

Sourcing for Research Grants and Building Collaborations

Prof James Ogunleye, Middlesex University, UK
Research Proposal Writing and Grant Management
Workshop, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, 8 March 2021



Outline

- Universities and Research Grants
- Universities and Research Grants – the UDFU case
- Research, Grants and Contracts – contextual definitions
- Forms of Research Funding
- Types of Research Grants
- Research Grants and Funding Bodies
- Research Collaborations
- Building Research Collaborations
- Concluding summary

Universities and Research Grants

- Why do universities need research grants?
 - Theoretically, universities – especially research-intensive universities – place research at the heart of their mission to educate and knowledge transfer;
 - A university needs research grants to fulfill its research mission!

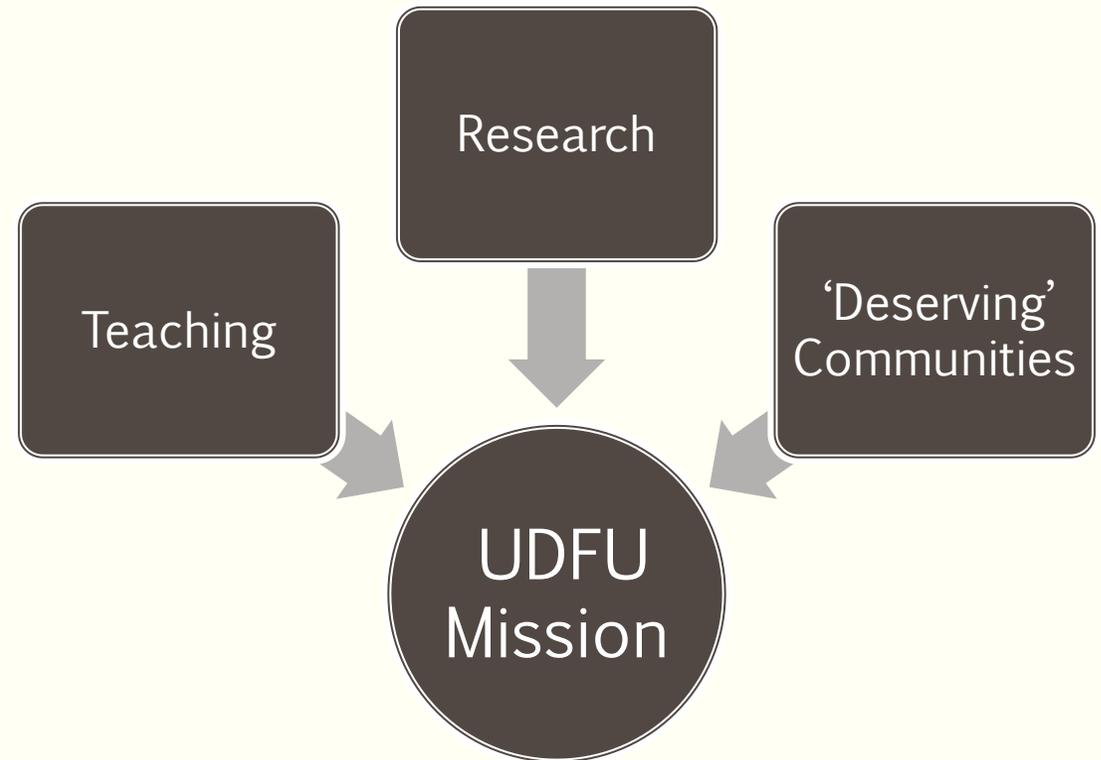


Universities and Research Grants

- More recently, universities have been using 'research grants and contract income' (RGCI) as a metric to judge academic performance and for ranking purposes;
- To raise money for the university;
- Specific examples: to support students, recruit PhDs, create or expand research positions, and advance research.

