



Please note that this presentation should not be used as a substitute for reading the current grants guide as information in it may become out of date, the BBSRC grants guide can be found here:

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide/>



Grant Writing and the Assessment Process

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Presentation contents

- Introduction and information on Responsive Mode calls
- Overview of the grant application/peer review process
- Guidance on writing grants



Responsive mode is the main vehicle for research council funding, but there are a range of funding opportunities

Check for range of funding

- Initiatives
 - Tend to be in specific areas
 - Sometimes one off
- “Schemes”
 - Run along side other activities
 - Might be targeted to a particular group
- Responsive Mode
 - Open call, 3 per year

Schemes in Responsive Mode

- New Investigator Scheme
- ‘Stand-alone’ LINK
- Industrial Partnership Awards
- Government Partnership Awards
- BBSRC- Brazil (FAPESP) joint funding of research
- Annual research focus on Welfare of Managed Animals
- Highlight calls



Responsive Mode Priorities

- BBSRC has a set of Council-wide strategic priority areas, described in the *BBSRC Strategic Plan*
- The responsive mode priorities reflect topics or activities within these broader strategic areas that the Council wishes to particularly encourage
- e.g. healthy ageing across the lifecycle; welfare of managed animals; replacement, refinement and reduction (3Rs) in research using animals; combatting antimicrobial resistance; data driven biology; synthetic biology,



Pre-application checks:

Check, with the assistance of the grants guide and BBSRC office staff if necessary, that:

- You and your partners are eligible
- Your institution is eligible
- The project is within the BBSRC remit
- The grant is not an uninvited resubmission
- You know which committee is best to submit to
- All the paperwork has been correctly completed
- The fEC costs are correct

Common reasons applications are withdrawn

- Not in council remit
- Ineligible PI/ Co-I or Ineligible Institution
- Applied to two or more Research Councils simultaneously with same application
- Resubmission of an identical proposal
- Joint components of application missing
- Late submissions - 4pm deadline is real
- Application over maximum funding cut-off
- fEC costs and special costs not filled in correctly e.g. animals

Institution Eligibility

Details of institutional eligibility are on the website

- 2 sets of rules:
 - Responsive mode
 - Managed mode (e.g. initiatives)
- Check joint applicant's institutes are also eligible
- If in doubt check with the Office (in advance)

PI/ Co-I eligibility

- Rules are same for PI and Co-I at BBSRC
- Details are in the Grants Guide
- Always check with the Office if in doubt-before submission:
eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk
- Post-docs are not eligible as PI/ Co-I
 - Post-docs who substantially contribute to the application can be named as Researcher Co-Investigators
- Lecturer level fellowships should be checked with the office prior to application

Remit

All decisions are project based – background, department or past funding do not determine remit eligibility

- Check the BBSRC website for remit information
- If in doubt, send 1-2 page outline to office: remit@bbsrc.ac.uk
- Research Councils have no remit gaps
 - see the RCUK Research Councils Concordat
 - <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/prrcremits.htm>

BBSRC-MRC Remit Interface

- We have a cross-Council Funding Agreement for Responsive Mode proposals
- Councils communicate to ensure there is no funding gap - every proposal will have a home for peer review providing it is within the remit of RCUK as a whole
- A proposal is considered out of BBSRC remit if its primary focus is elucidation of abnormal or disease processes
- BBSRC will accept proposals that utilise disease models to understand normal biological processes.

