Getting that Grant!

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My personal experience with applying for funding in UK

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Year/Location	Scheme	Outcome
2013	EPSRC First Grant	Success!
2016	ERC Starting Grant	Unsuccessful
2016	Leverhulme Fellowship	Unsuccessful
2017	ERC Consolidator	Unsuccessful
2018	EPSRC Standard (tried twice!)	Unsuccessful
2019	Leverhulme Grant	Success!
2020	ERC Consolidator	Unsuccessful
2020	EPSRC Standard	Success!
2020	MSCA and Newton Fellowships	Unsuccessful
2021	EPSRC Small grant	Success!

The most important advice

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- Success rates are low, and success depends on many factors - keep trying.
- With each failure, use the reviewer comments to make your next application even better.

Some other suggestions

- Write the summary/introduction (and much of the application) so that the *importance* and *excitement* is successfully conveyed to a **non-specialist**.
- Get **three** people to read your proposal - an expert in your area, someone from a different area of mathematics, and a *non-mathematician* (the last is especially important for Leverhulme).
- Key questions you should affirmatively answer: *Does it fill a gap*? *Are you uniquely suited to bring this project to fruition?*
- *Begin with a bold/big claim*. Even if you are not going to solve a million dollar problem or cure cancer, connect your proposal to such big problems.
- Highlight challenging aspects of your methodology and show your expertise to meet these challenges. Discuss any contentious choices.

Applications to the Leverhulme Trust

Various Leverhulme Schemes

- **Research Project Grants** (up to £500K, very flexible)
- Research Fellowships (up to £60K; teaching replacement, research expenses)
- Early Career Fellowships (for those without permanent positions; part of salary for 3 years)
- Several others...

Leverhulme Research Project Grants

- Overall success rate about 18%.
- A **two-stage** process: approximately 1,000 Outline Applications received annually; all taken to Stage 1 peer review (approximately 12 weeks). (Leverhulme Advisory Panel members play key role)
- Positive recommendation (approximately 40- 50%) leads to invitation to submit a Detailed Application (3 deadlines per year)
- Detailed Applications submitted to Stage 2 peer review (you select 2 reviewers + Trust selects some more) and decision by Trust Board (success rate approximately 40%)

Some other key differences between Leverhulme and EPSRC grants

- You get to pick 2 reviewers at Stage 2, who are **both** asked. Choose your reviewers carefully!
- The Trust does **not** pay for overheads. (So a £300K Leverhulme Grant gives you similar returns as a £700K EPSRC grant).
- Leverhulme Grants do **not** pay PI salary.
- You **can** hire someone for replacement teaching.
- You **can** ask to recruit a PhD student.
- Ultimate decision made by Trust board (Comprises ten former members of Unilever senior management) and based on peer-review reports and LAP advice.

Particular weight given to

- The **originality** of the proposed work.
- The **removal of barriers** between traditional disciplines.
- Intellectual curiosity and **willingness to take appropriate risks.**
- The extent to which the research is the reflection of one **individual's vision** or aspiration.
- **Fresh directions** and departures from existing approaches
- Your answer to the question: **Why Leverhulme**?

The "Why Leverhulme" question

- Extremely important, especially at Stage 1.
- Avoid generic statements or jargon.
- Tie it in with what the Trust values (originality, breaking down barriers between disciplines, fresh directions, reflection of long-term dream/vision, high-risk/high-reward).

Good sentences to put in this answer

(Taken from Leverhulme Presentation by Professor David Lowe, longtime LAP member)

- "Therefore,the research programme will transcend traditional boundaries among physics, chemistry, materials science and engineering."
- " I am curious and eager to find out whether the proposed idea is feasible. This work represents the applicants long-term research ambition in developing next-generation microfluidic technology. The findings will re-shape the future research and technological development in the field."
- "The concept of emerging equilibrium-like states within non-equilibrium systems is radically new; it challenges the existing view in statistical physics that typically separates the two types of systems."

Good luck!