



“RESEARCH AND RED TAPE”



**A Series of Guides for Staff Engaging with
the University’s Grants & Contracts Office**

No. 1

Research Grant Applications

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Contents

Introduction	1
The Grants & Contracts Team (GCO)	2
That Light Bulb Moment – Leading a Research Idea	4
Finding Funding for Your Research Idea	5
Identifying Your Research Team	6
Identifying the Ideal “Lead Partner”	6
Being a Project Partner	6
How to Make a Funding Application	7
First of All – Get In Touch!	7
Supplying “Advance Notification”	7
Talking to the Right People	8
Okay – All of the Players are Engaged, and I’ve got the Go Ahead – What’s Next?	10
Composing a Good Funding Proposal	10
Writing the Application	11
Administrative Details	11
Project Title	12
Summary Description or Abstract	12
Case for Support	12
Introduction	13
Problem Description	13
Project Description	13
The Budget	14
Justification for Resources	14
Letters of Support	14
Impact Summary	15
CVs	15
Organisational Approval Statements	15
Anything else?	15
Developing the Project Budget	16
Identifying Your Resources and Their Costs	16
Fine Tuning, Completion and Submission	18
Summary: Steps to take In Proposal Development	19
Contacts	20

Introduction

This series of guides is written primarily with Early Career Researchers in mind, however it aims to assist and inform all staff throughout the university - whether academic or administrative, whether employed by the university or an Academic Partner - in steering through the complexities of research delivery and management.

Research takes various forms, is carried out for various reasons, and can involve a variety of people and organisations depending upon its nature. As a result, very few research initiatives will be handled in exactly the same way, however common threads run throughout. Essentially, in order for researchers to achieve their goals by conducting research studies, their research needs to be **resourced, implemented, and managed**.

The series will look at many of the aspects connected to each of these threads, including:

- Finding funding for research
- How to apply for funding
- Writing a good proposal
- Identifying necessary resources and their associated costs
- Ethical issues
- Funding agreements
- Satisfying funding terms and conditions
- Managing a project

Each of these areas tends to be complex by nature, and it would be difficult to deal with all of those complexities here in intricate detail, therefore the series takes a fairly broad view in order to promote a basic but informed understanding of these issues. It aims to answer such questions as:

“Who can help me?”

“What’s the process?”

“What do I need?”

“What must I do?”



And may even shed some light on ... **“Why does it all seem so darned complicated?”**

The university’s Grants and Contracts Office is able to assist with all of the above. However, as a central service which works across the whole spectrum of research activity, we may not be able to provide very detailed advice or solutions in all cases. However, if we can’t actually help you with your problem, more often than not we will know who can.

This guide – the first in the series – describes the remit and activities of the university’s Grants and Contracts Office, and goes on to chart the steps of working towards submitting a good grant application with the optimum chance of success.

The Grants and Contracts Team (GCO)

GCO is based at the university's main offices in Inverness, and works closely with other central administrative departments, as well as its counterpart colleagues based with Academic Partners, in other universities and elsewhere. GCO's main objectives are to assist academic staff throughout the university to achieve their research goals, increase the volume of their research and knowledge transfer income, and to offer expert support with the often complex business of pre- and post-award project administration, whilst helping to ensure that the university is able to further its mission in a successful way which is beneficial to the community it serves.

GCO is staffed by a full time Grants & Contracts Manager, a Grants & Contracts Officer, and two part-time Contract Administrators. Its typical service users are:

Within the University –

- Academic Research staff
- Research Support staff
- The Chief Operating Officer
- Vice Principals – Research and Enterprise
- Deans of Faculty and the Dean of Research
- European Development Team
- Finance Staff
- Graduate School
- Research Ethics Committee

Externally –

- Funding bodies from the public, private, industry and charity sectors, both national and international
- Academic staff and Research Support staff in other universities throughout the world

GCO offers services including:

- Providing expert support and advice to those seeking – and winning - research and knowledge transfer related funding, by
 - assisting with the production and submission of high quality funding proposals
 - ensuring that the rules and regulations of funders are taken into account during proposal production, and helping researchers to interpret and understand these, and their implications
 - helping to compile realistic costings to inform a project's budget which would support the proposed work effectively
 - ensuring that funding applications are approved as “good to go” by the relevant committee and/or individuals ahead of submission
 - liaising with counterparts in collaborating institutions involved in funding proposals
 - working to ensure that proposals are submitted in the correct manner (and before the deadline!)
 - checking offers of grant to ensure all is correct ahead of acceptance
 - drafting, negotiating and recommending for sign-off the various types of legal agreements that may need to be put in place to support a project and mitigate potential risks

- liaising with contacts at funding bodies to smooth pathways and resolve any issues that may arise
- ensuring that the terms and conditions of a grant are followed, deliverables produced are of sufficient quality and are delivered on time
- ... and making sure that any and all other considerations – big or small - that may become apparent depending upon the particular situation are dealt with effectively

GCO can provide training in support of all of the above areas to both UHI researchers and research support staff based in Academic Partners; we were rather shocked to realise recently that, between us, we have upwards of 25 years' experience in research management! Some of us spent time as researchers in our previous lives too, which has given us some very useful perspective.

The Guides Series will look at many of the elements mentioned above in more detail; from hereon in we are on a mission to provide some general advice on various aspects of academic research, and to unravel and demystify the red tape that can at times seem to surround them.

That Light Bulb Moment – Leading a Research Idea

Key Point:
Remember... it'll all probably take longer than you think
- especially if there is a deadline!

The very first thing to do when you have a research idea is to discuss it with your line manager, who may well have valuable advice to impart. They will be aware of things happening in the wider university context which might have an impact on what you are hoping to do, and - with large scale initiatives in particular – it may be important for them to bring other departments or individuals into discussions first before you can be given the official go ahead.

Even at this very early stage, it is a good idea to develop your basic idea further, and to start to plan how your goal can be best achieved; the more you know at this stage, the easier the rest of the process will be. Things it may be useful for you to consider at this stage include such questions as:

Who will need to be involved in the project?	UHI staff only? Other UK universities? Overseas Universities? Commercial Companies?
How long will the project need to be and when should it start?	How long will it take to do the work? Can you start as soon as you know you are successful or will you need time to recruit staff/put a work plan together? Will you have sufficiently uncommitted time yourself to work on the project when it starts?
Will the project need a website?	Would it have to be external (which will incur a cost) or can it be attached to the university website? Would the website be required to exist after the project has finished, and if so how will you handle this?
Will you need a collaboration agreement in place before the start of the project?	How long will this take, and will this have an effect on when the project can start?

Bear in mind that you will be starting off a process that, as you progress, may involve any or all of the following:

- Your Line Manager
- Other researchers (Co-Is) you would like to involve
- GCO
- Your Dean of Faculty

If you are based at an Academic Partner you will also need to speak with:

- Your local administrative support
- Your finance department and
- Your institution's approver (usually your Principal)

Finding Funding for Your Research Idea

“It is a truth Universitally acknowledged that a researcher in possession of a good idea, must be in want of a grant.”

(with apologies to Jane Austen)



Once you have been given the go ahead to pursue your potential research project, you will need to explore early on is how it is going to be funded. In most cases it will be your responsibility to identify a potential funder and funding scheme, however there are certain resources and services which can help.

Although much of academic research funding comes from Research Councils, charities and the EC (for example, the Horizon 2020 Programme), there are many other potential funding sources worth considering when looking to fund your research project. Many of these can be found via Research Professional, a searchable, research funding opportunities database and information service. The university subscribes to this service, which is automatically available to all staff. More information about Research Professional, and access to the service, can be found in the [Research Funding Section](http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/resource/funding) of the UHI website (<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/resource/funding>).

Once you have found a potential funder and what looks to be a relevant funding scheme, you need to consider carefully whether or not it is ideal for your purposes. Writing a funding application is a significant task, and your time (and the funder's!) is too precious to waste, so, you should consider:

- The programme of work - is the area of research within the funder's area of interest/funding remit and/or does it meet a particular scheme's requirements?
- Eligibility for a grant - are you personally eligible to apply? Is the university eligible to hold the award?

And, not forgetting...

