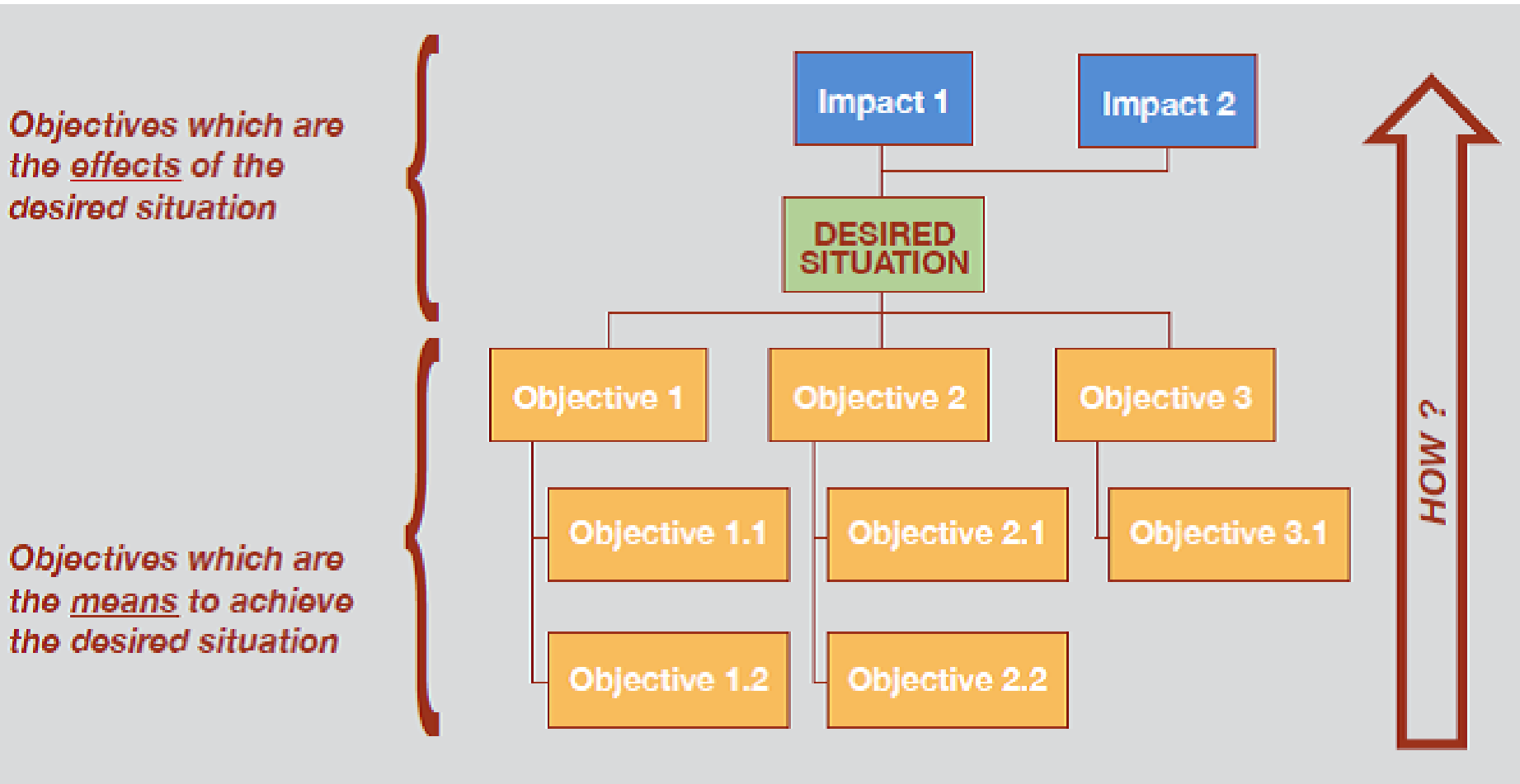
Proposal Coordinator

- Coordinates the information process on the relevant selection and distributes RFP
- Creates and enforces proposal calendar
- Manages version control for all sections & coordinates the production and the delivery effort

