How to find and win grant funding

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Agenda and Contents

Course Overview

Introduction

There's a massive misconception in industry that there's no funding around to do anything. That couldn't be further from the truth - there's more often than not a number of grants and support around, but you just need to know where to look for it. In many cases you have to be a little creative about what you do in order to achieve the optimum benefit, but in many cases there's support around to help you.

One of the most common question I get asked is "what funding is available for…" with ideas ranging from the obvious to the most absurd of ideas. I never set out to be a "funding expert" but before I knew it I'd worked on a range of bids (from £1k to £650M), developed and assessed new funding schemes, been a project monitor / assessor for one of the UK's largest and most established innovation funding programmes and had helped personal clients raise over £2M in grants and support. So, people naturally started asking me these questions.

The most honest answer to this question is that funding isn't always what the client needs, which is why I usually answer with another question - "it depends what you want to do".

The first step is always to sift those who have a requirement for work which is aligned with their plan and strategy, against those who simply seek funding because they believe money is the solution to their problems.

While money may be the solution they seek, the source they should so often chase is revenue, and certainly not a grant. A grant is a purely means to perform some work which will result in the generation of revenue.

About the Author

As a brief history, in 1997, the course author (Richard Harrison) started working at BAE SYSTEMS (then British Aerospace) in the "Research Management" department on funding programmes. This made him aware of a range of European funding streams, and how companies could fund their development activities without having to invest all of their hard earned profit. Throughout his career he balanced his technical and commercial development in order to provide a good balance of both, which is something he would strongly recommend. While at BAE SYSTEMS, Richard secured funding for his own development projects and won 4 Innovation awards.

This sparked Richard's passion for securing funding to help achieve growth. He moved through a series of other organisations and projects including the North West Aerospace Alliance where he helped secure £7M to deliver a programme to improve the region's Aerospace Supply Chain, and the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) where he monitored and supported several £multi-million research projects, assessed several £10M+ project applications, and helped a range of companies secure funding for their own development and growth.

During his time at the NWDA, Richard learned a lot about what funding was around, why it existed, what return was expected and how it was managed and monitored. This also included liaising with many of the academic partners in the region to help them better engage with industry. These contacts and this knowledge would turn out to be invaluable. Richard took this knowledge to the Business Link Northwest Innovation Team, where he was seen as the "grant funding expert" and built this knowledge further.

In 2011, Richard formed a private company to help other organisations and aspiring individuals achieve their growth potential - which so often requires securing investment. He estimates that on engagement, less than 10% of the companies he worked with had ever had any type of funding support. However, to this day almost EVERY company he works with has secured financial or business support in some form. In total, he's personally raised over £3M for client improvement and growth programmes, ranging from training courses worth a few hundred pounds to £500k for the development of specific R&D programmes.

What he knows comes from a combination of what he's learned, who he knows, and what he continues to ask. His background and experience is quite unique - and we know that you can reap the benefit from this.

If you want to see his full history, you can find Richard on LinkedIn by searching for "Richard Harrison Geminus Innovation". Please do take a moment to connect and if you're not on it yet, set yourself up a profile - it's the best online business tool we know of!

What to expect from this course

If you're sat somewhere reading this now, the chances are that you're seeking funding for something. You believe that a grant of some sort will lead to the development or delivery of something which will help your business. As we move on, we'll start to identify what type of funding or support is right for you.

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So, moving on - each section provides you with some information that you need to understand in order to maximise your chance of securing the right funding, and closes with a number of brief questions which are aimed to help tailor your understanding to your specific needs.

On this course, we will cover four key areas:

Section 1: Understanding grant funding - To stand the best chance of winning grant funding, it's important to understand what it actually is, why it exists and where it comes from.

Section 2: Finding the right fund - There are many different types of fund, each for a different purpose. This helps you understand which grant is best for you.

Section 3: Preparing a winning big - To win a grant, you have to write a application, proposal or bid document which convinces the assessment team that you deserve it. This section tells you precisely how to achieve that.

Section 4: Managing the results - Whether you win or lose each application, there is much to be done and learned. Find out more about that in this section.

We will then finish with a summary and top 10 tips for you to secure the grant funding you need!

Before you continue, please take a minute to sit back and rather than thinking about the first 3 questions!

1. *How much funding do you think you need?*

2. *If you had the funding, what would you want to spend it on*

3. *If you couldn't get the funding, how else could you pay for / achieve it?*

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Section 1: Understanding Grant Funding

A Brief History of "Funding"

Before we get into things, we need to understand the different types of funding. Traditionally, funding used to refer quite simply to money that was given to you to achieve something - life's not that simple anymore. If we delve back into the history of business funding, we'll see that when a scheme is developed, an extremely high percentage of new start and smaller businesses tend to apply for this funding. The main reason for this is that a lot of the funds tend to be relatively small (less than £5k) and for larger businesses, the administration involved is hardly worth the benefit.

