

# Preparing a Successful Application

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## Introduction

- The Royal Society is the independent scientific academy of the UK and Commonwealth, dedicated to promoting excellence in science.
- £55m annual expenditure (£38m Government Grant), 140 staff.
- Authority derived from the Fellowship, range of activities and history
- Volume of Research Funding:
  - 15 grant making schemes (10 UK, 5 international)
  - 2400 awards in 06/07 of which more than 600 were for long term individual support

## Investing in future scientific leaders

- Long-term support for individual careers – scientists of the highest calibre or promise
  - University Research Fellowships (310)
  - Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships (55)
  - Research Professorships (17)
  - Wolfson Research Merit Awards (145)
  - Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships (7)
  - Industry Fellowships (31)

## Investing in Research and Innovation

- Research Grants and Infrastructure
  - Research Grants
  - Royal Society/Wolfson Laboratory Refurbishment Award
  
- Innovation Awards
  - Brian Mercer Innovation Awards
  - Brian Mercer Feasibility Award
  - Paul Instrument Fund

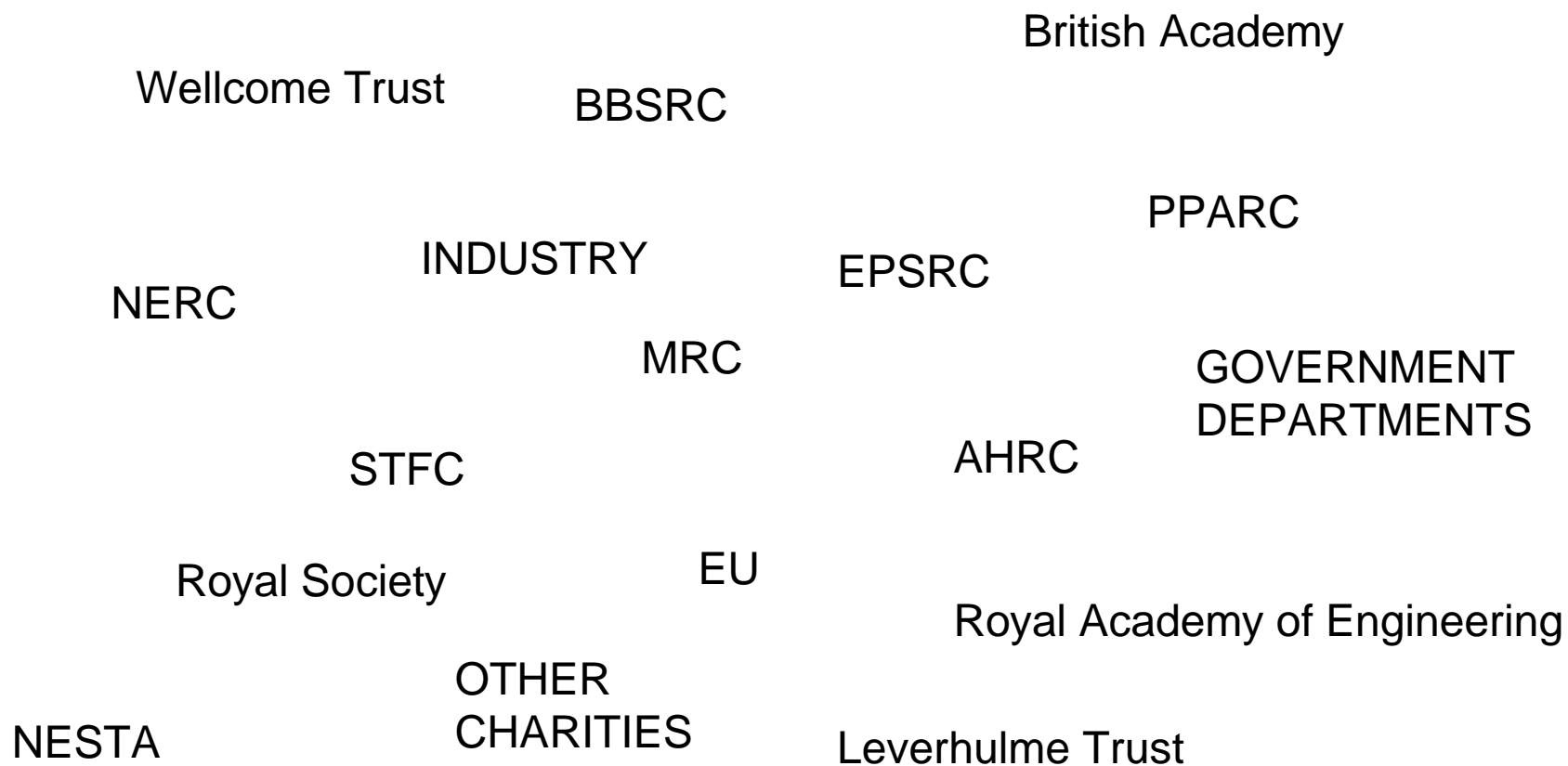
## Engaging with the best scientists worldwide

