CIMR postdocs: top tips for obtaining grant funding (based on seminar by Dr Candy Hassall, Head of Research Affairs, Wellcome Trust, June 2017)

Plan your career as you would your science. Try to establish a distinct research identity and think about where you should be working to build this. Aim for intellectual distance from your supervisor.

Seek a mentor who will provide frank advice and information that you need to know.

Time your applications for when your CV is strongest. Does your CV provide evidence that you can do what is proposed and deal with setbacks that might arise?

Demonstrate that you will make use of the specific opportunities provided by a fellowship scheme.

In preparing the application, read the guidance notes and think about why you are being asked the question. Use the form to your benefit. Emphasize what you learnt from specific experiences and how this has now poised you for this next stage.

Try to look at other applications, both successful and unsuccessful.

Make clear in the proposal: what is proposed, the approaches that will be taken; and why this is likely to work.

Aim to be understandable and persuasive to a broad range of researchers, including non-specialists.

Make clear how your proposal will make a significant difference, and why it is feasible in your hands, with the available resources in your new working environment and within the available timeframe.

Ensure the proposal stands alone. Don’t assume the reviewers will know what you’ve done or can do.

Be realistic and clear. Have a focus rather than including all your possible ideas.

Tell your story and emphasize vision of how this fellowship will progress your career.

Test your ideas in the proposal. Be persuasive but unbiased. Address any controversies.

Avoid a project that is too linear. Have a back-up plan e.g. if aim A does not work.

In the interview, listen to the question, be concise and own the project.

Be aware of new advances and be prepared to discuss these (but do not bring any handouts to the interview). Be constructive and convince the panel you can deliver.

In preparing a re-submission, don’t change the whole idea or just delete certain things. Take time to consider the feedback and try to address this.

When planning which grants to apply for, always have a back-up plan. Try to be resilient.