

IMI2 JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

Call ID: IMI2 Call 4 stage 2

H2020-JTI-IMI2-2015-04

Enabling Platform on Medicine Adaptive Pathways to Patients

Coordination and support action

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Present at the evaluation: April 28, 2015

Background

Following the stage 1 evaluation which took place on February 26, 2015, only one proposal had to be examined during the stage 2 phase. The applicant consortium ranked first in stage 1 was invited to (i) form a full consortium including EFPIA participants, (ii) prepare and submit a full proposal to IMI2.

Before the on-site meeting

The key dates of this process can be summarized as follow:

- Deadline for submission of the full proposal to IMI2: 14 April 2015
- Remote access of the proposal to independent experts: 15 April 2015
- Deadline for completing individual reports from experts in the SOFIA tool: 23 April 2015
- Access of these aggregated reports to all experts and the independent observer on 25 April 2015
- On-site plenary session for final evaluation, panel discussion and reports on 28 April 2015

This fast track was conducted professionally and fairly and all necessary documents supporting the Stage 2 evaluation process were provided to the independent observer (IO) on time.

On-site panel meeting

Preliminaries

The agenda of the on-site evaluation received before the meeting was:

- Registration & networking breakfast
- Experts Briefing
- Welcome & introduction to panel by the moderator: Discussion of the full proposal–Preparation & finalization of the Consensus report and the Report of panel review

Five independent experts (IE) in total participated to the evaluation (2 females, 3 males). One expert was unable to come. He followed and actively contributed to the discussion by phone. A second expert arrived 1 hour late due to a delayed flight. This did not impact the evaluation process. All these experts gather in-depth experience and knowledge of the domain and were in capacity to assess the different facets of the proposal under examination. They were coming from different countries and different organizations. As described in the rules, and in line with the rules, no representatives of industry attended the meeting.

The experts briefing and the introduction by the moderator were performed in a very efficient way as during the Stage 1 process with the presentation of the IMI2 organization, the goal of the programme and the IMI vision, the measures of success, the two stage procedure, the overview of the evaluation process, the confidentiality rules and the conflict of interest, etc. This introduction highlighted the difference with Stage 1, in particular in the final go/no go decision. The process relied on the scope, the operational capacity and 3 criteria with values between 0 to 5 for excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of the implementation. Each of these criteria were detailed in the documentation provided to the experts by IMI at a more granular level.

Discussion of the full proposal

One of the experts acted as rapporteur and was in charge of summarizing the project features and the individual reports sent independently by experts before the on-site meeting. Positive comments as well as negative ones were pinpointed. This allowed managing in a very efficient way the discussion. It also appeared that the distant individual scorings were highly coherent.

This discussion on pros and cons was well argued, very active and spontaneous and involved all the experts. Little intervention of the moderator was necessary: soliciting sometimes the distant expert (but most often he was intervening on his own in the exchange), summarizing the points of view expressed to be sure that there was no misinterpretation and that everybody agreed on. The scoring of individual criteria took place only after the panel collectively examined all the criteria, this choice permitting to get a full vision of the proposal and to set the scores accordingly.

Preparation & finalisation of consensus report and of report of panel review

This step started by the end of the morning. The expert initially in charge of the introductory summary wrote a first draft of the consensus report. Sent to the SOFIA platform of IMI, this draft was displayed on screen and interactively modified. The consensus on the contents was already obtained during the phase before, so the modifications basically concerned the wording. This exercise took time. When completed and approved, each expert received a printed and an e-mailed version. This version was read independently by the experts and some last corrections were made and unanimously approved.

The last step was devoted to the panel review with a request of the moderator to express comments and recommendations of the experts.

Before closing the meeting, an informal and open discussion took place between the experts, the moderator and the independent observer (refer to recommendations).

Observations and recommendations

The IO has been part of a number of national committees in Europe (Sweden, Spain, France, etc.) and in the US. He served also several times as IO for the European Commission (6th and 7th Framework Programme). The guidelines, the procedures and practices are very close to EC ones and are now well established. On the overall, the process is of very high quality as confirmed during the meeting by all the European experts.

This IO report is based on:

- reading of all documents provided by IMI through e-mail or by access to the SOFIA platform.
- observing the evaluation process during all meeting phases (from briefing to reports)
- soliciting any impressions, comments of the experts on the procedures that were applied and recommendations for improvements
- discussing face-to-face with them the IE (during the breaks and the lunch buffet)
- asking questions to the IMI moderator and her assistant in order to avoid any misinterpretation of some comments during the discussions and to get additional information when necessary.

