

Funder information sheet

What is it good for? Basic versus applied research

To undertake research, scientists request money from funders to cover costs associated with purchasing chemicals, laboratory equipment and subsequent use, as well as salaries for the scientists undertaking the research. Your task as funders is to listen to the arguments of the scientists and decide how you will allocate €100 000. Remember, you can decide not to fund a specific project, or you can give all of your money to a single scientist, but you have to be able to justify your decisions to the rest of the group, your teacher, and class. If you are working with another funder, make sure you collaborate on your decision as you share out the €100 000.

What is research funding used for?

- Staff salaries (researchers and technicians)
- Laboratory equipment. Some equipment is very expensive. For example
 - Microcentrifuge ~€4000
 - Mass spectrometer ~€44 000
 - Flow cytometer ~€200 000

Note: very expensive machines won't be purchased from the funding for a single project; sometimes, machines will even be shared between several research groups.



Scientists using a modern chromatography instrument
Kinga Lubowiecka/EMBL/Photolab, Copyright: EMBL 2019

- Reagents and chemicals
- Services from specialized facilities, like DNA sequencing or structural analysis
- Consumables: disposable equipment like petri dishes, tubes, filters, pipette tips, and gloves



Context

You are a governmental funding agency with €100 000 to award.

Your role is to listen to the scientists who are asking for funding. Each scientist should be given time present their case (2 minutes each). Then, you should interrogate the scientists by asking them key questions.

Key questions

1. How much of the €100 000 do you think I should award to your research?
2. Why do you deserve funding over the other scientists?
3. How long will your work take to generate results?

Probing questions

4. Why do you think that/how do you know?
5. What is your reason for that?
6. Can you think of another argument for your view?
7. Can you think of an argument against your view?
8. What is your evidence?

Listen to those that make sound arguments and debate well. Once you have heard from all the scientists, you now have to allocate the funding. If there is more than one funder in your group, work together to fill out the table below.

	Project 1 – mRNA in mammalian cells	Project 2 – synchrotrons and simulations	Project 3 – vaccine manufacturing	Project 4 – nanoparticle encapsulation
Funding allocated				

Remember that you will be asked to justify your decision to the rest of the class.