

How to proceed after getting a grant rejected?

The success rates of various funding calls are currently between 4-22%. At these success rates, there is a very strong element of luck and you should not take it personally and keep in mind that every academic will have more rejections than successes in their career. This is also why receiving a “No” from a funder should not be the end for your proposal/idea, and we strongly advise to either re-apply or apply to different funding bodies with unsuccessful grants. To do so it is important that you evaluate why your proposal was rejected.

Good practice on what to do when a grant has been unsuccessful.

- You will feel angry, sad, and worried after an unsuccessful grant. You may also feel wronged and inclined to email the funding body expressing your disappointment (and/or anger). Take some time to let those feelings settle and **avoid emailing the funding bodies**, the decision you have been informed of is irreversible.
- Put things into perspective, even excellent proposals can be rejected sometimes, remember it can be because there was simply not enough funding for all proposals above the threshold.
- You may have received **feedback** and this feedback can be useful if read carefully. For example, UKRI panel members are advised to give detailed, clear, and constructive feedback to the applicants. At the same time, panel members are aware that the feedback must comply with the legal requirements of UKRI’s decision-making process. This might result in cryptic and seemingly useless feedback, but often there is valuable information in it if you know how to “decode” the feedback.
- Take this as an opportunity to look at your proposal critically and reassess why it was rejected, how can you make it stronger and which parts of the application you need to focus on.

First, check your ranking if it is available:

- (a) if you ranked within the top 30%, you were likely simply unlucky. This can happen even if you are within the top 50%.
- (b) If you are ranked below 50% you are advised to refer to the SBS ‘Internal Support with Funding’ webpages and study the material carefully. You should be considering whether you had the right team in place, did you allocate sufficient time to the proposal, did you go over and utilise all of the advice and support available. Speak to colleagues and/or the Research Director and members of the Research Committee if needed. The research development team in the school and other colleagues can be very valuable. With the pre-award research support and peer review processes we have in place we hope that no grants submitted are ranked below 50%.

If you are ranked in the top 50% you might consider resubmitting to the same funding body. For example, see if most if not all of the negative feedback focused on one or two of the aims in your proposal. If so, there is scope for resubmitting the grant with those aims changed. To do so you need to convince the funding body (not the reviewers and the panel) in a letter that this proposal has been sufficiently changed, to now be considered different. This is usually not hard and involves communication with the funding body prior to submission. Seek advice from any colleagues that are involved with the funding body you have applied for to get more specific advice. It is very likely that many of your colleagues across SBS will have resubmitted an application at some point in their career and can offer valuable advice on how to pitch this to funders.

If you are ranked in the top 50% but the feedback is not focused on specific parts of the proposal, see if the feedback and reviewers’ comments tell you anything about the suitability of your proposal for the funding body. For example, MRC and BBSRC (in that order) are usually very risk-averse so

if your proposal was deemed risky you may consider applying to Leverhulme, as it is unlikely they will fund it the second time unless you de-risk your original proposal. Similarly, interdisciplinary projects might struggle with some funding bodies (e.g. you will find that no single reviewer understood the entire grant and focused only on specific parts that on their own do not represent your whole idea). While the expectation is that UKRI, for example, will be improving the application process for those grants, seek advice from colleagues on funding panels and Research Committee members before repurposing the project.

Couple of other things to consider

- Did you develop all sections equally well outside of the main case for support? For example, parts like data management plan for UKRI. These can be very important with such low success rates, and with advice available should not be the reason grants are scored lower than the quality of the case for support.

Specific council Resubmission rules and links

BBSRC

BBSRC does not accept proposals that have already been peer reviewed or are currently undergoing peer review by another research council or funding body. BBSRC expects previously unfunded proposals to be substantially updated and revised before being submitted for funding again. For a proposal to be considered significantly different, and therefore not a resubmission, BBSRC would expect more than 50% of the stated objectives or work packages to be identified as 'new', that is not listed in proposals previously submitted to BBSRC by the applicants. Any decision regarding whether a proposal is deemed to be significantly different will be made by BBSRC and will be considered as final.

EPSRC

EPSRC does not accept uninvited resubmissions of proposals. EPSRC expects previously unfunded proposals to be substantially changed before being submitted for funding again. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that their application is not a re-submission, to the satisfaction of EPSRC. If you amend a past proposal to only account for panel and reviewer comments or other minor changes, the application will be rejected as a resubmission.

NERC (page 40-41 of the grants and fellowships handbook)

- For the Pushing the Frontiers grant scheme and the International Ocean Discovery Programme (IODP), unsuccessful applications can be resubmitted after a period of at least **nine months** from the closing date of the original submission
- Applications which duplicate 40% or more of the stated Objectives and/or work packages of an unsuccessful submission involving the same PI or Co-I(s) will not be accepted if submitted within nine months of the closing date for the funding round to which the original application was submitted.
- For an application to be considered significantly different (and therefore not a direct resubmission) NERC would expect more than 60% of the stated Objectives and/or work packages to be identified as 'new' i.e. not listed in applications previously submitted to NERC by the applicants.
- Applications for the same research project cannot be submitted to more than one Research Council. Unless specifically invited, or if prior approval from the NERC Office has been obtained.
- An application that is unsuccessful in a Strategic Research opportunity (including the Highlight Topic opportunity), but which is within the NERC remit, can be resubmitted into a Discovery Science opportunity (or relevant Strategic Research opportunity). Those that are rejected on the basis of Strategic Research programme remit can be resubmitted at any time.

MRC

Applications previously declined by the MRC, another research council or other funding body, will not be considered by the MRC within 12 months (from the original submission date), unless invited in writing to resubmit by the MRC.

This time restriction does not apply to outline applications except for our Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme (DPFS).

Wellcome

In general for most of the schemes, If you are unsuccessful with an application to this scheme, you can submit one more application for the same project. Significant changes are needed for the second application. You do not need to contact them first. Please always check with the specific scheme you want to apply to check if there are specific resubmission rules.

ESRC

ESRC does not allow the resubmission of any previously unsuccessful proposals (including proposals previously submitted to another Research Council), unless they have been specifically invited to do so. For further information please refer to the UKRI [resubmission policy](#).

EU funding Horizon Europe

- **Collaborative projects:** Normally no restrictions apply, these can be resubmitted as long as they fit the scope of the next call you are applying for.
- **MSCA schemes:** usually if you reach a threshold of 70% and above you can resubmit.
- **ERC** The general rule is that a score C in the first stage results in a restriction for two consecutive deadlines and a score B results in a restriction of one consecutive deadline. If you go to the interview and are not successful in securing funding, NO restrictions apply.