



Episode 6: Review, rejection and moving forward

Summary: Episode 6 of the STARTcast features a discussion between START's Program Specialist, Dr. Mzime Ndebele- Murisa and Dr. Blane Harvey, an Assistant Professor, and a William Dawson Scholar at McGill University in Canada. Blane is also an associate of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in the UK. Prior to holding these positions, Blane led work on learning and knowledge sharing of the IDRC's Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIIAA) and with the climate change team of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. Blane has worked with several funders and research consortia as a reviewer as well as a researcher and he is an Associate Editor of a journal. He therefore understands well the work 'behind the scenes' when it comes to review procedures. In this episode, Blane shares his experience and offers invaluable advice on research proposal review processes, why proposals get rejected, and how to deal with rejection including some of the lessons one can take.



Dr Blane Harvey, McGill University, Canada

Highlights:

- Make clear the problem you are trying to solve, why it is important, and the value add
- The quality, novelty and contribution need to be presented upfront
- Leave enough time for multiple proofreading
- Knowing stylistic differences will help you submit within funders' scope
- Get feedback from people experienced in your field
- Do not take it personal, understand and accept that rejection is completely normal and inevitable as a natural part of pursuing funding and sometimes it comes down to chance
- Most of us will be rejected more than we are successful
- It never hurts to ask for feedback; reviewing feedback carefully and with an open mind is an opportunity to learn the weaknesses and strengths of our proposals and therefore to improve our proposals
- Finding mentors and building a peer community is essentially for inexperienced researchers; while experienced researchers should pay it forward as mentors
- Do not let your failures or successes define you
- Propose the research that you want to do and not because of funding and ultimately if you are successful you will be much happier doing the work that you are passionate about

Links:

- [McGill](#)
- [Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia](#)