Q&A – Grant Writing Workshop

Questions that were raised by participants during Day 1 and Day 2 of the Online Grant Writing Workshop for Early and Mid-Career researchers.

You can find more information about the Online Grant Workshop, organised by The Global Health Network and the Wellcome-funded Pathogen Variants Network, HERE.

Funding Opportunities & Requirements

Q: What are the best platforms to search for available grant calls?

A: Honestly: AI! These days, you can get great information about grant opportunities from AI, and it's used by my grants team all the time now.
A: Another piece of advice is, know who the key funders are in your area. Who funded the research in the papers you are reading (it will be listed!). And follow those funders on social media.

Q: When in the year should someone watch out for certain calls?

A: It depends hugely on what your target funders are.

Q: Do you have some advice on how to apply and get funding when you are not tenured or do not have a full-time position at a university in LMIC? It is very difficult to apply for funding without an affiliation. In the past, even winning funding was lost because of not having an affiliation. & For the Wellcome project, the difficult thing is to have a UK collaborator. Is it mandatory to have a UK collaborator or a European collaborator to apply?

A (by Ana Cehovin): Essentially, for Wellcome, I mentioned earlier that we have this Discovery team that manages the open mode schemes that I spoke about in the first session, so the Early Career Award, Career Development Award and the Discovery Award. All these awards, and in general all awards coming from Wellcome, will require an institutional affiliation for the grant administration. So, we require this, and basically every funder will require this because the funds need to be managed through a recognised legal entity that can handle compliance and reporting. However, we do not mandate tenure, so we do not need you to have a full-time permanent position. And in fact, for example, especially Early Career awards, they don't require you to have a PhD. You just need to demonstrate the equivalent experience, and I've also spoken about that on the first day.

Also, academic institutions are not the only institutions that we would consider. You can partner, for example, with NGOs. It's for affiliation. You can partner with research institutes, and you can also consider partnering with international collaborators. These international collaborators do not necessarily need to be in high-income countries or the UK to meet the requirements of affiliation.

To your second question about whether applicants need a collaborator in the UK or need to be affiliated with a UK university or institution. No, that is not a Wellcome's requirement.

Early Career Researchers

Q: Are the available funding opportunities only for postgraduate students, or even undergraduate students can apply?

A: It depends on the grant call. Check, as they usually have criteria that state who can apply.

Q: Why do many grant/funders prioritise PhDs? For early career grant opportunities, most of the grant qualifications require a PhD. Few grants are available for MScs. Is it because a master's is not enough for managing a big research project? Why do most grants exclude it?

A: Wellcome provides Early Career Awards:
https://wellcome.org/research-funding/schemes/wellcome-early-career-awards#who-can-apply-be42.

By the end of this award, the applicants are expected to be ready to lead their own independent research programme. You do not need a PhD to apply.

Q: Is there a consensus approach on the definition of who is an Early Career Researcher?

A: For Wellcome, check the Q&A session of the workshop at 0:10.

Q: What about early-career researchers without that many publications?

A: That is ok, include all the publications you have. Publications show that you can do a piece of work and take it to completion, and have it published. For Wellcome, check the Q&A session of the workshop at 0:10.

Q: I have just completed my MSc and am planning on enrolling in a PhD program in the near future. My goal is to become a PI. Any advice on how I can begin writing grants at this stage?

A: Start small. Look for travel grants or seed funding. But also: prioritise your PhD over new grants.
A: Q&A session at 10:23.

Grant Proposal Writing

- For more information about Grant Proposal Writing, you can watch Dr Sylvie Kwedi's presentation in Session 1 of the workshop and Prof Isabella Oyier's presentation in Session 2 of the workshop.

Q: Could you please share any grant proposal depositories or any anonymised examples of winning grant proposals?

