Preparing Funding Proposals at MU

Research Development Office
Vinnie Fagan
June 2021

Sections of the PFP@MU Workshop

1. Overview of Structures of Research Support at MU

2. Overview of Funding Landscape & Finding Research Funding

3. Developing your Funding Strategy

4. Budgeting and Research Finance

5. Grant Writing Skills

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Section 1; Overview of Structures of Research Support at MU

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June 2021

Overview of Structures of Research Support at MU

Dr Carol Barrett
Director of Research Development

- The Research Development Office (RDO) is responsible for developing and supporting research capacity, performance and activity at Maynooth University.

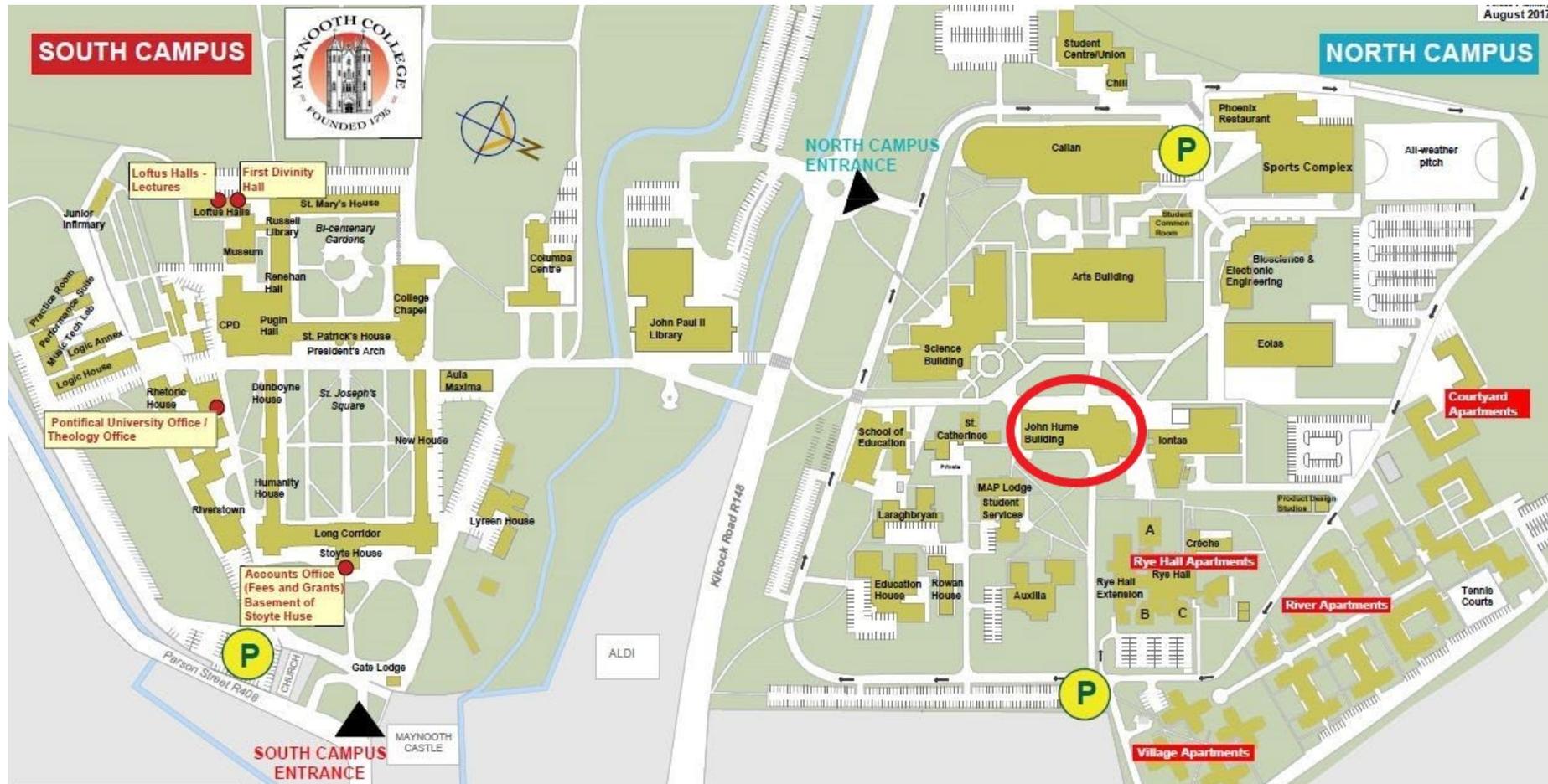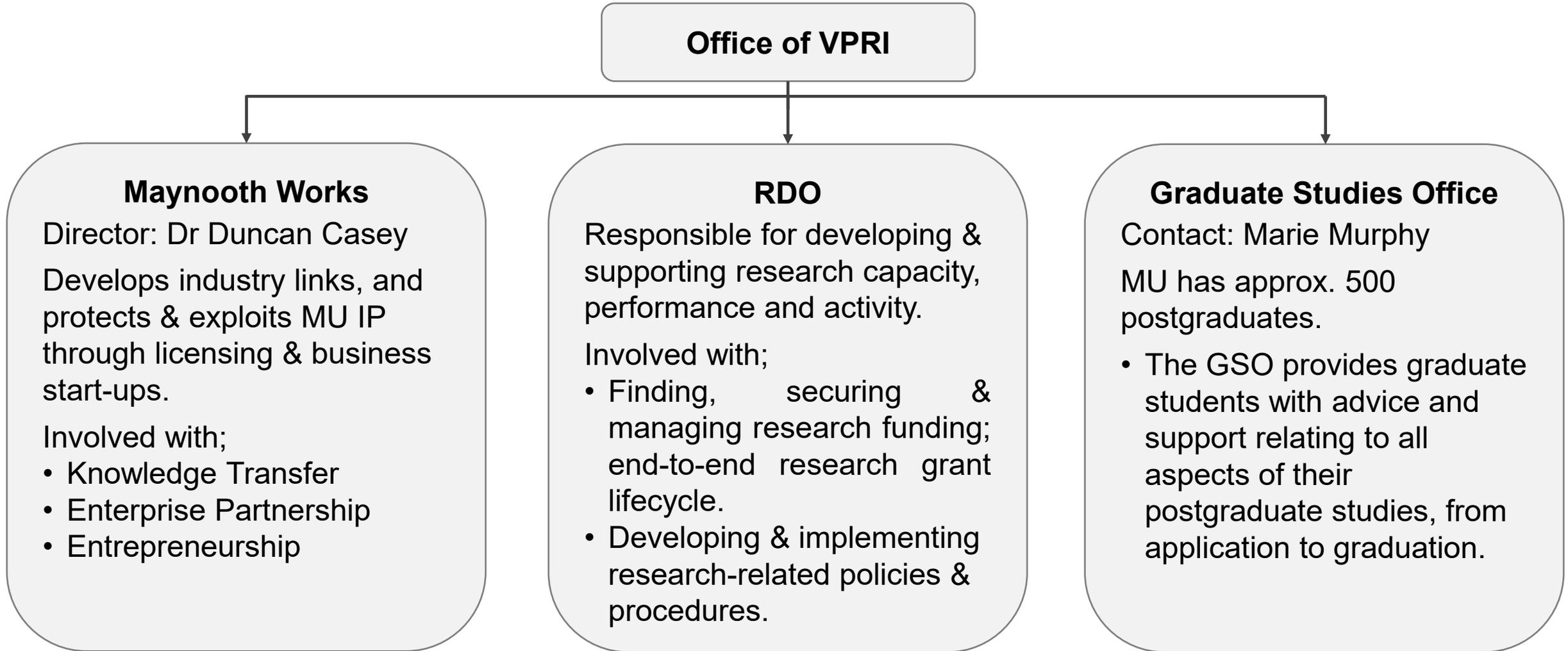- The RDO Director oversees all research support activities.

