

Picker

Influence • Inspire • Empower

What Judges Are Really Looking For

How to write a stronger application and maximise your score

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The Biggest Finding

The project was often better than the submission

Many judges felt excellent projects lost marks because:

- Evidence wasn't presented clearly
- Outcomes weren't demonstrated
- Patient involvement wasn't explained
- Impact wasn't evidenced
- Transferability wasn't described

"Don't assume judges know your project. Show them."

What judges want to see

Impact, co-production, evidence, inclusion, leadership

The top 10 things that scored highly

- Clear problem statement
- Genuine co-production
- Patient stories
- Measurable outcomes
- Evidence of impact
- Inclusion and health inequalities
- Leadership
- Sustainability
- Transferability
- Learning and improvement

Activity vs impact

Show outcomes, not just activity

The most common weakness were through descriptions of meetings held, surveys completed, groups gathered etc where judges asked:

“So what happened as a result?”

Patient voice leads to higher scores

Who was involved and what changed?

The questions judges always asked were:

- Who was involved?
- How were they involved?
- What changed because of their involvement?

Strong evidence of this was:

- Patients helped design the service
- Carers sat on steering groups
- Service users influenced priorities
- Patients sat on interview panels
- Lived experience partners led changes

Use data properly

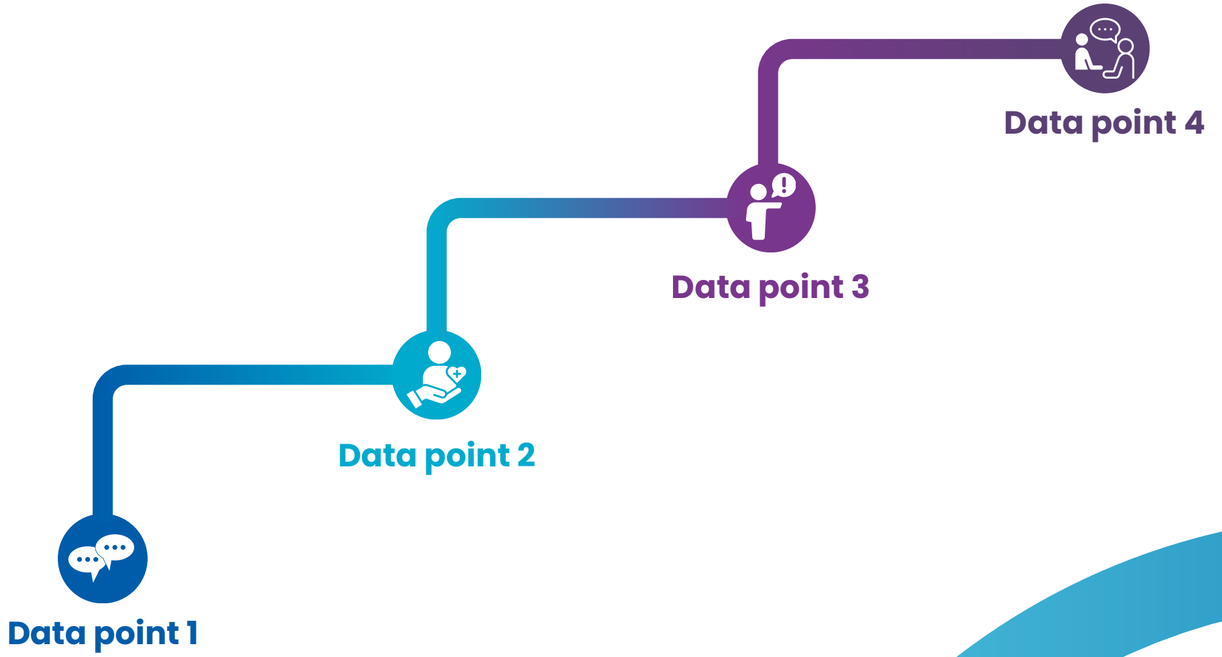
Baselines, trends and outcomes

Judges Love:

✅ Baselines
✅ Before-and-after comparisons
✅ Trend data
✅ National benchmarks
✅ Independent evidence

Judges Struggle With:

❌ Percentages without numbers
❌ Claims without evidence
❌ Activity counts only
❌ Outcomes without methodology



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Guide for future award submissions

Co-production matters

The single biggest theme was patients as equal partners. People spoke about co-production but this was often flagged as consultation.

Co-Production

✅ Patients as equal partners
✅ Patients on project teams
✅ Joint decision making
✅ Shared ownership
✅ Co-authorship and co-presentation

Consultation

❌ Asking people what they think
❌ Surveys
❌ Focus groups
❌ Feedback after decisions made

Inclusion matters

Be specific about groups reached

Judges Want To Know:

- Who was involved?
- Who was missing?
- What did you do differently?

Specific:

✅ "We worked with 18 people with learning disabilities."

✅ "We held sessions in community faith centres."

✅ "Materials were translated into 11 languages."

