Do's and Don'ts of Applying for Research Grants

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European Research Council (EU)
Science Foundation Ireland (Ireland)
Higher Education Authority (Ireland)
Royal Irish Academy (Ireland)
National Science Foundation (US)
Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
Enterprise Ireland (Ireland)
Special EU programmes Body (EU)
Interreg (EU)
ESPON (EU)

Dept Environment, Heritage, Local Government
Dept of Foreign Affairs
Dept of Education
Dept of Taoiseach
InterTradeIreland
International Fund for Ireland
Strategic Investment Board
Combat Poverty Agency
Canada DFAIT
Scottish government

ERC panel, IRC board

Routes

- Start with the scheme and fit a proposal to it
- Start with an idea and look for a scheme

- Single investigator led
- Collaborative bid (within and between jurisdictions)
- Centre/Institute bid

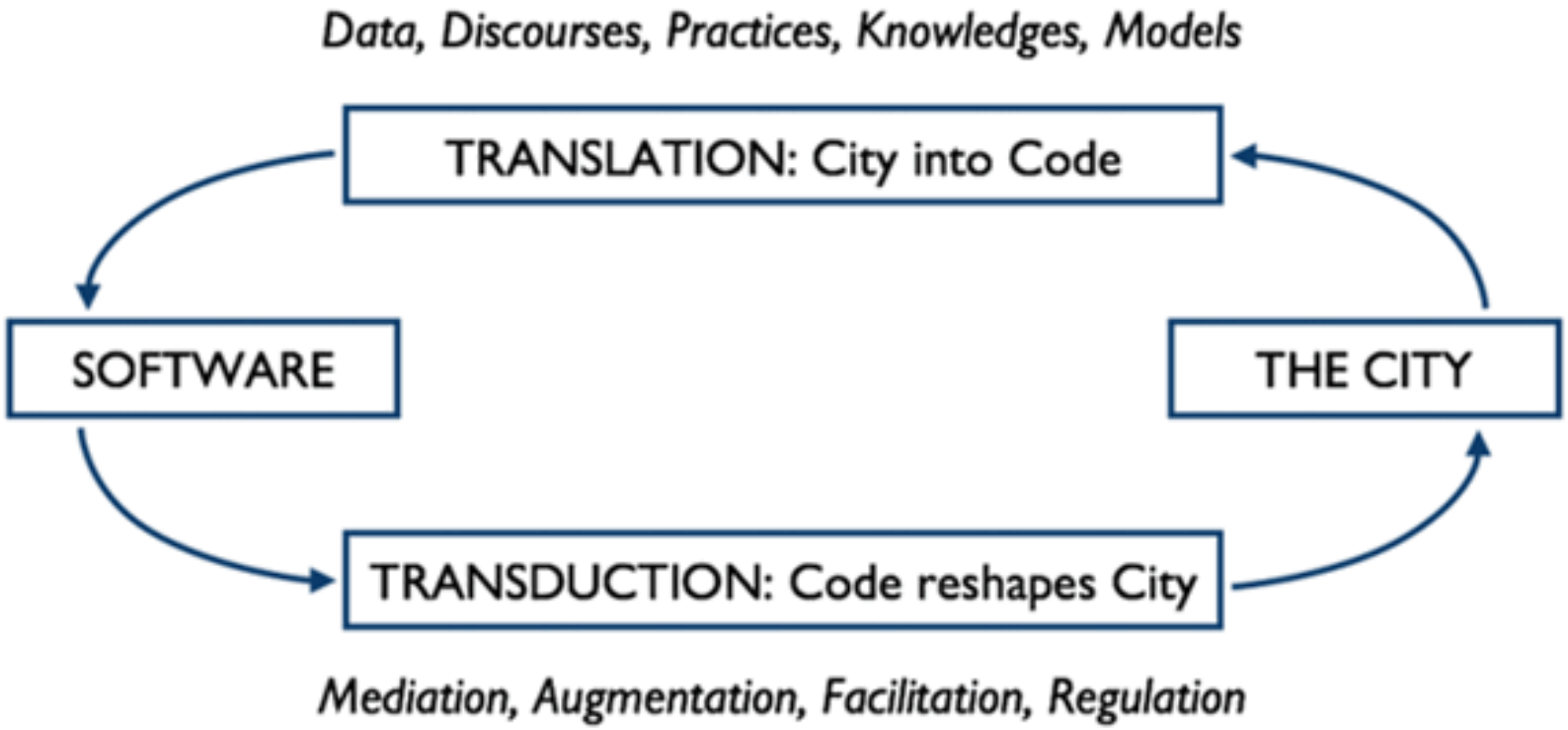
- Single discipline
- Interdisciplinary

Essential aspects of grant applications …

- A compelling hook
- Clear sense of the fundamental or applied problem being addressed
- How that problem is being approach conceptually and operationally

