

NRN-LCEE Research Development Fund R39GO1/CC8004/RDF007

Proposal Writing Workshops for Marie Skłodowska Curie Individual Fellowships

Workshop 1 - Life Sciences Hub, Cardiff, CF10 4PL. 04-05th July 2016

Workshop 2 – Bangor University, LL57 2DG. 09-10th August 2016

Background:

The Horizon2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Individual Fellowships (IF) call opened 12th April 2016, DEADLINE 14th September 2016. These fellowships enable fully funded talented postdoc fellows from outside of the UK, to come to Welsh HEIs for up to 2 years to work on a specific research project. Applications to this particular scheme has been targeted for support by the NRN as **integrating international fellows into the NRN clusters will give all PIs involved in NRN clusters, or projects, the opportunity to exploit interest from international researchers to join their teams. As the NRN topics are already identified as Welsh research priorities, the initiative will automatically support capacity building in these areas. The alternative under MSCA IF gives NRN fellows or staff the opportunity to continue their work in a third country and then re-integrate into their Welsh working groups with the aim of knowledge transfer.**

Aim:

The aim of the workshops was to increase the success rate of MSCA applications made by all Welsh HEI within the remit of the NRNs, especially the NRN LCEE. MSCA Fellowships are highly competitive with low success rates (between 10% and 15%). Although the success of applicants who participated in the workshop and applied in September will not be available until 2017, the aim was that 75% of the workshop attendees would be submitted for the September 14th deadline.

The workshops offered the opportunity for prospective fellows and their supervisors to meet, co-write, and fine-tune their proposal together, while receiving advice on how best to approach the different parts of the proposal from expert trainers, previous successful applicants and experienced evaluators of the scheme. The workshops offered a totally new joint training format open to all Welsh HEIs, allowing fellows and supervisors from different institutions to learn together and from each other - fostering a collaborative 'team Wales' approach to MSCA.

Workshop 1 Cardiff 04-05th July 2016, :Life Sciences Hub, Cardiff, CF10 4PL

Outline: 2 day workshop for possible applicants for MSCA Individual fellowship call – deadline 14th September 2016. The workshop offered attendees advice on how best to approach the different sections of the proposal from a number of experts:

1. J. M. Beames - previous successful applicant and current MSCA fellow at Cardiff University.
2. Carol Featherston - experienced MSCA IF evaluator who has been on the MATENG panel in 2013, 2014 & 2015.
3. Geraint Green (WEFO) gave a presentation on “Supporting research and innovation in Wales”.

Outcomes:

- Excluding trainers the workshops had a total of 13 attendees, 11 potential fellows and 2 Supervisors. No fellow/supervisor pairings at this workshop.
- From the 11 fellows, 9 of these fell under the NRN research topics.
- 8 applications (NRN) were submitted for the 14th September deadline (89%).
- Total 9 applications out of a possible 13.
- Supervisors from Cardiff Metropolitan University shared information from the workshop with colleagues which resulted in applications (not included in figures).

Workshop 2 Bangor 09th10th August 2016, Bangor University, LL57 2DG

Outline: 2 day workshop for possible applicants for MSCA Individual fellowship call – deadline 14th September 2016. The workshop offered attendees advice on how best to approach the different sections of the proposal from a number of experts:

1. Dr Juanita Mora Gomez - previous successful MSCA applicant and current MSCA fellow at Bangor University. Juanita had attended a previous workshop held at Bangor in 2015.
2. Dr Richard Holland, Bangor University- experienced MSCA IF evaluator.
3. Baudewijn Morgan (WEFO) gave a presentation on “Supporting research and innovation in Wales” which included information for applicants on secondment opportunities.
4. Professor Neville Ford, Dean of Research, Chester University – Experienced MSCA who has chaired MSCA panels for many years.