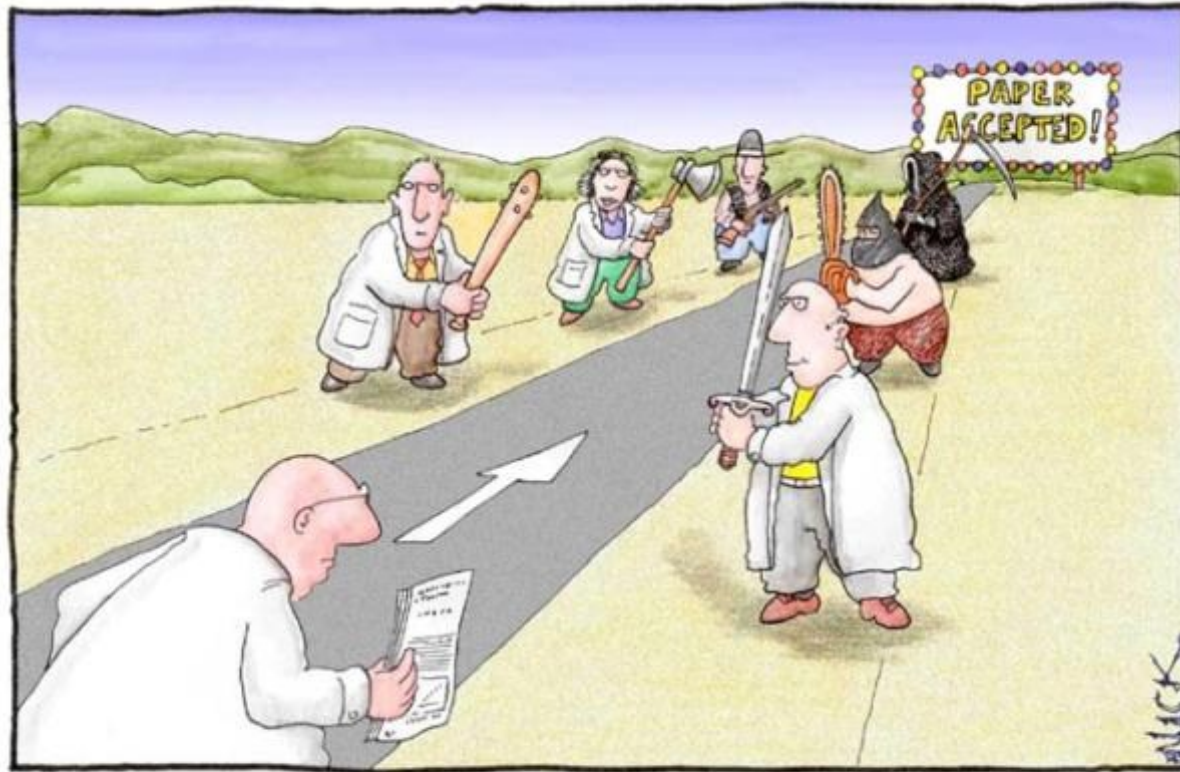


BBSRC/MRC Remits

Both support fundamental research relevant to human health.
Primary *motivation* determines the best 'home' for proposals

- **BBSRC** gives priority to science which:
 - Addresses underpinning themes in biology or normal human physiology (e.g. processes of ageing)
 - Seeks to develop new tools, technologies and approaches with broad applications (e.g. systems biology)
 - Involves research in to plant or animal health
- **MRC** gives priority to science which:
 - Addresses important health questions or is likely to inform research on health or disease

The assessment process



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Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