But, these funds were abused to a degree. This isn't really the fault of the applicant, but more down to a lack of guidelines and rules around what the funds could be used for. In many cases:

- companies spent the money, achieved little, and then had no money to perform the next stage of their plan;
- the use of the money was misguided and didn't lead to any benefit; or
- the business was never going to go anywhere, because there wasn't a good commercial proposition there.

Ultimately, the fund holder (usually the government or a similar body) didn't receive the return on investment that they wanted, and subsequently introduced stricture conditions around future schemes to ensure they met certain targets.

Something had to change - which is why the system is a lot stricter, but ultimately better defined and presents a better return on the taxpayer's investment today.

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Within this course, we cover 4 different types of funding. You may not actually get money for all of them, as in many cases the scheme in question provides the funding directly to a third party to help you achieve something significant.

Now you'll start to understand questions from the previous section - do you really want cash or are you trying to achieve something specific?

The typical types of funding include:

Grant funding
Grant funding is money awarded in order to achieve something specific. Most grants are a competitive process and require an in-depth application form explaining what you want to spend the money on, and what you're going to achieve as a result. Most grants tend to range from (for example) the development of a new product through to the purchase of capital equipment. In most cases, it's used to fund work performed by a third party.

Subsidised Business Support
Subsidised business support provides financial assistance in bringing in some specialist advice in order to achieve something specific. There are a number of schemes that can be used to fund certain types of coaching, mentoring, training and specialist support. Again, the majority of these schemes are tailored to achieve something special and require an in-depth application form.

Academic Support
A great source of support is from Universities and other Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs), who secure a range of funds to help companies achieve certain activities. These activities are usually aligned with the specialist subjects within that University, and give the University an opportunity to work more closely with the business community in order to demonstrate their capabilities.

Subsidised training
Finally, there are a range of schemes to help fund a certain training courses to help your business. This can range from a contribution towards the cost to many fully funded options. What if you don't actually need training? Think creatively - by transferring your current training to these providers, you may be freeing up finance in other parts of the business to help fund your goals!

PLEASE NOTE: Within this course, we don't cover access to investment, bank loans, tax credits or any form of crowdfunding. However, the basic principles for applying for these funds share many common requirements.

The Funding Supply Chain

The next thing that you need to understand is that funding doesn't grow on trees, and ultimately it's come out of someone's pocket or budget. The better you know where it's come from and what they want, the better your chance of getting a slice of it.

To keep it simple and straightforward, the majority of grant funding comes from the Government (national or local), the European Union or a specific funding body such as the National Lottery. In most cases, these funds will be administered by a third party. They've often bid for the privilege of managing the fund, and will be getting a small slice themselves for the management.

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The people who have the funding tend to have two objectives and sets of customers. One one hand, they've got to serve you by giving you funding to achieve something in particular - but on the other, they need to satisfy the people who's money they're administering, by achieving some set outputs and outcomes. If you can help them achieve both sets of objectives, you're putting yourself in the ideal position to receive this funding.

So, your first job is to find out who is administering a fund, what they're seeking and what their targets are. The fund title often gives it away and you can find a lot on the internet, but if you can't find what you're looking for don't be afraid to phone them up and ask - in most cases they'll be obliged to have a point of contact who can explain the funding and rationale.

For example, at the time of writing, a certain scheme had just closed - let me use this as an example, but please appreciate that I've shortened it to fit it all in here:

- The Growth Sector Support scheme is managed by Regenerate Pennine Lancashire
- Funding and specific advice is available to help with a wide range of innovative growth projects, including Information technology, e-business, software development, and systems integration.
- The funding available is 50% of the project cost, but with the grant value not exceeding £5k
- The company is expected to employ additional people or increase turnover

So, you can see from this example given that the money was for something IT and innovation related, they had to be Lancashire based and had to increase turnover or create jobs as a result.

This gives you an early idea whether the fund is right for you. Put yourself in their position - if you received your application, would it fit?

Funding isn't free!

The worst thing if you're completely strapped for cash, is that we can tell you straight away that funding costs, and there's hardly ever something for nothing.

The following funding rates are typical of what tends to be available:

Purchase of capital equipment:	**20% - 50%**
Research and Development:	**30% - 60%**
Coaching support:	**Up to 60%**
Consultancy support	**50%**
Leadership & Management training	**Up to 50%**
Other training courses	**50% - 100%**
Academic support	**50% - 100%**

In addition to this, there are additional factors such as company size, subject area, geographic location and minimum levels of grant also often apply.

Please note, this is typical of what is around at any given time. There will be times when schemes will exist offering support above and beyond what is shown here, and times when none of the above is available.

