

# Writing Research Grant Applications

## Introduction

This workshop is designed to start you working on an extremely efficient 'recipe' for an application for a research project grant, such as a research council standard grant. The morning session is to discuss the things you need to know before you start writing. The afternoon session is to get you working on the things you need to do to start writing.

The things you need to know include the following:-

- Writing a grant application is very difficult unless you design a fundable project before you start. We will discuss how you can assess whether you have a fundable project.
- We will discuss how the case for support in a grant application can work as a sales pitch.
- We will discuss the way funding decisions are made and the unacknowledged requirements that the decision process imposes on the case for support in a grant application.
- We will discuss a 'magic formula' for a case for support that meets all these requirements.
- We will discuss a 'recipe', a step-by-step guide to constructing a case for support that conforms to the 'magic formula'.
- We will discuss how the requirements of a grant application dictate writing style, and some common academic writing habits that you need to eliminate from your grant applications.
- We will discuss how you can compose a set of aims and objectives that deliver your sales pitch.

If you have a fundable project in mind at the start of the day, you should have a rough draft of the skeleton of the case for support by the end of the day. If you don't have a suitable project in mind at the start of the day you can practise the skills of writing the 10 key sentences with a dummy project, or maybe you will be able to formulate something to work with in the morning.

There are two things you need to do to prepare for the workshop.

- First, it is essential for the exercises in the afternoon that you are prepared to write about a research project. Ideally this will be a project for which you intend to write a grant application but you can use a piece of research that you have already done. You can work with a previous grant application - even if it was awarded it will still provide you with suitable material for the workshop, but if it was rejected, even better.
- The workshop is aimed at mainstream UK project funders like the research councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC), the Leverhulme Trust and the Wellcome Trust. It will help if you can identify your target funder before the workshop.
- It's not essential but it will help if you bring a laptop, tablet or smartphone on which you can type.

My delivery style is interactive, so feel free to ask questions throughout the day. On the day I will show you where you can download a handout that contains all the visual material to be used during the day, with clickable links to the main sections in the programme and to the full contents of my presentation, slide-by-slide.

## Presenter



Andrew Derrington has in-depth experience of the research funding process. He obtained his first research grant, a Beit Memorial Fellowship for Medical Research, while he was writing his PhD. His research was continuously funded by fellowships, project and programme grants for the next 30 years. He served on research grant committees for The Science and Engineering Research Council, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. His book, *The Research Funding Toolkit*, which he co-wrote with Jacqueline Aldridge, research and enterprise associate in the School of Psychology at the University of Kent, is the definitive guide to grant writing for early career academics and research professionals. It is based on Andrew's analysis of how grants committees make funding decisions.

Andrew has worked in eight Universities including two in the world top ten.

He has also worked as a journalist. Over several years he wrote two successful columns in the Financial Times. *The Nature of Things* covered science - from astrophysics to zoology. *Psych Yourself Up* was a guide to the different psychotherapies available in the UK.

Andrew set up [Parker Derrington Ltd](#) in 2013. He now works as a consultant, writing research grant applications and providing strategic advice and training to individuals and organizations.

## Testimonials

*I had a fantastically useful time attending your recent workshop at Leicester University. Writing the 10 key sentences was a very useful exercise and I have, since, worked on them to discover they are a fab tool for any kind of writing really.*

Dr Ranjana Das, University of Leicester

*Andrew blends easy authority and extensive experience with humour and approachability. The result is a workshop full of practical, memorable advice on how to compete more successfully for research funding.*

Professor Peter Clegg, Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool

*I attended one of Andrew's workshops when I was a senior lecturer. The hands on advice about how to structure my applications in a really appealing fashion enabled me to win a grant of nearly →£600K the next year. I still implement the advice that I received in that workshop, and pass it down to junior colleagues. I find that Andrew's advice has a high success rate!*

Prof Theresa Gannon, University of Kent

*I still use the tips you gave me for my successful Wellcome SRF application. Your advice on "12 key sentences" is spot-on and helps people focus on the aspects of the proposal that are critical to success instead of getting bogged down in reams of text.*

Prof Mark Baxter, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

*Andrew's grant-writing workshops teach you how to convince the world that it needs your research. They are the most useful training events I have ever attended. His advice about how to sell the big idea without compromising on the science was critical to the success of our →£9.3 million ESRC application.*

Prof Julian Pine, University of Liverpool

Andrew Derrington