- International Travel Grants (from September 2008)
- Joint Projects
- Newton International Fellowships (launched on 4 June 2008)
- Special networking initiatives (China, India, Japan, etc)

## Strengthening the role of science in international development

- South Africa: Joint programme with NRF since 1996
- Ghana and Tanzania: Leverhulme - Royal Society Africa Awards to be launched in October 2008

# Funding Environment



## First Steps

- Consider your interests and your career stage
- Compare yourself to your peers
- Explore funding opportunities and analyse scheme criteria and priorities - these can change over time
- What are the chances of success?
- Don't be shy to contact funding bodies - where relevant identify scheme manager

## Applying to the Royal Society

- Relatively small funder, but:
  - High Status
  - High degree of flexibility
    - recognise 'non-traditional' career paths
    - part-time/full-time
    - reclaim 'lost time'
    - funds for family support
  - Value-added
    - professional development
    - mentoring
    - Royal Society 'family'

## Support for Fellows (cross-sectional collaboration)

- Engagement with the Royal Society
  - Networking events
  - Policy groups
  - Panels
- Professional development/mentoring
  - MP/MEP Pairing Scheme
  - Media and Communication Training
  - Innovation and the Business of Science
- Publications
- Strategic grant making based on policy
- Increasing accessibility

## Training for Research Fellows

- “Innovation and the Business of Science” course developed in partnership with Imperial College’s Tanaka Business School
  - modules on **science and the economy, the business of science, and entrepreneurship.**
  - equips Research Fellows with the skills needed to communicate and negotiate effectively, manage and lead international teams and understand the increasingly complex relationships between science and society.

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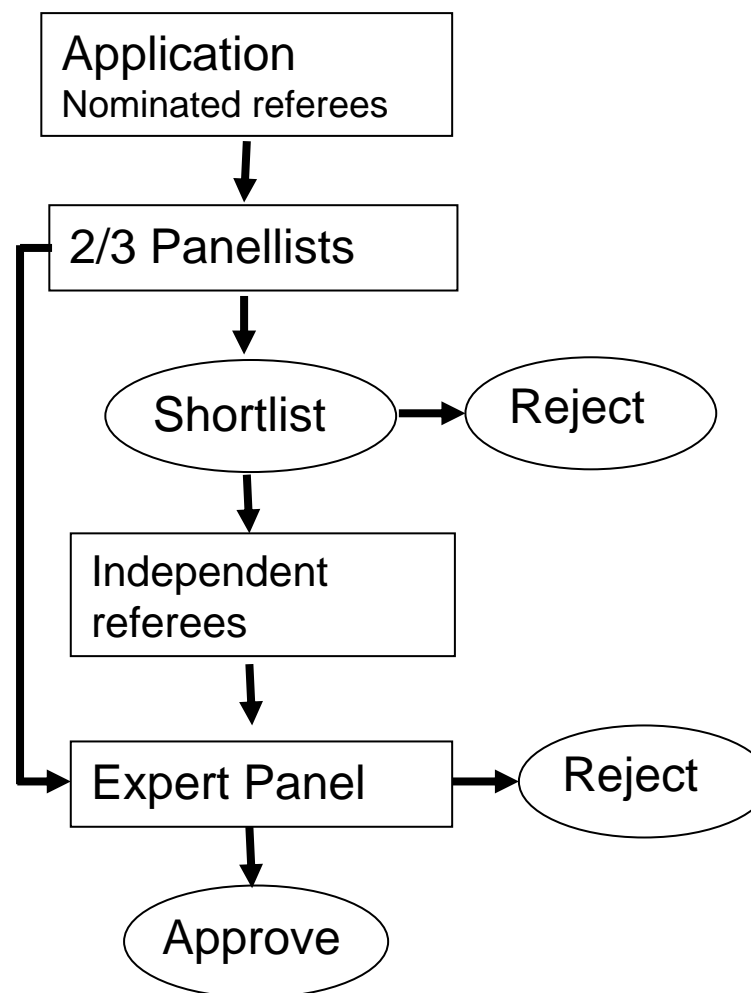
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## Application Process - fellowships and large grants

- Host organisation/department supporting statement
- Nominated references
- Assessment through expert panel
- Independent referees
- Panel meeting
- Typically 4-5 months (WRMA fast track)



## Application - short-listing

- Short-listing will be decided on
  - The strength of your proposed research
  - The support of your nominated referees and host department
- The short-listing does not involve independent refereeing, i.e. application will be read by **non experts**, in a related field to yours
- Therefore, spend some time on the **lay report**: make this accessible to an educated non-expert
- Convey your enthusiasm and talent to do research.