Most funds work on a "pay first, claim after" basis so even with the 100% grants, you've normally got to "cashflow" them. You can usually make your claim once you have an invoice and evidence of the work performed - and then payback typically takes up to 30 days.

The main exceptions to this are academic support programmes and fully funded training courses which often require no exchange of finance whatsoever - but even on that note, if you have no cashflow within your business, you might not fit the acceptance criteria for the sort of businesses they're looking to work with.

Does this make you think about what you need? Consider the following questions:

1. *What type of support do you think that you need?*

2. *Where do you think that the funding you're seeking will come from*

3. *Based on the table, what sort of intervention rate do you think that you'll be able to receive?*

4. *Do you have access to the matched funds, and if so, where?*

Section 2: Finding the right fund

Where do I look for Funding?

If you're after funding to grow your business, you'll find out what exists simply by looking in the right places and asking the right people. If you follow these steps, you'll be on the right path…

Local Business Support Service

Most regions have a group of people who are dedicated to helping support business growth. They tend to be funded by the council (or some other similar body) and should be the point of all knowledge for these types of questions. In most cases they're pretty good - but it's also the case that fishing around as many potential sources as possible won't do you any harm as there may be a fund that the business support groups simply aren't aware of. Google something like "business support grants (your county - e.g. Lancashire)" and you'll find a number of links to people who can help you. Read up, pick up the phone and call them, tell them what you want and ask them what they know. Don't be afraid or nervous - they exist to help you and answer these types of call every day!

Academic Business Support Service

In addition to the government and council style support services, many Universities are now working closer with the business community, often offering services themselves. While the council service will most likely be able to tell you which Universities in your area can help you, this may be restricted to a county basis. So the Lancashire business support team may tell you about University support in Lancashire, but may not know of the fantastic support from the universities in the bordering counties - which in this case, would

include those in Liverpool and Manchester - who may be able to provide me with something closer to what I need. So, you need to call the University's commercial engagement team - again, google something like "business support (the institute you want to know about - e.g. Manchester University) and you'll get their details. Call them for a chat and they'll tell you how they can help you! In most cases, the academic engagement teams can take a little longer as they don't have the details about every department in the University to hand - just be patient with them…

General Search Engines

If you type in what you're searching for, followed by something like "grant funding" you're likely to find out what national grants exist. In many cases there are support bodies with government funding to help you gain funding for what it is you need. By way of example, you've got government supported projects such as InnovateUK, Nesta, and Defra to name a few. You've then got every charity, trust and sector support organisation who have funding to support specific aims and objectives. Depending on what you're seeking, there are usually many candidates. The secret, is in picking the right ones.

Dedicated Funding Sites

Finally, there are a number of sites that provide access to a range of funding sources sorted into a series of categories, depending on what you want the funding for. These sites tend to have a free or subscription offer - the free offer will usually give you the fund names and providers, but you need the subscription offer to access the fine detail and compare funds. If you want easy and quick access to all of the details then the subscription offers are good - but if you're the resourceful type on a tighter budget, you can use the details from the

free login to get the fund details, and then use google to take you to the fund providers own site. The only negative with these site searches is that (from our experience) only around 5% of the grants suggested tend to be relevant to your specific needs.

How to identify if a certain scheme is right for you

The "business on benefits" model never works. Grants and other funding schemes are a good way to save money or help you achieve something a little extra, but you should never base your business entirely on grant funding.

Bearing in mind the point that many administrative bodies have already had their fingers (and pockets) burned by the funding bodies who get frustrated when their targets aren't met, if you don't meet the criteria for a specific fund then you're not going to get it. That's why it's so important to make sure that you fit what a scheme is offering before you apply for it.

When bearing this in mind, the questions I always ask (in this order) are as shown on the following page. This is your golden guide to finding out if a grant fund is right for you!

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1. What is the target market for the fund?
If they're not seeking what you're after, the scheme probably isn't for you. Do think creatively, but don't deviate from your plan and change what you need to do to something you don't need, just because there's funding available.

2. What can the funding be spent on?
Make sure you know what the money can be spent on. Typical categories include in-house costs (wages, etc) and third party support. Some schemes cover capital equipment - make sure you know if the fund covers the full cost of the equipment or just the depreciation value.

3. How much is available?
It's pointless applying for a £5k grant if you need £100k to complete the project. Equally, if the competition offers £100k and you only need £5k, the scheme and your requirements are mis-matched.

4. What is the intervention rate and can you afford the match?
What percentage of your costs does the grant cover? Very few funding schemes cover the full 100%. For the aspect you need to provide, does it have to be cash or can it be the value of your unpaid time?

5. What is the deadline?
Now I know the basics, the next big question is when is the deadline. In many cases there's one hard fixed deadline, but for many ongoing schemes there are periodic assessment points (for example, every month or quarter.

