Research Services

Research, Business and Employability Services

Finding partners for your Research Project

Working with partners on a project can bring great benefits to a piece of work. It can enable you to exchange expertise, stimulate new ideas and bring greater impact to your project.

If you are new to externally funded research projects, a good way to get your first funding is to find organisations looking for partners to work with.

Many funding schemes require projects to collaborate. Partners can be from national, European, and international backgrounds. Finding the right partners can make a real difference to project success.

A good partner engages in the project, and contributes the right expertise to the consortium. They need to be reliable, since you may be working with them for some time, and committed to the project.

It's important to take time to get to know potential partners and work out if they are right for you.

Ways to find Partners

Start with who you already know
Talk to colleges at the University and people in your research area to see what they are doing and find out if there are links to your research which would make collaboration suitable.

Network at Conferences Approach people who have delivered papers linking to your work and share your interests. It can be hard to remember who you met after attending a conference, so set aside time after you return from a conference to follow up leads by sending a quick synopsis of your shared research interests and express an interest in partnering on their next project. This may seem a tall order when the inbox is full after a trip way, but if it makes a lasting contact out of a conference, then it makes the whole trip worth it.

Get in touch with your peers
Published research papers always tell you the names of the academics who wrote them. If you want to contact a peer about collaborating on a project, a search on the internet often brings up the relevant contact details. There are some tips overleaf on the best way to introduce yourself to fellow researchers.

Search Successful projects Most funding websites now show lists of projects they have funded along with contact details of who led them. Using these databases is a great way to identify people who have already been successful in getting funding. Many consortiums start developing additional projects once they have been successful with one. It is good for an existing consortium to get in fresh faces. By contacting

organisations and demonstrating why they need you on board, you make it easy for them to develop their next partnership. They will see you as keen, proactive partner.

The Research Council has a gateway to research. You can carry out a keyword search to find funded research in the UK gtr.rcuk.ac.uk.

Erasmus+ publishes an annual list of funded projects with project titles and names of co-ordinators. Many Erasmus+ projects set up websites, searching using the project title can take you to the websites and provide

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contact details for the project lead and participants.

www.erasmusplus.org.uk/funding-results

Cordis Europe has a projects and results page where you can search successful Horizon 2020 projects, FP7, FP6 and more. cordis.europa.eu/projects

Online Networking Find specialist social networking sites in your research area. Linked In, Facebook and Twitter have groups which could provide links to people with the same research interests. Sharing your existing research and commenting on other people's work is a great way to start developing relationships.

If you can't find groups directly relating to your research, try searching via funds, or use platforms designed to find partners.

Linked In, has a number of European Fund focused groups, they are used to search for partners, responding to them can be a direct way to participate in projects.

Innovate UK has a number of Knowledge Transfer Networks. They are places to share information and work together. They are broken down into subject areas.

ERRIN facilitates knowledge exchange, joint action and project partnerships in EU regions (Staffordshire university has access to this network via the Greater Birmingham West Midlands Brussels Office).

Existing institutional links We already work with partners round the world. Linking with existing partners means you can rely on pre-existing relationships to add commitment to the partnership. Research Services can use internal databases to find partners for your project. Email: researchservices@staffs.ac.uk

Attend partner search events Many agencies run events to help organisations find partners for specific funds. Information days about a particular project are ideal opportunities to network and find new partners.

Things to consider

Do you have a staff profile on the University website?

Is it up to date? If you get in touch with someone and they search for you online, what will they find? Staffs.ac.uk is a high profile website, this is the best place to start making sure you have a great web presence. Linked In is also a good place to develop another profile.

Before contacting an unknown partner run an online background check on them. What kind of organisation are they? Do they look reliable? How long have they existed? Are they experienced at running projects?

If you contact someone from a partner search, ask them questions. Who is leading the project? What experience do they have? You are committing time to a research project so check the teams dedication and knowledge.

If you contact someone about getting involved with their work and they ask you to lead on a project, be cautious. Leading is a big responsibility and not advisable if you have not worked on a research project in the past. You have to question why they would not want to lead on their own work.

Introducing yourself to a researcher you've never met

It may seem like cold calling, but if you have done your research well, you will have similar interests to the person you are contacting. Things to include :

• Where you found the person, and what you admire about their work.

• Details of the call you hope to work with them on.

• How your work links in with what they are doing.

• That you would be interested in working with them if they are developing any other bids

• What is your unique selling point? Why do they need you as a partner?

Keep the message short. They do not want a list of all your publications. If they are interested, they will look online, so make sure your staff profile is up to date.