- The RDO, and the MaynoothWorks Commercialisation Office, forms part of the Office of Vice-President for Research & Innovation, which is overseen by the Vice-President for Research & Innovation (VPRI).

- The RDO and MaynoothWorks Commercialisation Office, as well as the Graduate Studies Office (GSO), are located in John Hume Building, on the University's North campus.

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We Are Here

- The RDO, Maynooth Works and Graduate Studies Office are in John Hume Building (top floor).

Overview of Structures of Research Support at MU

Office of VPRI

Maynooth Works

Director: Dr Duncan Casey

Develops industry links, and protects & exploits MU IP through licensing & business start-ups.

Involved with;
- Knowledge Transfer
- Enterprise Partnership
- Entrepreneurship

RDO

Responsible for developing & supporting research capacity, performance and activity.

Involved with;
- Finding, securing & managing research funding; end-to-end research grant lifecycle.
- Developing & implementing research-related policies & procedures.

Graduate Studies Office

Contact: Marie Murphy

MU has approx. 500 postgraduates.
- The GSO provides graduate students with advice and support relating to all aspects of their postgraduate studies, from application to graduation.

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How the RDO, MWorks & GSO Interact

- The RDO routinely interacts with many university departments and offices, but in relation to the preparation of funding proposals…

RDO & Maynooth Works

- From proposal preparation stage RDO consults with MWorks regarding protection and exploitation of project results.
- Patenting v Open Access.
- When a project involves a commercial entity.

RDO & Graduate Studies Office

- RDO will liaise with GSO when a funding proposal involves a postgraduate programme.
- RDO works with GSO on various aspects of postgraduate projects or for implementation of postgraduate training modules.

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office

The Research Development Office in More Detail

- The RDO staff members are split into teams that focus on particular areas within the RDO remit.

- You should contact the RDO as early as possible in the proposal preparation process.
  research.development@mu.ie

Pre-Award Support
- Identify funding opportunities
- Information & guidance
- Assist with certain sections (call dependant)
- Budget preparation
- Proposal review
- Institutional endorsement

RDO Finance
- Advise and guide budget preparation
- Review and approve final proposed budget.
  (This is an MU requirement)
- Manage all post-award accounting.

Post-Award Support
- Legal & Contracts Support
- MaynoothWorks
- RDO Finance
- HR
- Research Ethics
- Grant management support
- Compliance

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RDO Pre-Award Support

- **Identify Funding Opportunities;** The RDO provides a university-wide license for Research Professional, software used to search, track and provide alerts on research funding opportunities across all disciplines.

- **Proposal Review & Institutional Endorsement;** In order to protect individual researchers and the University, proposals are submitted, and awards are made to the University (not to the researcher). Therefore MU, via the RDO, must ensure all regulations and policies are met.

  - Most funders require institutional endorsement (Director of Research Development/VPRI signature or research office endorsement).
  - Applicants should request institutional signature/endorsement at least 2 weeks before the deadline.
  - We provide guidance and support at every stage in the process…**we help you to put the best possible application together.**

- If a proposal is submitted without RDO review and approval;

  - If funded, the University has the right to renegotiate the terms and conditions, budget, resources etc., before accepting the award.
  - The University may have to decline the award.

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Contact the RDO early…We are here to help!

Contacting the RDO

- You can contact the RDO by email (research.development@mu.ie) for;

  ➢ Support in identifying suitable funding opportunities.
  ➢ Support in proposal preparation and institutional endorsement.
  ➢ Any post-award support.

- When you wish to apply for funding, you can also contact the RDO by submitting an Intent on RIS (Research Information System). https://ris.maynoothuniversity.ie/live/w_rms_security.login

- Each RDO Officer has responsibilities for particular funding agencies, so your request will be sent to the most appropriate RDO Officer, who will contact you directly.
  https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/our-people

- Where possible, the relevant RDO Officer will work with you through each stage of your proposal and will be your point of contact throughout the lifecycle of your application, including for post-award support.

- The RDO Officer will liaise with RDO Finance, Maynooth Works…etc. on your behalf to ensure you get the support you need.

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Researcher Obligations

- After contacting the RDO, the appropriate RDO Officer will provide you with initial information and advice relating to the funding call of interest.

- If you choose to progress with the funding application, **you are committing yourself to some external and internal obligations.**

- Some of these obligations include;

  - Comply with all **Terms and Conditions** of the funder.
  - Comply with **Financial Management** policies and procedures.
  - Deliver and retain **Reporting Requirements and Documentation**.
  - Agree to any **Publicity and Acknowledgement** requirements of the funder.
  - Agree to **comply with all MU policies** (Ethics, Intellectual Property…etc.)
    https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/research-policies
    https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/policies

- Further details of Researcher Obligations can be found on the RDO website;

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/finding-external-funding

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RIS

- The Maynooth University Research Information System (RIS) is a web-based information management system that is used to track and manage all funding applications (among other things). https://ris.maynoothuniversity.ie/live/w_rms_security.login

Creating a New Intent on RIS

- If you want to apply for external research funding, you must complete an Intent to Submit form on RIS, which creates a record of your application and enables us to help you with your application.

- Further training and RIS related information can be found on the RDO website (also see workshop pack); https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ris-guide

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Ethics Process

- For successful funding applications that require ethical approval; Ethics applications are submitted and managed via RIS, and must be obtained prior to commencement of the research.

- RIS Ethics Module Guidance training material is available from the RDO website (also see workshop pack). https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ris-guide

- MU operates a 3-Tier ethical review process, which allows research proposals of different complexities to be handled appropriately without compromising good ethical practice.

- Information on the Tier Process, and on selecting the tier applicable to your proposal, can be found on the RDO website. https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ethics/ethical-review-process-and-closing-dates

- Researchers should also familiarise themselves with the MU Research Ethics Policy. https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/research-policies

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Research Data Management

- Funders now place significant importance on Research Data Management, and the requirement of a Data Management Plan (DMP) is becoming more common.

- Your RDO Officer will provide advice on preparing your DMP, and the MU Library have put together information, guidance and training resources relating to the preparation of DMPs.

  https://nuim.libguides.com/RDM

- The IRC, HRB and SFI are member of Science Europe, an organisation representing 38 major public research funders across 28 European countries.

