LSTM
— CENTRE FOR —
CAPACITY RESEARCH

Centre for Capacity Research

Advancing the science of capacity strengthening for sustainable development

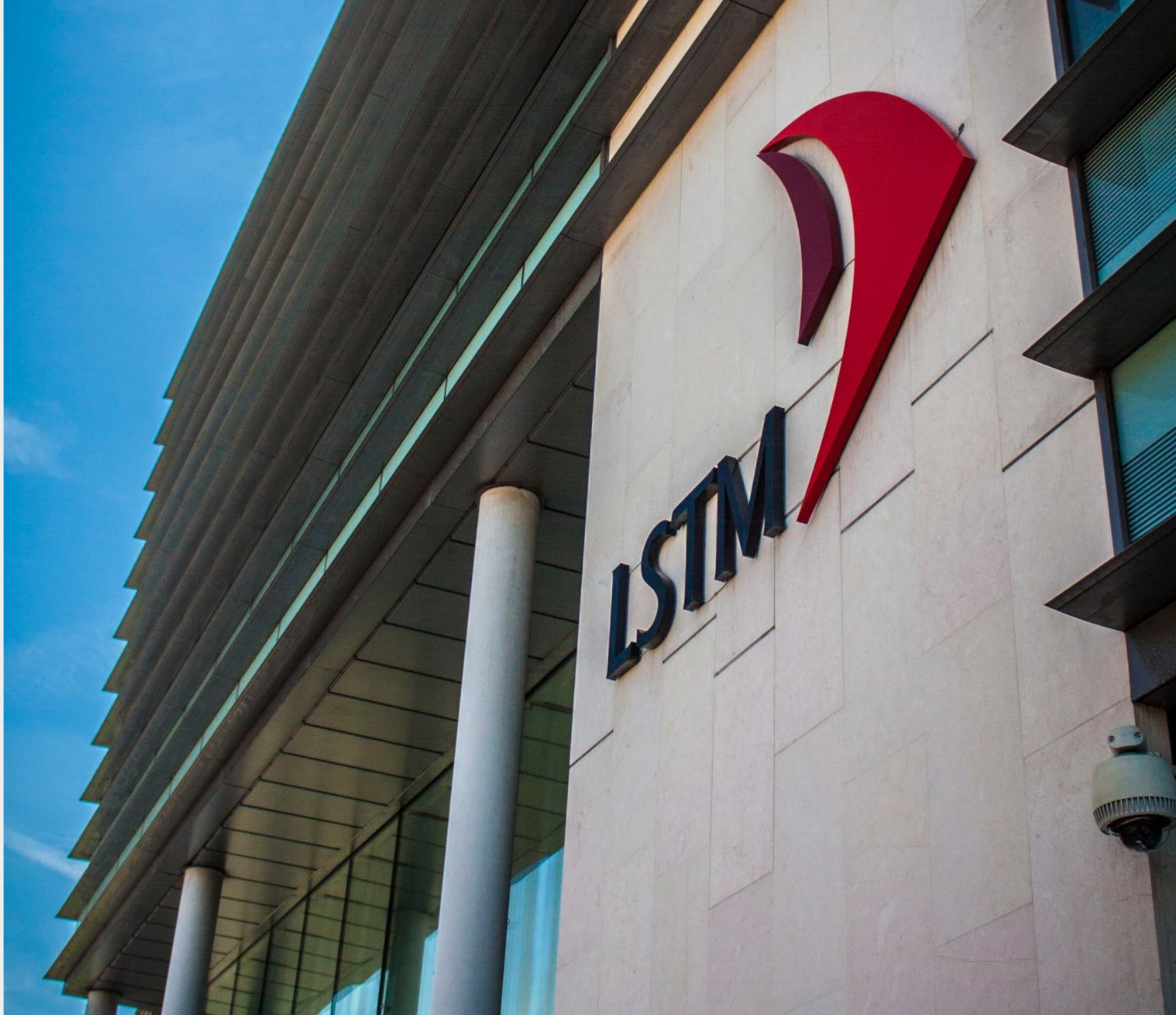
Teamwork to prepare and submit grant applications

