

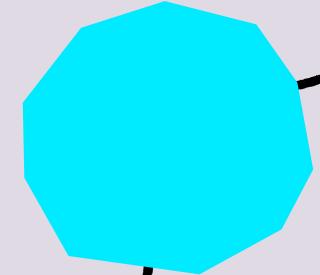


# How to write a Q funding bid

A guide for Q members



Q is led by the Health Foundation  
and supported by partners across  
the UK and Ireland



# Introduction

Over the years, we have gathered a lot of information on how members write Q Exchange funding bids and what makes them successful. We've compiled that information into this handy guide, to help you write your funding application. It focuses on Q Exchange, but the guidance applies to other Q funding programmes too.

There's a knack to writing a great funding application. Practice helps, but there are also some 'rules' to consider to demonstrate your project's design, development, and eventual delivery.

This guide covers what makes a well-written and well-designed application.



This guide is interactive. You can use this menu to help you navigate the document. Jump to a specific section, or read it from cover to cover.

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# Does your project align with the theme or funding criteria?

Every year a fantastic range of funding proposals are submitted to Q. But projects need to clearly align with the theme or funding criteria to be shortlisted.

- You should present a compelling need for your project.
  - Make sure your project is clearly aligned to the challenge set by the programme.
- For Q Exchange the project should tackle a priority issue for the health system where it is based.



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# How feasible is your project within available resources?

- Be realistic about the scope of your project.
- Demonstrate that the project can be completed during the funding period.
- Demonstrate how you will work within the funding being offered.
- Clarify if the project sits within a bigger programme or not.
- Use a SMART framework to set objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Provide detail on how you will recruit to backfill roles so you can deliver the work within the funding timeframe.
- Clearly show the time scheduled for conversations, across a health system or patient pathway, about project development and implementation.
- Set out possible next steps after the funding period has ended.



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# Collaborating, engaging and co-designing

## How have stakeholders, including patients and service users, been involved in developing the idea?

Consult as widely as possible about your proposal and try to form a multi-disciplinary (sometimes multi-organisational) team. Or at the very least a comprehensive engagement plan.

You should:

- Ensure patients and carers are involved in and can influence, any changes that will have a direct effect on the care that they or their families will receive.
- Map your processes, stakeholders, and systems so you know who, where and what will be impacted by any changes.
- Consider the diversity within your project team. How are you working with patients, care staff, improvement experts, and project managers?

Involving and engaging patients, carers and the public in quality improvement ensures their active participation in making health care better and is a vital part of person-centred care.

Past projects have learnt that patient and public involvement and engagement takes planning and time. There will be barriers to engagement, which will need to be addressed at the planning stage and throughout the life of the project.

Engagement could involve:

- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Co-design/production workshops
- Meetings with existing patient groups.



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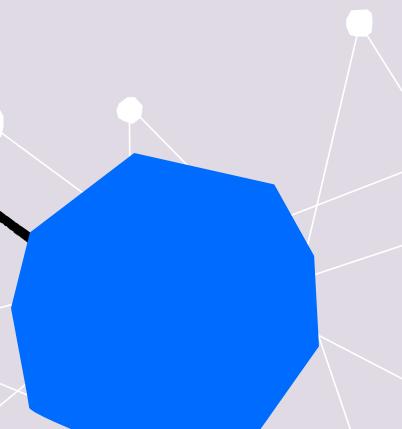
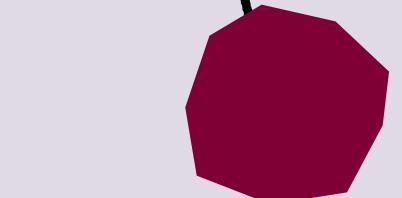
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# Engaging the Q community

Working with the Q community when shaping a proposal is a good way to build relationships or have conversations that cut across a system. It's also an important part of how Q Exchange projects are assessed.

