

## Planning your research project

### What exactly is a research proposal?

There can sometimes be confusion between the terms 'proposal' and 'protocol' and often they're used interchangeably. We like to think of a proposal as your marketing tool—it sells the project to people and explains the benefits it will bring. In our session we talked about what a proposal usually contains:

- Title
- Abstract/summary (lay summary)
- Background/rationale

- Aims/objectives
- Design and methods
- Ethical considerations
- Benefits of the study
- Resources and costs
- Logistics and Gantt chart

We have posted a couple of examples of proposals on the FARRIL e-learning portal, both from Trust staff. They're both quite different but have the key elements a good proposal should contain.

### Applying for funding

Often you can use your funding application as a basis for a project plan. Most funders will ask for a comprehensive project outline to ensure that what you are proposing will be feasible.

Once you've applied, don't be alarmed if the deadline for a funding decision comes and goes and you haven't heard back. Quite often applications have to go before a committee, which always takes time. They may ask you to make changes—to your methods, the way you will disseminate your findings or other things—again, this isn't anything to worry about, they're just helping to strengthen your proposal. Some funders will release half the funding at the start of the project and the other half at a later date, either halfway through the project's timeline, or after certain milestones have been reached. Always read the terms and conditions so you're aware of any restrictions there might be.

Have a look at some of the successful projects that have been awarded College of Radiographers Industry Partnership Scheme Research Grants [here](#) to get some ideas of what makes a good funding bid.

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## Stakeholders

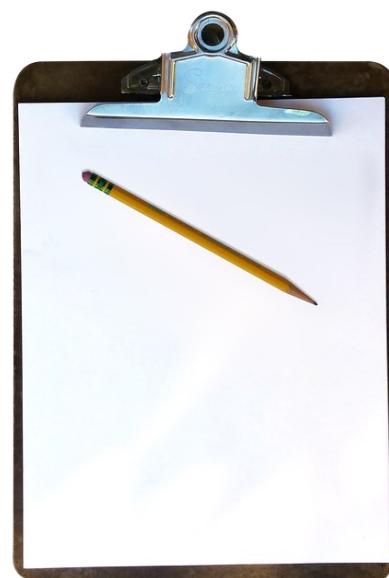
[Stakeholders](#) are people or organisations who have an interest in your research project, or affect or are affected by its outcomes. Some will be supportive of your project but some may not be. Identifying who your stakeholders are, or could be, and the influence they could exert not only helps you plan and deliver the project but can ultimately expand the scope and influence of your project.

## Gantt Charts

You may or may not be required to produce a Gantt chart. However they can be useful for planning and scheduling projects. They can help you assess how long a project should take, determine the resources needed, and plan the order in which you'll complete tasks. They're also helpful for making sure you stay focused and on target. Here's the [free template](#) we have used in the past.

## Risk Matrix

Does the term make you think of risk assessment? This is basically what you are compiling—an evaluation of potential risks to your project throughout its course and what you would do if these risks should arise to “threaten” your project. Again it's another useful project planning and management tool that will help you explore your project. It's not about planning problems, it's about planning the project so it will succeed! The FARRIL example is posted on the e-learning portal for you to take a look, it's based on the very useful template provided by the [Open University](#).



## Reference management

Keeping track of all the articles and reports that relate to your project can be confusing, so it's best to use something designed for the job.

[RefME](#) is a free referencing tool that you can use to store all of your references. You can even produce a bibliography that's formatted in the style you prefer. Creating references is easy, and the library can offer you training to help you get the most out of it. Contact [Emily.hurt@lthtr.nhs.uk](mailto:Emily.hurt@lthtr.nhs.uk) to arrange a session.

## Next steps

- **An overview of ejournals and databases** is on Tues 22nd Nov, 09:00-10:00, IT suite in the Library  
Fri 25th of Nov, 12:00-13:00, IT suite in the Library
- Register for an Athens username and password in advance [here](#)
- Follow our Twitter account, [@FacResRad](#)

Emily Hurt: [Emily.hurt@lthtr.nhs.uk](mailto:Emily.hurt@lthtr.nhs.uk) Ext 4763

Alison McLoughlin: [Alison.mcloughlin@lthtr.nhs.uk](mailto:Alison.mcloughlin@lthtr.nhs.uk) Ext 2013