Overview of process

Proposal submitted

← External reviewing

← “Committee” meeting

← Final decision made

Grant awarded / rejected



Submission of proposals

Enquiries to office

↓
Proposal submitted

↓
Remit check

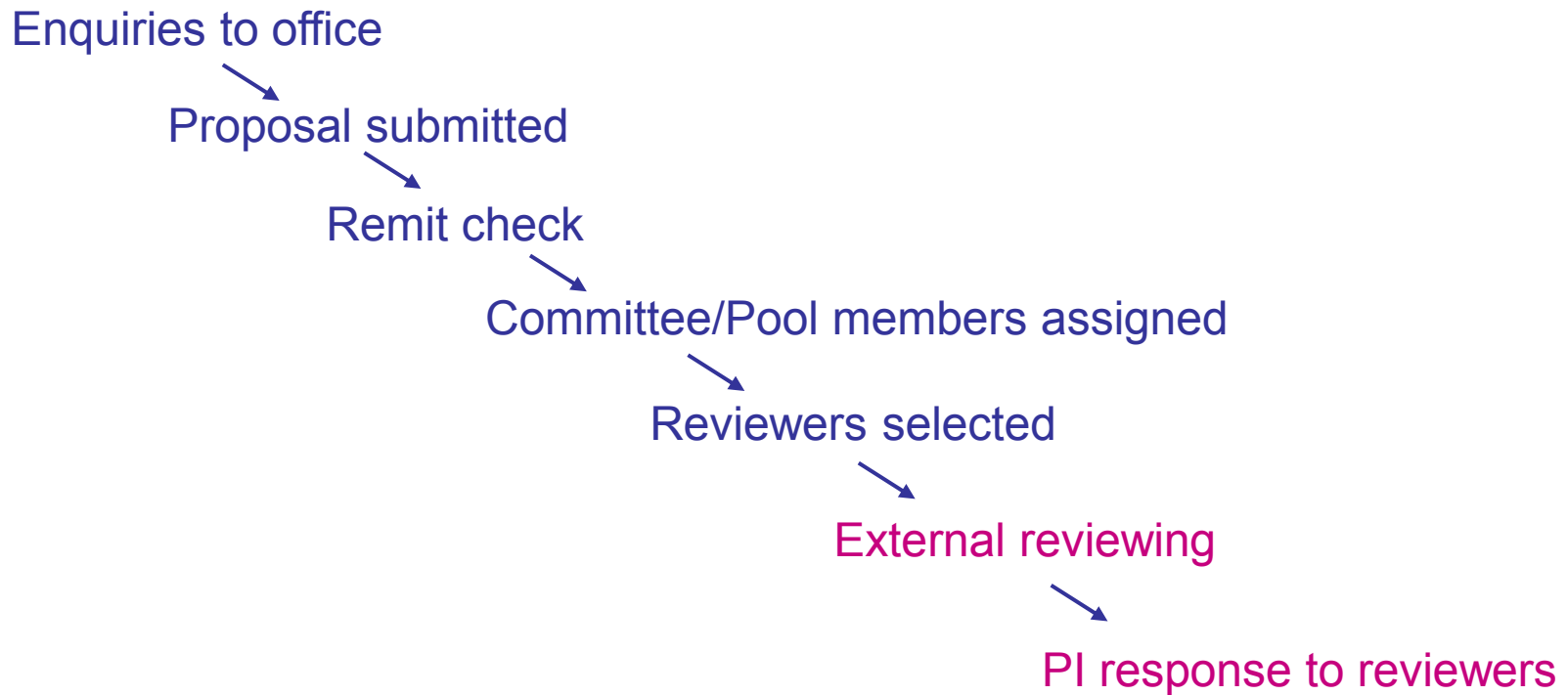
- Office staff answer queries relating to remit, eligibility, costs etc.
- Proposals submitted through Je-S by 4pm on closing date **Zero tolerance!**
- Staff check remits
- May “transfer” to other Research Councils (transfer to other councils effectively means it is withdrawn)

Assignment of Introducers



- Office staff assign committee members to each proposal based on expertise
- The “introducers” (**at least 2**) lead on the discussions in the meeting

Peer Review



- Request to review sent via email
- Anonymised reviewers' comments are sent to applicant
- Applicant (PI) submits a response to the reviewers' comments