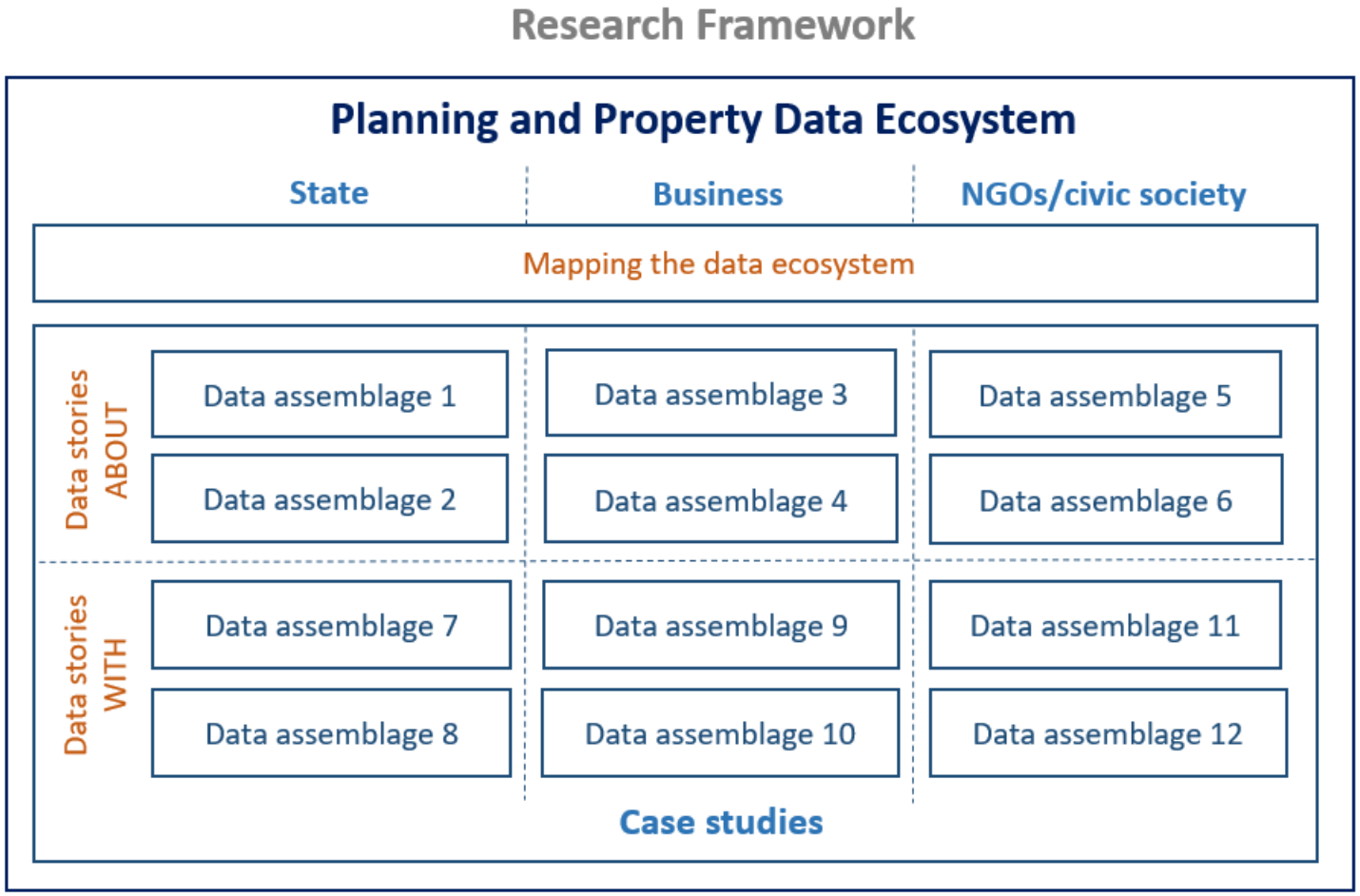
Programmable City project

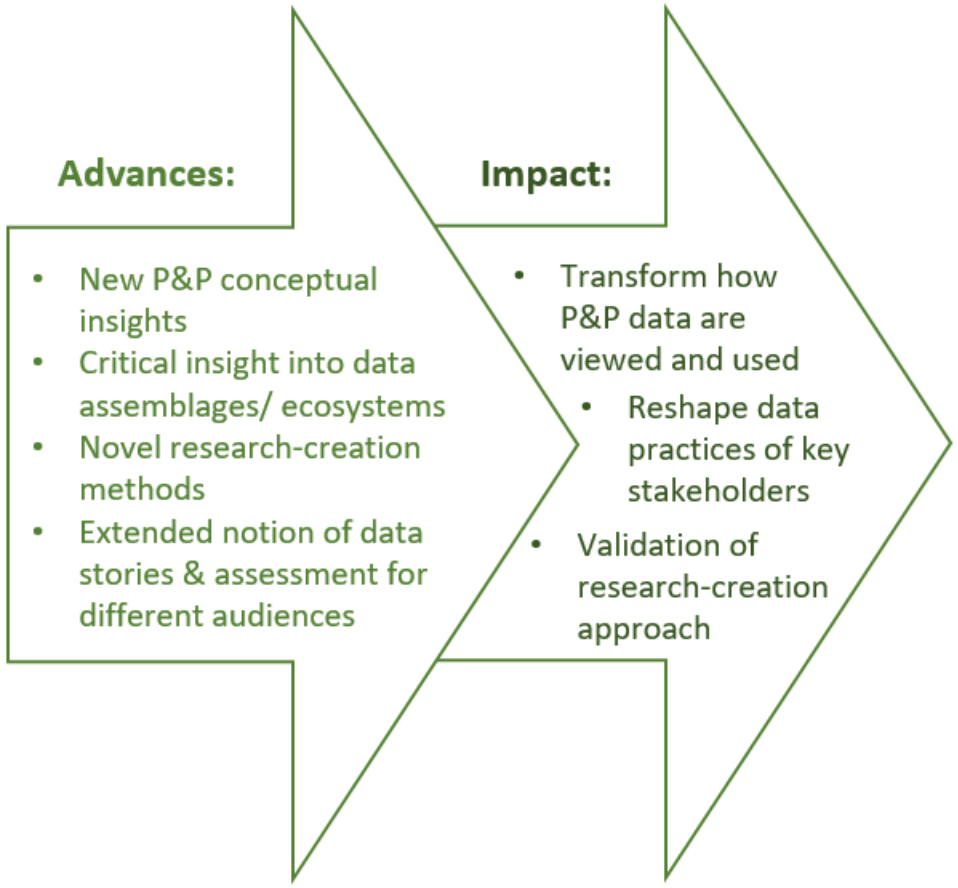
How is the city translated into code, and how does code reshape the city?



Data Stories project

- Examine the politics, praxes and socio-technical make-up of a data ecosystem at a city-scale (challenge novelty)
- Evaluate the efficacy and utility of a research-creation approach (methodological novelty)





P&P = Planning & Property; CDS = Critical Data Studies

Essential aspects of grant applications …

- A compelling hook
- Clear sense of the fundamental or applied problem being addressed
- How that problem is being approach conceptually and operationally
- Why solving that problem is important
- How it will be solved in a way that advances the field
- Why you are the right person to solve it
- How the knowledge produced will generate impact

