

Grants and Funding

How can I find PER funding?

There are lots of sources of funding for PER activities, probably more than you expect. The University has an [internal seed-corn](#) fund of up to £2,000, and there are a range of external PER-specific funds from societies, charities and funding bodies. Most funders also now expect public engagement to be included within research grants. For UK Research Council applications engagement and impact are particularly important and exist as a separate section of the application, called *Pathways to Impact*. The best way to find out about funding schemes is through the [PER Team website](#) or [newsletter](#).

Can I get help with my applications?

The PER Team offer support to anyone applying for funding for engagement. From securing £20 for a prop to writing £200,000 of activities into 'grand challenge' style bids. We can help you develop your ideas and check the practicalities, read and edit drafts and provide relevant contextual information (e.g. PER training available for DTP bids). [Email us](#) or come to a [monthly drop-in](#) to access support.

Where do I start?

It's tempting to start by thinking what kind of activity you'd like to do, but in our experience, that rarely works well. Instead you should start by defining the change you want to make or the challenge you are addressing. What do you want people to know or do differently as a result of engaging with your research and what is the expected benefit of them doing that? Next you need to think about who your engagement is for. Is there a particular demographic, age or at risk group that would benefit the most or to whom the underpinning research is particularly relevant? We would never recommend aiming your activities at 'the general public' as without a good idea of who would be interested, you may struggle to get uptake. Finally think about how. There are thousands of possible methods and the best one you will depend on the why and the who, what is available to you and what you can realistically commit to.

PURPOSE

Why do you want to engage?
What do you want people to know or do?

PEOPLE

Who are the audience(s)?
Stakeholders, children, at risk groups?

PROCESS

Which types of activity? How and when? How will you know it's worked?



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How do I know if my idea is 'high quality'?

It's not just about deciding what to do and why. Public engagement is defined as being a two-way process so you need to demonstrate that you are also learning something from the public. You should also consider how collaborative or participatory your engagement could be, as we know that people understand more and are more likely to do something if they have been involved. It's even better if you can include the public from the start, when developing research ideas and before devising an engagement plan, to be sure it meets their needs. Finally, you need to think about evaluation. How will you test whether your activity meets your aims and whether your participants have taken anything from the experience? Just counting heads or tickets is not enough, but evaluation also doesn't need to be hard. It could be as simple as a voting task or collecting comment cards.

What existing schemes can I plug into?

Just like methods, there are almost endless numbers of schemes you could take part in and write into your grant. Examples include: 1) [Research at the Heart of Brum](#), 2) [Arts & Science Festival](#) 3) [Pint of Science](#), 4) [BrightClub](#), 5) [CoCoMad Festival](#), 6) [Café Scientifique](#), 7) [Meet the Expert](#), 8) [Being Human](#), 9) [ESRC Festival of Social Science](#), 10) [Book to the Future](#). But think broadly too, festivals (music, arts, literature, science, Europe, LGBTQ+, horror, poetry, zines, Birmingham has them all) museums, galleries, public parks and spaces, community centres, zoos, theme parks, and shopping centres are all great places for public engagement and might have ready-made opportunities.

How do I cost for it?

Funders will pay for quality and some schemes will award hundreds of thousands of pounds for public engagement so be realistic. Think about: – Staff time, from development to delivery, – Comms and marketing, – Printing costs, – Transport and travel, – Refreshments, – Take-aways e.g. stickers, branded materials, – Venue hire, – Artist, designer or specialist time, – Support for those with additional needs
How it might translate: £ – a prop or some craft items, ££ - a small craft demo with the made item to take away, £££ - a set of reusable demos OR some printed materials OR a small piece of equipment OR catering for 50 people, ££££ - a video or animation OR activities with branding, t-shirts and branded items to take away OR an event with 100 attendees, £££££ - a programme of reusable activities and all web, design, materials

How long will it take to write?

We know that engagement plans are being held to more and more scrutiny. Funders often say that a well thought-out engagement / impact plan can even be the deciding factor between two research proposals of similar merit and quality. Of course the engagement shouldn't be priority over the research, but you do need to start planning and ask for help as early as you can and at least a few weeks before the deadline. So please [get in touch](#), but don't leave it to the last minute. The earlier you start, the better it will be.



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