- In Jan 2021 Science Europe published a practical guide for preparing DMPs, which aims to align international requirements and expectations relating to DMPs.

- This comprehensive and practical guide can be downloaded from the below website, along with a DMP template (also see workshop pack).
  https://scienceeurope.org/our-priorities/research-data/research-data-management/

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Section 2; Overview of Funding Landscape & Finding Research Funding

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Who Are the Main Funders

National Funders

- MU Internal Funding
- Irish Research Council
- Science Foundation Ireland
- Health Research Board
- Enterprise Ireland
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Teagasc
- Marine Institute
- Wellcome Trust

EU Joint Initiative & Co-Funded Programmes

- Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI)
- European Joint Programme Cofund (EJP)
- European Research Area Networks (ERA-Net)
- MSCA COFUND

European Commission

- Horizon Europe
- European Space Agency
- European Environment Agency
- European Food Safety Authority
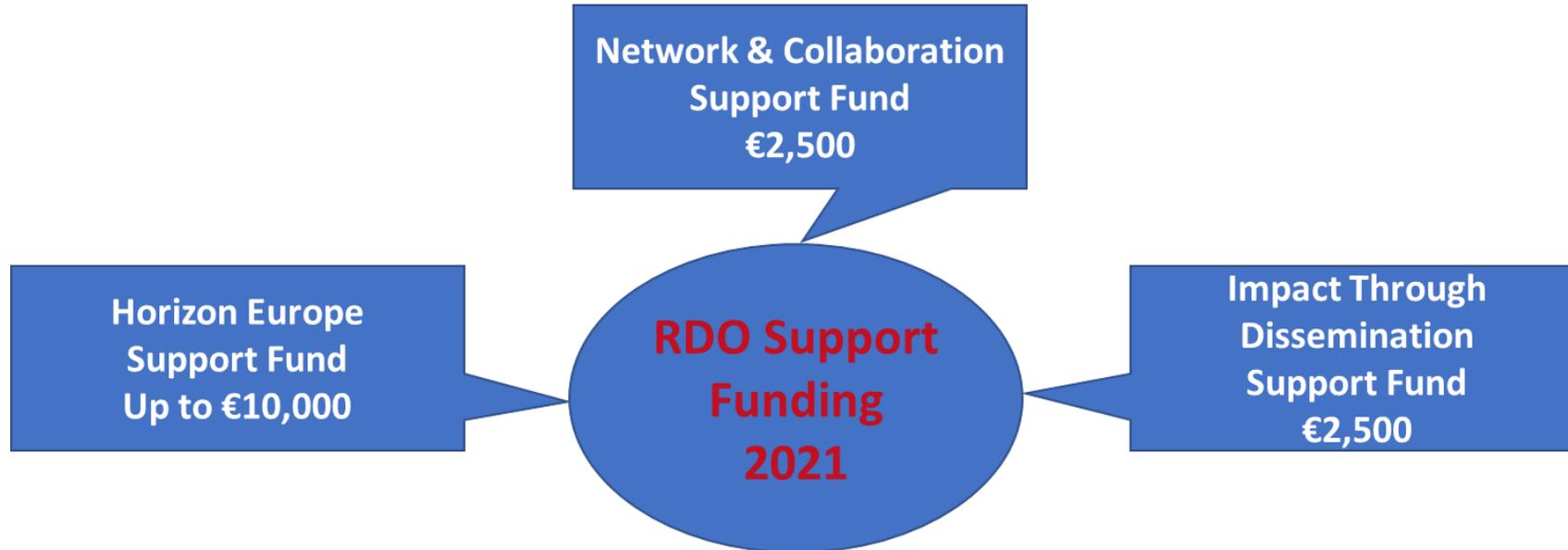- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

- The above is just a small few of the more well-known funders…there are many, many more.

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Types of Funding Calls

- **Bottom Up;**
  - ➤ You decide the research area: Broad scope covering all disciplines (e.g. IRC, MSCA, ERC).
  - ➤ Less limitations on scope so highly competitive.

- **Top Down;**
  - ➤ Funder decides research area: Narrow, well-defined scope (e.g. EPA, Teagasc, HEU Global Challenges).
  - ➤ Smaller pool of researchers that have the correct experience.

- **Research and innovation actions (RIA);** Includes basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing and validation on a small-scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment.

- **Innovation actions (IA);** Includes prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.

- **Coordination and support actions (CSA);** May include standardisation, dissemination, communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning, complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

- **European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) action;** Specifically for research networking, funds conferences, meetings, training schools and scientific exchanges.

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MU Internal Research Enhancement Fund

- Provides small funding supports to MU researchers to enhance the scope and impact of their research.

- Information on internal calls and online application forms can be accessed via the RDO website;
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/finding-internal-funding

- For queries relating to internal calls please contact RDOsupportfund@mu.ie
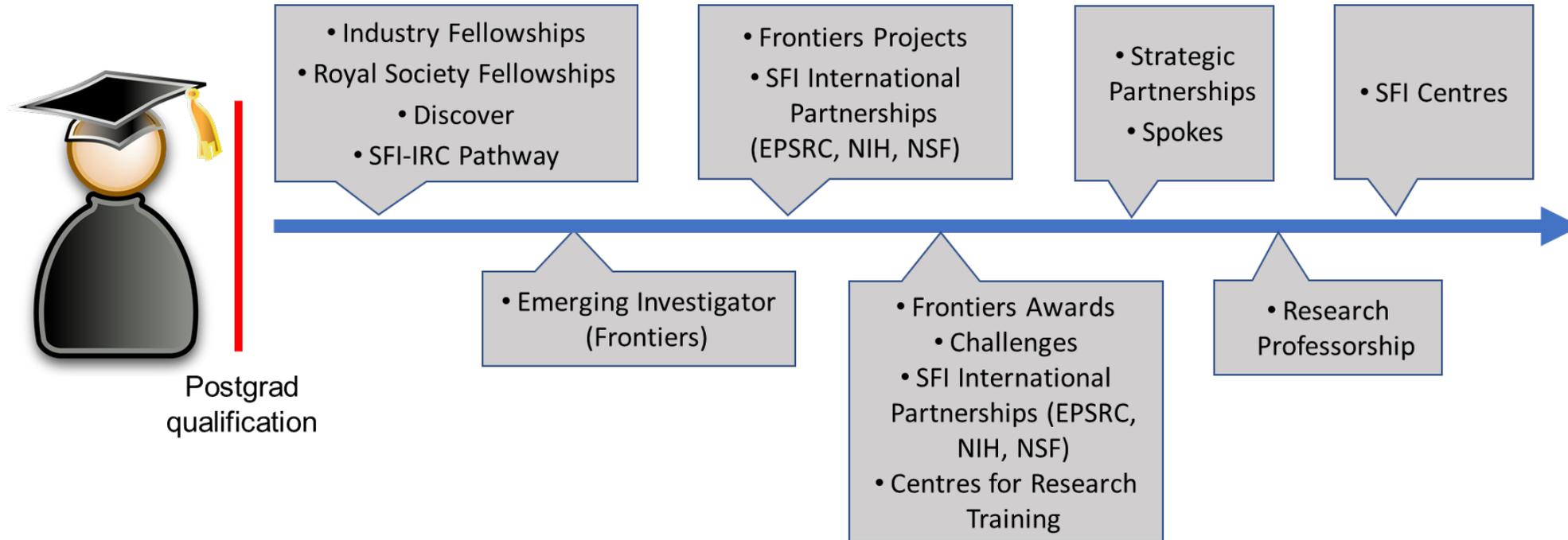
The Irish Research Council

- Funds ground-breaking basic and applied research across **all disciplines** that will have knowledge, societal and/or enterprise impact.