Generic:

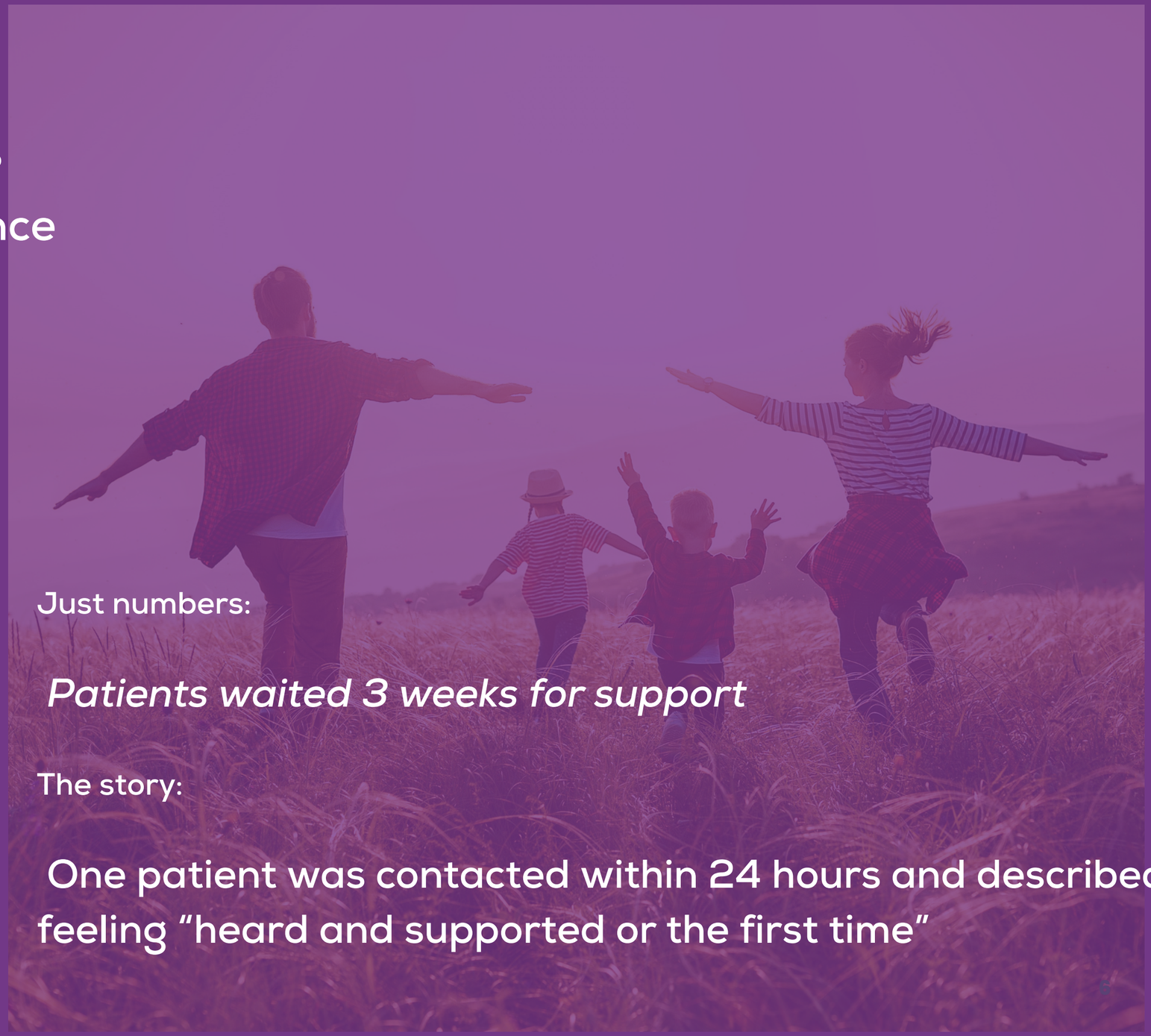
❌ "We engaged underserved groups."

So tell a story....

Numbers explain, stories convince

Many judges specifically asked for:

- Patient stories
- Family stories
- Carer experiences
- Before-and-after examples



Just numbers:

Patients waited 3 weeks for support

The story:

One patient was contacted within 24 hours and described feeling “heard and supported or the first time”

Start with the problem

Provide context and need

Never assume judges understand:

- Your specialty
- Your condition
- Your acronym
- Your pathway

Tell us:

- What was wrong?
- Why did it matter?
- Who was affected?
- What happened before?
- Why wasn’t that good enough?



Demonstrate Leadership

Leadership is influence, not title

Judges want evidence of:

- Influencing others
- Bringing people together
- Driving change
- Securing support
- Challenging existing thinking
- Overcoming barriers

Tell us:

- Who led?
- What resistance existed?
- How was it overcome?



Demonstrate Sustainability

Explain what happens next.

Strong submissions explained:

- Ongoing funding
- Governance structures
- Ownership
- Succession planning
- Monitoring arrangements
- Integration into routine practice

Judges Frequently Asked:

"What happens if the project lead leaves?"



Demonstrate Transferability

Help others replicate the work

Many excellent submissions lost marks here as they failed to explain what another organisation needs, time to implement, lessons learned, resources required and key success factors.

The stronger submissions provided:

- Toolkits
- SOPs
- Frameworks
- Templates
- Implementation guides

Include the challenges

Share barriers and learning

What didn’t work?

What barriers existed?

What did you learn?

The Strongest Submissions Were Honest

Many applications only described success.

Remember: honesty builds credibility.



Common Reasons Marks Were Lost

Jargon, repetition, missing evidence

Too much jargon
"I don't know what this means."

Too many acronyms
"Hard to follow as a non-clinical reader."

Too much repetition
"The same point appears throughout."

Not enough evidence
"The work sounds fantastic but I cannot score evidence that isn't there."

The Award-Winning Formula

Feedback → Action → Change → Outcome

A Strong Submission Structure:

1. Problem - What needed to change?
2. Co-Production - Who helped shape the solution?
3. Intervention - What did you do?
4. Inclusion - Who did you actively involve?
5. Sustainability - How will it continue?
6. Transferability - How can others adopt it?
7. Outcomes - What changed?
8. Learning - What would you do differently?
9. Human Impact - Tell a real story.

Picker

"The judges were often convinced the work was excellent. What determined the score was whether the submission proved it."

Show us the evidence | Show us the people | Show us the difference you made

Show us the difference

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Picker

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