6. What types of company are they looking for?
Many schemes are only available to companies in certain sectors. For example, ERDF projects often have restrictions that limit or prevent investment in sectors such as shipbuilding, coal and steel, agriculture. Make sure you're in their target marketplace.

7. What outputs / outcomes are they seeking?
Remember, we're spending someone else's money, and they want something in return. It's usually something like jobs created or increased turnover. You need to find out what the conditions are and be sure that you can meet them. What are the consequences if you don't hit their target?

8. Is it competitive, and what is the competition like?
Some funding is pretty much guaranteed if you meet the criteria, while other schemes may be competitive - i.e. there's an application process with a cut off point, and the top applications secure the funding. If you're applying for a competitive scheme, how strong is your application in comparison to the other potential applicants? As this carries a higher risk, you need to consider the chance of winning against the time you have to invest in preparing the application.

9. What is the timescale?
Getting money isn't usually a quick process. The application process can take up to a few weeks, especially if meetings or visits are involved. Assessment can then typically take anything from a week to 3 months.

10. What is the process?
Finally, you need to look at the process - there's usually a website or documentation guidelines. Read these well and you'll be in the best possible position to know whether this fund is for you or not!

There are a few more pointers that can help you secure the funding for your business. Some of these are obvious, others not so much!

Make friends with the administrative body

More often than not, there's a designated point of contact in the administrative body who's job it is to help you understand if the fund is right for you. You can ask them all of the questions from the previous section, and they'll tell you the answers! These people aren't there to catch you out, they're there to help you. In many cases you'll develop a relationship where they'll help with your application process as long as it fit's what they're looking for - after all, they have to spend the money with someone, so if you fit the bill, you're helping them too!

Find out what the assessment criteria is

If a scheme is competitive or there are restrictions applied, there will be some form of scoresheet. If the programme has a designated point of contact you can always ask what the project applications are measured against. If there's downloadable documentation about the programme and application process, the assessment criteria is either provided, or it's usually pretty easy to guess what the criteria will be.

Pick out the buzzwords

More often than not, a scheme will focus on a specific topic of interest, and the documentation will make reference to certain things they want to see addressed, or areas of particular importance. For example, if a funding scheme for security applications makes reference to the point that they see mobile phones as being one of the main sources for online payments in the future, then there's a high chance that they're going to allocate quite a bit of the funding to solutions based around mobile phone security. Read the lines, and then in-between the lines to try and evaluate what really excites them!

Your questions for this section are as follows:

1. *Where have you looked for funding so far? Have you been able to find any funds that you think may meet your criteria?*

2. *Can you see the relevance, restrictions, buzzwords and any other key information which would help shape your application?*

3. *Write down the main criteria and buzzwords for this fund - do you really fit?*

4. *Do you still believe that these funds fit your project, and you're the right type of applicant?*

Section 3: Preparing a Winning Bid

Prepare a winning bid

If you've followed the instructions up to this point and there's a fund that you think is right for you, then you're on the right tracks. The next thing to do is to pull together a winning application.

This is where you have to be completely hones with yourself, and ask yourself what your writing style is like. If the application is simple and straightforward, then you can probably pull a strong application together yourself. But if it's a bit longer or for a relatively high sum of money (typically £20k+) you need to think about whether you can write a strong application which is likely to sufficiently impress the assessors.

Do you write blogs? What feedback have you had? Are you good at reports which are concise and relevant? If you write a good story, then by all means have a go yourself - I've provided a few additional tips below. However, if you've never written applications before or you're just one of those people whose verbal communication is stronger than their written works, you might want to consider getting the support of someone with a little more experience.

In many cases, the administrator for the scheme can help you with the application form, but in the case of competitive bids it's more often than not down to you - and if you're competing against professional bid writers, then you're fighting a hard battle. It's not hard to find bid writers, but you need to know they've got a good track record and that you're getting a good deal. There are a few out there that do no-win no fee, but there are also a few who charge a lot of money for a not so great service. Ask around and check their success rate before committing.

If you do decide to write the bid yourself, then hopefully you'll remember from the previous sections that if the application is competitive, the questions are likely to be marked. Go back to your school exam days - the difference this time, is that you've got time and other resources (such as the internet) on your side. Look at each question and work out what sort of answer they're wanting to see. Align this with your response, including any of the relevant topics and buzzwords. The top 10 tips at the end of this guide are essential to consider!

Take your time, read it over to make sure it's concise and makes sense, get someone else to proof read it, and perform a mock assessment to see how you'd mark it. If you're happy, click that submit button and wait for your results!

Be honest about your writing skills - this can be the difference between failure and success:

Before you develop your final application, there are a number of areas which you should consider addressing. Not all funding applications will need every one of these sections answered, but it will enhance your chance of getting the funding (and answering any potential awkward questions) if you've considered each of the following sections.