## Ways to involve Q members in your project

- Use Q members' insights to sharpen your idea and discover who to connect with for expertise.
- Actively invite and engage with comments on your project.
- Could you collaborate with those leading other projects?
- Share your experience and expertise on other applications.
- Think about how the community can engage with your project through implementation and beyond.



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# Who is writing your proposal?

Skills in proposal writing are crucial for any funding bid. You should consider who can do this well in the available time. It should be someone who can help assessors understand your project. This may not be someone in a clinical leadership position on the team, or the person who is closest to the project.

Assessors struggle when a proposal has been put together in a hurry, is not fully thought through, or is unclear. Find a team member who has the capacity to articulate your project idea clearly.

Information in this guide is designed to support you to apply for funding, regardless of your experience with proposal writing.



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# How to write your proposal

## Write in plain English

Make your writing easily and quickly accessible, so anyone can read and understand it. This doesn't mean changing the meaning of your messages or dumbing down your knowledge and expertise.

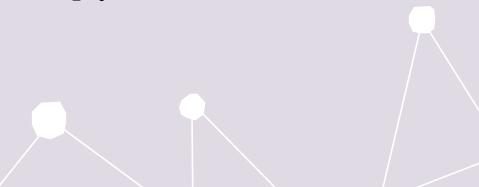
In writing your bid, consider the following:

- **Organise your information.** Put important details early and use a logical order to help the reader.
- **Use more verbs and fewer nouns.** This will help keep your writing active and easily understood. Include a subject, verb and object in each sentence.
- Eg instead of '*The document was read by Oliver today*', say '*Oliver read the document today*'.
- **Use active language.** Be clear, direct and to the point.

- **Use short sentences.** Short sentences are easier to understand. Breaking writing down so that each sentence has one clear point makes complex information more digestible. Do not sacrifice clarity for brevity: use more words if it helps people to understand.
- **Avoid using jargon** or colloquialisms to get your point across.
- **Explain any acronyms** when you first use them.
- **Delete unnecessary words or details.**
- **Get someone to proofread your writing.**

Find more [tips on writing in plain English](#)

Tools like [Hemingwayapp.com](https://www.hemingwayapp.com) can help you edit your sentences.



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# Why is the project needed?

## Aim statement

Start with a clear and purposeful statement on what you want to achieve. Teams with clear aims end up performing better.

The aim statement is the foundation for the rest of the application.

Sketch out:

- What you're doing (the ambition, proposed change and scale of the change)
- Who it will benefit
- When it will be completed
- How much impact it will have
- How you will measure and evaluate success.

While you will want to focus on your proposed population, don't forget to include the potential for other service areas or populations.

[Read more about developing an aims statement](#)

## Your case for change

- What is the need for your project?
- How will it benefit the patients/community outlined?
- What evidence is already available to support you?

Reference this in your application.

Evidenced-based proposals are more successful. Supporting evidence could include:

- Data on the burden of disease
- Patient or carer feedback
- Survey data
- Research evidence
- Knowledge of existing work in the field
- Previous improvement work you want to build on
- Links to national strategy, good practice guidance or other existing literature.



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# Budget

Budgets should be looked at carefully to ensure that the project will be affordable. You should identify all the costs in your budget, explain why they are reasonable and explain the benefits of what you're asking to fund. Assessors will consider whether the project is value for money.

Clearly state any project management arrangements, with the time and budget allocated in the project plan and budget.

Measuring value for money is often done retrospectively, but it is important to consider value at the application stage, along with how ongoing costs will be picked up locally following Q funding.

If you have secured matched or additional funding, you should make this clear in your application.

## DO

- Provide detail in your budget.
- Carefully read the guidance on submitting your budget.
- Make sure you budget for project management time to support successful delivery of the project.
- Detail costs of recruitment and backfill posts.

## DON'T

- Include budget for existing staff delivery roles.