- Awards individual researchers at **all career stages**.

- **Evaluates solely on the basis of excellence** with respect to researcher, idea and project design through international peer review.

- The provisional schedule of programme calls in 2022 can be found here; https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/IRC-Provisional-Call-Schedule-2022.pdf

IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

Programme Calls in 2022 – Provisional Schedule

Early-career stage			
Programme	**Description**	**Launch**	**Outcome**
Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme 2023	Supporting suitably qualified research master's and doctoral candidates pursuing, or intending to pursue, full-time research in any discipline	Q3 2022	Q1 2023
Enterprise Partnership Scheme (Postgraduate Scholarships) 2023	Supporting suitably qualified research master's and doctoral candidates in any discipline working in partnership with academia and enterprise	Q4 2022	Q2 2023
Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme 2023	Supporting suitably qualified research master's and doctoral candidates in any discipline working in partnership with academia while employed by an enterprise partner	Q4 2022	Q2 2023

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Science Foundation Ireland

- Industry Fellowships
- Royal Society Fellowships
- Discover
- SFI-IRC Pathway

- Frontiers Projects
- SFI International Partnerships (EPSRC, NIH, NSF)

- Strategic Partnerships
- Spokes

- SFI Centres

Postgrad qualification

- Emerging Investigator (Frontiers)

- Frontiers Awards
- Challenges
- SFI International Partnerships (EPSRC, NIH, NSF)
- Centres for Research Training

- Research Professorship

- SFI is largest Irish funder of **science and technology**, and funds both orientated basic & applied research. https://www.sfi.ie/

- Typically, funds established researchers & centres that then recruit postgrads & postdocs, but some calls open to postdoctoral researchers (e.g. Pathway Programme, Industry Fellowships, UK Royal Society, Wellcome).

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Horizon Europe

Pillar 1
Excellent Science

- European Research Council
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
- Research Infrastructures

Pillar 2
Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness

Clusters
- Health
- Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society
- Civil Security for Society
- Digital, Industry and Space
- Climate, Energy and Mobility
- Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

Joint Research Centre

Pillar 3
Innovative Europe

- European Innovation Council
- European innovation ecosystems
- European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area

- Widening participation and spreading excellence
- Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I system

- With a budget of 95.5 billion (running between 2021- 2027), it is Europe's biggest every research & innovation funding programme.

Horizon Europe

Mission areas

- Adaptation to climate change, including societal transformation
- Cancer
- Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters
- Climate-neutral and smart cities
- Soil health and food

European Commission

- Funding calls and call-specific information can be found on the European Commission's Funding and Tender portal; https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

- For more information of EU funding, you can contact eu.research@mu.ie

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Finding Funding Opportunities

- However, there are <u>tens of thousands</u> of sources of funding available for research so it would be impossible for you to keep up-to-date with the latest developments for each funder.

- There are many ways to find funding opportunities (Opps);
  - ➢ Word of mouth / network of collaborators
  - ➢ Google searches
  - ➢ Visit the websites of particular funders on a regular basis
  - ➢ Research Professional Software

- In addition, the RDO sends out regular emails to alert researchers of some calls as they arise.

- So, what is the best way to find the right funding Opp for you?

Research Professional

- **What is Research Professional (RP);** One of the world's leading publishers of news and information specifically related to international research funding.

  https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/

- It has an up-to-date database of all funding opportunities from all disciplines worldwide. Users can run searches and add filters to obtain lists of funding Opps that are tailored to your research interests.

  https://www.researchprofessional.com/sso/login?service=https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/

- All MU staff/student have access to RP. Information and training material can be found on the RDO website (also see workshop pack);

  https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/finding-external-funding

Research Professional

- Go to RDO website.

- Click Research Funding.

- Click Find External Funding.

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Research Professional

- Click Research Professional to see info on RP.

- A Quick Start Training Guide, as well as a recorded training session is available as indicated by the purple arrows (also see workshop pack)

- For any assistance with RP, please contact;

  vinnie.fagan@mu.ie

Customised Search

- Create a customised search based on your profile.

- **Example Profile;**
  - ➢ You have a PhD and have some Postdoc experience.
  - ➢ You have published some high-quality research papers.
  - ➢ You now wish to secure a Senior Postdoc position or an Independent Researcher position.
  - ➢ You want to work in Ireland.

Customised Search

- This search generates a list of 12 results

- You must now evaluate which funding Opp to progress with.

- So how do you decide which funding Opp is right for you?

Results   Bookmark   Actions

12 items found

Sort [   ] ▲▼ Results per page [50]   Previous 1 Next

☐	Closing date		Max amount
	March 21		
☐	29 Mar 21	**Research career development fellowships** Wellcome, GB and other funders	Not specified
	April 21		
☐	07 Apr 21	**EXTENDED DEADLINE: Research fellowship for social, nursing and allied health sciences** Irish Cancer Society, IE	€160,000
☐	08 Apr 21	**Research career re-entry fellowships** Wellcome, GB and other funders	Not specified
☐	15 Apr 21 (Forecast)	**COMING SOON: Atlantic fellows programme** Trinity College Dublin, IE	Not specified
	July 21		
☐	01 Jul 21	**Principal research fellowships** Wellcome, GB and other funders	Not specified
☐	01 Jul 21	**Senior research fellowships** Wellcome, GB and other funders	Not specified

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Choosing the Right Funding Opp

- **Basic question to ask yourself;**

  ➢ Are you eligible?

  ➢ Do you have a project proposal that is within the scope?

  ➢ When is the deadline? Do you have the time?

  ➢ Are there other specific eligibility criteria (matching funding, consortium requirements, industry involvement, letters of support…etc.).

Results   Bookmark [Actions ▾]

12 items found

| Sort [▾] [▲][▼] Results per page [50 ▾] | Previous 1 Next |

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Section 3; Developing your Funding Strategy

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What is a Funding Strategy?

- It is common for charities, NGOs, and even corporate entities, to develop funding strategies that maximise existing resources and increase the likelihood of securing additional resources.

- For the same reasons, funding strategies for academic research is becoming more common, which is the specific focus of this workshop.