- Would the grant support the whole of the project, or will you need to find more funding contributions?

Assuming these considerations are taken care of, you can begin to address the red tape, and begin to develop your project proposal.

Identifying Your Research Team

Depending on the nature of the research, or, for example, if your research idea is large or complex and will require a lot of work to achieve, it may be best to form a team with other researchers in order to increase its chance of success. Hopefully you will already have made connections with others in your field of expertise and will continue to develop your research network as your career progresses, however there are certain tools which can assist you in identifying appropriate connections. These can be especially useful if, say, you wish to undertake a project which crosses the boundaries of more than one research field (interdisciplinary research).

One such tool is accessible via the “Research Partners” section of the European Commission’s [Community Research and Development Information Service](https://cordis.europa.eu/partners/web/guest) (CORDIS) website (<https://cordis.europa.eu/partners/web/guest>). Other tools may be available which are more specific to your sector of expertise; colleagues in your own department or wider subject network are most likely to be aware of these.

Identifying the Ideal “Lead Partner”

If you have decided to form a research team in order to develop a funding proposal, most funders will want to know which organisation is going to take ultimate responsibility for managing the project. Amongst other reasons, this makes communication lines more efficient. The funder will normally refer to the managing organisation as the “Lead Partner”, or the “Main Applicant”.

You may assume – and reasonably so! – that you, as the person with the original idea, should automatically assume the Lead Partner role, and in many cases this will be the correct thing to do. However, before you finally make that decision, remember that the administration involved in running a large project can be a significant task, so it will be good to make absolutely sure that:

- you would have both the time and the supporting resources to manage the project as well as doing the research; and
- your department would have sufficient resources to support you in managing the project.

It is important also to think about what the funder will be looking for; sometimes it might be tactically advantageous to have a specific partner as lead if they have a really good track record with a particular funder. On occasion, however, it might be useful to propose a junior academic as Principal Investigator and highlight the development of future leaders being supported by a team of experienced Co-Investigators as being a strength of the proposal.

Being a Project Partner

So far, we have assumed that you will be intending to lead a funding application submission, (i.e., you would be the Principal Investigator, or “PI”), but what should you do if someone else invites you to become a partner (a Co-Investigator or “Co-I”) in one of theirs?

Basically, the process will be the same as above, except that the task of finding a potential funder will tend to be handled by the Lead Partner – in fact a funder may have been identified even before you are approached. If so, make sure you are given details of the funder and funding programme as soon as possible so you can check that you are eligible to apply. This will enable you also to be aware

of such things as whether or not the grant would fund the project in full, or if you would need to find a financial contribution from elsewhere to fund part of your involvement.

How to make a Funding Application

First of All – Get In Touch!

Key Point:

Contact the Grants and Contracts Office as soon as you have decided that you wish to make a funding application, or have been invited to take part in one.

In order to submit a funding proposal through the university, you will not only need to interface with the funder's application process, you will also need to engage with the university's administrative processes which support funding applications, and also those of your own institution if you are based with an Academic Partner. You may need to speak to several people as time goes on, but the first thing to do will be to contact a member of GCO, who will:

- confirm that the university is eligible to apply to the funder and funding stream you have identified;
- set the administrative wheels in motion and steer you through the red tape in order to make sure that the appropriate internal authorisation process is satisfied;
- make contact with the other project partners' Grants and Contracts offices to set up firm communication paths;
- give you help where needed with the different sections of the application form and any other requirements, such as gathering supporting documentation;
- assist you in ensuring that the final submission is of the best quality, satisfies all of the funder's requirements, and is submitted before the deadline;
- submit the application 'centrally' on your behalf if that is what the particular application system requires.

It will be helpful, even at this very early stage, if you can provide GCO with as much detail as you can about the project, your target funder, and the funding call to which you are intending to apply. This will allow us to identify the most appropriate member of GCO who will continue to work with you as your main contact until your proposal is submitted to the funder.

Supplying "Advance Notification"

Your GCO contact will issue an initial form for you to complete so that the process of supporting you, and having your application authorised, may begin. The form will quote a unique **Project Reference** in the top right-hand corner, which is important for you to note, as this will be used as the main reference to your project for the whole of its lifetime.

