



A KNOWLEDGE E QUICK GUIDE

HOW TO APPLY FOR A RESEARCH GRANT

HOW IT WORKS

Proposal writing can seem overwhelming to even the seasoned professional, but it need not be if broken down into smaller tasks. The following is a short summary of the basics of the funding process to get you started.

It is possible to hit more than one of these in a sentence – be creative!



INVESTIGATE



INQUIRE



WRITE & SUBMIT



FOLLOW-UP

INVESTIGATE

The first part of the process of getting research funded is to do some homework. There is no single place to find all the potential research grants available in the world. You will be most successful if you investigate using multiple strategies and sources, including:

STRATEGIES: PEOPLE & COMMUNICATION

Research Management Office (RMO)

Most research universities have an office focused on tracking institutional research (sometimes called the Office of Research Administration or the Office of Sponsored Programs). This office often subscribes to directories of funding sources that you cannot not access as an individual. Check to see what support they can offer you.

Libraries

Many academic libraries subscribe to research funding databases.

Faculty/College & Department Research Offices

Many faculties or departments have their own research support office that can assist you.

Experienced Researchers

Ask experienced researchers in your field for their recommendations.

Professional Associations

Many professional associations in your field have blogs or email newsletters that you can subscribe to.

Articles

When you read scientific articles in your field, look for the funding sources in the acknowledgements.

Alerts

Subscribe to relevant alerts and newsletters from directories or organisations.

Web Search

Searching the web is useful, there are often unique funding sources for your specific area of research you may not discover by other means. Conduct a web search using a variety of terms for your area of research and different variations of “research funding”. For example: “water treatment research funding” or “bio-medical scientific research funding sources” or “research grants for environmental justice”.



SOURCES: DIRECTORIES & INSTITUTIONS

Global & Regional

There are many grants “directories” that have lists of funding sources for scientific research around the globe. Many directories charge for access, and some restrict subscription to institutions (see page 3). The Open Education Database has a list of funding directories and sources that is a good place to start. It is US-centric but most of the directories include grants open to all. Most of the directories in the General category require institutional subscriptions. Check with your RMO or library. Many international organisations (e.g., United Nations) fund research. Search for regional or topical organisations relevant to you and “research grants” or “research funding”.