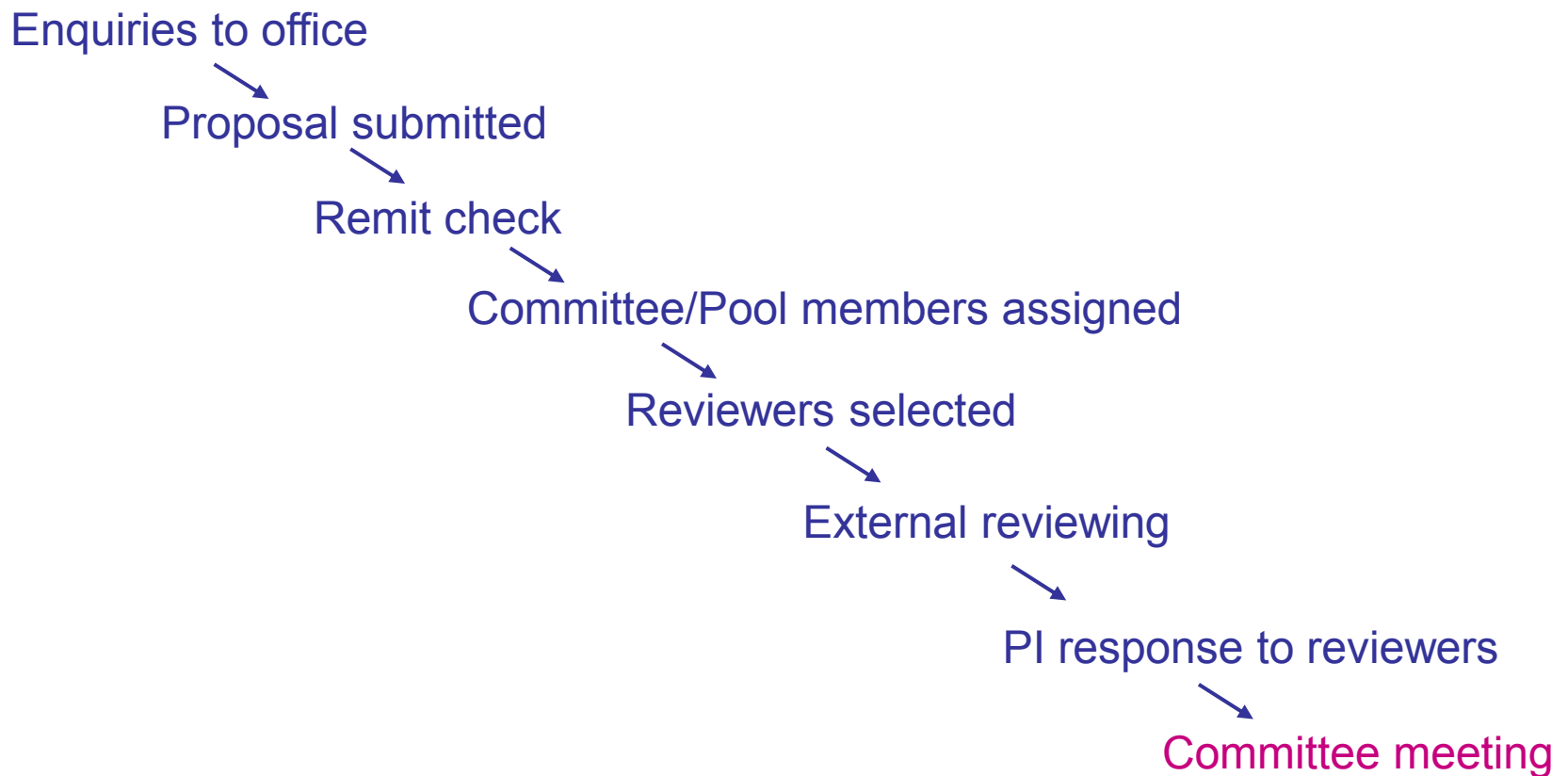
Reviewers' comments

- **Read in anger, sleep on it, respond with patience**
- Respond to reviewers **fully** and **positively**: negative reviewer comments will not necessarily harm your chances of funding if you address them appropriately
 - Identify criticisms clearly and respond explicitly
 - Criticise the reviewer comments **NEVER the reviewer**
 - View this as an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge
 - Clarify experimental approaches if asked
 - Don't just summarise positive comments, but deal with each negative comment – take the opportunity to highlight new supporting data, if appropriate.

