How to write a grant and get it accepted

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1. Introduction
2. Grant and fellowship structure in the UK
3. Some general principles for grant writing
What I should be talking about ..

“How not to write a grant and get it rejected”

• … but I have reviewed grants for national and international agencies and sat on and chaired grant committees.

• I’ve seen a lot of grants rejected!
The process
Types of grant

- **Programme Grant** – Generally 5 years. A substantive and complex piece of science.
- **Project** – Generally 3 years. Directed at a more focussed scientific goal.
- **Studentships and Fellowships** - Directed to PhDs for scientists and clinicians through to senior investigators.
- **Wellcome Investigator Awards**
- **“Soft” award\money**
- **Special awards, initiatives etc**
Agencies

- Medical Research Council – two page scientific proposal, interviews, competition across all clinical sciences, twice a year (20\call)
- Wellcome Trust – longer scientific proposal, interviews, open competition, three calls\year
- British Heart Foundation - longer scientific proposal, no interviews, no deadlines (committee meets 3-4 times per year)
- Heart Research UK – two fellowships\year. Capped at 150K.
- NIHR – patient focus, both full-time (doctoral RF) and P\T (academic CF).
- Academy of Medical Sciences
What they do with your grant

• Consult expert reviewers in the field who should know knowledge of the field.

• Considered by a committee. Usually assigned to at least two members. Quite often will not have detailed specialist insight.

• Interviews in some schemes. Again the interview panel can be quite broad e.g. across all clinical sciences.
The project
“The scholarly and clear exposition of a good idea with convincing preliminary data”

…..common pitfalls
Pitfall

• Read the regulations and call carefully
• Tailor your proposal to the call and funding agency
• Spend time and thought on the questions extraneous to the proposal e.g. How will the award benefit your career?
• If you aren’t sure talk to the them
Pitfall

Structure the proposal

• Abstract
• Introduction – set the scene, why is the issue important, give specific details of the health burden
• Hypothesis - very important, specific
• Aims
• Experimental Plan
• Summary\likely impact
Pitfall

- Avoid being vague
- Make use of diagrams, flow charts etc
- Gannt charts for timeline
- Follow the guidelines for length, formatting, reference style
- Write in a direct style that will be comprehensible to the nonspecialist too
- Avoid too much jargon and acronyms
Pitfall

- Don’t rush
- Don’t do everything before the deadline
- Get colleagues to read and critique
- Polish and revise repeatedly
- Zero tolerance to errors
Tips for success

• Invest time and effort in an area that really interests you
• Work with a good mentor
• Read successful grants
• Collaborate and network
Websites

- www.mrc.ac.uk
- www.wellcome.ac.uk
- www.bhf.org.uk
- www.nihr.ac.uk
- www.heartresearch.org.uk