National Governments

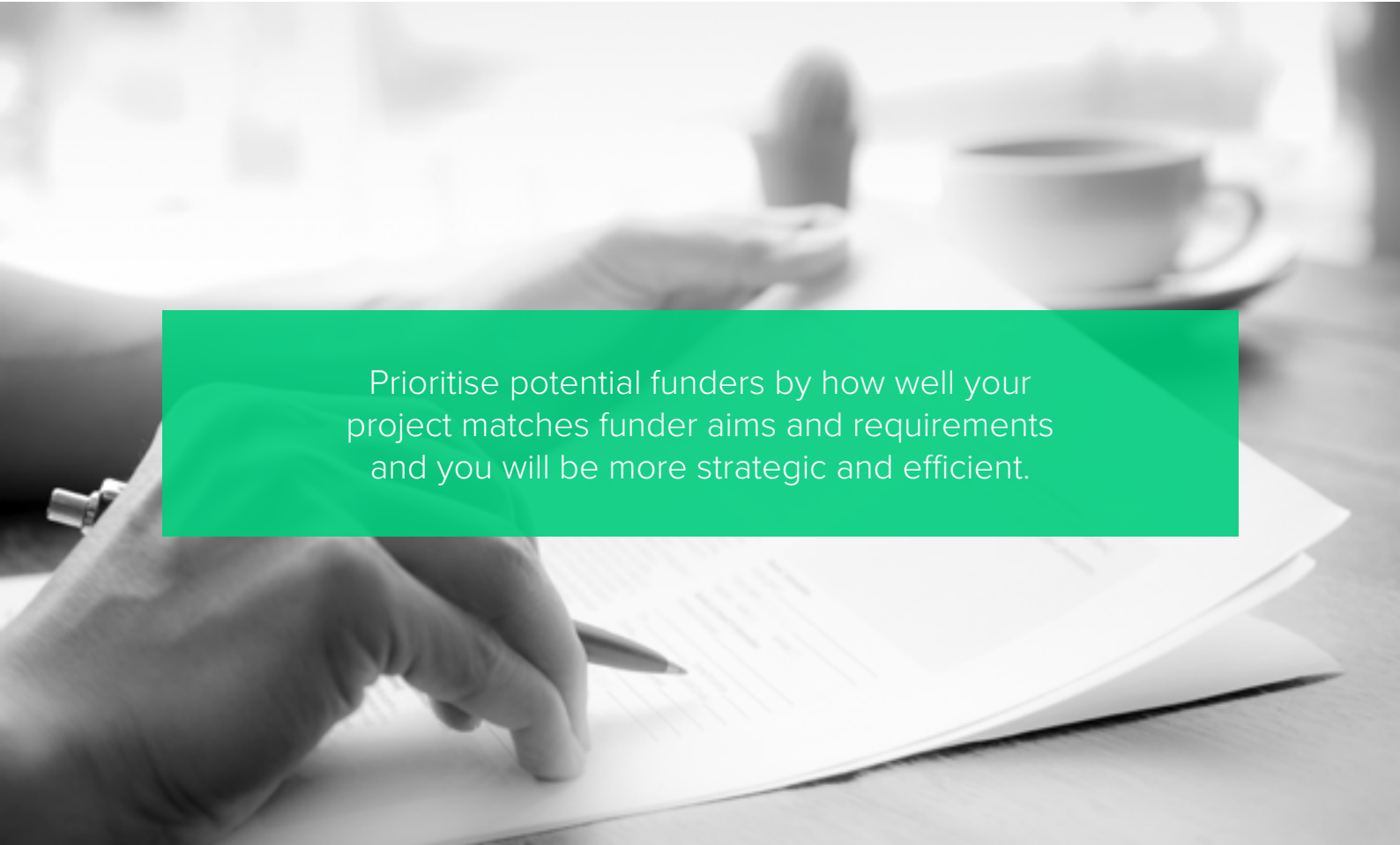
Most national governments fund research through individual departments or ministries (e.g., National Institutes of Health) or through dedicated funding bodies (e.g., National Science Foundation). Identify which government departments fund research relevant to your work, investigate their websites and subscribe to funding or grant email lists. Many national funders allow applications from non-citizens. Check the eligibility requirements. Most of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (higher income countries), and the European Union as a whole, offer research grants that are open to non-citizens, especially as most of these countries provide aid to developing countries. Search the web for a country and “research funding” or “research grants” to find relevant websites at the national or ministry/department level.

Foundations & Corporations

There are many philanthropic foundations around the world that fund research specific to their areas of interest. Some of the largest foundations are included in directories, but there are many smaller ones that will only be revealed through other strategies. Many local and regional corporations have funding programs specifically for researchers in their region. Check the websites of the largest corporations in your region as well as “development banks”, which finance development activities.

PRIORITISE

Once you have a list of prospects that fund your subject matter generally, you must narrow the list to those organisations whose funding criteria match your specific project. Always visit a funder’s website to get accurate, up-to-date funding guidelines for each funder. Check the funder’s mission, programs, and restrictions (geographic, no individuals, fellowships only, etc.) to confirm that you are relevant to them and eligible to apply. Confirm the average grant sizes (check their annual reports) and deadlines for proposals. This will help you prioritise your proposal writing (e.g., if the annual deadline was last month and they only make grants of \$200-300, they go to bottom of the list). Prioritise potential funders by how well your project matches funder aims and requirements and you will be more strategic and efficient.



