

Grant funding strategy: Which grants to apply for?

With so many funding opportunities, choosing which grant to apply for can be hard to know. This is an especially important consideration for early-career scientists. Grants are time-consuming to write, but are important for getting the funding needed to complete your research.

Some advisors have a “shotgun” approach, meaning that they apply for all grants for which they are eligible. Each grant application takes time, however, and it can be hard to give each grant the attention needed to be successful. Multiple rejections can also be discouraging. Instead, in my own career, I thought carefully about the next logical grant that I felt I could get funded. I tried to build up to larger, more competitive grants.

I started with a \$5000 grant from a campus-wide committee. An average of 16 of these grants were awarded each year. My next application was to a larger internal grant competition for \$40,000 and about five such proposals were awarded annually. I then applied for a \$150,000 grant that was awarded by our university system (four separate institutions and campuses). Next, I led a research project grant on a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Center of Biomedical Excellence.

Meanwhile, I worked to develop my collaborative team. For me that included two physician-scientists, an orthotist, a statistician, and an implementation scientist. I served as a co-investigator on grants led by my collaborators, actively published our results, and gave presentations at national meetings in my own discipline as well as my colleagues’ discipline. Our team developed a strong reputation and became known as leaders in our area of research.

After being productive during these projects, I was ready to submit for an independent investigator award, an NIH R01. Fortunately for me, my grant was funded on the first submission, and we are nearing the end of my first large project as the PI.

For junior faculty, I often advise a similar strategy. Start with small grants and projects that can demonstrate your ability to complete the work, lead to publications, and provide preliminary data for the next proposal. Find strong collaborators who strengthen your team and are committed to advancing your collective line of research. All of this shows reviewers that you have a track record of productivity, you have built a strong team that

works well together, and you are ready to grow and lead at the next project level.

Additional Resources

[Diversity Your Funding Portfolio \(https://edgeforscholars.org/diversify-your-funding-portfolio/\)](https://edgeforscholars.org/diversify-your-funding-portfolio/)

[Growing Opportunities: Research Funding Bulletin Board \(https://edgeforscholars.org/funding-opportunities-bulletin-board/\)](https://edgeforscholars.org/funding-opportunities-bulletin-board/)

[Discover What's Getting Funded With NIH Matchmaker \(https://edgeforscholars.org/category/grants-and-funding/page/5/\)](https://edgeforscholars.org/category/grants-and-funding/page/5/)

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ABOUT ME

Scientist, administrator, wife, mother to five, and an encourager to fellow imperfect colleagues.

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