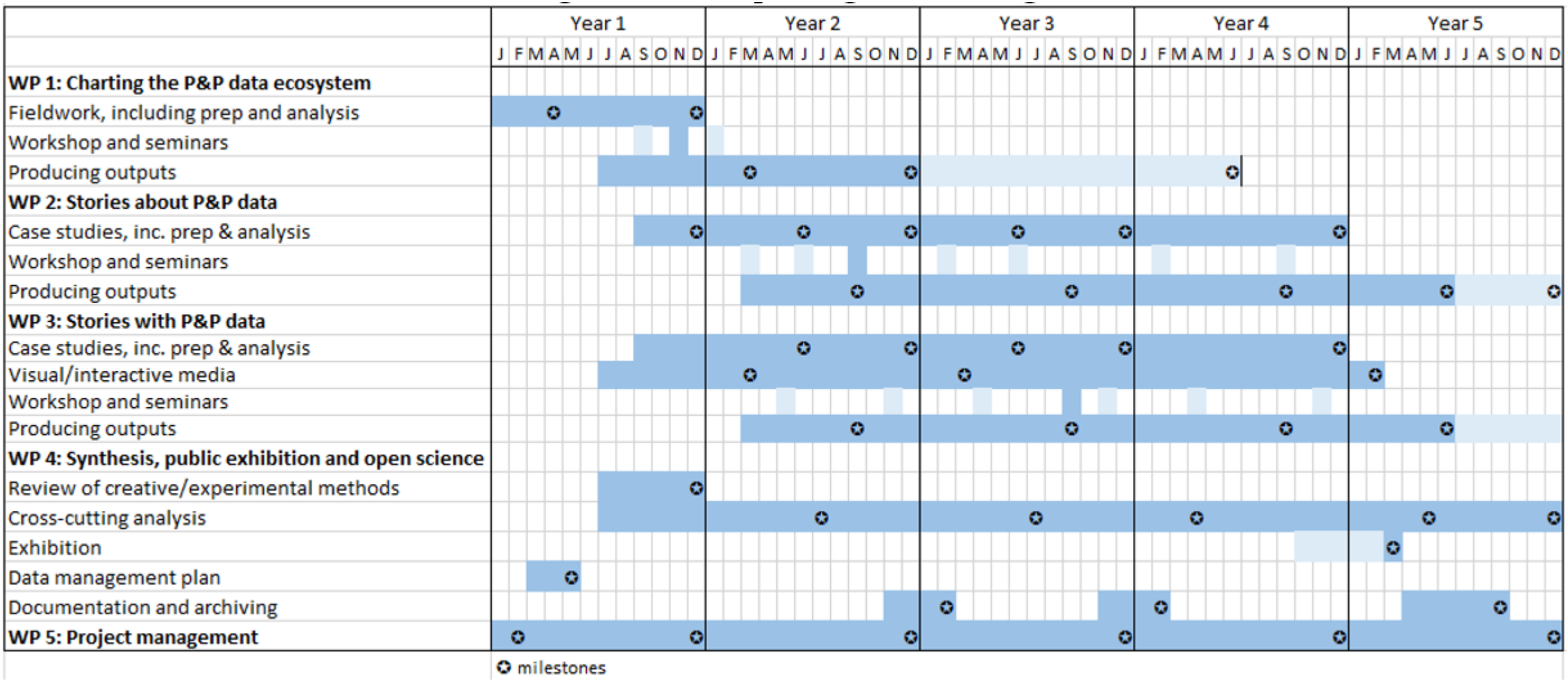
Write to the scoring

- ERC score card
- ***Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project***
- To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?
- To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain (i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a high risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims)?
- ***Scientific Approach***
- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain?
- ***Principal Investigator***
- To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
- To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?
- To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

What should be in the proposal …

- Follow an expected structured format of a research proposal (even for non-science projects)
- Needs clear rationale, aims/objectives and research questions (and how these questions will work together to produce more than sum of parts)
- Clear siting in relation to present state-of-the-art
- Conceptual and/or applied framing
- Lots of detail on methodology and methods, including case studies and sampling
- How the project will be operationalised through work packages
- Timeline (gantt chart)
- Identify potential risks, but also why the risks are worth it and how they'll be mitigated
- Ethics and data management plans
- Strong budget justification

Gantt Chart


Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4
Year 5
J F M A M J J A S O N D
WP 1: Charting the P&P data ecosystem
Fieldwork, including prep and analysis
Workshop and seminars
Producing outputs
WP 2: Stories about P&P data
Case studies, inc. prep & analysis
Workshop and seminars
Producing outputs
WP 3: Stories with P&P data
Case studies, inc. prep & analysis
Visual/interactive media
Workshop and seminars
Producing outputs
WP 4: Synthesis, public exhibition and open science
Review of creative/experimental methods
Cross-cutting analysis
Exhibition
Data management plan
Documentation and archiving
WP 5: Project management
milestones

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About the researcher

- No false modesty
- Stress esteem indicators
  - Scholarships/prizes
  - Invitations for talks/keynotes
  - Membership of advisory bodies, journal boards, organizing committees
  - Invitations to submit papers/book chapters
  - Media coverage
  - Translation of work
  - Citations and trajectory of citation
  - Highlight international impact
- Stress leadership and responsibility
  - PI or co-I on projects
  - Editorial roles
  - Organising events
  - Supervision
- Interpret CV for the reader

How it is said …

- Tell the scorers what they want to hear …
- In the way that want to hear it …
- Write for a high-level but general audience

Keep in mind …

- There cannot be any major weak points
- Maximize scores in every section
- Make sure all relevant information is provided
- Be bold, but do not over-reach
- Do not be modest, but also do not over-claim
- Do not on-board weak partners
- Affiliate with institutes and centres and use their resources information
- Use institutional research office advice and resources
- Seek peer advice, especially from experienced grant winners (or collaborate with them)
- Ensure enough time to prepare
- If re-applying (and you should), use the feedback from first time to strengthen bid