A (by Katrina Lawson): I don't know of anything very reliable, particularly, but what I would say is that where I've seen them working has been within institutions. I would say that if you want this resource, perhaps this is an opportunity for you to take leadership in your own organisation and create it for your organisation and for people in your organisation to use. It does require you and others around you to be willing to share, and it's helpful to share unsuccessful proposal examples as well as successful proposal examples that people can see both. Often, there's very little difference that you can tell just by looking at them because it's very context-specific. When something gets selected for funding, it's not just about the writing. I would say that's where (your own organisation) these kinds of repositories work best because they also can capture the context of your organisation and the things that people in your field and in your area are working around as well. So, I would say if this were something you want and you don't have it in your organisation, perhaps think about creating it.

Q: Could you skip references to manage the required word limit?

A: It's unusual for references to be included in the word limit. However, it's also generally not allowed to have pages and pages of references. Many funders limit you to one page.

Q: If space is provided, can we add diagrams to explain the workflow or theory of change more clearly?

A: You do need to check whether there is a limit on how many figures are allowed, e.g., at one time, MRC only allowed 1 page of figures. But generally, diagrams and visualisations are helpful, so long as they are well explained in the text.

Q: I know good writing comes with practice and that reading helps, but how do you know when it's the right time to start writing instead of just reading?

A (by Evelyne Kestelyn): You can read, and you can keep reading, but the real practice will come from actually writing, and we all know that even the most well-established Research Institute

doesn't have a 100% success rate when it comes to grant applications. So, we know that there will always be grants that will not be funded. So even though it takes time to submit a proposal, I would say go ahead and start. You know, you don't need to wait. And I think apart from the experience of writing the grant, the experience of getting rejected is something that is hard, and the first time you get rejected is really hard. So that in itself is learning, and it is, unfortunately, part of writing and submitting and getting rejected, doing it again. So, all of that is part of learning. So, I don't think there is a right time to start. I think it's just about starting.
A (by Ana Cehovin): I totally agree with everything that was said, and I think that reading is part of the learning process. When we read, it helps absorb the ideas and styles, but it's really the writing that we need to shape our own thinking. At Wellcome, we consistently say that we really value clarity and originality of proposals, and those can only really come from practice. You can wait as long as you want, but really, there is never a good time to do anything, really, if you think about it. So, you might as well just start, just jot something down. When you have something to say, just start writing, even if it's rough, because the more you do it, the better you will get at it.

Q: How do outputs differ from expected outcomes?

A: Outputs are things you produce, like reports, publications, events, technology, and intellectual property. Outcomes are ways that your project has produced change in the world, by changing understanding, by influencing policy, and by providing opportunities for others. Generally, outputs are easier to identify and happen relatively quickly, whereas outcomes can take years in some cases.

Q: Could you please clarify the difference between deliverables, milestones and expected outcomes?

A: Expected outcomes are what the project will achieve overall. The big impact of the work. Deliverables are the steps to getting to the outcomes, what will be done, and the milestones are what you need to do to achieve the deliverables or progress made towards the deliverables.
A: Q&A session @ 2:21

Q: I work in a francophone environment. Do you have any advice on how to approach the English-focused grant application environment?

A: Session 2 of the workshop at 25:53.

AI in Grant Proposal Writing

- For more information about the use of AI in Grant proposal writing, you can watch the Q&A session of the workshop at 30:09 and Session 2 of the workshop at 26:09.

Q: How to ethically use AI in writing and editing a grant application/proposal?

A: The Wellcome's policy on the use of generative AI when applying for Wellcome funding is helpful on this topic and also links to the Funders' joint statement on the use of generative AI tools:
https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/policies-grant-conditions/use-of-generative-ai.
In general, researchers must disclose if they are using generative AI on their applications and be honest, transparent, and accountable about the use of generative AI tools for their applications.
A: Workshop Session 2 at 26:09

Q: In which section of the proposal should the use of AI be declared?

A: If there is no specific section, then I would add it as a footnote to your main proposal.

Q: Should the use of Grammarly be declared as use of AI?

