



TBAT

| Innovation



Guide to a successful grant application

Introduction

I am lucky enough to be the Managing Director at TBAT Innovation Ltd. I began my career in aerospace with Rolls Royce after graduating with a Masters in Mechanical Engineering and later moved into the rail sector working for Bombardier Transportation. After I completed my MBA I began looking into consultancy which led me to TBAT back in 2007.

TBAT is the epitome of what I love doing, working with highly innovative clients over a range of sectors who are creating something game-changing.

TBAT is a leading consultancy with over 16 years' experience working with technology/research and development organisations all over the UK; helping them to innovate. We believe that our funding services are crucial to helping companies enable their R&D projects.

Some Innovate UK funding competitions have a success rate of 11%. With that in mind, we believe that knowledge is power, so we have written this document as a how-to guide when it comes to writing a high-scoring Innovate UK application. We have addressed each question individually with a few top tips along the way!



Matt Symonds
Managing Director

Question 1: Need or Challenge

This question is asking you to consider and explain the business need, citizen challenge, technological challenge or market opportunity that is the main motivation of the project. It may seem obvious, but it is crucial that this part of your application clearly outlines that your project and the reason behind it falls into the competition scope. If this part of the application doesn't make it crystal clear to the assessors that the project is aligned to the scope, they will reject the application - regardless of how strong the rest of the application is. Don't leave anything to guesswork for the assessors.

You must explain the nearest comparative state-of-the-art and its limitations, along with any work you have already performed to respond to the need and the wider economic, social, environmental, cultural and/or political challenges which are influential in creating the opportunity.

Top Tip



Use clear language and remember that the assessors may not be experts in your sector, so avoid using acronyms and highly technical language where possible.

Question 2: Approach & Innovation

To answer this question efficiently, you must first have a clear idea of your project and what you will be doing. You need to address how you will respond to the challenge that you identified in Q1 and explain the outputs you expect from the project and how these will target the identified need.

The assessors want to know whether the project is technical – focusing on the application of existing technologies in new areas, or commercial – addressing a need in a novel way. Your innovation needs to deliver a significant step-change and without making unsubstantiated claims, your idea needs to come across as genuinely novel.

Your answer needs to show that you have freedom to operate in your sector – you can do this by providing evidence of patent searches, literature surveys and competitor analyses. A key point that assessors will be looking for, especially in the ‘open’ competitions, is if the innovation can be enabling and underpinning i.e. does it have the potential to drive improvements in multiple applications across a wide scope?

Top Tip

Make sure your answer to this question reflects your planned work and the key risks that will be mentioned in the later questions.



Question 3: Team & Resources

You need to include a bio of each person within the project team, their role, skills and experience that are relevant to the approach you are taking. You also need to detail the resources, equipment and facilities you need for the project, how you will access them and any subcontractors you need to work with to make the project successful.

If you have project partners, you need to include details on the current relationships and how these will change as a result of the project. The assessors need to know that the consortium is likely to work well and are well placed to carry out the project and exploit the results.

Top Tip

The assessors are looking to ensure that the partners and people involved in the project have all of the required skills and resource to deliver the project.



Question 4: Market Awareness

To answer this question, you need to show you understand the potential market for your project. You need to describe the markets you will be targeting in depth, with details such as the size of target markets specifically for your project outcomes (preferably backed up with references where available), and the dynamics of the market e.g. is it growing? How fast and what trends affect it?

Relevant secondary markets should also be identified, but in brief, compared to the identified target market.

You need to identify the current UK position in targeting these markets and any barriers to entry that exist.

If your project is highly innovative and the market is new or not currently explored, describe the possible routes, what the market size might be and how your project will try to explore the market potential.

Top Tip



Don't claim too much! The assessors are aware of what is possible, and they want to see that investing public money in this project is going to be value for money.

Question 5: Outcomes & Route to Market

Think of this question as explaining your exploitation plan. The assessor needs to see how you are going to grow your business and increase productivity long-term as a result of the project.

The assessor wants to know multiple things:

- Who are your target customers?
- Does the project fulfil a genuine need?
- What is your current position in the market you are targeting?
- What is the proposed route to market?
- How will you increase profit, productivity and growth?
- How are you going to protect IP and exploit the results?

