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**Checklist**

**Before submitting the application**

* Application form signed by the applicant and the supervisor
* 2 confidential letters of reference

**Guidance on writing your proposal**

1. **Describe your previous education, training, and research in limnology or related fields (100 words). Here, if applicable, you may also list up to 3 papers on which you are a co-author.**

Here, you need to list your relevant education. As the word limit is very short, you may use a bullet list. It is important you list the education and training you received that is relevant to the research you want to carry out. For example, if you propose to use a specific methodology, you can show here that you have taken a course on it during your studies. If you have multiple publications, select those that are most relevant to the topic you are proposing. You can provide the journal ranking and impact factor for your publication (e.g. IF2023: 3.1; SCimago2023: Q1]).

1. **Explain your skills and experience (100 words):**

This is the part where you can show why you are the best person to carry out the proposed project. Don’t be shy and list all the skills and experiences that you have focusing on those that are the most relevant for the proposed work. For example, if you are planning to work with an organism or in a habitat, you should mention if you have already worked with these. It is important that you do not only write a list of the skills but you provide some support for these. For example, if you want to mention fieldwork experience, provide some details on what the fieldwork entailed, how long you engaged in it, what specific techniques you used etc. If you are proposing a project where you use specific methodology, technique, or equipment, you should mention here any previous experience you have using them.

Examples of hard skills: *specific laboratory techniques (e.g. eDNA work, water chemistry analysis, flowcytometry), fieldwork, use of specific field equipment, statistical analysis (ANOVA, NMDS, PCA, GLM), software (R, SPSS, GIS)*

Examples of soft skills: *project management, problem-solving, collaboration, time management*

1. **Describe the research or training that you will conduct under Tonolli support, including an explanation of the problem, key questions to be answered by the study, and methods to be employed (400 words).**

This is the most important part of your application where you have the chance to showcase the project you want to undertake.

The structure of this section should follow a funnel structure. You should introduce your topic and provide background information and place the work in the broader context. Give enough background information that someone who is not in your field can still understand the importance of the study and its relevance. From the broader context, get more and more specific and land at the knowledge gap. This is where the novelty of your project comes in and tries to address this gap. Then, you should formulate 2-3 research questions which should be specific and focused. These questions are important because you need to be able to answer them by the end of your project and these can guide you through your analyses so formulate them carefully. If your project is not merely descriptive, make sure you state the ecological hypothesis you plan to put to the test and the associated predictions. Finally, describe the methods you are planning to use, including the statistical approach to analyse the data generated. Make sure that the methods you select are appropriate to answer your research questions. You do not need to describe widely used methods (e.g. multimeter probe, kick-net sampling for macroinvertebrates or Secchi disc), but if you plan to employ more specific techniques, provide more details and explanation. Always include the relevant references, for both conceptual and methodological sections.

1. **Describe the significance of the proposed research to limnology, to your own country and at the international level (300 words).**

Here you have the chance to explain the importance of your proposed work. What is the novelty of the project? How does it contribute to the current knowledge in limnology? Are you addressing important conservation, restoration or environmental protection issues? Does your project have implications for society e.g. studying invasive species, fishery research, ecosystem services? Does your project improve current monitoring protocols?

1. **Please provide a budget of the expenses you would like to be covered by this award. You can include consumables and travel to/from sampling. Your request can range USD 1000-1500.**

Provide a detailed budget plan with all the expenses you expect to arise during your proposed work. Writing a thorough, detailed budget helps you plan your work better and it also helps the reviewers evaluate your application. All the items you write here should be mentioned above, so the reviewers understand why that item is needed. Similarly, anything you mentioned in the above texts, you need to include here. After reading the previous sections, it should be clear to the reviewers what you need and why it is included in your budget plan.

**General tips**

* Keep the word limit

It is important that you keep the word limit but provide enough detailed information. Try to use the available space wisely, for example, avoid using filler words that do not add meaning to your text but take up valuable space.