A: Absolutely, yes.

Q: This question is regarding the use of AI in improving the structure and especially the language. Once you've written your application, you use AI to improve the language and the structure of the application, and then you submit it. So, my question is, as a funder, how are you able to know that AI was used to improve the language and not to develop the whole application? Are you able to separate between the two, an application that was developed by AI and one where only the language has been improved by AI?

A (by Ana Cehovin): We have a very clear policy about using AI for grant writing for our applications for Wellcome. In general, what we ask of the applicants is that they disclose the use of AI for writing the application and how they actually used it. So, we are not saying that you're not allowed to, but you really need to say what you were using it for. In general, we see the benefits of AI, especially for applicants whose English is not their first language, basically to strengthen the language and to make that part of the application stronger, and you can freely disclose that when you're applying. And I think that is encouraged, so that's OK to do.

Since Bethan is on the call, maybe she can comment as well. Bethan, do you have any thoughts on that? Bethan's a colleague at Wellcome Trust too.

A (by Bethan Hamilton): As you say, we have a policy that does require disclosure of the use of AI beyond improving the standard of English. But I think in terms of policing it, I'm not on the side of things to know exactly what funders are doing in terms of tools, but I think it's like anything else, when you're putting an application to a funder that there's lots of policies that need to be complied with, sort of truthfully and honestly, and there isn't really anything different in fact that it's AI. There is really a responsibility for people who are putting in applications that they've been straightforward and compliant in all things, including what they used and whether they declared it. So, I think regardless of what technologies might be out there, the same principles that apply to every other aspect of the grant application do apply to the use of AI.

Q: Are you seeing a lot of grant proposals coming in where it is evident that AI has generated the majority of it, and I understand they will be rejected once that's identified, but is there a growing trend?

A (by Ana Cehovin): We certainly have. When we run funding calls, there are some that come through that you can tell are AI-generated, and the way we can tell that is because they lack specifics, just like the AI-generated proposal sample we saw today, which wouldn't be competitive if it were submitted properly through one of our schemes. So, when it lacks specifics that only a human can fill in and know, then you know it's AI-generated. But otherwise, for example, like what was mentioned earlier, if you use AI after you've written your application to strengthen the language, that is obviously difficult to detect, but also, there's no problem for us, even if we were able to detect it. As long as the application meets all the relevant criteria, just like Bethan said, it's OK, it's acceptable.

Budgeting

- For more information about Budgeting in Grant proposal writing, you can watch Katrina Lawson's presentation in Session 4 of the workshop and the Q&A session of the workshop at 40:48.

Q: How to estimate the field work costs (accommodation, travel, and samplings)?

A: You really do have to go into detail to estimate accurately. So, breaking it down into how many samples a researcher can extract in a day to determine how many days they will be in the field (or how many people), and then looking at actual costs of accommodation and transport, per diems, etc.

Q: What do you mean by quote? (referring to the presentation in Session 4)

A: I mean an estimate of costs from a supplier. For larger items, most suppliers will be able to provide you with a detailed estimate of costs.

Q: When do we consider an item as equipment? Is the cap 5,000 USD for all funders? Can one negotiate on indirect costs?

A: Different funders have different definitions of equipment, and it will usually be identified in the call guidance. If there is no guidance, then I would assume any single item over 5,000 USD may be considered equipment. Also, consider your own organisation's capital equipment policy. At what value does an item need to be added to your capital equipment register?

Q: What programs, spreadsheets, software and tools do you consider essential to manage funding and pricing? Any project management tool?

A by panellist: I just use Excel.

Q: Should I get ethical approval for the research proposal before submitting it to the funder?

A: No, this is not necessary. You probably need the funding to start the project, which includes obtaining ethical clearance.

Q: Can a researcher seek funding from an additional funder to expand the scope after the pilot phase?

A: Yes, and this can be a good time to think about diversifying funding streams. How likely do funders consider applications from a researcher with little or no publications, and what are funders flexible with?

