# How to win a grant – A funding body perspective

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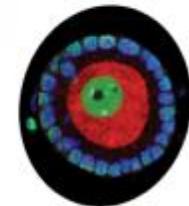
Please note that this presentation should not be used as a substitute for reading the current grants guide as information in it may become out of date, the BBSRC grants guide can be found here:

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

Grant Writing and the Assessment Process

- Introduction and information on Responsive Mode

- Overview of the grant application/peer review process

- Guidance on writing grants

BBSRC Training Opportunities

BBSRC bioscience for the future

Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Early Career Researcher (<5 years post-doc)	Advanced Early Career Researcher (>3 years post-doc)	Junior Research Leader	Senior Research Leader

- Research Experience Placements
- Doctoral Training Partnerships
- Future Leader Fellowships
- David Philips Fellowships
- New Investigator Awards
- Responsive Mode Grants

- Professional Internships for PhD Students
- Postdoctoral Research Assistant
- Strategic Longer and Larger Grants

- Biotechnology Young Entrepreneurs' Scheme

- Policy Placements Scheme
- Flexible Interchange Programme

- CASE Studentships
- Enterprise Fellowships

- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

- Advanced Training Partnerships
- Industrial Partnership Awards

- 'Stand-alone' LINK

- Research and Technology Clubs

Blue = Academic Training
Green = Industrial Collaborative Training
Yellow = Internships
Orange = Competitions
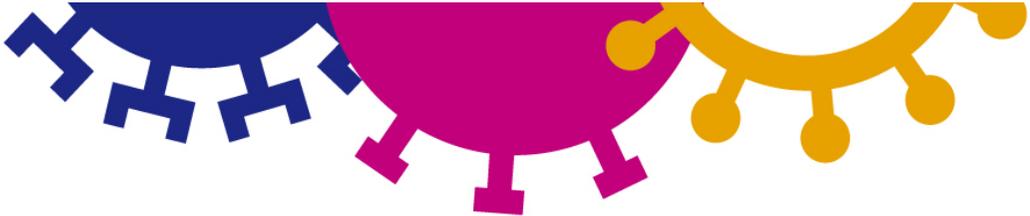
Responsive Mode

- Applications can be submitted at any time for consideration by one of the 4 Research Committees.

    - **Research Committee A** (Animal disease, health and welfare)
    - **Research Committee B** (Plants, microbes, food and sustainability)
    - **Research Committee C** (Genes, development and STEM* approaches to biology)
    - **Research Committee D** (Molecules, cells and industrial biotechnology)

- There is considerable overlap between Research Committees. We will assess applications using the most appropriate expertise.

*Science Technology Engineering and Maths - Committee C will consider generic STEM approaches to biology; specific applications will be considered by the Committee providing the appropriate biological context.

Responsive Mode

- Responsive mode grants success rates
  - BBSRC 27% (2013/4)
  - MRC 26% (2013/4)
  - NERC 18.4% (2013/4)
- Many of these are from people who write grants regularly.

- There are a large number of excellent grants submitted each round and only enough money to fund the very best of them.
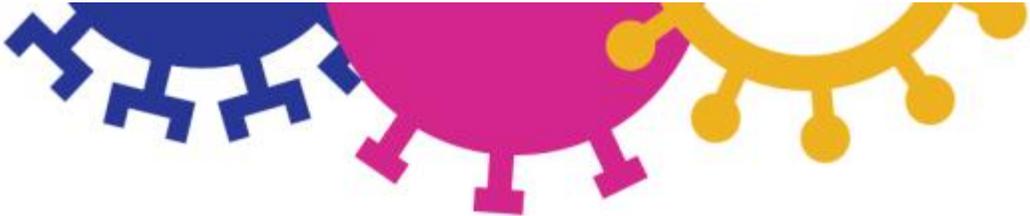
Schemes in Responsive Mode

- New Investigator Scheme

- 'Stand-alone' LINK

- Industrial Partnership Awards

- BBSRC–Brazil (FAPESP) joint funding of research

- Annual research focus on Welfare of Managed Animals

- Highlight calls

Overview of process

Proposal submitted

External reviewing

"Committee" meeting

**Final decision made**

Grant awarded / rejected

Pre-application checks:

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

- You and your partners are eligible

- Your institution is eligible

- The project is within the BBSRC remit

- The grant is not an uninvited resubmission

- You know which committee is best to submit to

- All the paperwork has been correctly completed

- The fEC costs are correct

Submission of proposals

Enquiries to office

→ Proposal submitted

→ Remit check

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

PI/ Co-I eligibility

- Rules are same for PI and Co-I at BBSRC

- Details are in the Grants Guide

- Always check with the Office if in doubt-before submission: eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk

- Post-docs are not eligible as PI/ Co-I

  - Post-docs who substantially contribute to the application can be named as Researcher Co-Investigators

- Lecturer level fellowships should be checked with the office prior to application
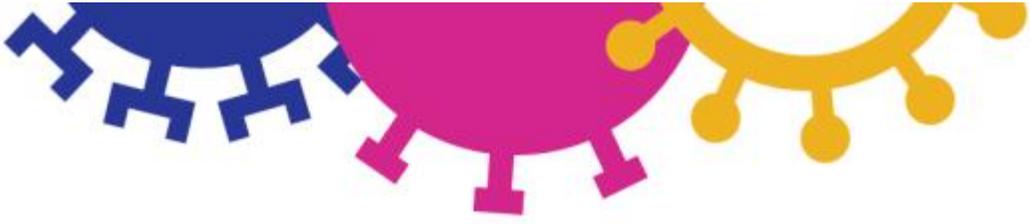
Remit

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

- Check the BBSRC website for remit information

- If in doubt, send 1-2 page outline to office: remit@bbsrc.ac.uk

- Research Councils have no remit gaps

  – see the RCUK Research Councils Concordat

  – http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/prrcremits.htm
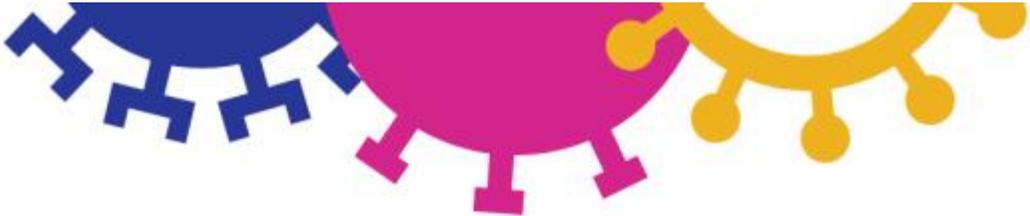
Common reasons applications are withdrawn

- Not in council remit

- Ineligible PI/ Co-I or Ineligible Institution

- Applied to two or more Research Councils simultaneously with same application

- Resubmission of an identical proposal

- Joint components of application missing

- Late submissions - 4pm deadline is real

- Application over maximum funding cut-off

- fEC costs and special costs not filled in correctly e.g. animals

Assignment of Introducers

Enquiries to office

Proposal submitted

Remit check

Committee/Pool members assigned

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

Selection of Reviewers

Enquiries to office

Proposal submitted

Remit check

Committee/Pool members assigned

Reviewers selected

- Applicants nominate four reviewers on their Je-S form

- Peer Review Officers select some of the nominated reviewers, and select other reviewers themselves

- Reviewers must not come from the applicant's or collaborator's institution, or have an existing collaboration with the applicant