- **A funding strategy is a well thought out written plan that;**

  1. Identifies the overall goals and objectives of your research ("mission statement").

  2. Determines your funding requirements over a period of 3-5 years.

  3. Identifies possible funding sources.

  4. Outlines a strategic plan for preparing and submitting funding applications.

  5. Is a practical working document that is reviewed and updated regularly.

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Why Should You Prepare a Funding Strategy?

- Better planning helps to avoid wasted time and energy.

- A funding strategy allows you to systematically build your research over time (master plan). Without it, your research might lack focus and become disjointed.

- Because your research goals are clearly outlined in a realistic and achievable way, you can specifically target funders to ensure the highest possibility of funding success.

- Ultimately, it will help you to become a more successful researcher.

Choose the Good Money Over the Big Money (Interesting article from Research Professional (also see workshop pack));

https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/funding/know-how/research-management/2021/01/Choose-the-good-money-over-the-big-money-.html

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1. Your "Mission Statement"

- Before you can create your funding "master plan", you must identify a clear research niche and your overall research objectives and goals...your mission statement!

- Your mission statement is the fundamental guiding principle of your research, which gives your research purpose and focus. The rest of your Funding Strategy should align with your mission statement.

- There's no "correct" way to write your mission statement: you should go with whatever resonates with you.

- Your mission statement should;

  ➢ complement your research experience and interests.
  ➢ complement your organisation's research strengths, strategy and direction.
  ➢ be positive, impactful and beneficial to society.

- The statement should identify;

  ➢ the opportunities/needs you will exploit/address.
  ➢ how you will address these needs.
  ➢ any principles or beliefs that guide your work.

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Examples of Mission Statement

Example Mission Statement
Climate and other environmental changes demand society's attention. The world needs leadership in understanding the biological impacts of global change and potential for solutions to those impacts. We believe that decisions about global change must be informed by scientific understanding and public values. Therefore, we: 1) develop and deploy cutting-edge science to understand the changing natural world, and 2) engage diverse stakeholders in conversation about solutions to environmental change.

https://gain.nd.edu/news/creating-a-mission-and-vision-statement-for-our-research-group/

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2. Your Funding Needs over 3-5 years

- To estimate your funding needs you should;
  - List your objectives in step-by-step detail to achieve the aims of your mission statement (e.g. What projects you will work on).
  - Assess where you are currently or what you currently have.
  - Identify what you will need to carry out those objectives over the 5 years, being as detailed as possible in the earlier years.
  - Prepare a budget by estimating the costs of those needs, taking into consideration where you are currently (See template in workshop pack).

- When listing your objectives, make sure they are **SMART**;
  - **S**pecific (talk in a precise and clear way about what you are going to do)
  - **M**easurable (how will you know when you have achieved your aim?).
  - **A**chievable (can be reasonably accomplished within time and resource constraints).
  - **R**elevant (your objectives should align with your long-term mission).
  - **T**ime bound (determine when each objective needs to be completed).

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3. Identify Possible funding Sources

- Once you know what/how much you will need, you can identify possible funders for your research.

- Funding sources can be categorised;
  - Corporate/Business/Private sector
  - Trusts/Foundations/Charities
  - Local & National Government Funding
  - European Funding
  - Facility/Services/Consultancy income

- Carry out an initial shortlisting of suitable funding opps from **each sector** and by doing the basic checks (eligibility, scope, adequate cost eligibilities).

- It is better to have funding from diverse funding sources. This lowers your exposure to risk of unforeseeable funding cuts.

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4. Strategically Plan Your Applications

- Taking the following strategic criteria into account, select the most desirable funding opps and organise them into a chronological ordered action plan.

  ➢ Submission deadline (can you realistically get everything in time, including from collaborators?)

  ➢ Application complexity (preliminary stage?)

  ➢ Alignment to your mission statement (is it a natural fit or is it a square peg, round hole situation?)

  ➢ Value/eligible costs (overheads, PI time, personnel costs, equipment)

  ➢ Success rates

  ➢ Your competitiveness

  ➢ Similarity to previous applications (plan for rejection)

  ➢ Does it diversify your funding sources

  ➢ Restriction on resubmission

- There are many more considerations that can be taken into account. See interesting case study here (also see workshop pack);
  https://www.dimensions.ai/blog/a-better-research-funding-strategy-with-dimensions-a-use-case/

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5. Review Your Funding Strategy

- Taking the time to prepare a written Funding Strategy means that you can review it regularly to remind yourself of your overall goals. You should update and amend it periodically.

- You mission statement will not change (much), but your future vision may evolve over time.

- Be prepared for rejection. Assess your failed attempts (and your successes) and incorporate the lessons into your Funding Strategy.

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Section 4; Budgeting and Research Finance

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Costing your Project & Preparing your budget

- If you are thinking of applying for research funding, you should submit a RIS Intent as outlined here; https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/ris-guide

- For general queries you can contact the RDO by email (research.development@mu.ie).

- After contacting the RDO, an RDO Officer will be assigned to you and (where possible) will be your point of contact throughout the project lifecycle.

- Your RDO Officer will assist you in preparing your budget and will liaise with RDO Finance on your behalf.

- Budgets vary greatly depending on the funder and the specific funding programme so it is important to read the funder's call documents in detail.

- Before submitting a research funding proposal, your final budget must be approved by RDO Finance, via your RDO Officer.

Read all call documents in detail…

…and contact the RDO early!

Some Common Terms

Terminology, as well as the definitions of terms, change from funder to funder and even call to call by the same funder, so it is vital that you read all documents relating to a call.

- **Direct Costs;** Costs that can be directly attributed to the proposal. e.g. Staff costs, consumables, equipment, travel, publication fees…etc.

- **Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC);** Direct costs minus equipment and external costs (e.g. subcontracting).

- **Indirect costs (Overheads);** Cost incurred by the university, but which are difficult to attribute directly to the proposal. e.g. Electricity, HR, RDO, building maintenance…etc. Usually set by funder at rate of ~25-30% of direct (modified direct costs). If overheads are eligible but not specified, then MU rates should be applied.

- **In-kind Contributions;** Contributions to the project other than direct cash contributions. e.g. Existing staff time, existing equipment, space, any other services…etc.

- **Matching Funding;** Some funding schemes only provide partial funding of projects, and require matching funds from other sources. e.g. Host institution, industry partner. This can be direct cash contribution or in-kind contribution.

    https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/preparing-budgets

Some Common Terms

- **Equipment depreciation;** Often funders will not fund the full cost of major equipment because such equipment usually has value beyond the lifetime of the project. However, funders may fund the depreciated cost of equipment. Each funder will define the method of calculation of eligible depreciation.

- **Person Month;** The total monthly cost associated with the employment of a particular person at a particular time. For new staff, PMs are set by MU salary scale, which align to IUA salary scales. For existing staff, PMs are calculated by RDO Finance upon request (project start date and duration required).

- **Unit costs;** Some funding calls do not require a budget *per se* (e.g. MSCAs) since they use set budgetary costs (unit costs) per researcher per month.

- **Consultancy Agreement;** An agreement between two parties where one party agrees to purchase goods or services from another, and therefore, the party providing the goods or services must apply VAT to the quoted price.