Q: Since part of stakeholders' engagement is done before the start of the actual research activities and before you receive funding, do funders allow payment of the costs retrospectively?

A: Generally, no - you cannot request retrospective funding. However, you can include stakeholder engagement in your research plan as part of your project activities, and many funders support funding them. The tricky thing is managing long-term engagement and maintaining relationships between projects.
A: For more information, please read the following article: https://mesh.tghn.org/articles/low-cost-and-upstream-engagement-funding-proposals/

Q: Is it advisable to ask for the entire budget?

A: In short, only if you can justify that request. For more details, please watch Session 4 of the workshop.

Q: Does a junior researcher need to be trained in grant and budget management, or can they ask the financial team for support?

A (by Katrina Lawson): The first thing I'd say is that if you have a financial team or someone in your institution who can support you, you should be working with them because that's only going to help increase the quality of your proposal and the likelihood that it's going to get funded and that you're going to be able to handle managing it. If you're a very early career researcher, maybe you don't need training because maybe you don't have financial responsibilities yet and you're not really going to be doing much, but as soon as you're starting to apply for grants or manage a grant of your own or have some financial or management responsibilities, then it's going to benefit you to get some training and understand what those responsibilities are going to be for you as a grant holder. Because even if you have a very well-established research management and support team, there are still a lot of responsibilities that rest with you as the researcher, and you need to know what's happening on your own grant.

Q: Some funders require that you demonstrate the contributions of the recipient institution, for example, equipment, lab space and expect you to cost these as well. How does one go about this?

A (by Ana Cehovin): So essentially, when you apply for a grant, and you cost it, you need to cost everything that you need to complete that grant, and if that requires you to buy a new PCR machine, a centrifuge or something like that in the lab, then you just put it on the grant. At the same time, you need to be able to leverage all these other opportunities that your institution provides you. So, if there are lab spaces or equipment or other things that you can use, you don't cost them, but you do write that that's what you're going to use to successfully complete this particular piece of work. You don't need to cost the things that you don't have to buy, but we do expect from a Wellcome's perspective that you would justify why you chose to perform your research at that particular institution and that all kinds of is basically part of that, the kind of space that they're providing you, the kind of support they're providing you and also the kind of equipment they're providing you.

A (by Katrina Lawson): So one thing I would say is that when you are costing out your research, when you're figuring out how much it costs your institution to deliver that piece of work, that's usually more money than you're ever going to get back on your actual grant application budget, because from the institution’s point of view, you usually want to figure out exactly all of the resources that you need to use to be able to produce this. So that means counting some of those hidden things, like your indirect costs, it means counting things like sometimes people's time. If there are tenured people or people who have salary support working on a grant, often their time can be costed as a contribution if it's not going to be directly charged, for example. So those kinds of things that don't actually end up making it into the budget for the grant, they can often be quantified as if you were going to charge it out. That's how it's done for an in-kind contribution that gets quantified. Some funders do demand match funding, and they may demand it as a cash contribution or an in-kind contribution. If it's a cash contribution, that means that they expect your institution to actually pay for some things, like maybe paying for a piece of equipment or paying for all of your travel costs or something, something that they're going to have to spend money on. An in-kind contribution is the kind of stuff like Ana was just talking about, which is those things that are less easy to quantify, like using lab space, for example, that would be considered an in-kind contribution, and you can just describe that a lot of the time. So, it does depend very much on the context of what your funder is expecting and how your organisation costs research and then prices it.

Q: At the University of Lagos in Nigeria, we have some funders who have specified limits on the amount of money you have to spend for equipment, for dissemination, and all other parts or aspects of the budget. So sometimes they might specify that you don't spend more than 20% of the total budget on equipment, not more than 5% on dissemination. So practically, how do you actually go about starting to prepare such a budget?