Research the subject matter

As an assessor, there's nothing worse than a badly researched proposal. If you're going to award an applicant with funding or other support, you want to have the confidence that they're going to use it

wisely! More often than not, this comes down to a combination of the applicant having a good knowledge of what they're doing, what they're spending and where they're going. We'll address the latter two of these in the next few sections - but for now lets focus on "what they're doing".

Every applicant should be able to provide a comprehensive description of what they're doing, why they're doing it and the context of the project in their industrial sector. This should include a comparison of who (or what) their competitors are, what their capabilities are and what they're doing. There must also be a clear understanding of how your proposition exceeds that (or boosts your capabilities beyond those) of your competitors.

If someone asked you a question about your project, you should be able to provide an answer which demonstrates that you're a relative expert (or at least, highly knowledgeable) in the subject!

Develop your work plan

Every project application should be accompanied by a plan of work. You might not need to submit this plan as a part of the application, but without it, how do you know how you will spend the money, and utilise it to its full extent?

A good way to achieve this is to think about the following three key elements:
1. Splitting the project into Work Packages
2. Developing a Timeframe (using a Gantt Chart)
3. Understanding the Risks (using a Risk Register)

You can achieve each of these using the following simple methodology. We'll look at the Work Packages first:

Firstly, think about what it is that you're going to do. Write down the series of stages (or "tasks") into main categories, and describe each in a few key points. Make each sentence "SMART" - that is, make it:

- **SPECIFIC** (be precise about what you're doing)
- **MEASURED** (what is the output - can it be measured?)
- **ACHIEVABLE** (ensure that it can be done!)
- **REALISTIC** (ensure that it can be done WITH YOUR RESOURCES)
- **TIMED** (how long will this task take)

For example, the tasks in a certain (highly simplified) technical development project may involve:
1. Purchase the components
2. Build the prototype
3. Test the prototype
4. Refine the design

As we investigate these tasks further, we should see a breakdown of each task which will start to look something like this:

Task 2: Build the Prototype   **Duration:** 2 months
Description: This phase involves building a fully functioning prototype of the product. The prototype will be full size, but the appearance will not be as polished as the final design. The reason for this, is that it is purely to demonstrate the functionality. The components used will be the same as those used in the final system to reduce risks.
Requirements: The design and purchased components from Task 1
Output: A working prototype ready for test

Develop your resource plan

Now you have a list of your tasks, you will need to ask yourself whether you have the resources to deliver the project. When you think about resources, you will need to think about ANYTHING that you need to deliver this project.

The resources you might want to consider include:

- **EQUIPMENT** (machinery, computers, etc)
- **TIME** (yours and others!)
- **FINANCES** (we'll consider this a little more in the next section)
- **KNOWLEDGE** (do you have all of the know-how you need to need the project?)

Add a line on "resources"and "responsibilities" to your work package descriptions, so they now look a little like this:

Task 2: Build the Prototype   **Duration:** 2 months
Resources: 2 weeks access to full workshop (in-house), 3 days use of 3D printer in partner company (ABC Printing).
Responsibilities: Task lead - Phil Evans, support of Helen Williams.
Description: This phase involves building a fully functioning prototype of the product. The prototype will be full size, but the appearance will not be as polished as the final design. The reason for this, is that it is purely to demonstrate the functionality. The components used will be the same as those used in the final system to reduce risks.
Requirements: The design and purchased components from Task 1
Output: A working prototype ready for test

Know your timeframe

The next crucial stage is to understand how long each phase of your project will take. It's important to remember that your tasks don't necessarily have to run one after another - there will be many tasks which can run at the same time. Developing a basic time plan will help you understand how long your overall project will take, but also which work packages are depend upon others.

As with the work and resource plans, you may not need this to apply for a specific fund, but knowing it may increase your chance of securing the fund, and will certainly help you manage your project in a more robust manner.

The most common way to calculate and visualise your timeframe is to use a type of graph called a Gantt Chart. Developing a Gantt Chart is quite easy, and can be a very powerful tool.

To develop your Gantt Chart:

1. Write down a list of your work packages
2. Next to each work package, estimate how long it will take to complete
3. Think about which work packages you can do at the same time
4. Think about which work packages require information or an output from another package before they can start

When you've worked each of these out, you can draw them on your chart. Select a timeframe which suits your project (for example days, weeks or months) and list your tasks.

When you draw this on a graph, it will look something like this:

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8
WP1: Purchase Components	■							
WP2: Build the Prototype		■	■	■	■			
WP3: Test the Prototype					■	■	■	
WP4: Refine the Design								■

What this shows is:
- WP1 takes a week to complete
- WP2 starts when WP1 is complete and takes 4 weeks
- WP3 can start before WP2 is finished, and takes 3 weeks
- WP4 starts after WP3 has finished and takes 1 week.

