

# Grant Evaluations

- observations and advice

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# Background

I have been a member of FNU since 2007

- › Danish Council for Independent Research: Natural Sciences
- › 16 members, 2 for Computer Science/Mathematics

A large volume:

- › in 2010 we received around 750 applications
- › Computer Science/Mathematics had 86 applications
- › total budget of 234 million DKK

Various grant instruments:

- › research projects
- › major research projects
- › postdoc stipends
- › Steno stipends
- › Sapere Aude (1+2)



# The Evaluation Process

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Applications are screened by the staff

- › required association with Denmark
- › correct grant instrument
- › budget sanity check

Sometimes external reviews are used

- › e.g. Sapere Aude, Council members

Applications are evaluated by the subject subcommittee

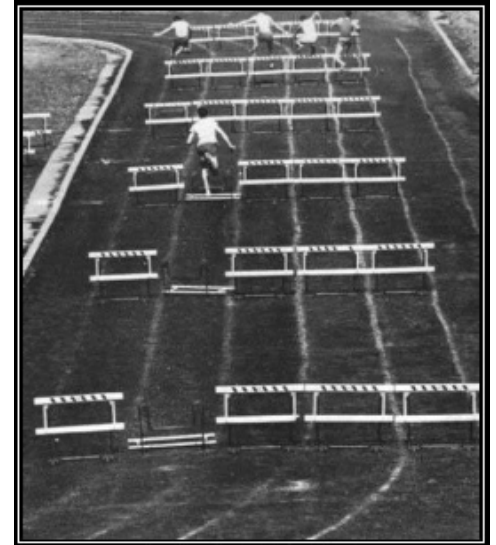
- › CV, project, budget

Applications are presented for the instrument subcommittee

- › very long Skype meetings
- › ABC rankings

Applications are discussed at a physical meeting

- › mainly confirming A's and Cs, long discussions about B's
- › possibly reallocating funds between instruments



# Evaluating an Application: CV

## Quantity and quality of publications

- › relative to PhD age
- › parental leave is always subtracted
- › your publications should be representative of your area
- › avoid a "noisy" publication list

## Impact

- › results, citations, h-index
- › you might as well directly tackle this yourself

## Difficult comparisons across subjects

- › Mathematics (1 publication/year) vs. Chemistry (15 publications/year)
- › the Council members gain some experience

See: *"How to Get a Permanent Position in Academia"*



# Evaluating an Application: Project

## Relevance for the Research Council

- › for FNU: is it **basic research** in **natural sciences**?

## Originality

- › new idea or approach
- › clear hypothesis

## Background

- › state of the art
- › required competences and facilities
- › (international) collaboration

## Plan

- › background → hypothesis → method → results
- › timeline, work packages (only if not contrived)



# Evaluating an Application: Budget

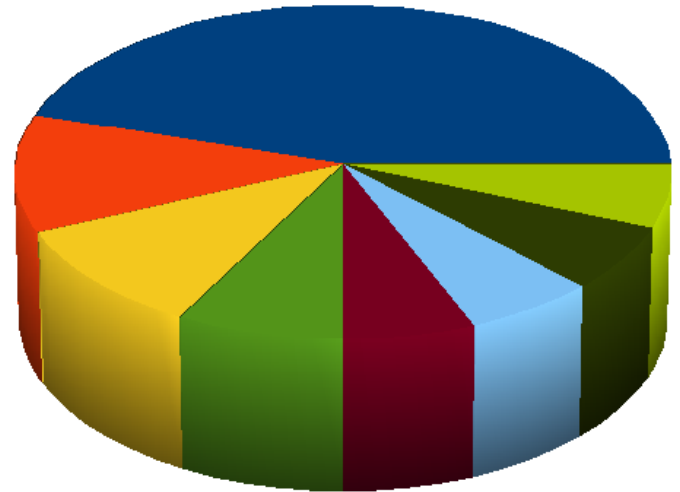
## Legality

- › correct pay scales
- › correct overheads for host institutions
- › within limits for the grant instrument
- › allowed expenses

## Motivation

- › relate expenses to the project
- › who are actually benefiting
- › what are they expected to contribute