Universities and Research Grants – the UDFU case

- So, why does the Usmanu Danfodiyo University needs research grants or encourage its academics to pursue research grants or engage in research activities?
- The answer lies in the University’s research mission:
 - “To provide quality teaching, research and community service to **deserving (?)** persons and communities ... and to ensure that at all times it [UDFU] serves a centre for pursuit of research and academic excellence” (UDFU, 2021 [website]);



Research, Grants and Contracts – contextual definitions

- Research –
 - ‘original investigation, undertaken to gain new knowledge and understanding, which may be directed towards a specific aim or objective’ (U of Lancaster, 2017, p.2);
 - Notice the five keywords: original [empirical] new investigation, knowledge, understanding;
- Grants –
 - sums of money given for specific purposes, for example, to fund research;
 - a provision of financial support for a specific purpose , i.e., to conduct research.



Research, Grants and Contracts – contextual definitions

- So, when we talk about Research Grants, we simply means ‘grants that fund or support research.’
- Research Contracts –
 - are usually between the university and the external organisations – i.e. government agencies, universities, companies/industry etc – that either fund the research or participate in the conduct of the research in question;
 - are usually legally binding – like any contractual agreement;
- The term ‘Research Grants’ and ‘Research Contracts’ are now commonly used in the academia in the West:
 - research grants and research contracts both relate to externally funded research projects, but the former is more restricted to non-commercial research projects (such as those funded by the TetFund, for example).

Forms of Research Funding

- Two main categories or forms of research funding:
 - Commercial – the term ‘funding’ is used very strictly;
 - Industry/private sector organisations, multinational companies, etc;
 - Non-commercial – the term ‘grants’ is used very strictly;
 - AU, ECOWAS, EU, Nigerian or foreign government departments/MDA including Tetfund, NGO, WHO, UNESCO, UN, etc.



Types of Research Grants

- Types of Research Grants –
 - Scholarship/Fellowship grants;
 - Seed grants – form of grants, usually small sums of money, to get the researcher started on a project;
 - seed funding allows a researcher to ‘prove the potential’ of their idea;
 - successful outcome of a seed grant should allow the research to ‘move on’ to a much larger project;
 - Project grants –
 - common, standard and competitive; think about TetFund’s Institution Based Research (IBR) projects and National Research Fund (NRF) programmes;

Types of Research Grants

- Centre grants –
 - another example of competitive grant funding but much larger than project grants and
 - usually much longer in terms of duration of the research project and the collaboration involved;
- Conference grants –
 - awarded to scholars to attend conferences at which research is disseminated; or grants given to academics to support their attendance at an academic conference;
- Travel Grants –
 - grant award to fund travels, usually international, travels, and
 - may include element for subsistence (to cover meals and lodgings);

Research Grants Funding Bodies

- Nationally, most tertiary education research activities in Nigeria are sponsored by the Nigerian government through government funding agencies, such as:
 - The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund);
 - Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF);
 - National Science and Technology Fund (NSTF);
- International, governments and bodies including philanthropic organisations sponsor research in Nigeria, including:
 - fellowships;
- Research grants in form of foreign aid:
 - between 2014–2019 the UK ODA and Wellcome research investment in Nigeria totalled £665.4m (UKCDR, 2020);

Research Grants Funding Bodies

- Commonwealth Academic Fellowships –
 - awards for early career academics from developing Commonwealth countries;
- Sponsors of research in Africa include:
 - the National Research Foundation and Medical Research Council in South Africa;
 - the UK Department for International Development (include UK ODA);
 - the World Health Organisation;
 - the World Bank and various international development agencies, such as USAID, NZAID, and AUSAID.