Key Point:

There are hundreds of projects in the GCO system; if you always quote the **Project Reference** in your correspondence with your GCO contact, it will make your project records easy to find, will improve efficiency, and avoid possible confusion.

When you start to deal with the internal form, you may find that you can't complete all of the sections accurately and in full, but that's okay. Your project idea may not be at all developed at this stage, and the form does ask for quite a lot of detail – especially about the budget - which you may not yet know, but you should complete what you can anyway, even if it just provides a summary of the idea and an approximate budget, before forwarding to your Faculty Dean for approval. One of the main reasons for completing a form at the very start of the process is so that your idea can be put on the “proposal development radar”, which allows GCO to identify early on the approximate size and complexity of your project, so we can make sure it engages properly with its appropriate approval mechanism. In addition, the university will need to consider such things as the strategic fit of what you are proposing to do - how it fits into the university's research 'landscape' as it were, and the form prompts you to begin thinking about this sort of thing so that you can discuss it with your line manager and others if necessary.

Talking to the Right People

Once your GCO contact has a basic idea of what your research will involve, they may recommend that you contact other individuals or departments who will be able to add value to your proposal; for instance, the knowledge of colleagues in the European Development Office can come in very handy if you are intending to apply to an EC funding stream.

If your project has the potential to be very large and complex, it may be that a team of appropriate individuals is brought together to assist you. Such decisions as this are made at senior management level and on a case by case basis.

In summary, the people you need to involve, and the reasons as to why you need to involve them, are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Your Line Manager | - who needs to know what you are applying for and how your time is likely to be committed. It is good practice to have someone read through your application as this often helps to improve its quality; your line manager may be a good choice for this. |
| Your Co-Investigators | - any Co-Is involved in the proposal need to have input into it and also must agree with what you have said they will do. Co-Is also need to be given time to discuss their involvement with their line managers and other relevant staff; this is particularly important if they are from different institutions. |
| Your Faculty Dean | - who will sign off your initial Advance Notification. |

And for staff based in Academic Partners:

- Your local Administration Office - who may be able to help you with your application in conjunction with your GCO contact.
- Your Finance Office - who will need to know about your funding application, as this has the potential to affect funding coming to your institution. It will also need to be involved with aspects of the costing out your project budget.
- Your Institutional Authoriser - who may be your Principal, or Head of Department; whoever is assigned as such by whatever is the accepted funding application approval process at your institution.

Okay - All of the Players are Engaged, and I've Got the Go Ahead – What's Next?



Composing a Good Funding Proposal

There are several elements to writing a funding application, and we will examine all of these in more detail here. Essentially, your proposal will need to:

- include information which is correct and complete
- make sense, and answer all of the questions asked
- be of the highest possible quality
- look professional
- be sufficiently exciting and attractive to the funder so that it will award the project a grant

Regardless of the actual format you are required to use when formulating a funding proposal, the information you will be asked to supply tends to be fairly standard, and the application form itself will be divided into similar sections, including ones to record:

- administrative details
- the project title
- a summary description of the study being proposed
- a detailed project description (or “Case for Support”)
- a statement justifying the proposed budget (or “Justification for Resources”)
- a budget detailed appropriately

You may also be required to provide supporting documents including:

- letters of support from project partners and other stakeholders
- PI and Co-I CVs
- organisational approval statements
- and anything else the funder requires

If it should happen that an application form isn't actually supplied, say if the funder requires you to submit a freeform Business Case document or similar, then the above sections can be used as a guide to inform that exercise.

The following section looks at each of these requirements in more detail.

Writing the Application

Key Point:

Read the funder guidelines carefully, think about your costs and alert people as early as possible if you need signatures/letters of support etc.

And be aware of the deadline!

Administrative Details

It is important for the administrative details (contact details, organisation address etc.) supplied in any funding application to be both accurate and complete in order for the funder to be able to communicate with both you and the organisation effectively; this is also vital for legal reasons.