- **Request for Tender;** A request for goods or services to be provided on commercial terms, and therefore, the price quoted to provide those service must include VAT.

  https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/preparing-budgets

Example of a Budget

- For this workshop, the Water JPI Aquatic Pollutants Joint Transnational Call 2020 has been chosen as an example because it is evaluated at a European level, with European evaluation criteria, but involves a national funding agency (EPA), with its associated funding rules and eligibility (for demonstration purposes, this call covers a lot of bases!).

- Call specific documents can be downloaded from the Water JPI website (also see workshop pack);
http://www.waterjpi.eu/joint-calls/joint-call-2020-aquaticpollutants

- However, the guidelines and T&Cs of the national funder (EPA) also apply and must by read carefully (see workshop pack).

	Funding Organisation:	**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** epaResearch Climate · Water · Sustainability
National Contact Point (NCP)	**Name:**	**Email and Phone:**
	Lisa Sheils	l.sheils@epa.ie
	Total Amount for the Call	**Maximum Amount Per Proposal**
Funding Commitment	€ 500,000	The following will be used as national eligibility criteria: Maximum Budget Requested for Coordinator: € 300,000 Maximum Budget Requested for Partners: € 150,000 Maximum of 1 Irish research organisation (e.g. coordinator or partner) requesting budget from the EPA within a consortium
Other Funding Criteria	As detailed in "Maximum Amount Per Proposal"	
Relevant documents	EPA Research 2019 Call - Guide for Applicants EPA Research 2019 Call - Guide for Grantees EPA Research 2019 Call - Terms and Conditions	

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Preparing Your Budget

- When you contact the RDO, the relevant RDO Office will send you an internal budget template with some of the fields populated and will provide some guidance on how to complete it.

- Your RDO Officer will work with you to complete the budget template and will liaise with RDO Finance on your behalf.

- Your RDO Officer will get approval for the final budget from RDO Finance before the proposal is submitted to the funder.

- For further information and guidance on preparing budgets please see the MU RDO website
  https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/research-development-office/research-funding/preparing-budgets

Contact the RDO early; We will help you to prepare your budget.

- Since this is a workshop, we will now talk through an example budget (see workshop pack).

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Teaching Buyout v PI time

- **Teaching Buyout;** Also called teaching replacement. Costs budgeted to cover the salary of a temporary replacement lecturer. Costs are usually for a person at a more junior level than the post-holder.

- Some programmes allow for teaching replacement costs to facilitate the participation of applicants with existing commitments (e.g. IRC, EI, SFI, Wellcome Trust).

- **Funding for teaching buyout must be used for that purpose** (so the RIF policy is not relevant here). There are several options for teaching buyout, which your RDO Officer will discuss with you.

- **All teaching buyout must be agreed with your Head of Department before an application can be endorsed by the RDO.**

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Teaching Buyout v PI time

- **PI Time;** The salary costs of the PI for the time he/she spends on the project. Calculated using **actual** daily/monthly costs of the PI **for the period of the project** (inclusive of ER PRSI & ER pension).

- **You must contact the RDO for costing of any current staff.**

- Generally, PI time is not an eligible cost for national funders (historically except EPA), but is for European funding programmes (HEU, ERA-NET co-funded calls…etc).

- HoD agreement is required for PI time costs prior to proposal submission.

- **Monthly Timesheets must be maintained** by the PI and submitted to RDO Finance on request (usually requested twice during the academic year; March and September). Completed timesheets are used to calculate the PI time earned over a given period **and are the only mechanism of drawdown**.

- Funding for PI time is re-distributed to the PI/Department on an annual basis in line with MU RIF policy.

- Following the distribution of funding for PI time, the funds can be used for **any legitimate research cost** (which may include teaching buyout), as **agreed with your HoD.**

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Research Incentivisation Policy

- In recognition of the importance of external funding, MU's Research Incentivisation Policy outlines the financial incentives available for academic staff who win research funding (see workshop pack). https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/research-policies

- All research overheads are allocated to, and managed by, the central Finance Office (Bursar's Office).

- However, a Research Incentivisation Fund (RIF) is maintained with a value of 75% of research overheads recouped each year (single payment in each financial year, and a year in retrospect of actual research grant drawdown).

- The RIF is redistributed annually between the PI's General Research Account (GRA, 13.5%), the Departmental Research Fund (40%), the Research Institute/Centre Fund (40%) and the Central Research Development Fund (6.5% managed by the office of the VPRI). Important to note these rates relate to the RIF and <u>not the total overheads.</u>

- Funding for PI time, is distributed between the PI's General Research Account (25% (except where overheads are low)) and the home department (75%) to provide replacement of the PI's teaching duties or other purposes as agreed with HoD.

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Research Incentivisation Policy

- Approx. €69K overheads in the demo budget discussed earlier, of which 75% allocated to Research Incentivisation Fund. The table below indicates how these funds are redistributed.

- Demo budget has total PI time costs of €21,012, of which 25% goes to PI's GRA, and 75% to Department.

Using the Demo Budget Discussed Earlier as an Example		
	€69,013 overheads	PI time
	75% allocated to RIF = €51,760	€21,012
PI GRA	(13.5% of 75% = 10.13% (effective rate)) €6,988	(25%) €5,253
Departmental Fund	(40% of 75% = 30%) €20,704	(75%) €15,579
Institute/Centre Fund	(40% of 75% = 30%) €20,704	n/a
Central Research Development	(6.5% of 75% = 4.88%) €3,364	n/a

- It is important to be able to predict how much funds will be available to you, so that you can plan your research and be more strategic (see workshop pack, RIF Calculator).

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Major Infrastructure

- While there are very few funding calls specifically for equipment/infrastructure, each particular call may have different equipment/infrastructure eligibility criteria.

- Often full costs of large equipment/infrastructure (e.g. >10K (call specific)) are not eligible because they may have value beyond the lifetime of the project. However, the depreciation of the equipment may be an eligible cost, for the time that it is required during the project.

Equipment Depreciation = (A/B) x C x D

Example; Project duration 36 months; total cost of required equipment is 100K; equipment is needed from month 12 onwards and will be in 50% usage.

€20K = (24/60) x 100 x (50/100)

A =	The period in months during which the durable equipment is used for the project after invoicing
B =	The depreciation period for the durable equipment: 36 months for computer equipment or 60 months for other equipment
C =	The actual cost of the durable equipment
D =	Percentage of usage of the durable equipment for the project

- Before approving depreciation costs, RDOF insist that you identify where the remaining equipment cost will come from. Therefore, you must strategically plan, negotiate and pool resources available to you, your colleagues and your Department/Institute.

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Conclusions

- Your budget must be able to realistically provide the finances required to deliver the outputs described in your proposal and you must be able to justify each cost.

- There are many budgetary considerations that are only applicable under particular circumstance so it is easy to overlook important aspects of your budget.

- You are not expected to be familiar with all these budgetary considerations, however, you are expected to contact the RDO early so that we can assist you with your budget and approve the final budget before proposal submission.