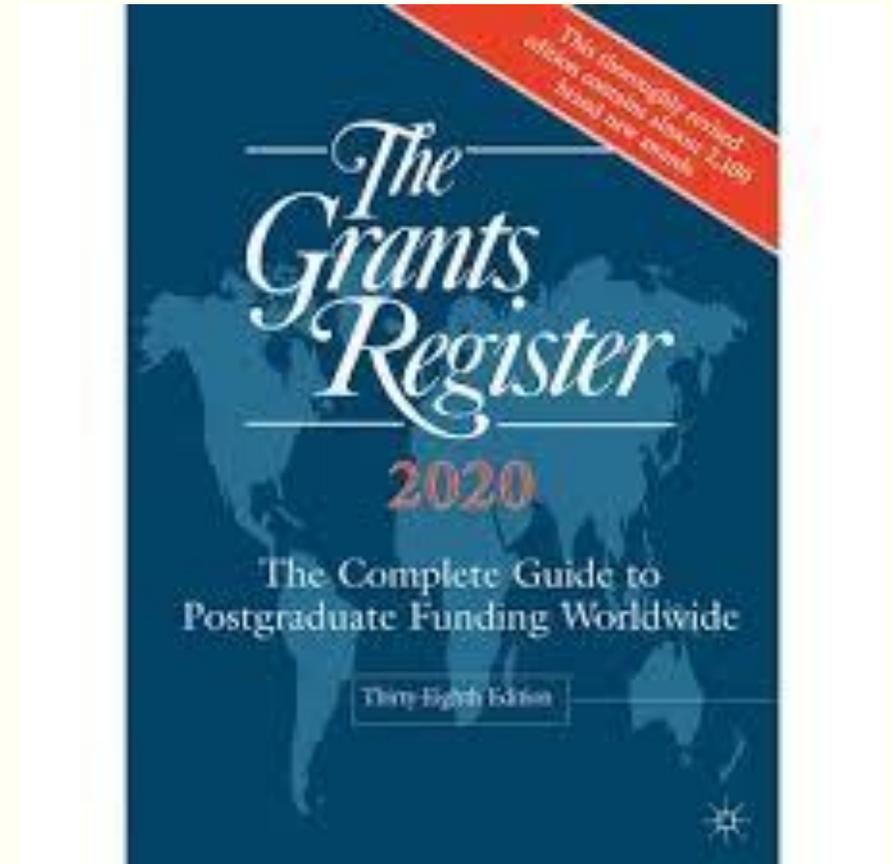
Research Grants Funding Bodies – Nigerian industry

- Nationally, in Nigeria, the industry have not been very active in terms of research funding:
 - MTN [ARDIC] Academic Research Development and Innovation Challenge 2019 (a one-off N1 million grants for 6 Masters/PhD researchers);
 - MTN Budding Entrepreneur Business Grant provided funding for young entrepreneurs with ‘good business idea/plan’ in 2012 (also a one-off N30 million for 4 out of 12 shortlisted ideas).



Strategic Source of Grants Funding

- Useful resources –
 - The Grants Register 2021: The Complete Guide to Postgraduate Funding Worldwide, Editors: Palgrave Macmillan (Ed.)



Part II: Research Collaborations

- Research Collaboration – at the academic and university level:
 - bringing together academics/researchers of different expertise, subject knowledge, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into a research project;
 - usually, a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research project especially in applied research,
 - or interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary in the case of basic research;
 - or when the phenomenon to be examined or investigated is complex;



Research Collaborations

- Research Collaborations – at national and regional levels:
 - bringing together universities into a research project e.g., UAE’s research funding model, Collaborative Research Program Grant (CRPG), example UAE Ministry of Education’s on innovation and which is worth (30M AED or 7.5M AED per winner (4x) for a 3-year research specifically for innovation and doubling the number of PhDs for 3 universities;
 - bringing together countries into a research project – e.g., EU research and intervention funding model.