The University of the Highlands and Islands is a bit more complicated than other universities in this regard, as it is made up of several legal entities. UHI Executive Office itself is the legal entity for the whole university, of which each Academic Partner is a member (in a sort of “departmental” way), but each Academic Partner is also a legal entity in its own right. This can lead to confusion over the correct administrative details to provide.

The basic rule of thumb is that all funding applications need to be signed off and submitted by an eligible legal entity – either the university or a College - and if you are making a funding application through the university (and remember, you may have to in order to be eligible to apply to a particular funding stream), then you will need to work through your GCO contact, who will ensure that the legal entity details are expressed in the correct manner to allow this to happen. If the application is going to the funder direct from your College, i.e. in the College’s name, then you should work directly with your local administrative team and legal signatory.

This is extremely important, as providing the wrong details at this point can complicate matters further down the line, for instance:

- Certain funders, such as the Research Councils, will only accept applications from the university as legal entity. If you try to make an application in a College’s name, it will not be viewed as eligible and the funder will refuse it;
- If a funder accepts an application from a College (technically in error) to a funding stream to which only the university is entitled to apply, and subsequently makes an award to the College, then an auditor discovers at a later date that the College was not eligible to receive the grant, the funder may demand that the funds are returned, even if they have all been spent and the work completed;
- If you intend making a funding application with the university as legal entity, but you omit to tell the university what you are doing, then the university may refuse any subsequent offer of grant, as the application will not have gone through the correct approval and submission procedure;

- If you make a funding application with the university as the legal entity, but do not involve the university, and accept any subsequent grant directly to the College, this could be viewed as fraud, which could have serious ramifications.

So – it is always worth checking with GCO first to be certain you are handling things correctly.

The Project Title

The title for your project should provide the funder with a clear indication of what your project is about and avoid being overly verbose. The project title will often be the first thing that a reviewer looks at, and the aim is to immediately engage their interest. Don't spend too much time at the start honing your project title (and perhaps catchy acronym) to perfection, as titles can often change as proposal writing progresses. Make sure when your project description is finalised that the title as it stands is still valid!

Start Date and Duration

Most funders will be interested in knowing when you could start the project and how long it would take to complete; one of the reasons why funders view this as important is that their 'grant pots' work to defined financial years, and having an idea of when your project expenditure would be incurred helps them to budget accordingly.

You should consider your preferred start date carefully, making sure that you allow sufficient time ahead for all of the red tape that inevitably will be produced if your application is successful to be dealt with, and that you will have sufficient time to have the required resources in place and at the ready in time for work to begin. This will be particularly important if you would need to engage new staff, as recruitment can be a surprisingly lengthy process.

Occasionally, depending upon the nature of the call for applications, a funder may prescribe the start date. If so, and no matter how attractive and relevant to your work the funding seems, you should consider carefully whether the start date is realistic and whether you could fulfil that requirement; making promises which it turns out you can't keep can lead to reputational damage.

The Grants and Contracts Office knows a lot about the sort of things that need to happen before a project can commence and how long these can take. This subject is covered in detail in GCO Guide 2 – "Research Grant Awards", so please do consult that or ask your GCO contact for advice re your start date if this would be helpful.

Summary Description or Abstract

This is the next thing that will likely be of interest to the typical reviewer, and affords the opportunity for you to give a short and sharp description of the problem and how you intend to solve it. If the word limit of this section is generous, you may be able to go into an appreciable level of detail here, however you should aim for conciseness throughout.

Although this section may be at the beginning of the application form, it is better to actually write it last, in order that it is informed by, and accurately reflects, the content of the rest of the application.

Case for Support

The case for support is an important – if not indeed the most important - section of your application, as it sets out to describe in detail exactly what you are seeking funding for. Some application formats

will require the case for support to be written in sections, which may be numbered, but if yours does not, then the general format should include:

Introduction	An overview of the project, designed to engage the reader's attention
A description of the problem	to define and establish its importance, and why seeking a solution to it should be funded
A description of the project	how you are proposing to address the problem

A general guide to follow when completing your case for support is to break it down into:

Introduction	<= 20%
Problem description	<= 30%
Project description	>= 50%

Introduction

The introductory section should give the reviewer an immediate preview of the whole research proposal – what you are wanting to do and why you should be given a grant to do it. The purpose of the introduction is to grab and hold the reviewer's attention and make them want to read on. You may think you have already done this if you have been required to provide an abstract earlier, but the introduction allows you to go into more depth than will be relevant to the abstract content.