Note, while the total project tasks add up to 9 weeks, the project only requires 8 weeks as some of the tasks can overlap!

If you want, you can break down the work packages into sub-tasks, defining as much detail as you like. Different project funds may require differing levels of detail.

Develop your financial plan

One of the most important aspects of your plan - certainly one which will cause you to fail if you get it wrong - is your financial plan. The good thing is, with a little organisation, preparing a basic cost plan isn't too hard, even if you're not financially or mathematically minded!

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Within your financial plan, you need to think about what you're going to spend on the project. It's best to break these costs down into the following sections:

- **SALARIES** (what is the cost of THE RELEVANT PROPORTION of your and your staff's time? Include all aspects of the salary including NI payments, etc)
- **OVERHEADS** (what is the pro-rata'd cost of premises, printing, etc?)
- **SUBCONTRACT** (what subcontract costs are required on the project?)
- **MATERIALS** (do you need to buy any basic materials or components for anything you're developing?)
- **EQUIPMENT** (Do you need to purchase any physical equipment for the project)
- **LAND & RENT** (Does the project involve the renting or purchase of land or property?
- **TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE** (Does the project involve any need for travel and time away from the office?

As with previous sections, you may not need to submit all of this information, but it will help you understand what the total project is costing you.

What's most important is that the project documentation is likely to identify eligible and ineligible costs, so you need to ensure that you're only applying for what is eligible. For example, very few grant schemes will pay for salaries. Others will pay for salaries, but possibly at a different support rate to other aspects of the project.

Equipment is a particularly interesting and sometimes tricky section, as many projects will only fund the "depreciation" value of the equipment over the life of the project. So, if you're buying a computer (for example) for £800, the project is a year long, and the computer has a market value of £600 at the end of the project, the depreciation value is £200 - and this might be all that you can claim. However, is during the project you had to take the computer apart and in doing so reduced it's commercial value to £100, then the depreciation is a lot higher (£700 in this case). Think about what you need, what the rules are, and how you can use them to your advantage!

It's good to develop a basic spreadsheet and work out these costs on a month by month basis. For our example project, this may look something like this:

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	TOTAL
Salaries	£5,000	£5,000	£2,500	**£12,500**
Overheads	£500	£500	£500	**£1,500**
Subcontract	£7,500	£5,000	£0	**£12,500**
Materials	£1,000	£1,000	£0	**£2,000**
Equipment	£0	£0	£0	**£0**
Land & Rent	£0	£0	£0	**£0**
Travel & Subsistence	£250	£250	£100	**£600**
TOTAL	**£14,250**	**£11,750**	**£3,100**	**£29,100**

The main difference is, that on your plan you might have a better breakdown of what each of the costs are (who the salary is for, what the subcontract is for, etc).

One more thing here - DON'T FORGET YOUR CASHFLOW!

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What are the risks?

The final aspect you may want to consider is to develop a good understanding of the risks - that is, what might go wrong on the project. Every project has risks, whether they're technical, commercial related to personnel and subcontractors, or something different altogether.

You define and address your risks on a table called a "risk register". The purpose of developing a risk register is to show that you've thought about all of these risks, and you've got a plan to either avoid them happening, or to mitigate them should they occur.

Developing a risk register is simple too - all you need to do is think about the following points:

- **RISK TITLE** (Think of a basic title which loosely describes the risk)

- **DESCRIPTION** (What is the risk - when would it happen and what might the impact be)

- **PROBABILITY** (What is the probability of the risk occurring - use a scale of very low / low / medium / high / very high)

- **IMPACT** (What is the impact if the risk occurs - use a scale of very low / low / medium / high / very high)

- **AVOID / MITIGATE** (Is your main plan to take action to avoid the risk occurring, to take mitigating action if the risk does occur, or a combination of both?)

- **ACTION** (Whether you plan to avoid or mitigate, what action will you take?)

An entry in your risk register may look something like this:

RISK TITLE: Components not all available
DESCRIPTION: If the required components can't be purchased, we will not be able to make the prototype
PROBABILITY: Low   **IMPACT:** Very high
AVOID / MITIGATE: Combination
ACTION: To avoid the risk we have identified several suppliers of the required components. In the event that none are available, we have identified suitable substitute components.

Perform a mock assessment

The final stage for you before you submit your project, is to imagine it's not your project, and you're on the assessment team. Do you have the assessment criteria for the project? If so, use it to mark your answers! If not, have a good guess what it might be.

Be brutally honest and try to pick holes in your application - don't ignore anything, as the assessment team will more than likely find any gaps in your application, and may mark you down. In a competitive process this can be the difference between winning and losing.

