

HFSP is a 'niche' program which invites innovative collaborative projects, rather than those which are scientifically solid but not of a "Frontier" character. Applicants are asked to take this "caveat" seriously, lest our review system be overloaded. In recent years we have received significantly more letters of intent, many of which were "non-Frontier" applications. Disappointed applicants were often first rate scientists sticking their successful individual ongoing research programs together, each of which are well suited to national funding programs, often incremental, with little or no sign of synergy coming from the collaboration. If this trend continues, the current HFSP grant program may be threatened as the load on the international review committee members will be unreasonable.

Basic do's and don'ts for a successful letter of intent.

Get a novel idea. Ask yourself what you would really like to know even if the technique is not as yet available.

READ THE GUIDELINES AND THE FAQ.

Do:

- Start your planning a few months before the submission deadline. Even though a letter of intent is a short format, reviewers are looking for a well thought out plan presented succinctly.
- think about a paper or presentation that you've seen recently that suggested a new twist for your research program or excited you enough to consider a complete change in your research
- do a literature search on the author(s) concerned to get an idea of their interests and willingness to collaborate – send them a preliminary mail asking whether they are interested.
- think carefully about the team members before inviting them to join the project, avoid duplicating contributions and creating a team that is too large to be convincing. HFSP does not fund 'consortiums'.
- think about the interaction in a practical way, how will each partner contribute, how can you plan the flow of ideas, materials and results backwards and forwards between the partners? Are there critical steps where the project depends upon the success of one team member? Can you see alternative strategies if such a block arises?

Don't:

- construct a 'me-too' project by using a published approach for your gene/your species/your signaling pathway etc. unless you are adding something really innovative that has not been seen in the published studies.
- invite people doing the same type of research as you, using the same techniques and publishing alongside you in the same journals to form a team.
- look for 'sleeping' partners just because they have a big name, are in a prestigious institute or in the 'right' country to give your team an intercontinental flavor
- send in proposals that would be better suited for national or regional (European) funding schemes. The review committee eliminates many sound proposals that are clinically orientated or of very narrow expertise because the underlying idea does not promise to push back the limits of knowledge.
- be satisfied with just proposing the next obvious step in your current program – very many others will be doing exactly the same thing and will be rejected for that reason.