- **Take-home message; It is not in your interest to bypass the RDO in any situation, so…**

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Conclusions

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…contact the RDO early…we are here to help!

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PFP@MU

Section 5;
Grant Writing Skills

Research Development Office
Vinnie Fagan
June 2021

Evaluation Criteria

- It is very important to understand what you are being evaluated on. For each call, the evaluation criteria will be defined and you should write your application with these criteria in mind.

- It is highly advisable to study all call documents, including evaluator criteria/score sheet (if available) and to summarise what exactly the funder is looking for, so that you can continuously refer to this evaluation criteria summary as you write your application.

- Generally, proposals are evaluated based on the below three major criteria, with each weighted differently.

Excellence	Impact	Implementation
50%	30%	20%

- Typically, to differentiate proposals with equal scores, Excellence takes precedence over Impact, followed by Implementation.

- Specific calls may increase the weighting of other criteria (e.g. gender consideration, Public & Patient Involvement (PPI), value for money) so it is very important to read all call documents for each call.

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Excellence

Creative
- Proposal must be highly innovative
- Go beyond the state-of-the-art
- A good solution to a real problem

Comprehensive
- Must have thought of everything
- Get feedback from colleagues in different disciplines
- Take all feedback on board, particularly first impressions

Coherent
- Work packages are complementary
- Not separate independent mini projects

Excellence
Creative
Contemplated
Comprehensive
Comprehensible
Coherent

Contemplate
- Detail of your proposal must be well thought out & explained well
- Lack of detail is a common failure
- Discuss with colleagues, refine & modify

Comprehensible
- Easy to follow by non-expert
- Consistent terminology, connective language, concise, minimal jargon, limit acronyms.
- Can a colleague read your proposal for the 1st time & understand it in one take?

- Excellence refers to the research proposal itself; The idea! (Can also include to excellence of the candidate)

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The Consortium; Don't Compete, Collaborate!

- Very difficult to be a world-class expert in multiple disciplines, so to develop an excellent multidisciplinary research proposal, build a network of collaborators; if you don't, it is difficult to compete with those that do.

- Know what you need from the collaboration and what you bring to it. The best collaborations are formed through mutually beneficial partnerships.

    A good consortium;
    - (i) de-risks the project for the funder (greater expertise => higher chance of successful outcomes)
    - (ii) coordinates efforts & prevents duplication
    - (iii) has partners with distinct & complementary expertise working to solve the same problems, but from different perspectives
    - (iv) has partners from different sectors (greater chance of impact)
    - (v) has partners that are fully committed to the collaboration
    - (vi) has good geographical spread

- More partners mean more complex project management; must be thoroughly addressed in your proposal (WPs, roles & responsibilities clearly defined, each partner should have a specific & complementary role).

- A network of collaborators also allows you to apply to calls with consortium requirements.

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Impact

Current
- Is your research timely
- Address an issue that matters to society & the world now

Considered
- Think of impact from the start
- Impact Strategy: identify & target beneficiaries to enhance uptake
- On the right platform, a video clip can go viral

Captured
- How will you know the research has high/low impact
- Impact Strategy should identify metrics

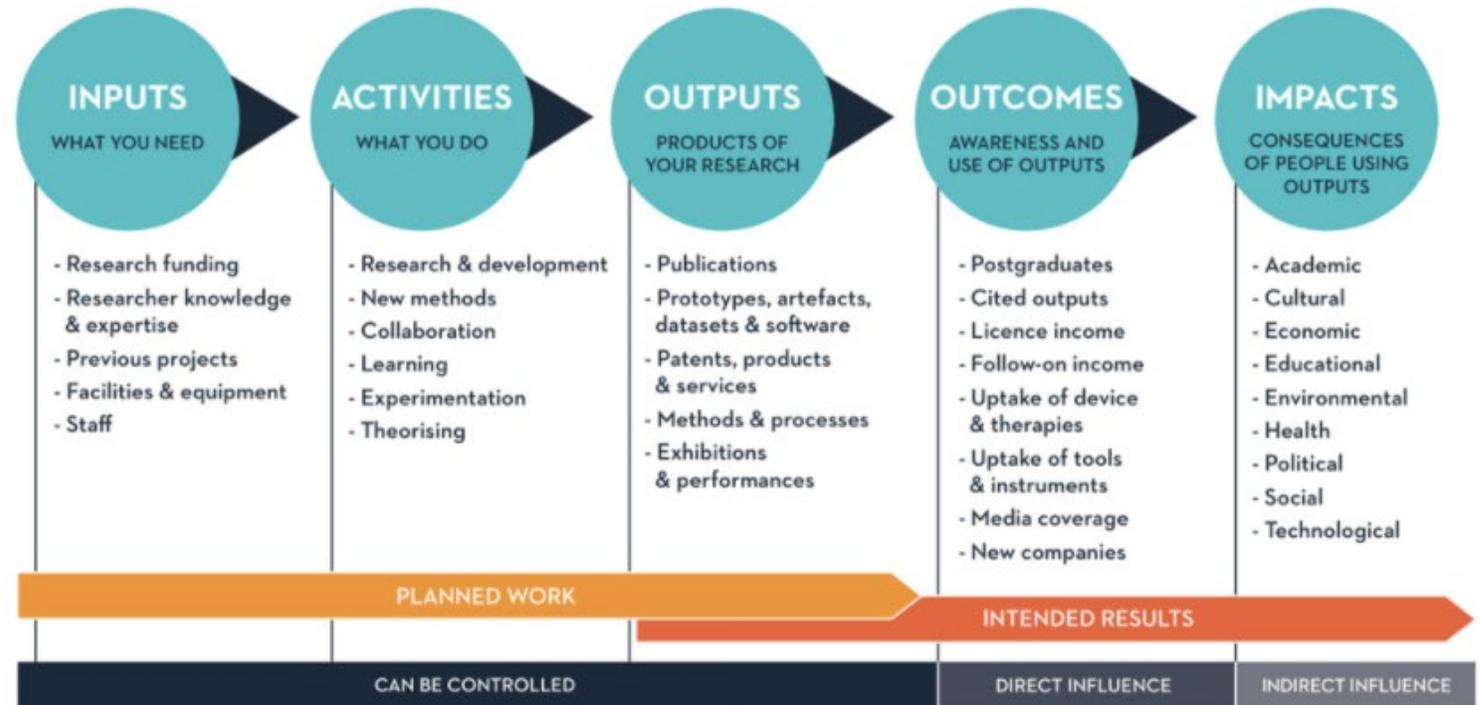**Impact**
Current
Considered
Captured
Contribution

Contribution
- To National Research Priority Areas?
- To the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- To the European Mission Areas?

- Impact refers the implications beyond academia; The economics and/or well-being of the wider society.