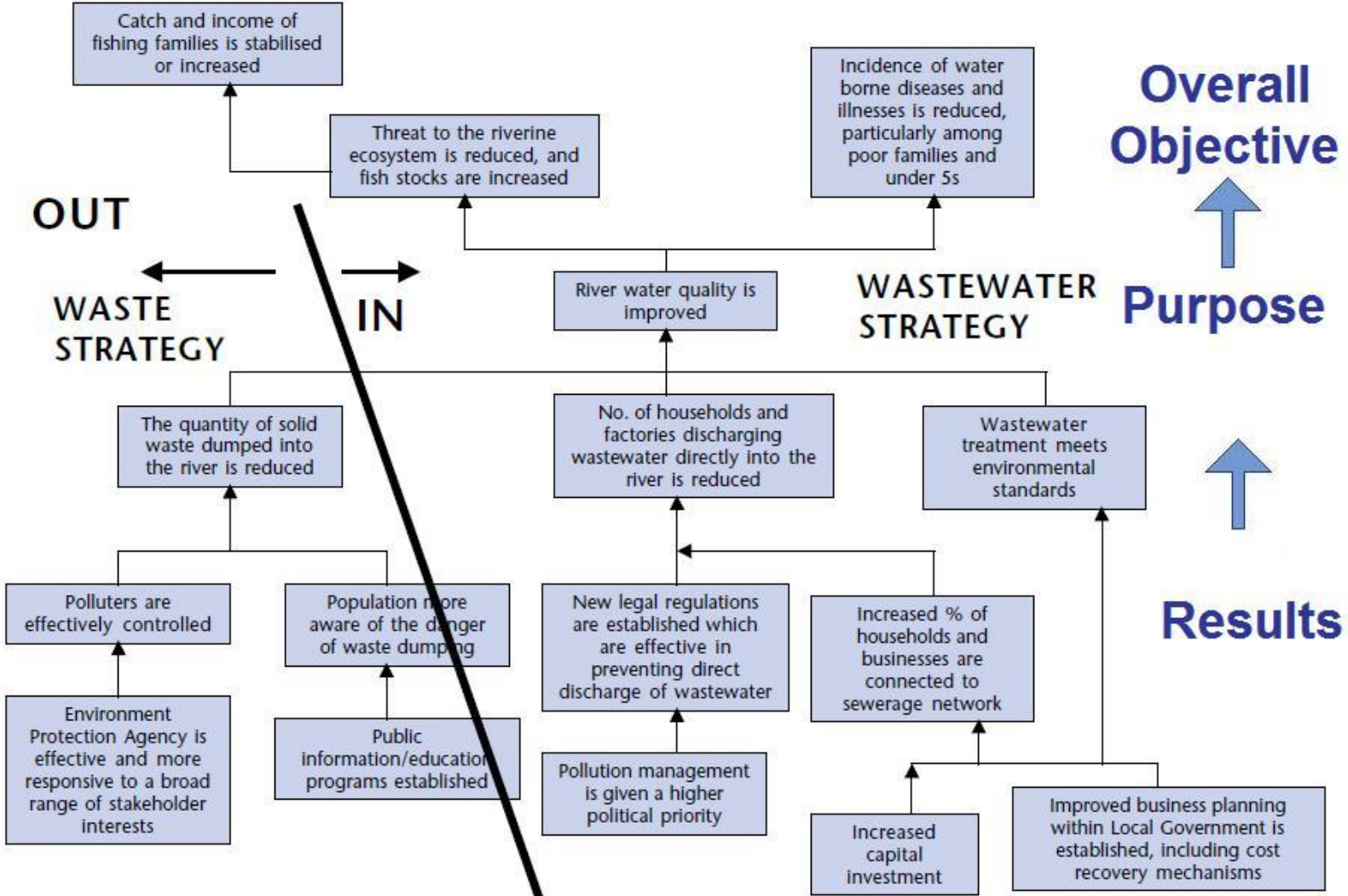
PCM: TOOLS FOR THE ANALYSIS