Universities:	44%
Hospitals:	3%
GTS (Alexandra):	20%
Companies:	0%



## Budget reform 2009

- › we cannot (arbitrarily) reduce budgets
- › we cannot weigh in (lack of) co-financing from institutions
- › this generally results in larger budgets

# Typical Pitfalls

## Administrative rejection

- › inappropriate grant instrument
- › illegal budget
- › missing signatures or stamps

## Missing attachments

- › CVs for co-applicants
- › approval from host institution
- › project description

## Unconvincing CV

- › obscure publication list
- › unclear employment status

## Excessive budget

- › unjustified expenses
- › knowledge *can* be too expensive



# Success Rates

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Defined as percentage of applied funds that are granted

We have seen a steady decline since 2005

- › no significant decline in Research Council funding
- › increase in number of applications for all instruments
- › increase in amount of funds for each grant

The decline is even greater as percentage of applications

Funds per granted application increase

- › overhead reform (44%) without full compensation
- › spiraling salary costs
- › budget reform precludes trimming

Number of applications increases

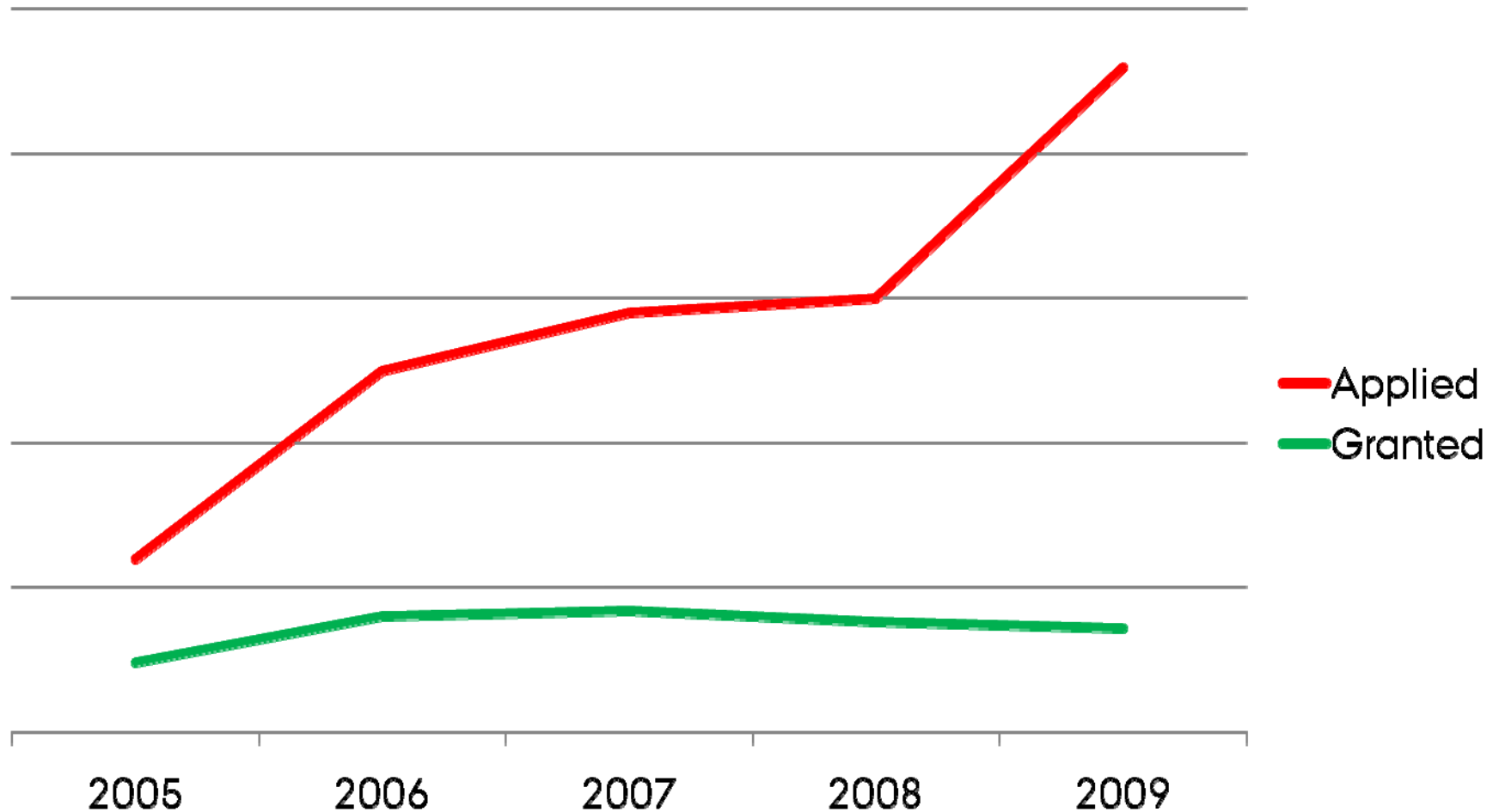
- › increased competition
- › large growth in PhD production