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Impact Toolkit

- The Higher Education Authority have funded an Impact Toolkit, which is hosted by UCD, but was contributed to by representatives from across Ireland's research community, including MU (see workshop pack). https://www.ucd.ie/impacttoolkit/

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
WHAT YOU NEED	WHAT YOU DO	PRODUCTS OF YOUR RESEARCH	AWARENESS AND USE OF OUTPUTS	CONSEQUENCES OF PEOPLE USING OUTPUTS
- Research funding - Researcher knowledge & expertise - Previous projects - Facilities & equipment - Staff	- Research & development - New methods - Collaboration - Learning - Experimentation - Theorising	- Publications - Prototypes, artefacts, datasets & software - Patents, products & services - Methods & processes - Exhibitions & performances	- Postgraduates - Cited outputs - Licence income - Follow-on income - Uptake of device & therapies - Uptake of tools & instruments - Media coverage - New companies	- Academic - Cultural - Economic - Educational - Environmental - Health - Political - Social - Technological

PLANNED WORK — INTENDED RESULTS

CAN BE CONTROLLED — DIRECT INFLUENCE — INDIRECT INFLUENCE

- SFI also provide good resources to assist applicants in preparing impact sections (see workshop pack). https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/

- We encouraged you to use these valuable resources.

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Implementation

Implementation
Credible
Categoric
Calculable

Credible
- Be realistic within the time, budget & your experience
- Get feedback from more experience colleagues

Categoric
- Be explicit. Reviewer can only give credit for what is written
- Define and assign exact tasks, and give timelines (Gantt)
- Specify milestones and deliverables

Calculable
- Measurable. How will you manage the project to ensure it is on track.
- Specify who is responsible for tracking the achievement of tasks etc, submission of reports to funder, monitoring expenditure

Get the Basics Right or Risk Sinking!

Complete
- Complete all sections

Concise
- Use less words to say more
- Less for reviewer to sift through

Captivating
- Use analogies, graphics, anything to make it interesting (e.g. boat analogy)
- Break text up & vary sentence length
- Narrative writing style. See video here
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0167983

Compliant
- You meet all eligibilities and other specific requirements (e.g. budget support letters)

Conscientious
- No errors or typos
- Accurate info
- Well formatted
- Headers/footers

Consistent
- Spelling (US/UK)
- Terminology
- Formatting

Convincing
- Back statements up with evidence (refer to a time you achieved something, ideally that resulting in an output)

Get the Basics Right or Risk Sinking!
Complete, Compliant, Conscientious, Consistent
Concise, Captivating, Convincing

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How to be Concise

- To be concise in your writing, review your text and remove any words that are not needed to convey the message. Restructure sentences so that you use the minimum amount of words.

- Try the below exercise. The workshop pack has a simple guide, downloaded from here; https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-concisely

Wordy	Concise
However, it must be remembered that Ruth's marriage could have positive effects on Naomi's situation.	
In high school, where I had the opportunity for three years of working with the student government, I realized how significantly a person's enthusiasm can be destroyed merely by the attitudes of his superiors.	
The economic situation of Anne Moody was also a crucial factor in the formation of her character.	
Frequently, a chapter in a book reveals to the reader the main point that the author desires to bring out during the course of the chapter.	

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Wordy	Concise
However, it must be remembered that Ruth's marriage could have positive effects on Naomi's situation.	Ruth's marriage, however, will also provide security for Naomi.
In high school, where I had the opportunity for three years of working with the student government, I realized how significantly a person's enthusiasm can be destroyed merely by the attitudes of his superiors.	In high school, during three years on the student council, I saw students' enthusiasm destroyed by insecure teachers and cynical administrators.
The economic situation of Anne Moody was also a crucial factor in the formation of her character.	Anne Moody's poverty also helped form her character.
Frequently, a chapter in a book reveals to the reader the main point that the author desires to bring out during the course of the chapter.	A chapter's title often reveals its thesis.

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Use STAR Method

- Your proposal may require Letters of Support (LoS), CVs, personal statements.

- In these sections it may be useful to use the STAR method to convince reviewers of your skills or achievements (see workshop pack).

- The STAR method can help you to prove your claims.

Example

I am experienced in the development and delivery of training programmes. At the RDO, I was tasked with the organisation of a grant writing workshop, to be delivered by an external training consultant. However, after obtaining quotations it became clear that external consultant fees were prohibitively expensive. Therefore, with support from my colleagues, I prepared a workshop that was specific to the needs of MU researchers. I delivered the workshop and it received very positive feedback from both colleagues and participants. The training is now delivered periodically on a permanent basis, as part of the University's Research Skills Development Programme.

S Situation
Set the scenario for your example.

T Task
Describe the specific challenge or task that relates to the question.

A Action
Talk about the actions that you took to accomplish the task.

R Result
Present the results that followed because of the chosen action.

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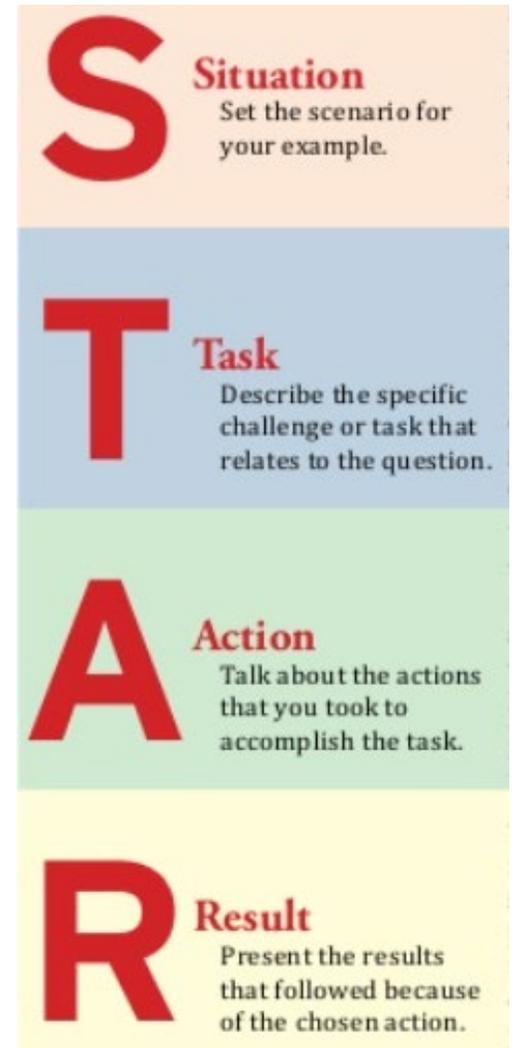
More Available from Research Professional

- Many more articles and guidance material relating to grant preparation are available from the Know How section of Research Professional.

- For example, see article with 8 basic but very useful tips on grant writing (also see workshop pack); https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/funding/insight/2021/2/Write-grants-like-a-boss.html

More Available from Elsevier

- The Elsevier Researcher Academy website has training webinars covering various aspects of scientific research, which you can access free of charge; https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/

- You may find the below presentation useful, which relates to the preparation of research funding proposals; https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/research-preparation/funding/successful-research-grant-applications-getting-right

Thank You

Thanks for your interest in this workshop.

Good luck with your applications!

☺

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