Peer Review

Enquiries to office

Proposal submitted

Remit check

Committee/Pool members assigned

Reviewers selected

External reviewing

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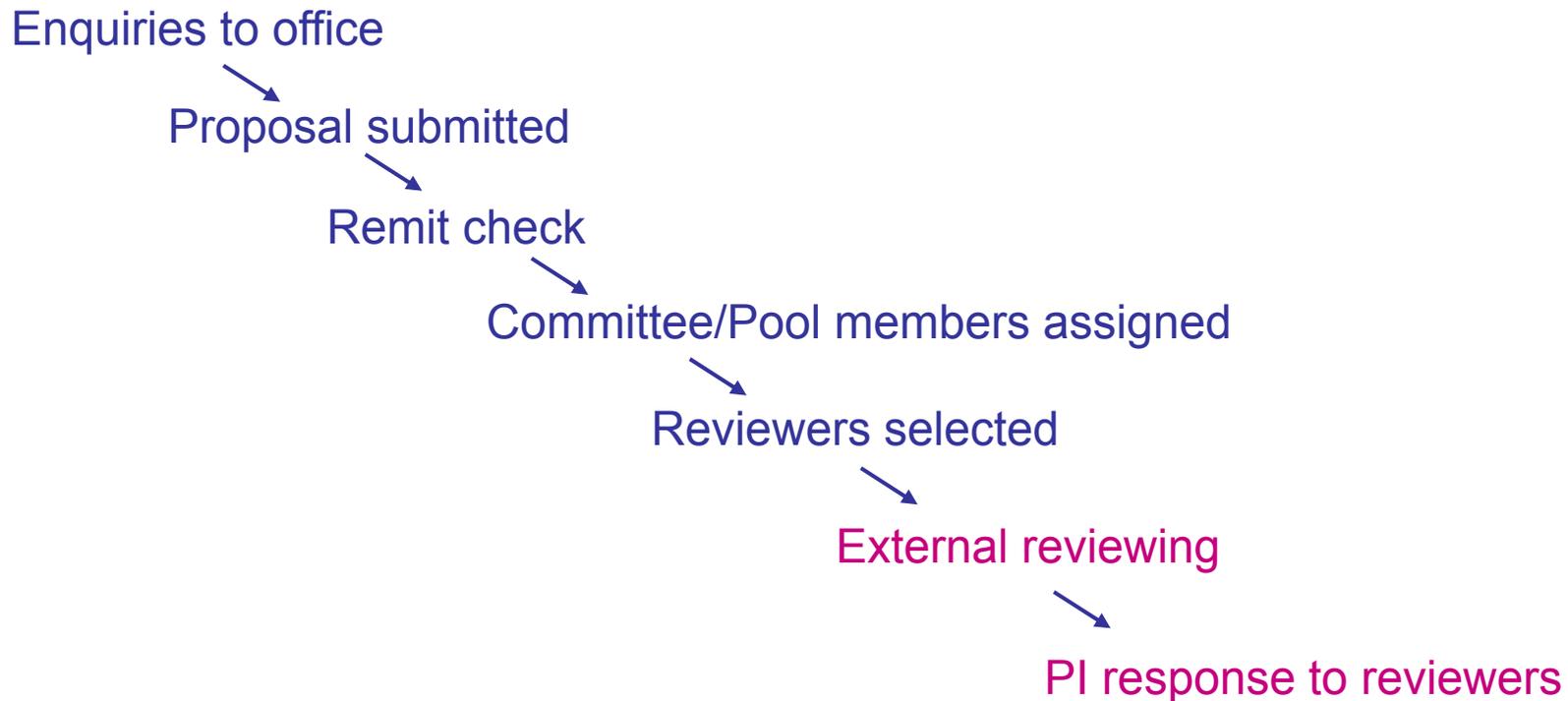
- Request to review sent via email
- Anonymised reviewers' comments are sent to applicant
- Applicant (PI) submits a response to the reviewers' comments

Reviewers' comments

- **Read in anger, get a good nights sleep, respond with patience**

- Respond to reviewers fully and positively: Having negative reviewers comments will not necessarily harm your chances of funding if you deal with them appropriately
  - Identify criticisms clearly and respond explicitly to negative comments
  - Criticise the reviewer comments **NEVER the reviewer**
  - View this as an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and add new supporting data
  - Clarify experimental approaches if asked

- **Committees WILL consider your response** in their discussions and it often improves your chances when you respond well

- Remember you nominated some of the reviewers- so please don't complain to the Office that they have asked the wrong reviewers

- If the reviewer didn't understand what you are planning to do maybe the committee won't either. Now's your last chance to clear up ambiguity