Outcomes:

- Excluding trainers the workshop had a total of 12 attendees, 7 potential fellows and 5 Supervisors. There were 3 fellow/supervisor pairings at this workshop.
- From the 7 fellows, 3 of these fell under the NRN research topics.
- 3 applications (NRN) were submitted for the 14th September deadline (100%).
- Total 7 applications out of a possible 8.
- One proposal was submitted by Bangor University with a PI who attended the 2015 workshop.(Ying Weng, Computer Science).

Overall Summary from both Workshops

Total number of attendees: 25, (18 fellows, 7 supervisors)

Total possible applications: 21

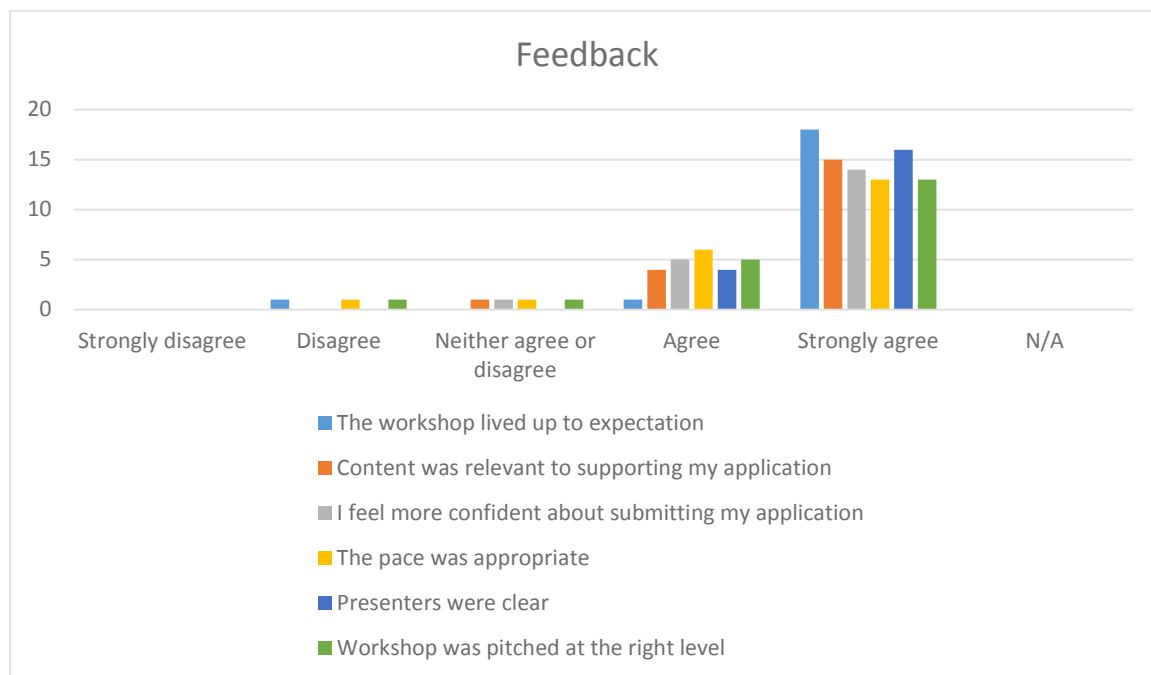
Total number of applications: 16 (76%)

Total number of NRN applications: 11 out of a possible 12 (92%).

The total value of applications submitted (11 NRN applications) equates to over 2M€ if successful.

Feedback results

Feedback was collected from both workshops, summarised in table below. (Total number of responses = 20)



100% of the feedback agreed/strongly agreed that the presenters were clear.

95% of the feedback agreed/strongly agreed that the workshop lived up to expectation, the content was relevant to supporting the applications and that they felt more confident about submitting a successful application after participation in the workshops.

90% of the feedback agreed/strongly agreed that the pace of the workshops were appropriate and pitched at the right level.

Next steps

To check the success rate of the applications – not anticipated until early 2017. Also a number of attendees had not completed their applications therefore it would be interesting to follow up if any will apply for the next call in September 2017.

Organisers

The organisers included Debbie Taylor & Sonia Monteiro (Cardiff University), Anne Howells & Sian Davies (Aberystwyth University) and Cornelia Thomas (Bangor University).