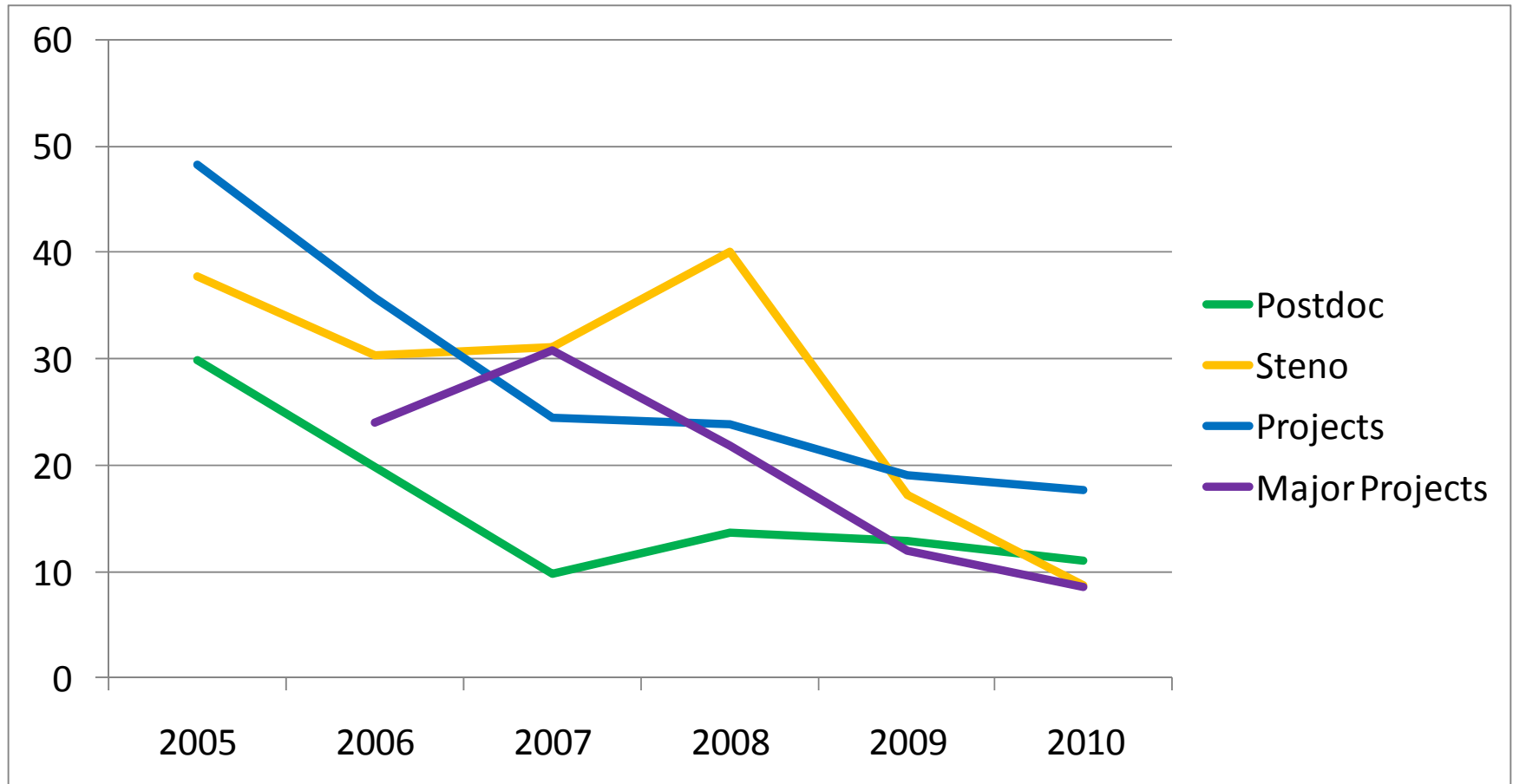


# FNU: Applied and Granted Amounts

adjusted for inflation



# FNU: Success Rates for Grant Instruments



# Where Is The Money?

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It is still there!