Tuesday 15th June 2021

www.lstmed.ac.uk/ccr

@lstm_ccr

ccr@lstmed.ac.uk



Introduction

LSTM
CENTRE FOR CAPACITY RESEARCH

- An overview of the grant application process from our perspective as a research active team
- Aimed at early career researchers
- Many different types of research proposals and funding calls – lots of variables

Overview

LSTM
CENTRE FOR CAPACITY RESEARCH

- Sources of funding
- Eligibility
- Typical stages of a call
- Deciding what to go for
- Timeline planning
- Partnerships and consortia
- Funder guidelines
- Writing
- Budget preparation
- Teamwork – tasks, roles & capacity development

Funding: Sources of funding

- Frequently check **funder/funding council sites** e.g. UKRI, BOND, Wellcome Trust, NIHR, UUKi
- Follow funders and funding councils on **Twitter** to learn about new funding opportunities
- Sign up to **newsletters**

Funding: Eligibility

- Common requirements for funding calls:
  - Usual for UK funders to require a **UK host/lead institution**
  - Sometimes a requirement for a **partner/joint-lead applicant from a LMIC**
  - The **lead/named applicant** is responsible for the project but does not have to conduct the research activities themselves (i.e. they may supervise a team of researchers); all funding will likely be awarded to their institution for onward disbursement
  - Call may require partners have **affiliation** to academic institution

- Can your research plan meet all the **requirements of the proposal**?

Funding: Typical stages of a call

1. Funding call is advertised by funder

   For larger calls, webinars are hosted to present the funding call outline and for funders to answer any questions

2. Funding call “opens” – guidance notes and submission process is published and open to applications

3. Complete your application – different requirements for different funders

4. Funding call “closes” – there could be a long wait for a decision from the funder

5. Some applications are 2-stage i.e. you have to be successful at round 1 before being invited to submit a larger application or attend an interview at stage 2

6. Outcome received from funder, sometimes with feedback on your proposal

Deciding what to go for

Considerations – some are black & white, some more nuanced…

- Financial
  - Institutional – contribution to overheads?
  - Practical – enough funding to properly implement research?
- Eligibility – meet all requirements? Have existing partnerships ready, aligned & interested?
- Technical – does research question fit with requirements? Is it an area the funder is interested in? Evidence that research is required? Team's track record? Knowledge of funder?
- How competitive is the call? Often funders give an indication of number of proposals received/funded in previous rounds
- Practical – enough time and capacity?

Proposal Preparation: Time planning

Final funder deadline	Check the day, date, and time of day, including time zone Does anything need completing after the deadline? i.e. partner approvals
Uploading	Adding all documents to correct part of submission portal; may not let you submit if not complete
Final check	Proof reading, formatting, consistency, word counts, cross check
Partner contributions, edits & review	How many reviews? What date is the deadline for final proposal edits from partners/contributors? Need time to adjust the budget to reflect technical changes (or vice versa)?
Peer edits/review	Will a colleague(s) review your proposal – give them enough time to provide good quality feedback; how will their comments and edits be incorporated – if they suggest substantial changes, will you have time to discuss with proposal partners?
Additional sections	As well as technical proposal – may need data management plan, gender equity statement, value for money, justification of resources, dissemination plan, community engagement strategy
Budgeting	Should be done concurrently to technical proposal & regularly updated. Need input from all partners – often have to go through institutional approval that can take time
Administrative aspects	CVs, institutional letters of support (institutional signatures), publication lists, diagrams

Partnerships and consortia

Finding the right partners

- Existing networks
  - current/recent projects, contacts from presentation/conferences
  - peers' or departmental contacts
  - partners' partners
- Institutional partnerships
  - longstanding relationships
  - international visitors
  - alumni
  - institutional research database
- Networking grants

Proposal Preparation: Funder guidelines

- Pay close attention to the **funder remit and guidance notes** (these can be long!):
  - What sections need to be included in the **research plan**?
  - What aspects of the **application form** need completing?
  - What documents need to be **attached/uploaded** in addition to the main application form? e.g. gender equity statements, data management plans, dissemination plans
  - What are the **formatting rules** including font size, spacing, margin sizing, word or character counts?
  - What roles will your **collaborators** have? – i.e. “Joint-application”, “collaborator”, “partner” etc.