A (by Katrina Lawson): First thing I'm going to say is that it's pretty weird. I haven't come across many funders asking you to split down to percentages for different types of line items like that

very much. I mean, yes, for indirect costs and sometimes for equipment or travel because they want to limit, but it's quite unusual to have a very specific percentage.
The second thing I would say is that you should treat those percentages as a limit and not a target. So, if they say you can only have 20% for equipment, that doesn't mean you must spend 20% on equipment. So, I would say you need to tackle the budget kind of by ignoring those limits to start with and do what I was talking about before, which is cost out for your project, for your research question, how much is it going to cost your university or your institution to deliver that, and then figure out. If, for example, you need to buy a big piece of equipment that's going to cost 40% of the budget, then you can only request 20% of that price, and you must figure out another way to fund the remaining 20%. So maybe your university has to pay for it, or you need to get co-funding, or something has to happen from other sources to cover that deficit. Or alternatively, if you are only going to end up needing 10%, then only request the 10%. So, what they're basically saying to you is: we've got a $100,000 window. We don't want to spend more than 20,000 of that on equipment. So, we would probably prefer to support other activities than just buying equipment or whatever it might be.
If your project design doesn't fit within that, maybe this scheme as well is not the best scheme for what you're trying to do. So, if you really can't make that budget work with your organisation, maybe this isn't the right scheme to be applying for. Sometimes, those are a good indicator of whether or not you're a good fit for the funding scheme.

Collaborations (with collaborators and funders)

- For more information about establishing and handling collaborations, you can watch Dr Evelyne Kestelyn's presentation in Session 3 of the workshop and the Q&A session of the workshop at 21:30.

Q: The challenge at times gets frustrating when other collaborators are not proactive. How can you motivate such partners?

A: Most of you asked about unproductive collaborators. This is a very common and delicate challenge in multi-country collaborations, hence my emphasis on equity and communication. Motivating partners who are underperforming requires strategic communication, but also clarity (responsibilities) and incentives (win/win).

What to do next based on understanding the underlying problem:

- Clarify roles, expectations, and timelines

- Circulate a clear work plan with responsibilities, deliverables, and deadlines (with their agreement).
- Include mutually agreed milestones, so they have ownership.
- Reiterate these in group calls — it creates peer accountability.

- Use positive peer pressure and visibility
  - Share progress dashboards or brief "partner updates" at meetings.
  - Highlight achievements of active sites — not punitively, but to set momentum.
  - Let others present results or progress in calls — recognition is a motivator.
- Link engagement to tangible benefits
  - Opportunities for authorship, training, or conference representation.
  - Mention their contributions in reports or publications.
  - Offer capacity-building support (e.g., help with data management, proposal development).
- Create structured follow-up and accountability
  - Send short, factual reminders tied to project milestones.
  - Introduce quarterly performance reviews or deliverable check-ins.
  - Include accountability clauses in MoUs or subcontracts if the project is funded (Funders do the same!).
- Recognise and reward effort
  - Public acknowledgement in meetings or reports.
  - Small but meaningful incentives: authorship lead, mentorship opportunities, or funding for a visit to a partner site.
- Know when to escalate or reassign
  - If, despite repeated efforts, there's no improvement, consider redistributing tasks to more active sites, but document all communication to maintain fairness and transparency with the funder.

Q: Do you have any tips on how to approach a researcher for collaboration? How to avoid getting the wrong individuals into a collaborative team? Some researchers look better on their CVs than as real-life research partners.

A: It's important to work together before grant submission, for example, developing a concept note, setting up a few meetings to understand each other's priorities, etc. Most of the time, you will quickly see who is not showing up, putting in the work at that stage, and it allows you to make a decision before grant submission. My advice when choosing new collaborators is to talk to them and get to know them before making any decisions. The CVs alone can be very misleading, as you rightly point out!

Q: What is the best way of handling PIs who shortchange their collaborators once the funding is successful? What measures can one have in place to mitigate this vice?