Reviewers' comments

- Remember you nominated some of the reviewers- don't assume critical reviewers have been nominated by the Office...
- If the reviewer didn't fully understand your proposal maybe the committee won't either – now is your last chance to clear up ambiguity
- Committees WILL consider your response
- The way you respond to reviewers comments can be critical: tackle key concerns head on, and respectfully; a strong response can improve your chances of funding.

Overview





Grant Assessment at BBSRC

- Each application is discussed in turn, 70 -130 applications per committee
- A **collective** final score for each application is agreed
- A final rank ordered list is agreed (**the order is the key**, not the scores)
- On rare occasions the Committee may make “Conditional Awards” or “Invited Resubmissions”.

Assessment Criteria

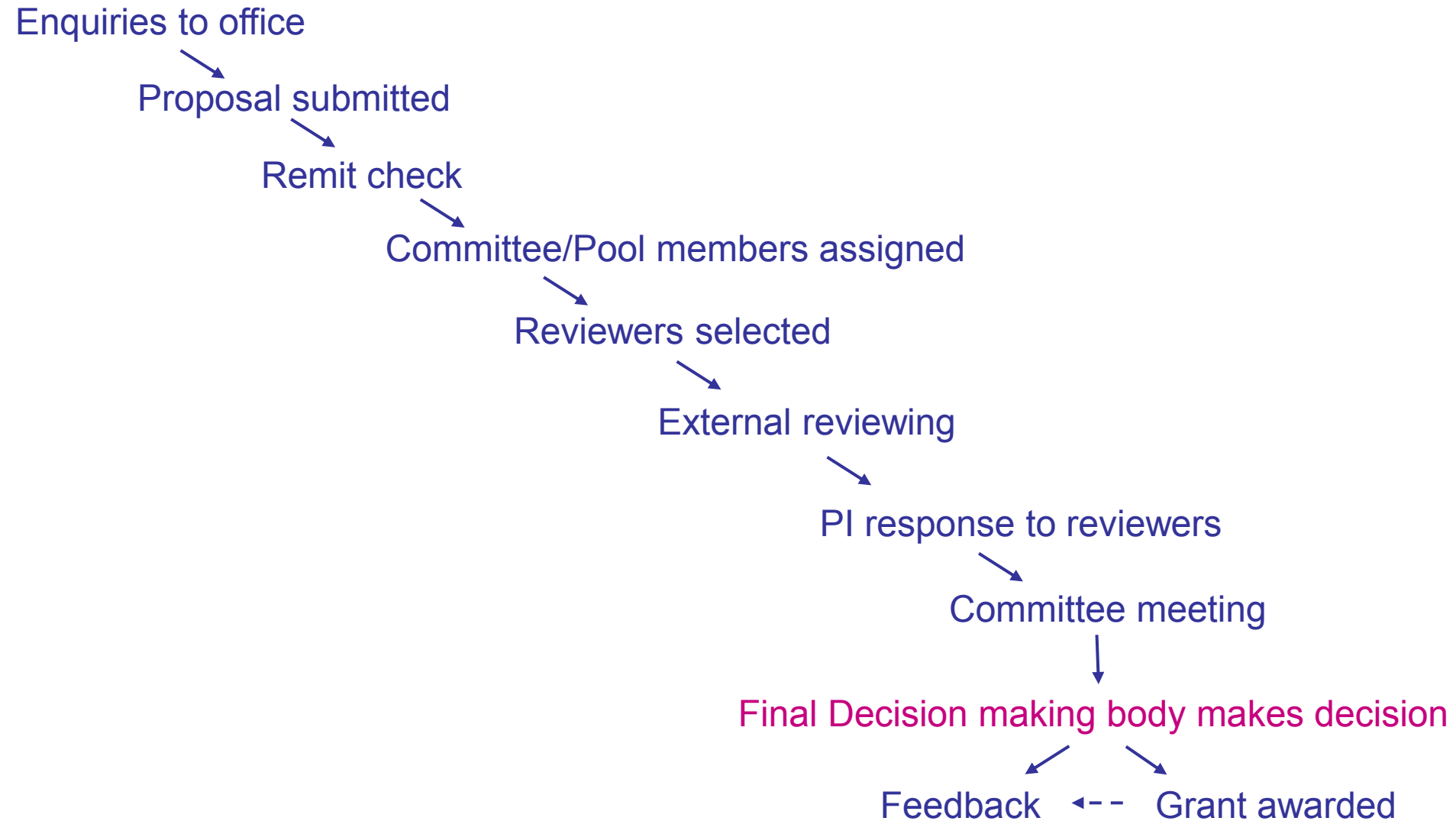
Scientific excellence

- Does the application meet the highest international standards of current research in the field?
- Does it demonstrate timeliness and promise?

Other criteria in areas such as:

- Delivery of Council's strategy
- Impact
- Staffing
- Appropriateness of costs

Overview



Final Decision

- Proposals are funded from the rank-ordered list (e.g. top 20-25%) based on available funding
- Those above the ‘funding cut-off’ are sent award letters. Once the grant has been announced, ownership passes to “Post Award process”
- Those falling below the funding cut-off are sent notification letters and receive feedback on request



After the process

- If successful: make sure your starting date is right and check the terms and conditions
- If unsuccessful:
 - Ask for feedback from a peer review officer. Additional information **may** be available
 - All council's resubmission rules discourage/disallow the resubmission of the same application
 - Remember success is relative to the quality of other applications and available funding



Guide to Grant Writing – the paperwork

The reality check