Do try to avoid using your Introduction as your Abstract or vice versa; they are not the same things, and just copying one into the other may be immediately apparent to the reviewer, which will not score you any points.

Problem Description

This section allows you to define the problem you are wishing to solve, or the hypothesis that you are wishing to test, and establish its importance to your field of research. An examination of the background which has led up to your identifying the problem should be demonstrated, along with setting of context, detailing of research questions and the project's objectives. Evidence of past and present related studies, and how solving your problem will build upon or enhance these, should be supplied. You can take the opportunity here also to explain how the problem links to the remit of the funder.

This section should be supported by citing sound and relevant references to the literature. Remember the difference between listing references and providing a bibliography; the latter is less likely to enhance your case for support - to the reviewer, it will be just a list of what you're indicating you have read, whereas the former will demonstrate more precise knowledge and has more potential to support the points you are making effectively. Remember too that citing references in your text will count towards your word limit, so you may prefer to list them in a separate section or attachment if the application format allows for this.

Project Description

Although the previous sections of the Case for Support are in themselves important, a good project description will be crucial if your application is to be successful in securing a grant. This section should describe:

- how you intend to carry out the project

- the resources you will use
- the techniques you will employ
- what results you are hoping to achieve, and
- how those results will be disseminated

You should go into an appreciable level of detail regarding each of these sub-sections - after all, at this point you will be telling the funder how you would be spending their money, and giving an indication of how far their investment would go in supporting their remit. You can include details here of such things as:

- how long the project is going to take and why
- who you are going to involve and why, and how you are going to involve them
- the research methods you have chosen and why these will provide optimum results

The more detail you are able to provide here the better, as it will help to demonstrate that you have given your project sufficient thought and have planned it effectively.

The Budget

The way you set out your budget will depend upon what the particular application form requires, but this will need to be informed by the costing exercise that will have to be carried out - just entering an approximation of what you think the project is going to cost without really thinking about your resources and having things calculated correctly can lead to real problems later on. So – make sure that your GCO contact assists you with this section. This exercise is examined in more detail in the “Developing the Project Budget” section below.

Justification for Resources

In the Justification for Resources (JfR) section of the application you will need to explain why you need to incur all of the costs listed in the budget that would be funded by the grant.

This section needs to be more than just a list of what the different elements are and how much they will cost; that can be discerned from the budget section in any case. The JfR should give more detail regarding such things as why the costs you have included are there and how they will support your research. Effectively, the JfR needs to substantiate your budget. So, rather than, for instance, stating

“Room hire and refreshments for workshops, £750”

You would rather say something like,

“£750 is requested to support 5 x 1-day focus group discussions (20 participants per session) to inform Study Part 1: Room hire (£250); Buffet lunch and refreshments (£500)”

This demonstrates to the funder that you have given thought to what you need in order to be able to carry out your project.

Letters of Support

Sometimes, funders will make it a requirement of an application that you must provide evidence of support for your idea from your institution, and sometimes from external agencies, such as those who have indicated that they would support the work in some way if your funding application resulted in a grant award.

Even if letters of support aren't an application requirement, they may be worth supplying anyway, assuming the application process does not preclude this from happening, as these can help to demonstrate to the funder the perceived importance and impact of your research to the wider community. If you can, try to ensure that those writing letters of support include as much information as possible about how beneficial they think your work will be, both to their organisation and the community they serve. If a company is willing to support your project in a material way – say, by donating expertise or use of equipment - this should be highlighted too.

Bear in mind that people are busy, so be sure to allow plenty of time for the appropriate person to write a really good and meaningful letter; something that simply states, “Yes, we think this is a good idea” won't add much to your proposal.

Most organisations who operate in your area of research will be happy to supply letters of support, especially if they already know of you and your work, so it's a good idea to bring companies and the like into your professional network; and such networking can of course lead to further opportunities.