A: You should have a collaboration agreement in place once the funding is awarded, which outlines the responsibilities and budget for each partner.

Q: This was a comment in the chat of the YouTube livestream: While we stress the importance of research collaboration, it appears this is contradictory to the University policy emphasising less authorship in published articles. Fewer authors mean more marks. However, on Day 1 of the workshop, we talked about how important and useful it is, and how difficult at the same time to create collaborations. We also talked about how to deal with the actual collaboration and all the logistics. Can we further discuss this comment?

A (by Evelyne Kestelyn): It's a known tension between being a researcher wanting to conduct research with a big impact, but at the same time understanding that the way to bring in money and to bring in grants and to have impact is by having the right CV. And you have the right CV by having the right authorships. So, it's a known tension. However, I think that the field is changing, and it also depends. Let's say that we're talking about the medical field. If we're talking about the social science field, for example, medical anthropology, usually you only have one or two authors on the papers. So, it is something that is specific to public health and medicine, but I do think that the field is moving away from that, and an example is the recovery trial. There were so many people involved in the recovery trial, every single person got an authorship. I mean, if you look at the authorship list of some of those articles, it's hundreds and hundreds of people, but they can put that on their CV. Is it a more meaningful authorship, as in a first or last, no, but it is an authorship.

So, I think that's one thing, you know, be inclusive when it comes to authorships, and I think the other element or kind of way of attributing more people is to say on behalf of and then this group of people. But there have been calls to include, for example, clinical staff on papers where they say nurses and physicians have helped to capture this data. What about, you know, research support? Without them, this would not have been possible. And where are they? So there are more and more voices about equitable authorship and not only about low income country versus high income country, but like I just mentioned like all the staff making this paper possible and I think this is something that at least I know Wellcome has been supportive of looking at how do we measure impact, how do we measure kind of these metrics of success and I know that, for example, in the UK universities, the REF has started to be a bit more open-minded about this. So, the field is changing because, yes, research and science are a team endeavour; it is a multidisciplinary endeavour. So, it needs to be inclusive. I think things are changing, but it's slow.

And I do think that the big funders definitely push that agenda, and I think some of them are doing that. So, this is maybe not exactly an answer, but at least I think some insights into the field.

Q: In a collaborative project, one person provides the research concept, and another brings the technical expertise. How should the grant roles be assigned? Should the idea originator or the technical lead be the grantee, or can the grant be awarded jointly?

A (by Ana Cehovin): Maybe I can answer from a Wellcome perspective. So, unfortunately, our grants can't be awarded jointly, and this is really just an administrative thing, and it doesn't mean that there cannot be two equal leads or even 3 in certain cases of that grant. We do require one main administering institution, usually for grants that can handle sort of like project management and payments to other sort of like co-PIs, but this is really an administrative requirement, and really on the grant leadership, it doesn't mean that certain co-PIs have a lesser role than the main, the leading PI. So, there really needs to be an agreement between the team, the leading team that is leading this particular grant, on how they will manage it, and that really has to come from them. This is somewhere where funders really cannot get involved.

Q: What's the best way to balance funders' expectations with the realities of project delivery and to communicate challenges?

A (by Ana Cehovin): This is a complex subject, but my advice is to communicate openly, honestly, and as soon as you are aware of the challenges. Your funder wants your project to succeed, so it is best to view them as a collaborator who may be able to help you through challenging times.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- For more information about Stakeholder and Community Engagement, you can watch Sheikha Mohamed's presentation in Session 5 of the workshop and the Q&A session of the workshop at 06:47 and 16:03.

Q: Resources in terms of money and time are required to incorporate patients and the public in the proposal development stage before application submission. Funders often provide funds upon being awarded, not before the application. How do you navigate this requirement without resources before the application?

A: Please read the following article: https://mesh.tghn.org/articles/low-cost-and-upstream-engagement-funding-proposals/ and watch the Q&A session of the workshop at 6:49.

