

Navigating the Grant Development Process

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There are different sources of funding for scientific research. These include government agencies, research and development companies, and charitable organizations. Today, the majority of research scientists have to apply to these organizations themselves to get funding for their research projects. In light of other challenges, such as research competition and pressure to publish, it is important that the grant development process be completed as quickly and effectively as possible.

To help with this, academic institutions often have a Grants Department, or Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The staff in these departments provide information on funding sources and inform faculty members when [suitable research grants become available](#). Investigators can also contact the Grants Department independently when they find potential funding sources by themselves. The Grants Department provides ongoing support throughout the grant development process.

Preliminary Approval

To ensure time is not wasted trying to fund a project that does not meet the basic requirements of the university or funding body, principal investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the Grants Department for preliminary approval before working on a grant. This is usually done by submitting an approval form, followed by a personal interview with a member of the Grants Department. Applicants are advised to do this as

soon as they decide to apply for a particular grant.

The approval form determines why the project is important and how it fits in with ongoing research. The principal investigator should also provide a budget that is justified by a detailed scope of the planned work. The budget should specify how much money is required for equipment, materials, staff costs, etc. Guidelines are available to help the principal investigator with budget development.

After submission of the approval form, the Grants Department will evaluate a number of factors, including whether or not the proposed project meets general funding body requirements and the eligibility of the applicant. Compliance of the proposed budget with university and funding agency requirements may also be assessed in order to avoid any unnecessary over- or under-budgeting. If the proposal is approved, the principal investigator can proceed to write the grant.

Writing the Grant

A badly written grant is unlikely to be accepted for funding. Grant writing can be challenging, particularly for first-time applicants, or applicants whose first language is not English. Most institutions provide guidelines and training sessions on proposal development. To ensure that the [grant is well-written](#), logically structured, and free of any language errors before submission, the Grant Department usually reviews and edits all grants that they have pre-approved.

The final version of the grant is approved by the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness before being submitted to the funding agency by the Grants Department. If the funding agency is interested in the proposal, it will be subjected to peer review; much like a [research paper](#) is peer-reviewed before publication.

Getting Your Research Funded

Whether or not a grant is accepted depends on a number of factors, including the percentage score awarded by the peer reviewer and availability of funds. Another important criterion is how relevant the proposal is to the [research objectives of the funding agency](#).

Funding agencies usually [advertise the areas of research](#) they are most interested in. To maximize the chance of acceptance, the principal investigator should check whether their proposal is aligned with the principal interests of the funding body. For example, the [National Institute of Health](#) (NIH) is composed of different institutes and centers, each with their own research goals. Scientists interested in applying for NIH funding should contact NIH directly to find out which NIH institute would be most interested in their proposal. Similarly, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality ([AHRQ](#)) welcomes inquiries about their current research interests. A list of AHRQ staff members responsible for different research areas is provided on their website.

The funding body issues a special notice when the grant is accepted for funding, stipulating how much money will be awarded and for how long. At this time, the principal investigator meets with the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness to implement the grant.

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