

The long and winding road: success beyond the research grant award

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Securing research funding is rarely a straightforward journey. I have just submitted my third National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funding application, hoping that the third time will be lucky. However, regardless of the outcome, the journey itself has already transformed my development as a researcher. While my first two funding applications were unsuccessful, each one provided invaluable learning opportunities, strengthened my research ideas and expanded my network of collaborators and mentors. I have outlined key support and what I have learned.

1

Funding

Writing a bid is time consuming. Over the course of three years I successfully applied for funding from the Research Capability Fund, BSA Small Research Grants, Research Support service, and NIHR Internship scheme. This was for my time, PPI costs some extras like conference attendance

Key learning: there are quite a few options available, take advantage of them all, application process have been quite straightforward.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes/starting-out/health-and-care-professional-internships>

3

Public and Patient Participation

Using secured funding I was able to offer vouchers to participants. I recruited local residents, people through Healthwatch, local hearing loss support groups, South Asian community members via introduction, people who attended Deep End GP practices, and worked with the Lawnmower's Theatre Company. This was invaluable in shaping my research plan and adding evidence of need to my applications.

Key learnings: use contacts, plan early, give vouchers and food!
<https://rdn.nihr.ac.uk/documents/working-research-abilities>

My research plan is to explore public, patient and audiologist views on how routine adult hearing care should be accessed, to improve accessibility and better meet the needs of diverse populations.



2

Academic collaborators

I shared my ideas with people I thought would be interested, who had done work in a similar area before and had experience in the types of research methods I wanted to use. I then met with them regularly to develop my ideas. They were key in providing feedback on draft plans and learning from their experiences.

Key learning: Make contact early, find people who think your ideas is as good as you do!

4

NIHR Research Support Service

The support received was excellent, from critically reviewing my plans, arranging meetings with methodological experts, and supporting PPI work by being able to access their patient panel to develop my lay summaries, arranging meetings with different groups and providing additional PPI funding.

Key learnings: use them!
<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/research-support-service>

5

Grant writing course

This was invaluable, and free! The most impactful learning was how to write for skim readers, as this is all the assessors would do with outline applications and I learnt how to write with an 'assert then justify' approach.

Key learning: you need to use a different style of writing for bids
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AJFyUjyYQ&list=PLbtSo4FMsn9g>

If you would like to know more about anything I've mentioned, or if I can support you on your research journey, please contact me: Helen.Martin11@nhs.net