Q: Most often, results from projects are generated when the team has already left the community, and often, dissemination is limited to the scientific community or policymakers. Do funders allow budgeting to travel back to the community and disseminate to the source of data owners?

A: It is important to add these activities to the project plan and budget, and be sure to request that support from the funders as part of your grant application.

Q: At what point in the research proposal do you display the community engagement goals? An example of how you incorporate community engagement in the proposal write-up would help.

A: The application forms usually have a space where you describe the up-front engagement, which feeds into a proposal, and a space to describe the engagement strategy to accompany implementation and dissemination.

Q: Should I make it explicit to the community of my research intention?

A: Yes, this is very important. That's where you will implement. Because one community's priorities can differ from the other. Also, enhancing the ownership.

Q: Can I use questionnaires for upstream engagement?

A: You can use questionnaires to gather upstream information on, for example, community preferences, etc. However, engagement is arguably more of a two-way conversation where community members, stakeholders and/or patients can share their views, questions, ideas, concerns, etc. So, in summary, questionnaires can be useful, but only as a form of information gathering.

Q: Several funders consider stakeholders not as part of the research team but as local collaborators. Can funding for stakeholders be included in the grant proposal budget? In my experience, such budget allocations are often rejected. Please provide clarification on how budget allocations for stakeholders should actually be managed.

A: Yes, funders such as Wellcome and NIHR expect that some budget will be allocated for stakeholder and community engagement. There may be some funders, on the other hand, that do not have it as a requirement.

Q: How do you decide on the members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB)?

A: Please read the following article:
https://mesh.tghn.org/themes/patient-and-public-involvement-and-engagement/mesh-guide-setting-research-advisoryinvolvement-group/

Q: Can you please discuss the involvement of enclaved communities and how you apply equity in engaging such a population? Sometimes research may be biased towards more accessible populations.

A: Engaging enclaved communities in health research requires researchers to prioritise building trust and authentic, long-term relationships before initiating studies. This will enable the researcher to marginalise, respect the culture and also use the culturally appropriate methods for the engagement activities.

Q: It is not always easy to include community engagement in different types of projects. For example, when looking at certain aspects of infectious disease, it is obvious how the community can benefit. If you are looking at molecular mechanisms, it is not always clear how the community can benefit. Do funders understand that community engagement cannot be equal in different projects? So, if you're doing research in a highly technical field, like metagenomics, how do you address community engagement expectations from funders?

A (by Katrina Lawson): It's a question I've come across before. The thing about this is that you have to know who your communities are, so even if you're in a very technical field, yes, maybe your community is not the village members, or it's not a school, or it's not a hospital. It might be an engagement with a policy-making community who are going to be interested in what that research can do. So, I think it's really important to figure out who the stakeholders are in your research. And that is an important question, no matter what your field of research is, because this is all about answering the question of who cares. Nobody's going to fund research that nobody really cares about if it's not going to have an impact. So, when they ask for community engagement, they're often asking, how do I know that somebody other than people with your very specific expertise is going to have any interest at all in these results and that the questions you're asking are going to be at all relevant for them. So if you're doing something very highly technical, perhaps it might be that your community is actually other scientists who are going to use that data or use that technique in the future, and if you have some engagement with them, that helps you to shape your question and shape the way that you do your research. It's all about understanding who your stakeholders are, who's going to be interested in the outcomes of that research, and that will help you identify your communities and how to engage with them.

Wellcome –related Questions

For more information about Wellcome's funding opportunities, please watch Dr Ana Cehovin's presentation in Session 6 of the Grant Writing Workshop.

Q: How can I find out about Wellcome funding opportunities?

A: For funding opportunities, please have a look here: https://wellcome.org/research-funding/schemes
or you can subscribe to their newsletters here https://wellcome.org/insights/newsletters.
All open calls are also advertised on their website.

Q: How does Wellcome Trust define an Early Career Researcher (ECR) for the Early Career Awards?