Don't rush your application. Give yourself plenty of time, and when you've finished your brutal assessment, go back and see what you can improve. Where did you score low? Where do you think that you were a little lenient and forgiving with your assessment of your answer?

If you need to go away and do a little more work, then do it - this is maximising YOUR chance of success on the project!

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Your questions for this section are as follows:

Think of a project - real or simply as an example…

1. What would your main work packages be?

2. Do you have the resources to deliver each package? If not, who can help you deliver them?

3. Draw a rough gantt chart, approximately how long will your project taker?

(you can use the template on the next page to help you with this)

*4. Describe 3 potential risks on your project*

5. If you were to assess your project now, where do you think the weakest area would be?

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Your Gantt Chart:

1. List your tasks here:

2. List your timeframe here, select times that suit your project work packages:

3. Draw lines to represent how long each task takes, and when it can be done

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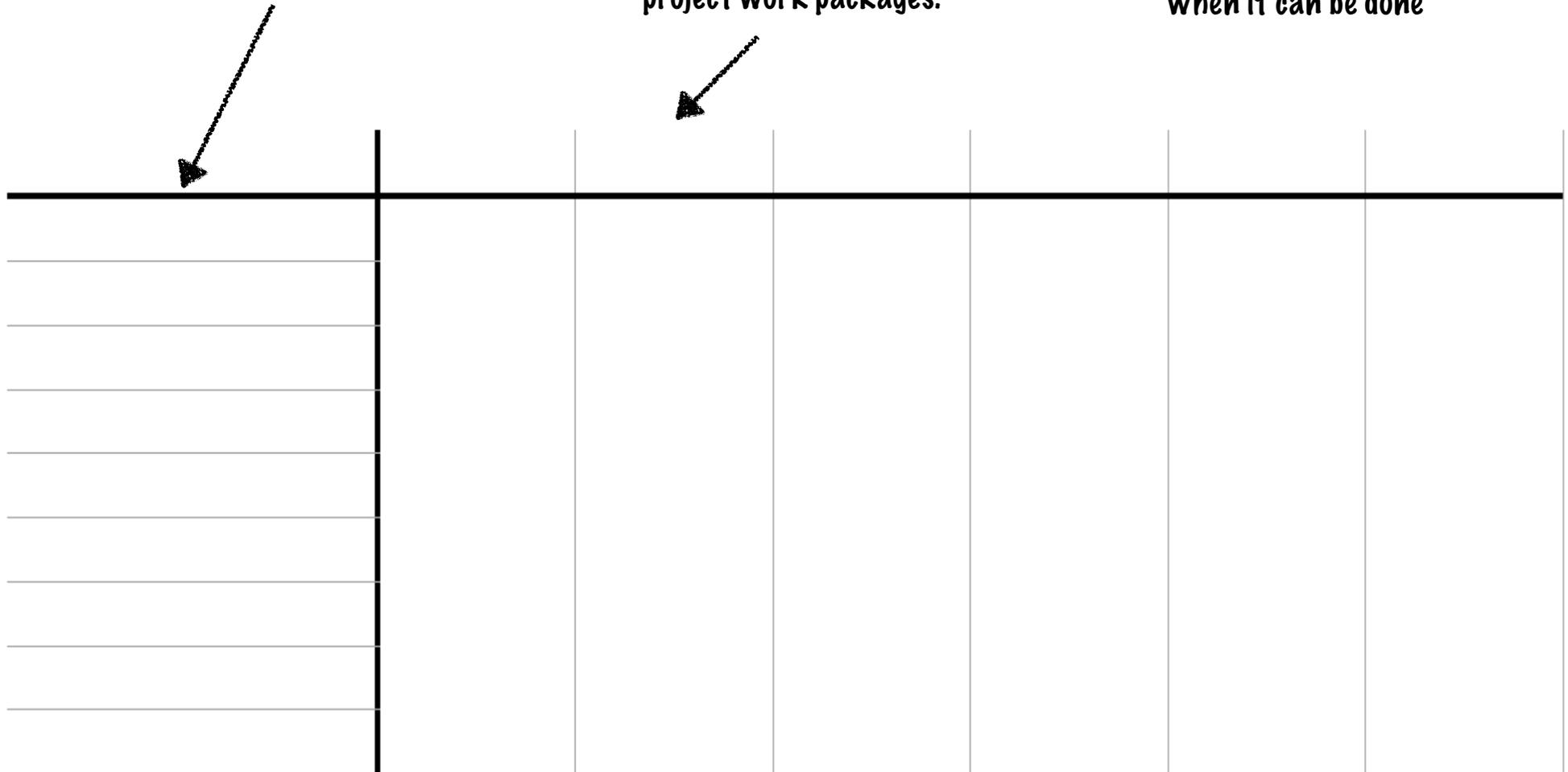
Section 4: Managing the result

Stick to your Delivery Plan

You've submitted your application, and hopefully got your funding. The last thing I need to tell you - and I can't stress the importance of this enough - is to do exactly what you've said you're going to do with the money, and make sure that you achieve what you set out to achieve.

