



## A quick guide to Storyboards

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### Introduction

'Storyboarding' is a term borrowed from the movie industry. A film plot is broken down into different scenes. A rough sketch of the action, or a few words of dialogue, is enough to convey the important elements of the story. Sometimes these story elements are pasted onto boards and switched around until the right sequence is found. It quickly becomes apparent where the story is weak, where a scene can be cut or a flashback inserted to increase the pace. Good storyboarding means good planning – without this crucial process, everything would take much longer and costs would rocket.

The purpose of proposal storyboarding is to capture the essence of the bid segment without investing all the time and energy in writing it first. It is much more efficient to refine your thinking at the storyboard stage, change the order, adjust the emphasis, spot the missing items, remove duplication, and what is more, communicate this to the rest of the bid team.

### How you can use storyboards

These are all of the things that storyboards let you do:

- Agree the scope of writing tasks. An author can be confident of not overlapping with other authors, providing they stick to the topics within the storyboard
- Manage the boundaries between sections. Gaps and overlaps are much easier to identify, and avoid, at the storyboarding stage
- Invite comments from external reviewers at an early stage. Reviewing storyboards gives a useful view of what the proposal will look like, allowing reviewers to feed in suggestions early
- Allocate workshare. There should be a lead author assigned to each storyboard
- Size and resource the bid. Storyboarding the proposal gives you good information about page numbers and the amount of writing effort required
- Fine-tune the proposal structure. When you see the high-level structure of the proposal laid out as a set of storyboards, it becomes easier to see the best, and most logical, order to present information. It is worth taking time shuffling the order of storyboards to get a logical 'flow' to the information you are presenting

### The storyboard template

If you are outlining with storyboards, you will need a storyboard template. The best advice is to keep this simple, or it becomes onerous. The storyboard should distil the essence of what needs to go into each section. This covers more than just content, it is a record of what to emphasise, what underlying messages need to be communicated, and the practicalities, such as word count, need for graphics etc.

### What not to storyboard

Save your storyboarding efforts for the most important parts of your proposal. For example, an appendix containing CVs does not need storyboarding, and your pricing section will probably not need a storyboard either.

Even for sections that do not need storyboarding, it may be useful to include 'place holders', often just the title of the section without any storyboard topics filled in. This allows you to lay out (or pin on the wall) the entire proposal, section by section in outline. This is useful to get a sense of the whole document, to allocate work, and to see how areas fit together.

### Putting storyboards to work

After the storyboards have been created, the next step is to review the emerging outline. Your completed storyboards give you a view of how your finished proposal will look at both macro and micro levels. You can use this to get the structure right. It is the closest you can come to seeing the finished proposal before you have actually written it.

### Reviewing the bid structure

Gather the bid team and ask each member of the team to review the entire set of storyboards. This is important even though some individuals will only be involved in a certain part of a bid. It is always beneficial to get an overview of the entire solution, and often you can receive helpful suggestions this way. Changing a storyboard is relatively easy, and much easier than rewriting the bid later on.

### A Review Checklist

Ask your reviewers to comment on the following:

- Is the structure complete? (I.e. are there key sections missing?)
- Does the structure reflect what is asked for in the ITT?
- Is the bid the right length for the size of the opportunity?
- Are the right messages being put across in the right places?
- Is there too much/too little emphasis of the key themes?
- Are the key themes backed up by sufficient evidence?
- Is there a logical flow to the section headings?
- Is there unevenness in the level of detail between different sections?
- Do sections overlap or contain duplication?
- Is there a consistent tone throughout the bid (e.g. are some introductory paragraphs overtly formal/informal compared to the rest of the proposal?)
- Have the right people (with the right skills) been assigned to each section?
- Are the assignments realistic (e.g. is there an unfair or infeasible allocation of work to certain individuals?)