A: There is a full definition on the Early Career Awards page on the Wellcome website.

Q: Is a PhD required to be eligible for Wellcome's Early Career Awards?

A: Depends on your experience - if you do not have an equivalent experience to a PhD, then a PhD is required.

Q: Does an MSc with some years of research experience qualify for Wellcome's early career award?

A: If your research experience is equivalent to a PhD, then yes.

Q: Are there age restrictions on who is considered an Early Career Researcher?

A: No, there are no age restrictions.

Q: Where does the TB prevention study fall in these funding groups? Early career, discovery, both or other?

A: For open mode schemes, it depends on the career stage of the lead applicant. For discovery/solutions, it depends on the type of study - whether the study has an immediate impact or whether it generates new insights.

Q: Does the Wellcome Trust fund cancer research?

A: Discovery Research does.

Q: Is the Welcome a national funding scheme or international? Can an outside-the-UK university apply?

A: There are different eligibility criteria for each scheme.

Q: If I have an idea, how can I know if my topic meets discovery research criteria?

A: The Discovery remit is very broad. If your idea is transformative and generates significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing, then it qualifies.

Q: I have a mathematical modelling project idea (for an early career award), but the nature of the project means that the costs of executing the research mostly include my salary, computer equipment and some travel-related expenses. My institution's grants department says I shouldn't apply to Wellcome because my budget suggests it's not ambitious enough. The scale of the project can be ambitious though, even though it need not cost anywhere near the 400,000 GBP. How do you think about their argument?

A: Difficult to assess this, but I would say that ambitious projects are not necessarily expensive. The budgets that Wellcome puts forward are for a broad remit of approaches - lab research, observational research, mathematical modelling, etc., etc., which are budgeted differently.

Q: What kind of advice would you give for early-career researchers from LMIC who have probably completed a PhD overseas and could not avoid a career break and are seeking a future opportunity in this competitive real-world situation?

A: Career breaks are considered when assessing your experience if you apply through Wellcome, so do not see a career break as a barrier for applying.

Q: Can you please share the link for the advisory committee?

A: https://wellcome.org/research-funding/guidance/how-wellcome-makes-funding-decisions/funding-application-advisory-committees

Q: In the field of bacterial diseases, I saw TB. I work in the field of Leprosy, and my country is the second most affected African country (according to the 2024 WHO report). Does the Wellcome fund for Leprosy research?

A: Not at the moment.

Q: I work in a high-resource setting and want to conduct research in an LMIC. Do I qualify for the Wellcome grants?

A: The various awards and funding calls at Wellcome have different eligibility criteria, so it's worth checking the eligibility criteria to see whether you qualify.

Q: For the Career Development Award, do I have to be based in the UK?

A: It is open to applicants in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the LMICs.

Q: Are China and India excluded from Wellcome Funding?

A: Wellcome cannot fund activities in mainland China because of the Chinese Overseas Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Law. Wellcome funding in India is provided through the DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance.

Q: If I have a research idea, yet I do not qualify in the criteria, am I allowed to collaborate with a person who fits the eligibility, say, with a terminal degree and use that as a justification for their inclusion in the grant application?

A: Depending on which criteria you do not qualify for. But in general, yes, if you contribute to the overall study and answer the research question.

Q: Does your funding take into account research into molecules against AntiMicrobial Resistance (AMR)?

A: At Wellcome Infectious Disease, we fund the development of new products and interventions, so it depends on which stage this research is in.

Q: Do I need to have research papers or articles before I can apply for the Wellcome?

A: Q&A session @ 0:10.

Q: How do you classify social science research? For example, if a study wants to explore the social, political and commercial determinants of a prevalent disease, will that be health science research or social science research?

A: For Wellcome: If the study is transformative in the field, and if it generates new insights that would improve human health, then it is within the remit of Discovery research. Many studies that we fund are multi-disciplinary.