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INQUIRE

Once you have your prioritised list, check the instructions for approaching each funder. Many funders require a Letter of Inquiry or other contact before accepting a proposal. Make sure you find the correct name, title and address of the appropriate contact person. Call or write the contact person as indicated. If you are unsure if you are a match for that funder, call. Most staff are very helpful, and some will even tell you how to spin your proposal if the topic is a stretch. Confirm all special guidelines for each funder (proposal length, attachments, etc.).

WRITE & SUBMIT

Now you are ready to write the full proposal. If you have written a Letter of Inquiry, your Cover Letter will be very similar. The Cover Letter should include all the main points of the proposal. Some people at the foundation may never read anything but the cover letter – it is like a mini proposal. Completing the Attachments before writing the proposal often saves time in the long run. In particular, you will find that working out the details of the budget helps clarify the activities and organisation of the project before writing about it. Be sure to check funder restrictions on attachments – some funders are very rigid about what they will, and will not, accept.

Now comes the meat of your work: writing the Proposal Narrative. Most importantly, follow the directions! Funders will tell you exactly what they want in each section. However, most guides to proposal writing can be distilled into a 6-point checklist of things you want to achieve in the Proposal Narrative:



INTRODUCE yourself and your research project - make sure the reader knows who you are, what you are doing, what you want from them, and why they would care.



EXPLAIN exactly how the goals and objectives of your project, as described in your introduction, will be achieved.



EXCITE your reader and get them emotionally engaged in your issue (inspired, saddened, horrified, outraged) by describing, in a compelling way, the need or problem your research project will address.



ENLIGHTEN your reader as to what they can do with their new-found concern about the policy problem you have described. Describe the specific goals and objectives of your research and how the project will help solve the problem or respond to the need outlined previously.



Next, **ENSURE** to the reader that you can do what you say – describe who is conducting the project and what their qualifications are (resumes, organisation history); describe any collaborations (funders like people who work well with others – if you’ve already developed relationships with key people or organisations, be sure to mention them); and describe the long-term plan for the project (its policy impact, and/or its practical application).



To wrap it up, **COMPEL** the reader to take action. Remind them why they should care and how their funding will make a difference!

EXTRA TIPS

In addition, it is especially useful to present your most compelling arguments in at least four ways to “hook” the four major personality types.

- ✓ **STATISTICS EXCITE** the analytical person. For example, “52% of the world’s population have never made a phone call”.
- ✓ **STORIES EXCITE** the sensitive, emotional person. For example, “The vast majority of families, like the XX family, live without running water or electricity”.
- ✓ **SUPERLATIVES EXCITE** the image-conscious person. For example, “Adjustments in interconnectivity rates between developed and developing nations have the potential to fundamentally alter North-South relations”.
- ✓ **LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES EXCITE** the power-focused person. For example, “To date the relationship between telecommunications policy and poverty has been left unaddressed. The right research could strategically position government, NGOs, and corporations to provide innovative leadership over the next two decades”.

Before you send out the proposal, check it for consistency and errors. Submit your proposal in a timely manner.

FOLLOW-UP

Most funders will email a confirmation receipt of your proposal. Most funders tell you when their decisions will be made, and it is usually unwise to contact before then. If you are not awarded a grant, most funders will explain why if you inquire. This information is very valuable for the future.

After receiving an award, send a thank you note promptly. Provide thorough reporting of your results and progress as requested, following guidelines precisely. If you have problems with your project (timeframe, logistics, etc.), contact the funder – they will usually adjust your reporting schedules if you have legitimate reasons.

Good luck!



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Sometimes the true value of a grant application can be overlooked, especially when it must be submitted in a foreign language for an overseas award opportunity. Don't let this happen to you.

Reach out to info@knowledgee.com if you need further assistance.

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Reach out to info@knowledgee.com
if you need further assistance.

CONTACT US

✉ info@knowledgee.com

☎ +971 4 422 7043

🌐 www.knowledgee.com



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