- > Research Council budgets are almost unchanged
- > except salaries have exceeded inflation

But more is converted to university funding

- > own salaries in applications
- > increased overheads

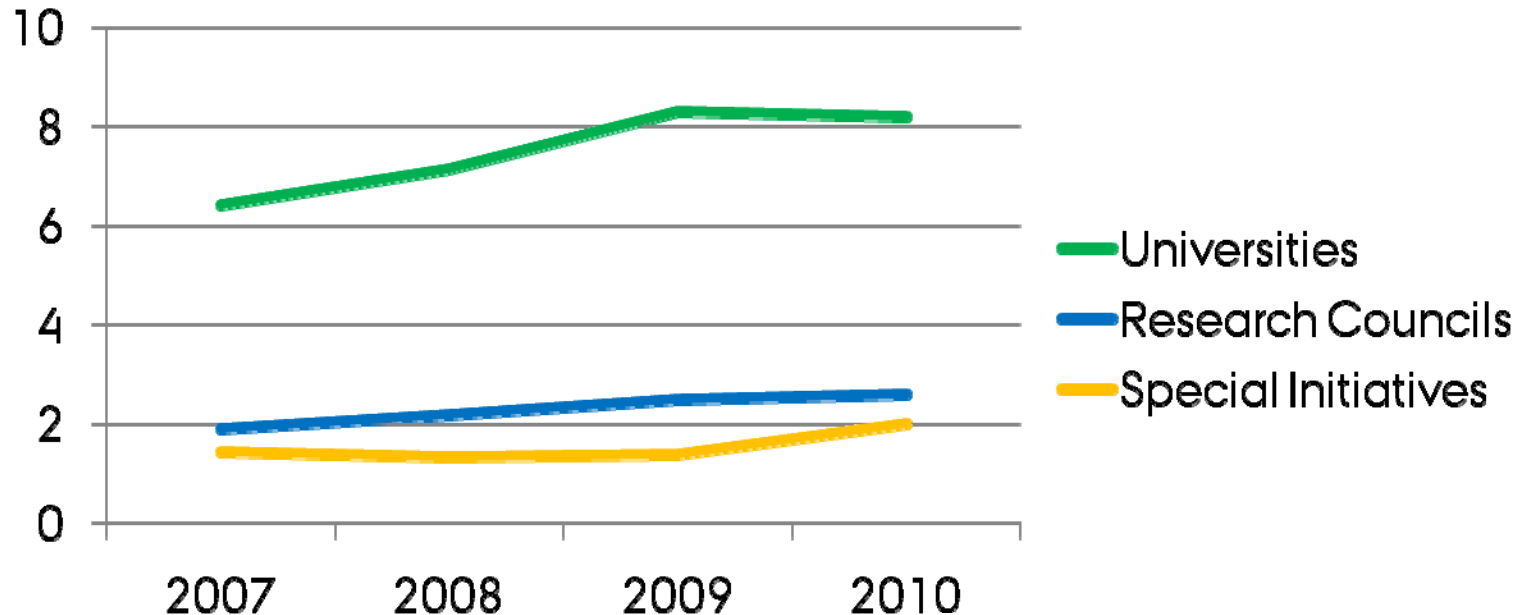
Bad news for next year

- > approximately 10% drop in FNU funding



# Where Is The Extra Money?

adjusted for inflation



Special programs: both government and within universities  
Fewer can apply, less competition  
Nice if your research fits in



# Conclusion

Still lots of money in the system

- › real increase in government spending
- › many special initiatives fit well with Computer Science

Quality is still rewarded

- › uncompromising standards in the Research Councils

PhD production has been accelerated

- › siphons resources from the universities
- › no corresponding increase in postdoc funding

The "lone researcher" is getting squeezed

- › no research funding from the university
- › dramatically lower success rates at the Research Council