There are a large number of very good grants submitted each round and only enough money to fund the very best of them.

Many of these are from people who write grants regularly.

Many good proposals (including with positive reviewers' comments) are routinely rejected.

This does not indicate a lack of funder interest or that your application was judged harshly.

Before you start writing

Decide where you are applying:

- There are many funding bodies
 - e.g. Government, Charity, International, Industry.....
- All have remits, rules and guidance
- All have priorities and strategies
- You need to read them first



Before you put “pen to paper”

Ask yourself questions:

- What is your big idea?
- Has it been done before?
- Will anyone but you care?
- Will it have an impact?
- Is it exciting?
- Does it have a wow factor?
- Does anyone else think so? Are they impartial.....
- Are you the best person to do it?

The Application

A good proposal should have/be:

- A clear hypothesis/aim and objectives [where appropriate]
- Feasible
- Preliminary data or demonstration of technique
- A clear work plan - and contingencies (what if?)
- Sufficient detail for assessment
- Appropriately costed

Should avoid:

- Data gathering without advancing knowledge
- Entirely speculative applications with no evidence base

Justification of Resources

Separate attachment (only 2 pages - not an essay)

Should include full justifications for:

- PI and Co-I time
- Level of staffing required (including research and technical staff)
- Level of resource (T&S, consumables, equipment, facilities access etc)

The Committees are empowered to cut ANY unjustified resource

Data management plan

BBSRC has a data-management policy.

- All applicants are required to include a statement of how they intend to make the data generated through their project available to the wider community.
- The Committee will assess whether the statement is adequate.
- If the applicant's data-sharing policy is not considered adequate the Committee can make funding conditional on the provision of a revised statement.