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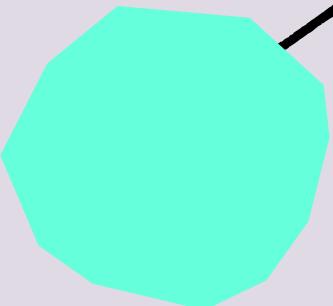
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# Evaluation

**How will you measure progress and impact, both during and after the funded period?**

Clearly set out how you'll monitor progress.

Demonstrating how you will measure the impact of your project will help bring the aims and objectives to life. Building in metrics will help with planning, and enhance the sustainability of the project. They'll also enable you to make the case for ongoing investment, changes to practice, or support.



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# Sharing learning

## How will you gather insight and share learning for your project?

Set out how you'll use existing networks and methods to share learning. But also consider how you could expand to reach a wider audience across a range of sectors and stakeholder groups.



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- Embed the theme in your project and proposal.
- Present a compelling need for your project.
- Make a clear, evidence-based case for change.
- Take readers on a clear and logical journey through your project.
- Be clear about how you will involve patients, service users, and wider stakeholders in your project.
- Show evidence of engaging and collaborating with Q members in preparing your bid.
- Decide who will write your proposal.

- Start your proposal with a clear aim statement.
- Make sure your method and delivery approach are clear, and your narrative aligns with your timeline.
- Make sure your budget is detailed and reflects what you're trying to achieve.
- Be realistic about what you can achieve with the time and budget.
- Provide clear measures for the work and how you will adjust based on findings.
- Clearly show how you will evaluate your intervention and share learning.