## Application - short-listing

- Nominated Referees
  - For Royal Society applications (other fellowship schemes differ) – choose the highest standing people who know you and will provide excellent supporting statements
  - **Ask them first**
- Host Department Head of Department Statement
  - Make sure this is supportive

## Get the simple things right

- Follow the instructions
- Meet deadlines
- Get prior agreement for exceptions
- Ensure you understand terms and conditions of funding – eligibility; what is supported, what is not; who is supported, who is not.
- If unsure, ask.

## Your application

- Consider what peer reviewers are asked to comment on and provide relevant evidence/examples
- Consider what makes you stand out
- Keep in mind that fellowships are mainly about you and not a project
- Be clear in own mind about the goals and hypotheses of the work
- State career breaks
- Take time to write the proposal
- Ask colleagues in the same, and in other fields, to comment on it

## What do Panel Members look for?

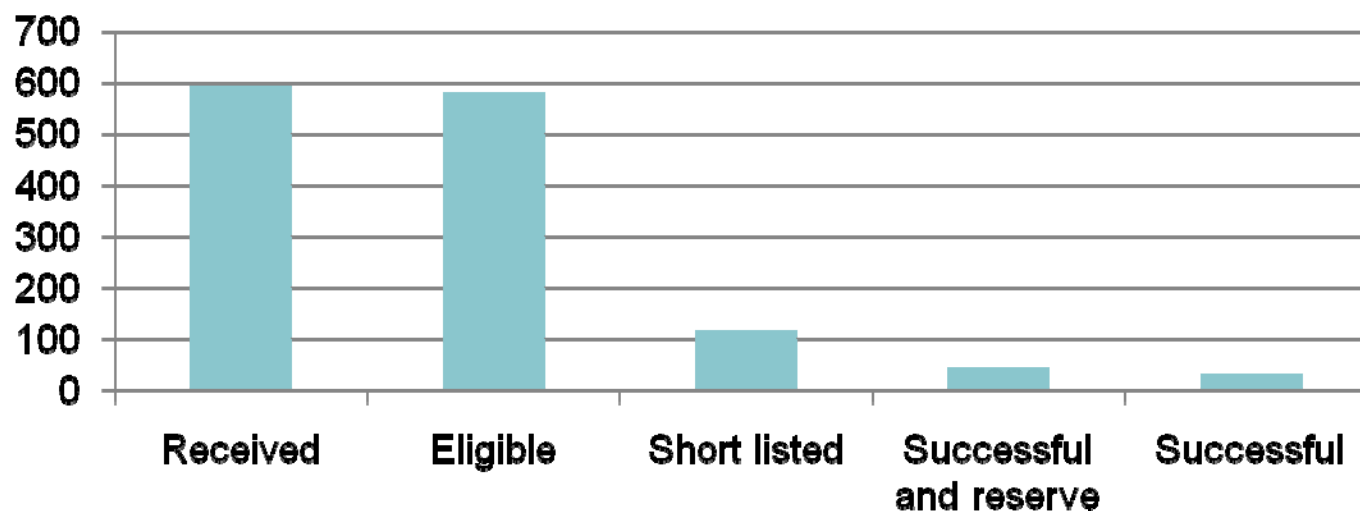
- Track record and potential – intellectual quality and merit of research - qualified? competence, credentials, and experience?
- Good publication list - has applicant taken a lead in publications?
- Independence? Mobility?
- Suitability of host organisation - facilities adequate and the environment supportive?
- Will the applicant be leading work as projects develop?
- Creativity, novelty and innovative thinking?

## What do Panel Members look for?

- Potential productivity/impact?
- Evidence that applicant will benefit from fellowship – where will it get the applicant?
- How does this applicant compare to the other 500?
- Is the research likely to produce new data and concepts or confirm existing hypotheses?
- Is the hypothesis valid and have you presented evidence supporting it?
- Are the aims logical?
- Are the procedures appropriate, adequate, and feasible for the research?

## University Research Fellowships

- 313 in post
- 500-600 applications
- 30-40 new awards
- £500,000 over 5 years



## Resubmitting an application

- If unsuccessful, **ask for feedback**
- Take feedback into account and **try again**
- Common fixable problems
  - Poor writing.
  - Insufficient information, experimental details, or preliminary data.
  - Significance not convincingly stated.
  - Approach not shown to be feasible, (but applicant is able to demonstrate feasibility).
  - Insufficient discussion of obstacles and alternative approaches.

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