This answer needs to appear credible to the assessor. Your projections for growth and market share must be robust and on a realistic timescale – they are trying to establish whether the project is likely to succeed.

Be clear about the further steps needed to achieve commercialisation, including the immediate opportunities after completing the project successfully.

Top Tip

Make sure you check the Guidance for Applicants for specific criteria about who should benefit from the project.



Question 6: Wider Impacts

In this question you are addressing the benefits for the project partners, and further impacts outside of the project.

Consider the economic, social, environmental and regional impacts, both negative and positive, with evidence. Explain whether the project will lead to creation of jobs, changes in regulation, health and safety, changes in quality of life for those that will use the end result?

As it is public money you are applying for, it is important for you to demonstrate that the project not only helps the organisations conducting it, but also provides sufficient benefits in all categories.

Top Tip

The assessor needs to see that you have measured the potential negative impacts. They should be described and fully mitigated where appropriate. If you don't, it will negatively impact your scoring.



Question 7: Project Management

This is your opportunity to explain each step of your project plan. The plan itself is best summarised in a Gantt chart. You should break the project down in to an appropriate level of detail – making clear for each main work package:

- The research category
- Lead partner assigned
- Resource allocation
- Total cost
- Any tools that will be used for project management
- Any links or dependencies between work packages and milestones

The assessors need to see a clear management reporting line, especially with any use of sub-contractors or partners. They want to understand the technical approach at each step but avoid using jargon and acronyms to make sure it is legible.

Top Tip

Make use of the formatting options available to present your plan clearly.



Question 8: Risks

Many applicants make the mistake of thinking that risk is a bad thing; and to be successful in the competition, they must downplay the risks. This approach has a negative effect on your application score.

Innovate UK understand there is always risk when it comes to innovative new ideas; what they are looking for on the application is a clear and honest understanding, explanation and assessment of the risks so they have the full picture when deciding whether to fund the project.

Best practice is to include a risk assessment table including the headers: Risk, Probability, Impact, Rating, Mitigation, Rating after Mitigation and Owner.

By using this table, you are showing the assessors you have undertaken a thorough, professional risk assessment of the project and have a contingency plan if they arise. They want to see that the key risks and the relevant constraints e.g. regulatory requirements, ethical issues, are identified.



Top Tip

Remember to discuss and explain the critical inputs and regulatory issues – these are risks too!

Question 9: Added Value

The change of name for this question has made answering slightly simpler – the assessors want to know what impact the public funding will have on the project.

Ideally, your application answers so far will have already told a compelling case as to why your project should be funded but the assessors are looking for an answer that explains why you are applying for the funding.

They want to know whether the project could go ahead without funding, and the difference the funding will make e.g. faster to market, reduced risk. Highlight what impact the project will have on the businesses involved and what would happen if the application is unsuccessful.

Top Tip

They want to see that by funding this project, it will significantly increase the industrial partners' R&D spend during the project and afterwards.



Question 10: Costs & Value for Money

This is where to include a full breakdown of all the project costs, how much you need and how it represents value for money. You need to provide full detail behind large costs so the assessors can see that these are justified.

Most competitions do not provide 100% project costs, so you need to clearly define where the match funding is coming from for the balance of the project.

The assessors are looking for value for money, if the proposed project costs are right for the complexity and size of the project and justification of all costs.

Top Tip



Make sure your resource allocation and costs in the project plan match the labour costs, and don't be vague with descriptions of costs.

Summary

With all the information that is required you must bear in mind that each question only allows for an answer of up to 400 words - getting the large amount of information needed into such a short answer is a skill that our consultants have mastered!

That skill along with our technological backgrounds and extensive knowledge of what the Innovate UK assessors are looking for is what makes our grant service so unique and successful.

Our grant funding services range from full bid writing to review of applications before submission and re-submission, along with consultancy to assist with any research needed to fill in knowledge gaps before an application is written. Our bid writing success rate over the last 12 months is 76%, showing that our expertise goes a long way to helping organisations be successfully awarded funding!

If you are interested in using any of our services to increase your chances of being successfully awarded Innovate UK funding, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us!





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For a free consultation

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