If you've followed our guidelines, you will have asked your funder what the consequences of not achieving your targets are. With research projects, this isn't usually as issue as the nature of research means that it carries risk and isn't always successful. If, however, there are firm targets with your funding, the administrative body can usually ask for the funding back if either (b) you don't spend the money on what you tell them you were going to spend the money on; (b) you don't achieve the agreed outputs or outcomes; or (c) there's something else in the contract that they're not happy with. This is called "clawback", and we've seen it happen quite a few times!

To prevent clawback, the guidelines are quite simple:

- **Read any contract and conditions in detail before signing to accept the grant**
- **Do what you said you were going to do**
- **Achieve what you said you were going to achieve**
- **Spend with who you said you were going to spend with**
- **Achieve the project within the agreed timescales**
- **If you want to change anything, ask the fund administrator first**

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You should find that more often than not, the funding administrator allows a degree of deviation from the plan as long as you discuss it with them first - they just don't like surprises!

If at first you didn't succeed…

If you didn't get the funding, don't be too disappointed - while there is a lot of funding around, many of the schemes can be quite competitive. It's a learning process, so get as much feedback as possible from the administrative body and learn the lessons for next time. There will be a next time in some size, shape or form - so get back out there and identify some more funds.

I've been writing bids for a long time, and it can even be hit or miss for me - while I'm strong at the smaller bids (less than £0.5M and only from certain bodies), I'll be the first to state that I'm not in the arena for writing £multi-million bids anymore because there are people who are a lot better than me out there who specialise in this area! So don;t expect success every time - none of us can.

What I would say, is that if there are multiple funds that match your needs, apply for all of them. It's better to have 5 offers than none - and you don't have to accept them all. If on the other hand you did get them all, it's important to make sure that each fund remains "clean" - i.e. you don't use multiple funds to pay for the same thing. This is called "double funding" and is fraudulent! But accepting the right one and rejecting others certainly isn't a problem.

There may be other ways to achieve your goals. Step back, and make sure you can see the bigger picture:

1. ***Think about one of your potential projects - is it all set in stone or is anything likely to change at all?***

2. ***If anything did change, what would the impact be on cost, timescales, outputs and the selection of delivery partners / subcontractors?***

3. ***How can you minimise this? (clue - look in to Risk Registers!)***

Summary & top 10 tips

So now you should be ready to go. Make sure you've addressed everything we've covered. To finish (and to make sure you were listening!) here are my top 10 tips for securing the right funding to push your business forward:

1. Know what you want
- Do you need support?
- Are you becoming a "funding addict"?!
- What do you want the money for?

It usually takes around 6 months to secure funding. Is it worth your effort?

2. Pick and choose...
- Study the funds available
- Be precise, not scattered
- Make sure it matches your business

With a scattered approach, my success was <5%. Now I'm precise, it's over 90%.

3. Study the provider
- Who are they and what do they do?
- Why are they giving money away?
- What do they want back from you in return?

Funders have 2 customers – you, and the people who pay them. Help them to help both of you

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4. Know the criteria

- What is the criteria for funding?
- What is the funding body looking to achieve?
- What are the reporting requirements?

Funders are likely to pick companies who contribute the most towards their targets

5. To write, or not…?

- BE HONEST – can you write?
- Can you find the balance required
- Do you present a good story with the facts and evidence required

There are good projects, good applicants and good proposals. You need all 3.

6. What & how THEY want it

- They ask questions for a reason
- If they don't ask, do they need to know?
- Appendices aren't an invite for your life story

With many applications, assessors have a lot to do. Large applications are off-putting

7. Plan your work, time & finances

- A good workplace goes a long way and shows your competency
- Make sure you've got the cashflow available
- Know how long it takes… it isn't quick

Funding isn't a quick fix (and isn't cheap) - you need to plan everything carefully to set foundations for future growth.

8. Mock assessment

- Write down the assessment criteria
- Write down your thoughts and answers
- Perform a brutally honest assessment

Performing an assessment against the criteria makes sure you don't. miss anything. And it's free.

9. Get feedback

- Whether successful or not, ask why
- If not, can you re-apply?
- If so, can you improve anything?

We tendered for 12 services, and were successful in 9. We learned more by asking about the other 3 we didn't get.

10. DELIVER!

- DO what you say you were going to
- Avoid a bad reputation as a non-deliverer
- Turn opportunity into success!

While clawback is rare, the reputation of a non-deliverer could be much more damaging to you

So what are you waiting for? Good luck with your searches and applications!

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