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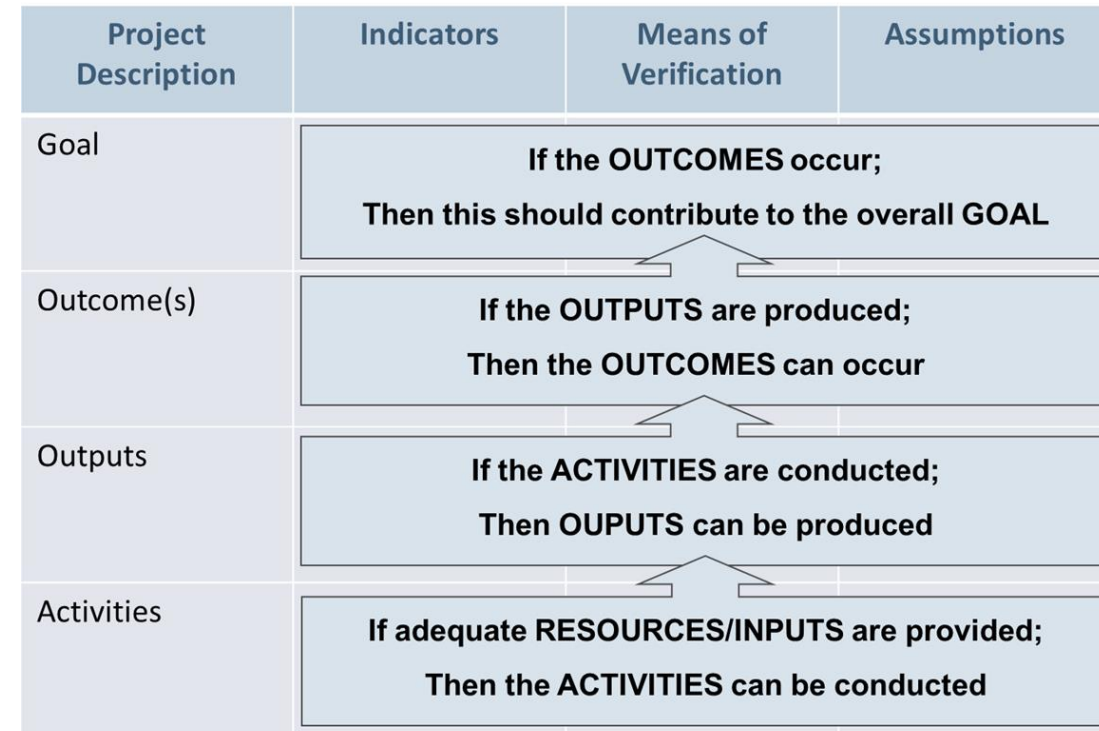