Pathways to Impact

Compulsory and includes 2 extra pages in case for support and a summary in the Je-S form

Je-S help text and text in grants guide is available

Activities outlined in the Pathways to Impact should be:

- project specific (e.g. with specific objectives and timelines)
- appropriate
- costed for activities within the period of the grant
- carried out by the staff working on the project
- not generic departmental activities

For more guidance see RCUK website: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/impacts/>



Learn from others

Find **recent & successful** grant applications in your department – ideally with the same funding body

Speak to people who have written these grants

But carefully manage this advice:

- especially around past unfunded applications
- not all advice is good or accurate
- not all of it reflects current realities
- don't rely on colleagues for latest rules



Top tips from the Office

- Don't rush it
- Make sure its going to the right place, at the right time
- Check that it is in remit, and you have done the paperwork correctly (including costs)
- Get someone outside your direct field to read it
- Work out possible criticism and head them off in the application (don't hide from them)
- View your response to reviewers comments as a chance to sell yourself (not to rubbish the reviewer)
- Prepare yourself for success rate reality and persevere

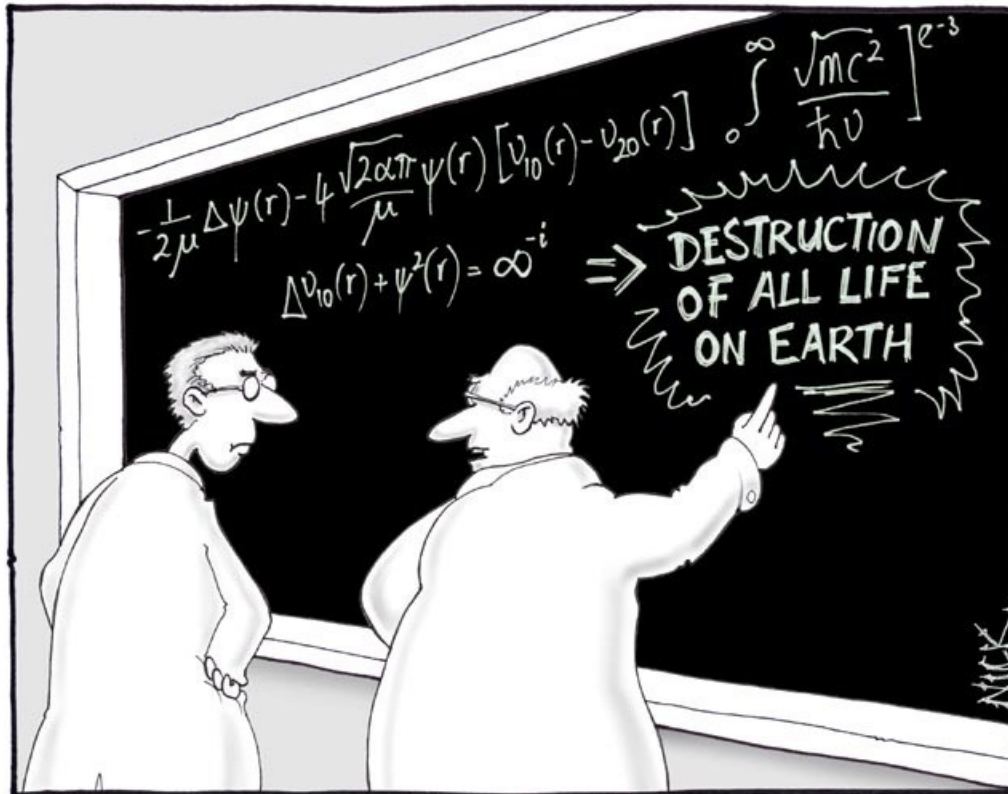


What makes a successful grant application?

View from a former Committee Chair

- Is it top quality internationally competitive science?
- Is it addressing an important problem?
- Is it novel and exciting?
- Are the aims and potential outcomes of the grant crystal clear from the case for support?
- Does the accompanying data support the proposal?
- Is the work feasible – are there contingencies?
- Has the applicant considered the potential impacts of the research?
- Can a non-specialist understand why the work is important?

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‘Since they turned down my last grant I have come up with a plan B.....’

