

Top tips for writing winning grants

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How do grant applications “happen”?

- You have an idea, or preliminary data and want/need some funding to pursue
- You want to move to the next stage of your career and need grant income



Need to search for appropriate funder

- You see a grant call / opportunity and think “I could try for that”
- Your supervisor suggests trying for a specific grant call



Need to search for appropriate project

The science and the idea

- The project needs to excite you
- The overall concept needs to come from you – then the details of how to make it happen can be discussed / finalised with others
- Write a 1-page outline:
 - Rationale, hypothesis and aims/research questions
 - This is your “pitch” and needs to be clear in your head to then flesh out and build upon

Find the best funder: if you have the idea first...

- It is essential to make sure you find the most appropriate funder for the type of project
 - No point applying to NIHR for a fundamental basic science project, or to MRC for a phase III clinical trial of efficacy
 - Spend time looking at all funding options
 - UKRI
 - Charities (disease specific or general – Wellcome)
 - NIHR
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Find the right type of grant, from that funder, for you

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/>



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Funding council

- AHRC
- BBSRC
- ESRC
- EPSRC
- Innovate UK
- MRC
- NERC
- Research England
- STFC

Funding finder

Sorted by publication date (newest first)

[Sort by opening date \(oldest to newest\)](#)

[Sort by closing date \(oldest to newest\)](#)

116 opportunities found using the current filters

Expression of interest: automotive transformation fund round 12

Registered businesses can apply for a share of up to £1 billion for capital centric investment projects that help industrialise the electrified automotive supply chain at scale in the UK.

Opportunity status: Open



Find the right type of grant, from that funder, for you

- Within the overall funder pool, there will be different types of grants, e.g. project grants, new investigator grants, pump priming grants
 - Choose the type of grant that best fits you and your project
 - Do you need more preliminary data? – pilot award
 - Can you apply for a young investigator award?
 - You may find your idea fits within the remit of more than one funder, which is great – apply to all eligible
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A grant call is relevant, but not quite perfect...

- Often we are sent alerts about specific grant calls
 - BRC pump priming grants
 - Charity grants with a specific focus – that is in your field
 - This may make you think you should apply
 - Go ahead, but make sure you adapt the project to fit the call
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Before applying...

- Read grant body guidelines VERY carefully
 - Check eligibility
 - Check what type of research they fund
 - Check what they fund (salary, consumables, equipment)
 - Check the funding limit for the call
 - They may have a very clear maximum; e.g. £50K
 - May not stipulate, but get an idea from others, e.g. 3 year project grant should not be £2m
 - You may have to adapt your project to fit the call
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Deadlines and timings

- Check the deadline
 - You need **at least** 3 months to put together a successful grant
 - 6 months (especially for fellowships / big 3-5 year grants)
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Costings – start early...

- Allow adequate time (up to 3 months) to do your costings
- Work out what you need in an ideal world
- The most expensive resource is salary – get that calculated first, then go from there...
- Go back to the call and work out what they are likely to give
- Make your “ideal” costs fit (compromise)

- Make sure you do not significantly under cost, you will not be able to deliver
- Make sure you do not over cost, the funder will not give you the money
- Ensure you spend time writing the justification of costs

Now for the writing...

- If possible, look at previous successful applications to that call / funder
 - Look at the style of writing
 - How does the funder like the layout – follow the guidance

 - Check word counts
 - Do word counts include spaces?
 - Log in to the electronic form and start the application – fill in your name, etc
 - Fill in some “dummy” sections
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Content

- Read and Answer the exam question...
 - Do not write Aims, if they want Research questions – change your aims into questions
 - Use the headings they ask for
 - Put the references in the format they like
 - Put the CV in the format they want
 - Include all required support letters / collaboration letters

 - The grant will be returned/rejected without even getting through the first admin stage if you do not follow instructions
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Do not ignore sections

- Power calculations
- Statistical analysis plan
- Ethical implications

- SoeCAT
- <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/schedule-of-events-cost-attribution-template-soecat-guidance/23214>
- SoECAT is a tool for use with non-commercial research studies in the four UK nations. Its primary purpose is to ensure that site-level costs are appropriately attributed and Research Costs are met

Lay Summary

- This is absolutely critical for all funders
 - Most will have lay reviewers
 - You have to pay attention to this and spend time on it and get it right
 - Get it reviewed by a lay friend
 - Get it reviewed by the lay panel in your hospital
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PPIE

- This is critical for all funders
 - Do it properly
 - Involve patients/public in the grant formation
 - Get their comments / suggestions for changes
 - Especially important for NIHR, but also needed for all funders including Wellcome/MRC
 - Remember to ensure you are being inclusive if it is patient centred research
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Internal review

- Get your co-applicants to read and send critical comments
 - Give them sufficient time to comment (at least a week, ideally 10 days)
 - Send them the relevant guidance for that call / funder
 - Send them a version that is easy for them to add comments to and track changes

 - Get 2 internal peer reviews from someone in your Dept/Section who is not directly in the field, can they understand it and follow it?
 - What would they say as a grant Reviewer?
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Pre-submission

- Check, check and check again
 - Be absolutely anal
 - NO typos at all
 - All word counts
 - Check all sections completed
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