* Use tools to improve your text

There are many free, online tools available to improve your text, especially if your native language is not English. There are online dictionaries, thesauruses, translation solutions and even AI help. It is important that you do not use AI to write your text instead of you, because it will ALWAYS be obvious to the reviewers. However, you can use it to improve your text, for example by removing repetitions or making your text shorter, and more succinct.

* Cite the relevant literature and provide the list of references at the end of the proposal

Applicants should cite at least five internationally published journal articles that they have read and served as inspiration for the work that they are undertaking. Citing relevant literature shows the reviewers that you have a thorough knowledge of the topic you would like to work on. It is important that you provide a reference list at the end of your document for the publications you cited within the text. Make sure not to include references in the list that do not appear in the text. There are free tools to manage your references easily.

* Keep the formatting tidy and easy to read

Although reviewers will judge the scientific content of your application, it is important to keep your application form neat. Try to use fonts that are easy to read (Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman) and keep the formatting consistent throughout the document. Avoid grammatical mistakes.

* Try to think as a reviewer

Once you have your application ready, try to read it as if you were the reviewer. The person evaluating your application will be a limnologist but they might not be working in the same specific field as you. If you are describing a method or technique that is not widely used, you might need to provide more detail on it. If you are planning to work with a specific organism, again, you might need to explain in a bit more detail why you chose that organism. The reviewers are likely from a different country or region, thus if you will work on a specific ecosystem or habitat (e.g. a wetland or lake famous in your country), you might need to explain the importance of that habitat.

* Use feedback from previous applications

If you have received feedback on a previous successful or unsuccessful application, use that constructive feedback to improve your current application.

* Ask a colleague for feedback

It is always a good idea to ask a friend or colleague to read your application and provide feedback. Someone outside of your specific field can act like a reviewer and help improve your proposal.

* Be realistic with the workload

When you are writing the proposal, you should be realistic about the amount of work you are taking on. You should take on enough work to be able to answer your research questions and it should be thorough enough for the amount of funds you are applying for. On the other hand, you should think about the time available for you to conduct the research and not promise too much. The reviewers have to see that you will use the funds well but you also understand the scope of the work.

* Use a Gantt chart

Using a Gantt chart would help you plan your work and set milestones for your progress. You may include this in your application to show the reviewers that you have a feasible plan for the proposed work.

**Resources**

* English grammar check:
  + Grammarly ([www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com))

Grammarly is an English language writing assistant software tool. It is available as a browser extension. It can be used when working with Google Docs. **Free version** of the app is available.

* + Microsoft Word/Google Docs

The **built-in** grammar check in a Word/Google Doc document works well and can improve the text.

* Dictionary and thesaurus:
  + <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
  + <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
* Translation:
  + DeepL ([www.deepl.com/en/translator](https://www.deepl.com/en/translator))

DeepL Translator is a [neural machine translation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neural_machine_translation) service. The translator can be used for **free with a limit** of 1,500 characters per translation.

* + Google Translate (<https://translate.google.com/>)

**Free** online translation tool available in most languages.

* AI for text editing:
  + ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com/>)

ChatGPT is a generative artificial intelligence chatbot.

* Reference management system:
  + Zotero (<https://www.zotero.org/>)

Zotero is a **free,** easy-to-use tool to help you collect, organise, annotate, cite, and share research. It can be downloaded to your desktop and used as a browser extension. It allows you to add references with just one click in your browser. It can be added as a plug-in to Google Docs to organise your references and create a bibliography.

* + Mendeley (<https://www.mendeley.com/>)

Mendeley is a **free** reference manager that can help you **store**, organise, note, share and cite references and research data.

**Online articles and videos on research grant proposal writing**

* <https://scientific-publishing.webshop.elsevier.com/research-process/writing-scientific-research-project-proposal/>
* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03914-5>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHA-8-o0Nyw>
* <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/grant-proposals-or-give-me-the-money/>
* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn2/art-of-writing-proposals-dsd-e-56b50ef814f12.pdf>
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9475994/>