Help is at Hand

Talk to us:

- Prior to submission
- Submit 1-2 page outline proposals
- Ask for feedback

Help the Office by:

- Explaining your science in simpler terms
- Peer reviewing when asked
- Reading the Je-S guidance notes and grants guide
- Treating the Office staff with respect

Get involved!

Join a Research Committee/Strategy Advisory Panel

- Members recruited twice annually
- Provides insight into BBSRC peer review and strategy

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/structures/committees/committee-pool-membership/>

Review Proposals

- This is an expectation for BBSRC Grant holders
- A strong track record of peer review contributions is looked for in making committee/panel appointments
- Keep details of expertise on JeS up to date!
- Join the Pool of Experts:

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/structures/committees/committee-pool-membership/>

Research Outcomes Collection

- It is vital that grant holders return information to us on the outcomes and outputs from their projects, so that we can use this to make the case for continued investment in research
- As of Autumn 2014 all Research Councils now use **Researchfish** to collect outcomes information from grant holders
- Grant holders can enter information at any time (including after the grant has finished), but there is an annual formal ‘submission’ period where grant holders are expected to confirm that the recorded outcomes information is complete and up-to-date
- Information returned to the Research Councils is also made available through the **Gateway to Research**, thereby raising the visibility of your research to the public and potential collaborators.

Keep In Touch!

Visit the Web Site

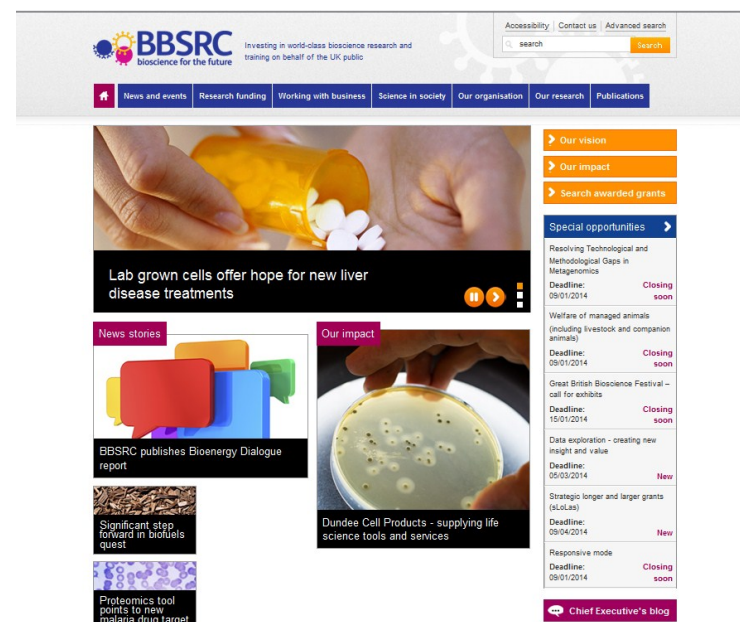
- www.bbsrc.ac.uk

Tell us about exciting outcomes

- We are always looking for interesting case studies, particularly showcasing impacts of BBSRC-funded research
- Contact BBSRC External Relations:
external.relations@bbsrc.ac.uk

Sign up for the email bulletin

- <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/news/news-email/>



The screenshot shows the BBSRC website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBSRC logo and tagline 'Investing in world-class bioscience research and training on behalf of the UK public'. Below the navigation bar, there are several featured articles and news stories. The main article is 'Lab grown cells offer hope for new liver disease treatments'. Other articles include 'BBSRC publishes Bioenergy Dialogue report', 'Significant step forward in biofuels quest', 'Proteomics tool points to new malaria drug target', 'Our impact', and 'Dundee Cell Products - supplying life science tools and services'. On the right side, there is a sidebar with 'Special opportunities' and a list of upcoming deadlines for various grants and events, such as 'Resolving Technological and Methodological Gaps in Metagenomics' and 'Great British Bioscience Festival - call for exhibits'.