Evidence of Institutional Commitment

Funding bodies sometimes require evidence of ‘institutional commitment’ as part of bids for large and/or interdisciplinary bids. Examples include:

- In the recent cross-disciplinary programme ‘Bridging the Gaps’, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council required applicants to provide evidence for the “Commitment of the organisation to multidisciplinary working, in particular in the proposed area of research”.
- Applicants for Wellcome Trust Strategic Awards must provide “a statement from the head of the institution, indicating how the proposal fits within the context of the institution's strategic vision and what financial commitment the institution will make to the group if the application is successful”.

Below are suggestions of such commitment to use when developing similar bids:

- Funding for new buildings (e.g. £32m on library);
- Refurbishment of laboratories or purchase of large equipment from SRIF* and its replacement CIF.
- RCUK Academic Fellowships†
- New Blood lectureships#
- Other new or replacement staff within the subject area
- University/department funded PhD studentships (e.g. Anniversary scholarships, open PhD Scholarships).

To find out how your department has benefited from the above or other similar schemes, contact your Head of Department, Director of Research or other senior staff.

If the size of the bids justifies it, you may also wish to talk to the PVC Research or Registrar about commitments by the University for funding support for the future.

Examples of costs

- SRIF and CIF. Details of projects available from Estates Office.
- RCUK fellows - £125K per fellow from government. Remainder found by university or (e.g.) by fellow obtaining externally funded salary support. Indicative salary costs for Grade 8 lecturer for 5 years (including NI and pension) = £210,000. Excludes Estates and Indirect costs.
- Indicative salary costs for lectureships for 3 years, including NI and pension = £125,000. Excludes Estates and Indirect costs.
- Average PhD studentship is about £50,000 including stipend and home (non-science) fees.

Examples of institutional commitment statements

- The combined commitment of the University and UHL NHS trust to the CLAHRC programme is £10.6M over 5 years (~50% University). Within this the University is providing core support to our Clinical Trials Unit and has committed £250K from its innovative GENIE programme, an educational project which has provided many useful developments in public engagement. Support for the Biobator, commercial contracts manager and a governance manager stand at just over £300K p.a. At a more basic level the University has committed £13M to create a Central Research Facility for biomedical sciences. … In total commitment in this area exceeds £20M over the next five years.
- The University’s strategic plan for 2004-2008 includes the objective ‘to develop high quality interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research wherever appropriate’. Infrastructure and equipment for the relevant groups has been well supported by the University and by SRIF
funding over recent years. The Adrian Building … has been completely refurbished at a total cost of £5m. … the Michael Atiyah Building which was funded from SRIF1, while SRIF2 provided £306K for the installation of advance computing facilities… In addition to the requested resources, a chair, two lecturers and three PhD students will be funded by the University… (matched support of about £2.3M).

*SRIF (Science Research Investment Fund) was set up as a joint initiative by the Office of Science and Innovation and the former Department for Education and Skills. Its purpose is to contribute to higher education institutions' (HEIs') long-term sustainable research strategies and address past under-investment in research infrastructure. Each HEI was allocated a sum based on research income and HEIs contributed 10% to the total allocation. The funds could be spent on new buildings, refurbishment and large equipment. There were 3 rounds of SRIF with SRIF 3 ending in March 2008. CIF (Capital Investment Fund) has replaced SRIF and is administered by hefce rather than government. It will run from 2008-2011 under similar rules to SRIF.

†Five year fellowships funded by Government. HEIs put forward bids for fellowships to support strategic areas. After 5 years, holders must be offered permanent contracts. Ran for 4 years (2004-8) but now closed to new applications.

#University funded lectureships with reduced teaching for first 2/3 years. Targeted at RAE2001 Grade 5 and higher departments.