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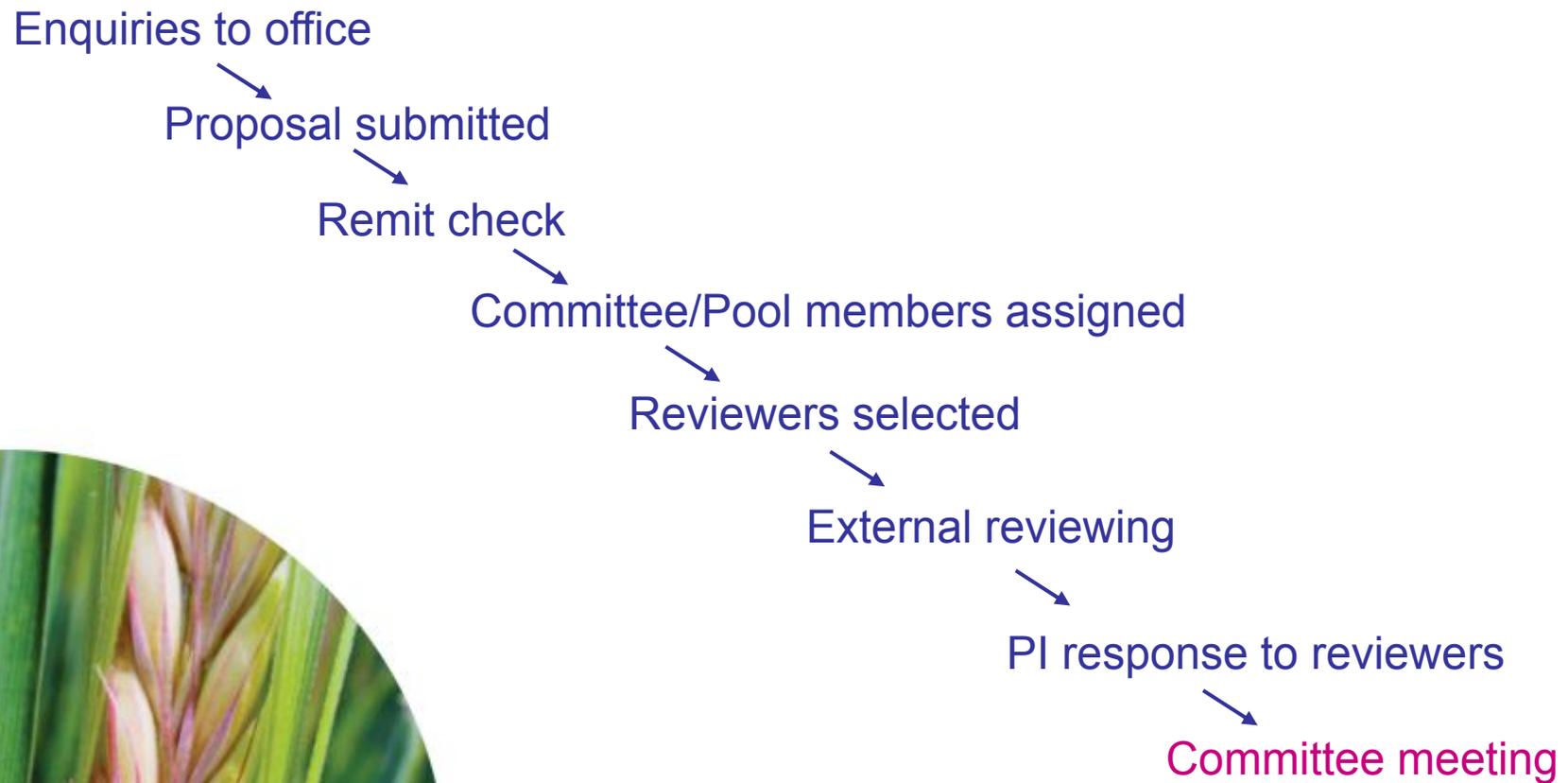
Grant Assessment at BBSRC

- Each application is discussed in turn, 70 -130 applications per committee

- A **collective** final score for each application is agreed

- A final rank ordered list is agreed (**the order is the key**, not the scores)

- On rare occasions the Committee may make "Conditional Awards" or "Invited Resubmissions".
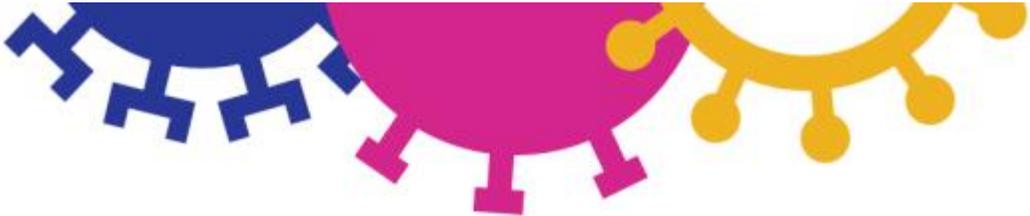
Assessment Criteria

Scientific excellence

- Does the application meet the highest international standards of current research in the field?

- Does it demonstrate timeliness and promise?

Other criteria in areas such as:

- Delivery of council's strategy

- Impact

- Staffing

- Appropriateness of costs

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Final Decision making body makes decision

Feedback ←-- Grant awarded

Final Decision

- Proposals are funded from the rank-ordered list (e.g. top 20-25%) based on available funding

- Those above the 'funding cut-off' are sent award letters. Once the grant has been announced, ownership passes to "Post Award process"

- Those falling below the funding cut-off are sent notification letters and receive feedback on request

- **It is a competition for funds - even good grants don't necessarily get funded**

After the process

- If successful: make sure your starting date is right and check the terms and conditions

- If unsuccessful:

  - Feedback from the committee can be requested from BBSRC.

