****

**Tips for submitting a successful bursary application**

We have tried to break this up into positive factors (Do’s) and negative factors (Don’ts).

**General Do’s**

In general, when structuring your application to fit the imposed boxes it pays to think in terms of Kipling’s 6 faithful servants: what, where, when, how, why and who. However devious the form appears this is the vital information to convey. The panel members are faced with a large pile of applications to rank. Make it easy for them; there is nothing like stating the obvious and doing it in a prominent position where it is easy to find. Unfortunately, many applicants fail to do so leaving the assessors scratching their heads wondering what the application is all about and why the BSIR should support it.

* Make sure you read the instructions and fill in the form correctly, stick to word and space limits.
* Leave sufficient time to do your application justice. Well prepared applications stand out from the crowd. It usually takes several iterations to get this right so don’t start out the night before submission is due. Letters of support can take weeks to arrive.
* Make your application easy to assess by using clear English and spelling out what you need the funding for and why it is relevant to the BSIR.
* Use a simple, logical layout that will be easy to read. It is unbelievably irritating if we are expected to be editors as well, and this can only detract from your application.
* A picture still paints a thousand words. Consider using illustrations if relevant to the project. Think hard before using that picture of you sipping a cocktail on a beach in paradise.
* Get your application in on time: failure to do so suggests a lack of interest and / or organisation, neither of which bodes well. Assume that all your hard work will have been wasted if it is received late, as it is then unlikely to succeed. The same applies throughout life: there is no point in risking missing the boat. This is true of all submissions whether abstracts to scientific meetings or applications for clinical excellence awards.

**Research Bursaries**

Research bursaries are to support BSIR members in advancing the practice of IR through the support of research projects.

BSIR encourages applications which are

* from centres with a track record in the area of research
* focussed on driving innovation in IR
* able to demonstrate collaboration between disciplines
* clear on the impact resulting from this work

BSIR will not fund

* applications which are awaiting ethical approval
* equipment for departments which should be provided by their hospital
* consumables in industry sponsored projects

By the standards of research grants, the BSIR bursaries are small but will provide evidence of a track record when applying for larger grants. The funding is most likely to be useful in a “pump priming” capacity. Applications are more likely to succeed if they are **original**, have **clear objectives** and it is clear that they have been thoroughly worked out and are **achievable**. If you can show a track record to support your objectives, so much the better, but the research bursaries are about establishing that essential track record as a stepping stone to more ambitious proposals.

**Do’s**

* While there is something to be said for a scatter gun attitude to grant application, remember to be honest and declare when you have applied for or received other sources of funding for the current project. How much was actually received, and how much is still needed?
* Collaborate with someone with a track record in the area of interest, but be the principal investigator yourself!
* Include a budget which clearly itemises the costs of the project (consumables, capital equipment, staff time), and indicates which elements are essential, desirable and optional. In other words indicate whether the project will still be viable if it is part funded.
* Provide evidence of current Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training which is becoming mandatory for all clinical researchers. GCP training can either take the form of a 1 day course or be done on line.
* Provide evidence of ethical committee and research governance approval, as this can take months to acquire. Given the choice of a project which is ready to go and one which might possibly start sometime in the future is a no brainer!

**Clearly indicate**

1. Background – What is known, and referenced, on the subject? What are the shortcomings of prior / existing work? What needs to be done next, and why?
2. Novelty – What is the novelty value of this project? Show how this is new work.
3. Timeliness. Whether now is the right time for this project: e.g. man has been to the moon, and this project will now take us to mars, which is timely as the climate is now changing on earth.
4. Methodology – Specify how the work will be done and who will do it! It is astonishing that this seems to be overlooked. If you will be taking time out to perform the work, provide letters of support confirming that this is possible. Remember: what is to be done, by whom, using what equipment?
5. Statistical analysis – Who will provide statistical support? Show how data will be analysed. Where relevant, indicate that the study is adequately powered to provide a meaningful result.
6. Milestones and timelines – A Gantt chart is ideal for this, but for a simple project, a table showing deliverables / milestones and when they occur may suffice.
7. Benefits – Indicate the importance and relevance of the project emphasizing the benefits to patients, BSIR and the NHS.
8. Intellectual property – Will any IP be produced by the project, and if so, who will manage this (i.e. provide the advice, route to market and commercialization). This might be an industrial partner, or a technology transfer organisation.
9. Justification – Provide a clear, brief justification of each of the items to be purchased by the grant.
10. Dissemination – How will the outputs of your work be disseminated? Which new device will be manufactured? At which meetings will the work be presented? Which journals will you publish in?
11. Provide other letters of support from your Trust R&D department, your local research lead, research partners / collaborators, and any recognized experts you can enlist.