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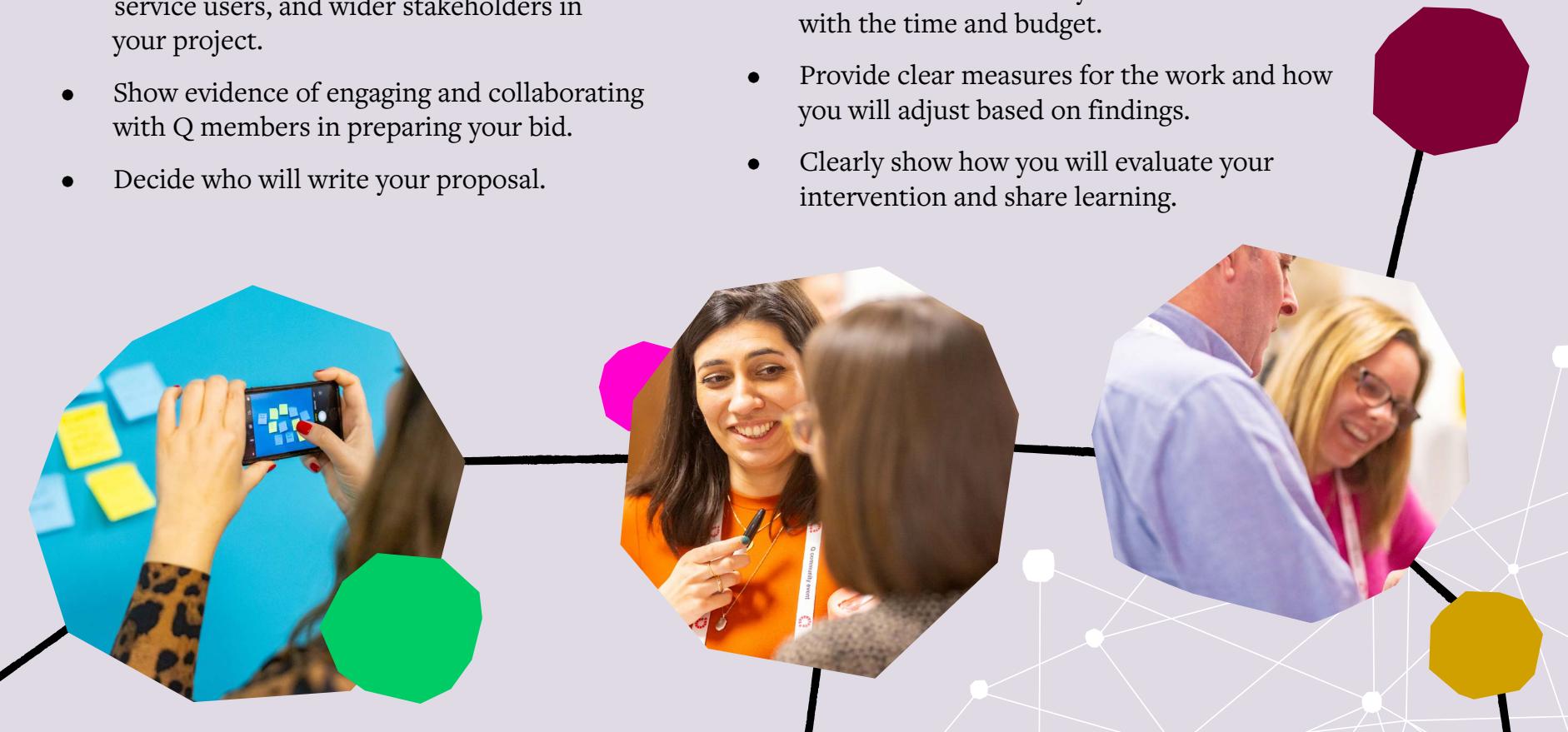
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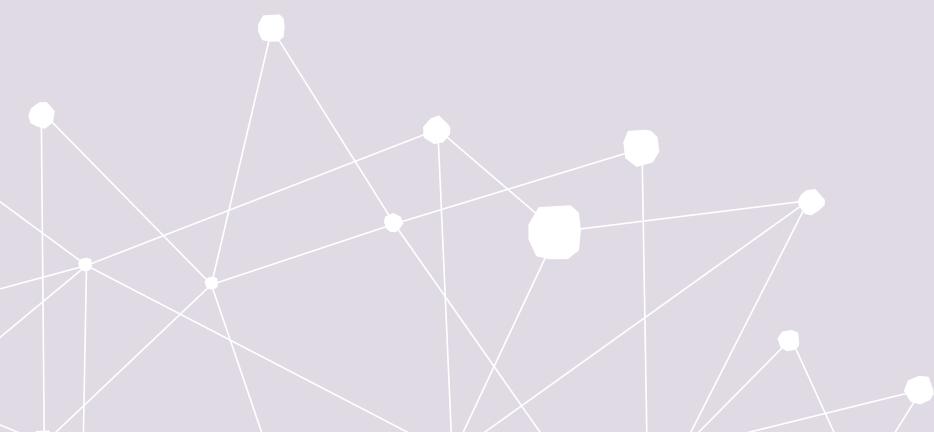
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This guide has been compiled from two comprehensive documents:

- [Q Exchange guidance for future applicants](#), a summary of feedback from Q Exchange 2, by Sarah Campbell
- [Feedback for Q Exchange 4 applicants](#), by Helen Crisp

## Evaluation

- [Making data count](#), NHS England
- Q Special Interest Groups:
  - [Measurement for Improvement](#)
  - [Evaluation](#)



### Involving and engaging stakeholders

- [The Improvement Journey](#), the Health Foundation
- [The challenge and potential of whole system flow](#), the Health Foundation
- [Perspectives on context](#), the Health Foundation
- Q Special Interest Groups: [Complexity Approaches to support Quality Improvement](#)

### Involving patients and the public

- The Point of Care Foundation have published an [Experience-based co-design toolkit](#)
- We also covered patient involvement and engagement in one of the [feedback webinars for Q Exchange 2019](#)
- There are also several Q Special Interest Groups which may be of use in this area:
  - [Co-production](#)
  - [PPI and Diversity](#)
  - [Making use of Patient Experience](#)
  - [Liberating Structures in health care](#)

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