  - All council's resubmission rules discourage/disallow the resubmission of the same application

  - Remember success is relative to the quality of other applications and available funding

Guide to Grant Writing
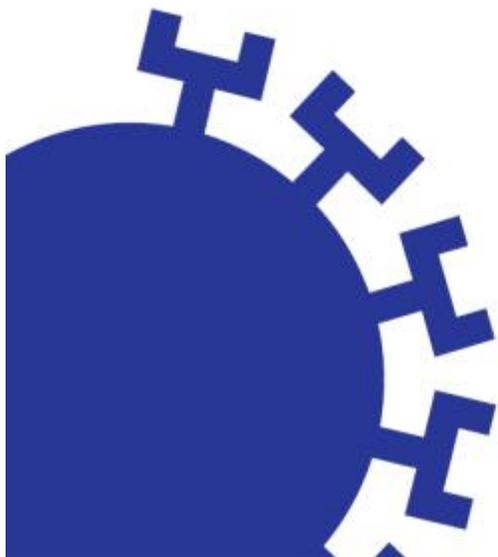
The Application

A good proposal should have/be:

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

Should avoid:

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

Justification of Resources

Separate attachment (only 2 pages - not an essay)

Should include full justifications for:

- PI and Co-I time

- Level of staffing required (including research and technical staff)

- Level of resource (T&S, consumables, equipment, facilities access etc)

The Committees are empowered to cut ANY unjustified resource

Data management plan

BBSRC has a data-management policy.

- All applicants are required to include a statement of how they intend to make the data generated through their project available to the wider community.

- The Committee will assess whether the statement is adequate.

- If the applicant's data-sharing policy is not considered adequate the Committee can make funding conditional on the provision of a revised statement.
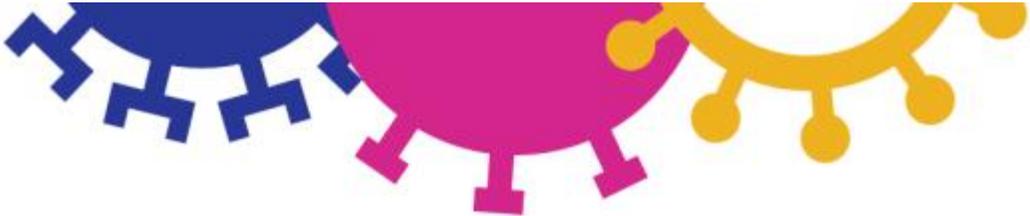
Pathways to Impact

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

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

Activities outlined in the Pathways to Impact should be:

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

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

Top tips from the Office

- Don't rush it

- Make sure its going to the right place, at the right time

- Check that it is in remit, and you have done the paperwork correctly (including costs)

- Get someone outside your direct field to read it

- Work out possible criticism and head them off in the application (don't hide from them)

- View your response to reviewers comments as a chance to sell yourself (not to rubbish the reviewer)

- Prepare yourself for success rate reality and persevere

What makes a successful grant application?

View from a former Committee Chair

- Is it top quality internationally competitive science?

- Is it addressing an important problem?

- Is it novel and exciting?

- Are the aims and potential outcomes of the grant crystal clear from the case for support?

- Does the accompanying data support the proposal?

- Is the work feasible – are there contingencies?

- Has the applicant considered the potential impacts of the research?

- Can a non-specialist understand why the work is important?
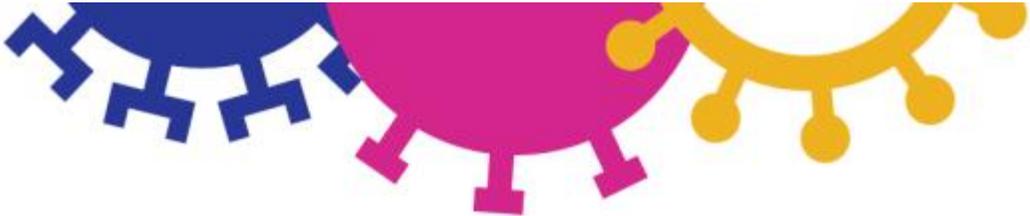
Help is at Hand

Talk to us:

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

Help the Office by:

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

Keep In Touch!

Visit the Web Site
- www.bbsrc.ac.uk

Tell us about exciting outcomes
- We are always looking for interesting case studies, particularly showcasing impacts of BBSRC-funded research

- Contact BBSRC External Relations: external.relations@bbsrc.ac.uk

Sign up for the email bulletin
- http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/news/news-email/