Impact Summary

Funders have become very interested in recent years at looking ahead to how the research they fund is likely to make a difference in the future, and so may ask you to provide a summary of your thinking with regard to the potential impact your research might have.

Writing a good impact summary can be a bit of a challenge, so do ask your line manager or other colleagues for their input if you find this section particularly hard going. For some good general guidance, it may be worth you visiting [RCUK's policy on research impact](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/policies/) (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/policies/>) and following through links to other information they provide.

CVs

If you are required to supply a copy of your CV with your application, be sure that the format adheres to any particular requirements the funder may have. For instance, some funders will insist on only a 2-page CV, and your application may be returned or discarded entirely if it exceeds that limit by even a sentence or two.

Organisational Approval Statements

Occasionally, you may need to submit some form of approval document from your organisation along with your application, in addition to having the application form itself signed. Try to spot this requirement early on in the process so that sufficient time is available for this to be obtained; the vast majority of approval statements will need to be supplied by a senior staff member whose availability may be at a premium. Your GCO contact will be able to arrange for such documents to be supplied.

Note: Approval statements are particularly attractive to EU funding bodies, who may require one from each member of an international multi-partner application. Pulling these together can be administratively challenging, not least due to geographic dispersion of partners, so make sure if you are leading such an application that your partners have sufficient time to have their letters issued by their administration and forwarded in time before the deadline for submission of the application.

Anything else?

Yes, there are various other small but important things to consider when preparing your application, including:

Word counts	There may be maximum words or characters allowed per section, so watch out for this and write accordingly.
Neatness	Keep an eye on the font and font size you are using, especially if you are pasting information into the application from another source. Presentation should be consistent throughout.
Style and Flow	If several people have input into your proposal narrative, it will be good to go through it periodically and harmonise the style of writing as far as possible so that the narrative is balanced and flows nicely.
Additional information requirements	Funders can request additional information to be supplied with a funding application, such as the university's Financial Statements, proof that it has a policy on Research Ethics, proof as to its VAT status – all kinds of things. Your GCO contact should be able to access all such information for you, but the sooner you can make the requirements known, the better.

Developing the Project Budget

As mentioned earlier, your budget needs to be given careful attention in order for you to be confident that the grant you are requesting would effectively support the project, whilst at the same time demonstrating efficiency and value for money. Your budget will need to be **realistic, sufficient and accurate**:

Realistic	because reviewers will be looking carefully at what you are proposing to do and, as experts in their field, will have a good idea if all of the resources you are saying you will need will be wholly necessary;
Sufficient	because, although you will be keen to demonstrate value for money, it may prove impossible to complete your project if you end up running out of funds due to having understated your actual costs;
Accurate	Because, if your application is successful, your Finance department's accounting procedures will be charting the project expenditure against the budget.

It is really important to work up an early rough draft of the budget, as this may influence what you say you can do in your proposal. In the long run this will save you time – and maybe even save the project altogether. For instance, an early costing might indicate that the funder you have identified isn't wholly appropriate to your purpose and that an alternative funder may be better, or that you need to adapt your project. It may become apparent that the funder wouldn't cover the cost of a vital item or staff member you need on your project, or the budget ceiling is far too low for what you want to do. GCO staff are familiar with the ways of working of many funding bodies, and are aware of such things as the types of costs that grants will cover and those that they won't. Because of this

your GCO contact will be able to see potential problems that maybe you cannot at such an early stage, so it will be well worth you involving them early.

Identifying Your Resources and Their Costs

The best way to inform your project budget is to cost it out as accurately as you can. In order to help you with this, your GCO contact will discuss with you what resources you will need to carry out your project, and will draft an initial costing for you that is in line with the funder's rules and regulations, as well as any rules particular to the individual call for applications. The costing will need to be applied to a timeline, so it will be good if you have a realistic idea of the project start date and duration by this point.

The costing exercise also helps to identify which costs would be covered by the grant (according to the funding rules), and if additional funding needs to be found from elsewhere to cover any that wouldn't.