The documentation related to IMI2 Call 4 Stage 2 either sent by e-mail or accessed through the SOFIA platform was gathering the information already used for the evaluation of Stage 1¹. As stated in the IO previous report on Stage 1, the information package provided beforehand was considered of very high quality by the experts. It covers all the relevant aspects of the Call, from the initial proposal template to the evaluation criteria. The efficiency and the facilities in use of the SOFIA platform were acknowledged.

In addition to these materials, the full proposal corresponding to the first-ranked project selected at Stage 1 was made available almost two weeks before the on-site meeting. This gives to the IO enough time for reading and preparing questions to IMI staff (procedure of Stage 2, experts present, decision process, etc.). A

¹ Call H2020-JTI-IMI2-2015-04-two-stage.Coordination and support action; IMI2 evaluation form for coordination and support actions; Summary of the most relevant provisions for participating in IMI2 actions; IMI2 manual for submission evaluation and grant award; Observer report template

phone call was set between the IO and IMI staff to clarify some of these issues and to get proper answers. The fact that aggregated reports arrived only a few days before the meeting was not a problem neither for the independent observer nor for the experts.

In the IO opinion, and this fully confirmed the observations made at Stage 1, the evaluation was carried out by fully respecting the applicable rules and in line with the guidelines publicly available. Experts were of a high quality as it could be observed during the discussion of the proposal. They had the relevant expertise to allow them analyzing the respective merits and shortcomings, contributing to a well-informed consensus decision and report. The evaluation and the on-site discussions were fair and transparent. The final evaluation report fits very well with the consensus opinion of the panel.

Only one expert was unable to attend the on-site meeting but participated and contributed to the discussions and evaluation through teleconferencing. This was managed nicely by the moderator. Panel members were fully aware of the objectives and criteria of the evaluation process, the tasks and the process they had to carry out and to follow, the decision to be taken, the importance of their scoring, reporting and their further recommendations on the process itself.

The moderation of the session was performed with professionalism and impartiality. It allows respecting the all viewpoints while well ensuring the conduct of the session. Advices were provided when necessary. There was no Conflict of Interest. Positive expert comments were received by the IO concerning the role and the contribution of the moderator. The IT tools used were considered as efficient and easily manageable both for remote evaluation and for the on-site writing, modification and completion of the reports.

The facilities offered during the meeting and the responsiveness of the IMI staff were excellent. This comment applies to the welcome, the infrastructure and working conditions and the administrative logistics. All the management of travels and accommodations has been achieved smoothly before and during the session. The remuneration of the experts strictly followed the EC rules and was no commented by the experts during the session.

One of the recommendations made after the Stage 1 by the IO was to help beforehand the expert in charge of summarizing the proposal and the individual reports in order to start the panel evaluation. This task was very well performed and allows focusing the discussion on the most important points.

A minor point would be to ask to the experts to arrive the day before the meeting. The IO knows, after discussing with the expert concerned in the present case, that the professional constraints can make difficult such solution but it should be strongly recommended. For this evaluation, hopefully, the morning delay did not have any impact because the discussion was just starting.

Regarding the panel review, the points made by the experts were (i) the short-timing of the process for this particular call and (ii) that all the weaknesses identified in Stage 1 were not addressed in the full proposal. Point (i) assumes that the experts will be fully available to individually review the proposal(s) in a distant mode about 10 days before the deadline for reporting. This can be organized in advance. The last informal exchange between the IO, the IE and the moderator has shown that this fast track procedure is exceptional and only justified for urgent, strategic operations. The Call on “Enabling Platform on Medicine Adaptive Pathways to Patients” belongs for the IO to such category. There is no doubt that the experience acquired in this case will serve in the future. It must be said also that the short-time is perhaps more critical for the proposers themselves. Going from a short proposal to a full proposal with all the issues to address (personnel involved, agreements between partners, budget, etc.) is not so easy and may be very early prepared with the risk to finally fail. Nevertheless, the panel recommendation to address the comments made at Stage 1 should be considered.

Acknowledgements

The IO thanks all experts for their availability and the comments/suggestions they made. They helped through informal and open discussions to establish this report. The IO further gratefully thanks the IMI staff for the

facilities offered, their competence and their excellent professionalism both before and during the meeting in Brussels.