

Tricks of the trade: developing funding proposals for NIHR



Dr Paul Clarkson

Specialist Social Care Adviser, NIHR Research Design Service North West

Senior Lecturer in Social Care, Social Care and Society, University of Manchester

Senior Fellow, NIHR School for Social Care Research Research Champion, NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN), Greater Manchester



Top 'tips' in preparing and writing a grant application

Preparing

- Familiarise yourself with the NIHR infrastructure; show in the application that you know it and have used it.
 - Approach the RDS at an early stage – even ideas stage
 - Speak to someone at the local CRN: there are people who are paid to help you!
 - Get to grips with the AcoRD (Attributing the costs of health and social care research) guidance: [Attributing the costs of health and social care research - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Top 'tips' in preparing and writing a grant application

Writing it!

- Its not a learned paper or a scientific report!
 - Outline your idea and plan very early on; think of an interesting title.
 - Pay special attention to the Plain English Summary (PES): get a 12 year old to read it; if they can't understand it, it's not clear
 - Write clearly and succinctly – as if you are writing a job application form – that is exactly what it is; **it's a proposal for a research contract**

Top 'tips' in preparing and writing a grant application

Writing it!

- Get help. Get a mentor. Ask around yourself, don't wait; It's easier to apologise than ask for permission.
- It's not all about the science! It's as much about 'can you be trusted to execute and complete the research'? So build a team around you. Non-academic inputs as important as academic investigators.
- Write with specific responsibilities given to specific contributors. Particularly give one person responsibility for PPIE (Public and 'Patient' Involvement and Engagement). Good if that person is a user/patient representative.

Top 'tips' in preparing and writing a grant application

Afterwards

- If you get it right first time; congratulations – have a celebration and prepare for the contract!
- But many don't. Don't be disheartened. Learn from the feedback, if any. Recycle your application, change it for another funding stream.
- Sometimes reasons for unsuccessful applications are simply resource, there's no budget left; pay special attention to why the panel say you were unsuccessful.
- Sometimes they're inexplicable. Forget about it, move on.
- Keep generating ideas and writing applications; it becomes a way of life. It will get easier as you have been through the processes before.