The costs that need to be considered can vary significantly between projects, but will usually include such things as:

Staff salaries	for your own time and that of any other staff who will be working on the project
Recruitment costs	if you would need to employ new staff to work on the project
Equipment	which you may need to support the research
Travel, Accommodation and Subsistence	for project staff and also any external research participants
Consumables	day-to-day supplies that aren't automatically covered by Indirect costs
Indirect costs	these are costs that are not directly associated with any particular object needed in order to be able to carry out your project. They are the costs associated with the organisation's support of your work, and are fixed at institutional level. Indirect costs cover such things as administrative support, marketing and stationery; the assistance offered by your GCO contact will often be viewed by funders as an Indirect cost
Estates costs	estates costs are premises-related, including such things as repairs and maintenance, basic services and utilities, existing equipment, cleaning and security - basically, everything to do with workplace infrastructure
Dissemination activities	website preparation and maintenance; conference attendance, workshop delivery, publications etc.

As time progresses, it is important that you inform your GCO contact of any changes in your plans as your proposal develops, as the project costing will need to be updated to reflect these. The costing itself will be used to inform the final budget in the submitted proposal, so it is very important for this

to be up to date and match what you are telling the funder you will need, otherwise the grant may end up not being sufficient to cover the work.

Once your costs are finalised, your GCO contact will enter the figures into your application for you (or will check them if you prefer to do this yourself). At this point your GCO contact will compare your budget with what you have stated elsewhere in the application to make sure there are no inconsistencies.

Fine Tuning, Completion and Submission



If you have spent a substantial amount of time on your application, everything may eventually become so familiar that you may stop seeing such things as errors, gaps and omissions, or places where there is generally room for improvement. Having other people read through your application ahead of it being submitted to the funder will reduce the chances of errors being present in the final version, and will help to ensure that your proposal is of the highest quality.

It is always a good idea to request a peer to review your application as experience has shown that this helps to maximise success. As GCO staff are not experts in any particular academic subject, it is likely that your GCO contact will not be able to assist with the fine tuning of, say, your case for support, but peers will be able to spot things such as

places where your argument is not quite correct, or ways in which you may enhance your proposed methodology etc.

Once you have finalised your application and are generally happy with it, your GCO contact will give it a final read through, and all being well, will proceed to the proposal submission stage. They will arrange for sign off by the university (if you are from an Academic Partner they will also check that your College has approved submission), and for paper-based applications they will help you to obtain the necessary signatures required by the funder. Once all of the red tape is satisfied, your GCO contact will submit your application on your behalf in the manner required by the funder.

A word of warning!

The submission process as generally summarised above may appear quite straightforward, however it is not always so. Depending upon the size and complexity of your project, the number of people and organisations involved, and the funder's application procedure requirements, all manner of things may need to be considered, such as:

- are you sure that the people you need signatures from are going to be available when you need them to be?
- if your application involves international partners, have you left sufficient time for them to arrange for and send you any forms and letters required?
- have your external project partners had enough time to satisfy their own red tape and official sign off procedures?
- if your application is to be submitted online, will everyone who needs to do something in the system actually be able to access it?
- again for online submissions (mainly!), have you checked the deadline **time** for submission as well as the day? Some deadlines end at noon...
- if your application needs to be put in the mail or couriered to an address abroad, have you left sufficient time for it to be received before the deadline?

- has any documentation which needs to be signed and officially stamped by the project's partner organisations actually been stamped?

Having your application fall at the last fence when you have worked so hard at it will be very disappointing, so remember to make sure you:

- are aware of all procedural requirements
- remain sufficiently organised so that you can cope with them
- liaise with your GCO contact to guard against the possibility of any last minute issues preventing submission.

Summary: Steps to Take in Proposal Development

- Come up with your project idea
- Find a funder
- Contact the Grants and Contracts Office to obtain a project number and for help with the red tape, your costing and your application
- Make sure you understand the rules of the scheme to which you are applying and ask for help if you are unclear
- Obtain approval from your line manager (and your College if applicable)
- Complete an Advance Notification (ANF) and obtain signature from your Faculty Dean and others as applicable
- Finalise your application with the help of your GCO contact
- Submit your final application via your GCO contact (unless the funder requires you to submit it directly to them yourself, or requires it to come from someone else, such as the Principal)
- Keep your fingers crossed for a successful outcome!

Contact

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