- Check the **process for submitting** your application to the funder – e.g. submission platform or email

- Familiarise yourself/team with the **submission website/application form**

- Some require partners to **register** individually or institutionally

- Who will give final sign off and who will complete the **final submission**?

Proposal Preparation: Writing

LSTM
CENTRE FOR CAPACITY RESEARCH

- Often easier to write the **proposal sections in word** for tracked changes and comments and then cut and paste into the application system
- Employ a **version control** system when sharing with partners etc
- Be **ambitious but realistic** in what you and your team can achieve
- Would a **diagram/figure** be more effective? Would a project timeline be useful? [these may need to be separate uploads or part of the main proposal]
- Stick closely to what is required in the call; use some of the funder's own wordings and language
- Technical contact at funder
- Partner & peer review

Proposal Preparation: Budget

LSTM
— CENTRE FOR —
CAPACITY RESEARCH

- Cost a **first draft** of the proposal as soon as possible. **Update** budget with technical changes (e.g. # workshops, #sites/staff) constantly

- To stay within budget, activities may need to be **increased or decreased**; this may need major re-writes of text and/or negotiations with partners

- **Be realistic** about cost/amount of research and support staff

- Consider **all costs** that will be incurred…

  Staff time, travel (flights, visas, hotels, subsistence, taxis), equipment, consumables, ethical approval, recruitment, publication costs, conferences, community engagement, training, workshops, office costs,

- Costs of travel, equipment, dissemination etc usually **flexible** to some extent, but try to be as **accurate as possible** (‘contingency’ rarely eligible)

Teamwork: Roles

- Decide who is **responsible** for which aspect of the proposal e.g. attachment documents, application form completion, proposal writing

  Roles to consider:
  - Writer
  - Editor/proof-reader/quality assurance/checking references
  - Submission coordinator
  - Budget oversight
  - Q&A for guidance specifics

- **Play to the team's skill set:** Who has an eye for detail, who can coordinate the team, who is best for budgets, who can contribute/review the text

- **Strong communication:** Be sure to update everyone about developments and progress, new versions of documents

Teamwork: Tasks

LSTM
CENTRE FOR
CAPACITY RESEARCH

- **Requesting information** – CVs, publication lists, institutional letters of support
- **Drafting documents** – will it save time to prepare document for collaborators e.g. letters of support (but don't make them all the same!), publication lists
- **Formatting and consistency** – takes a long time e.g. fonts, sizing, terminology, word cut
- **Drawing figures, diagrams, and timelines**
- Searching for **example costs** – e.g. average flight and hotel prices
- **Cross-checking** information and timeframes
- Prepare an application form **template** to save time
- Read the **full guidance**

Teamwork: Capacity development

- Spend time to **review feedback (if any) on previous applications** to help strengthen future proposals to find **strengths and weaknesses**
- Work with your team on elements of the proposal can be their **responsibility in the next submission** e.g. referencing, letters of support, CV formatting, budget, proofreading
- If a proposal is rejected, often the **content can be adapted** for other proposals
- Regular **searches** for funding and explore **new funders**

Tips & Best Practice

- ✓ Check that your research idea meets the **funder requirements** and you meet the **eligibility criteria**
- ✓ **Plan your time** wisely to meet the deadline
- ✓ Remember to **budget to reflect the work proposed** – changes to the proposal will impact the budget
- ✓ **Be clear on roles** and who is doing what for the application
- ✓ **Send a copy** of the final submitted application to partners – be cautious if sharing budgets
- ✓ Have a list of funders to **regularly check for new calls** and to mark up future opening dates for funding proposals
- ✓ Collate text and attachments and develop templates that can be **reused in future applications**

Resources

UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) www.ukri.org/opportunity/

NIHR www.nihr.ac.uk/researchers/apply-for-funding/

Wellcome Trust wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/how-to-write-wellcome-grant-application

Vitae Development www.vitae.ac.uk