Fact sheet 7: Where can I find funding for my research project?

This fact sheet aims to give you information to help you to understand:

- Points to consider when seeking funding for research; and
- Links and advice on possible funding sources

It will also provide links to other useful fact sheets and documents that relate to writing a research proposal.

1. Seeking funding for a research project – points to consider

There are a variety of different avenues for funding that can be explored. Different funding organisations will each have their own priorities and criteria which determine the research they wish to fund.

Some organisations issue calls for research funding associated with a broad topic or subject area. Other organisations have clearly defined objectives or questions, and invite proposals that respond only to a tightly defined brief.

It is also important to note the timelines associated with certain funding programmes. Most research funds have deadlines for submission which are very strictly adhered to. Some will allow more time and scope to prepare a proposal than others. Some sources of financial support have very long lead in times from submission to final allocation (up to a year), and therefore may not be appropriate for your project.

Funding for research is highly competitive and subject to a programme of quality review. It is important to ensure you have a sound evidence base, including a strong case of need for the research and a very clear and plausible approach. This will usually include taking into account any ethical considerations, specifying the time and the cost required for key elements of the work and clearly outlining implications for policy and what the research will add.

Funding organisations receive many applications and you must make a concise and well formulated case for your work. Points to consider:

- Does your proposal meet the stated aims and objectives of the funding call?
- Have you clearly stated what you want to achieve by your research and how you propose to do it?
- Have you demonstrated awareness of relevant work carried out in the field, and identified gaps in the evidence?
- Have you justified what this research will add to the existing body of evidence?
- Have you shown why the project is important and worth funding?
- Have you specified the likely outputs from the work?
- Have you justified why your proposed methods are appropriate and feasible?

- Have you clearly outlined the proposed costs of the research?
- Have you clearly outlined the proposed timescale for the research?
- Have you clearly discussed the dissemination of your project findings?
- Have you considered patient and public involvement in the development, implementation and dissemination of your proposed research (if appropriate)?

The funding body will assess your application and make a judgment based on the significance of the research, the merits of the technical methods proposed, the suitability of these methods for the project, the justification for staff and equipment requests and whether the research duplicates any similar or related work, past or current, in that field. The funding body will also be keen to ensure that the proposal is realistic, in terms of both time and costs.

If you are unsuccessful in your application for funding, it is helpful to request feedback on your application so that this can be taken into account when you re-apply or take your proposal to an alternative funding body.

2. Funding sources

There are a number of different sources if funding for research projects, including:

Research councils

There are 7 councils associated with Research Council UK, funded by the government to support quality research on national priorities. Visit www.rcuk.ac.uk for more information. For information on funding opportunities through the Medical Research Council, visit: http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Fundingopportunities/index.htm

Charities

There are a wide range of learned societies, charities and trusts who fund research that supports their charitable objectives. For example, Wellcome and other UK medical charities fund significant amounts of research in UK Universities.

For information on funding through the Wellcome Trust, visit: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/index.htm.

For a list of research charities affiliated with the Association of Medical Research, visit: http://www.amrc.org.uk

For information about The Leverhulme Trust, visit: http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/.

Government and public sector

Many government departments and agencies have budgets for commissioning research, with the aim of supporting & informing government policies, providing scientific foresight and helping to identify future policy options.

European Commission

The Commission funds research through its 7th Framework Programme (FP7).

Industry and business

Some companies fund research projects that fit with their commercial objectives.

3. Finding funding opportunities

www.researchprofessional.com
Researchprofessional.com is the online research funding opportunities information service. Users can search a collection of global databases of news, funding opportunities, and sponsors and sign up to email alerts.

www.nihr.ac.uk
This regularly updated resource is hosted through the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) and searchable by topic, funder type or deadline. You can create a profile to receive updates of research calls in your specific areas of interest.

www.ukro.ac.uk
The UK Research Office (UKRO) is one of the UK's leading information and advice services on European union funding for research and higher education

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More on this topic and further reading

In addition to the websites already listed in this fact sheet, other funding resources can be found at:

http://www.apcrc.nhs.uk/management/funding.htm

http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/respdf/researchhandbookonline.pdf

Also see Fact sheet 10: How do I design my research project? and Fact sheet 11: How do I write a research proposal?