**Don’ts**

* Don’t be overambitious with the project. A grand project may sound and look impressive but if it cannot realistically be achieved the application is unlikely to be successful.
* Don’t fudge the cost of items, get quotes.
* Don’t be frightened of asking for the project’s full costs.
* Don’t be shy of asking someone more experienced to review your proposal before submitting it.

**Educational Bursaries**

Education bursaries are to support BSIR members in their continued professional development, in order to advance the practice of IR in the UK.

We aim to enable individuals to acquire new learning and skills, which they can take back to their own centres and embed, making a meaningful impact.

BSIR encourages proposals which

* Enable an individual to participate in an educational experience.
* Clearly demonstrate how the learning will be put in to practice in their home centre.
* Focus on embedding meaningful learning, rather than stand-alone learning opportunities.

BSIR will not fund

* Acquisition of skills which should be financially supported by the deaneries
* Training support which could be financially supported and secured from corporate partners
* Learning new techniques which an individual will not be able to implement outside of the classroom.

Trainee and consultant applications to travel to another centre are the most frequent requests.

The panel is broadly supportive of broadening horizons and getting a wide experience but will always ask the following questions:

* If the experience is not available locally, why does the employing deanery not support this as Out of Program (OOP) training?
* Where a doctor wishes to travel to acquire a new skill, have they provided evidence for the need for this service development within their Trust? If so why is the trust not supporting it?
* Is the experience proleptic and needed for a new job? If so why aren’t the new employers supporting it?
* Is the training opportunity appropriate to your level of experience?
* Does the centre to be visited provide a formal training program? Provide any documentation and other supporting material to show that the experience of suitable duration and quality justifies the investment. It is invaluable to the panel to know exactly what can be achieved in the time period. Will the doctor be performing cases or just a fly on the wall?
* Is there a sufficient caseload? You are much more likely to learn all about a procedure / indications / service development in 3 weeks when the centre performs 500 procedures a year than 50 a year.
* How will this experience change the lives of others? And maybe, how will it change yours?

You are most likely to succeed if the purpose of the travel / training is an OOP with your employing deanery supporting your base salary, but you are likely to have your house repossessed due to failing to make the mortgage repayments due to the increased expenses.

**Don’ts**

* Appear greedy
* Fail to research the cheapest travel and accommodation available. Someone on the panel will look this up on the net. There is unlikely to be support to stay in a penthouse at the Ritz especially when Trusts make such poor provision for cost of living expenses.
* Ignore other opportunities to gain the experience. Why it is necessary to go to such an exotic location to gain the experience? Often there are more appropriate opportunities much closer to hand.
* Ask for funding to support a drop in salary such as an out of hours supplement unless this is absolutely necessary and likely to lead to hardship. The panel will notice if you are traveling to another deanery and wish to opt out of your on call.

Applications for funding to attend meetings generally have low priority. After all, they are not compulsory and it is your decision to submit material to and to attend these meetings. We have to recognise that the days of finding financial support for meetings are likely to be numbered, as is being increasingly seen in the funding for study leave for trainees and consultants.

**Summary**

Applying for grants and bursaries is not a difficult process but if you want to succeed make sure that you are succinct, original, clear, and accentuate the positive benefits of your work. Attention to detail is everything.