PCM: TOOLS FOR THE ANALYSIS

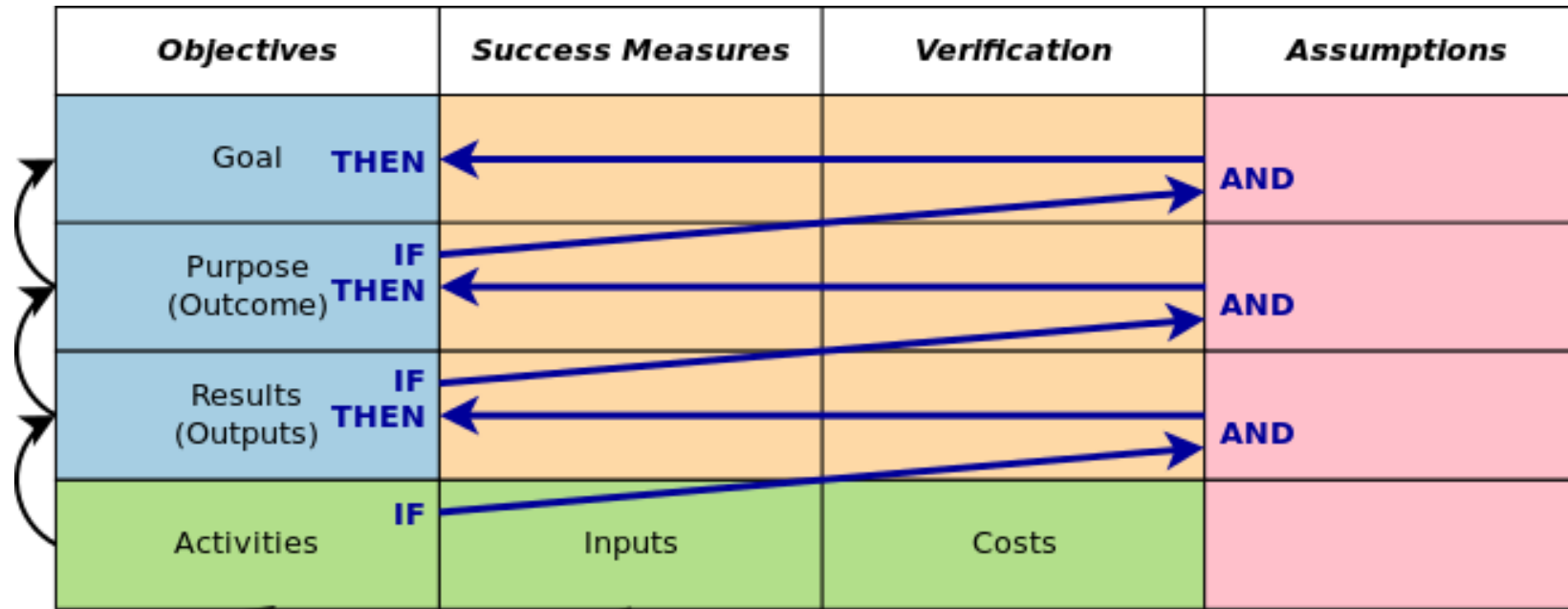
Stakeholder	Stakeholder Interests	Assessment of Impact	Potential Strategies

PCM: TOOLS FOR PROPOSAL PLANNING

Project Description		Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	What is the overall broader impact to which the action will contribute?	What are the key indicators related to the overall goal?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	What are the external factors necessary to sustain objectives in the long term?
Purpose	What is the immediate development outcome at the end of the project?	Which indicators clearly show that the objective of the action has been achieved?	What are the sources of information that exist or can be collected? What are the methods required to get this information?	Which factors and conditions are necessary to achieve that objective? (external conditions)
Outputs	What are the specifically deliverable results envisaged to achieve the specific objectives?	What are the indicators to measure whether and to what extent the action achieves the expected results?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	What external conditions must be met to obtain the expected results on schedule?
Activities	What are the key activities to be carried out and in what sequence in order to produce the expected results?	Means:	What are the sources of information about action progress?	What pre-conditions are required before the action starts?
		Costs	What are the action costs?	
		What are the means required to implement these activities, e. g. personnel, equipment, supplies, etc.		



PCM: TOOLS FOR PROPOSAL PLANNING



Color Legend

1. What are we trying to accomplish and why? (Strategic Intent & Alignment)
2. How will we measure success? (Performance & Improvement)
3. What other conditions must exist? (Assumptions & Risk)
4. How will we get there? (Project Management)

Your **Proposal** is often the only way for the donor to choose or reject your project. Package your project into an attractive proposal

- **Follow a logical thread:**

Background

⇒ Problem

⇒ Solution

⇒ Sustainability

- **Ensure match-up** between:

Problem – Outcomes – Means

(this is called internal coherence)

- This is the power of the **Logical Framework Approach**

LOGIC CHECKLIST

- Don't leave a **problem** unsolved
- Don't identify **outcomes** that do not correspond to a problem
- Don't identify outcomes for which you don't have a **solution**
- Don't propose **activities** that are not related to problems and outcomes
- Don't list **human resources** that don't match the outcomes you aim to achieve

ANALYZING REQUEST/CALL FOR PROPOSALS REQUIREMENTS

Start considering the “YOU” focus



INTELLIGENCE
IS THE ABILITY
TO ADAPT TO
CHANGE

STEPHEN HAWKING, PHYSICIST