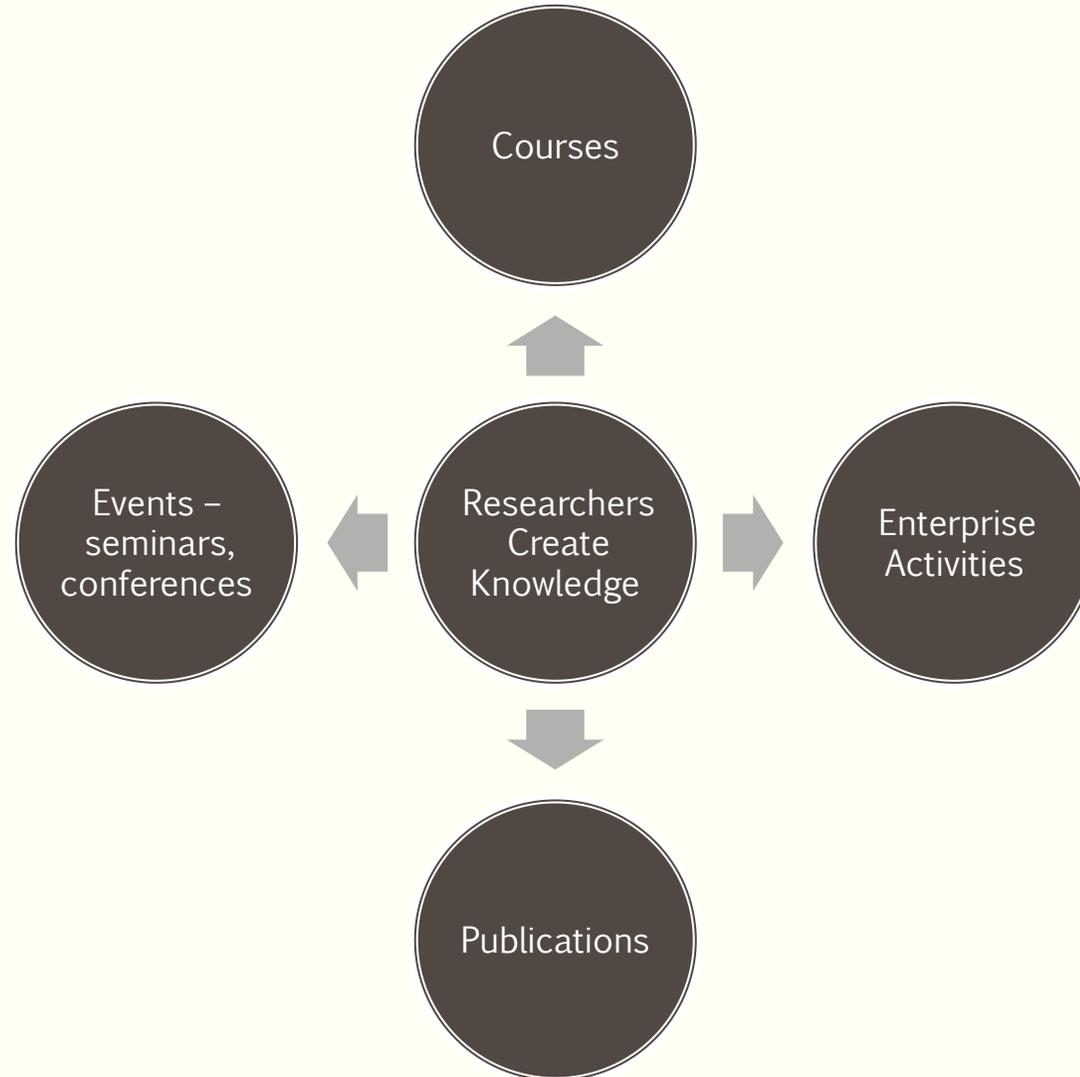
Building Research Collaborations

- Strategies for establishing and building effective research collaborations:
 - understand the benefits and risks involved in, or associated with building research collaborations (you will need to be self-critical, to be able to convince the project sponsors/funders that your research is fundable);
 - identify and establish contact with needed/potential colleagues and partners;
 - have a framework document, usually a legally-binding agreement, to guide the collaboration;

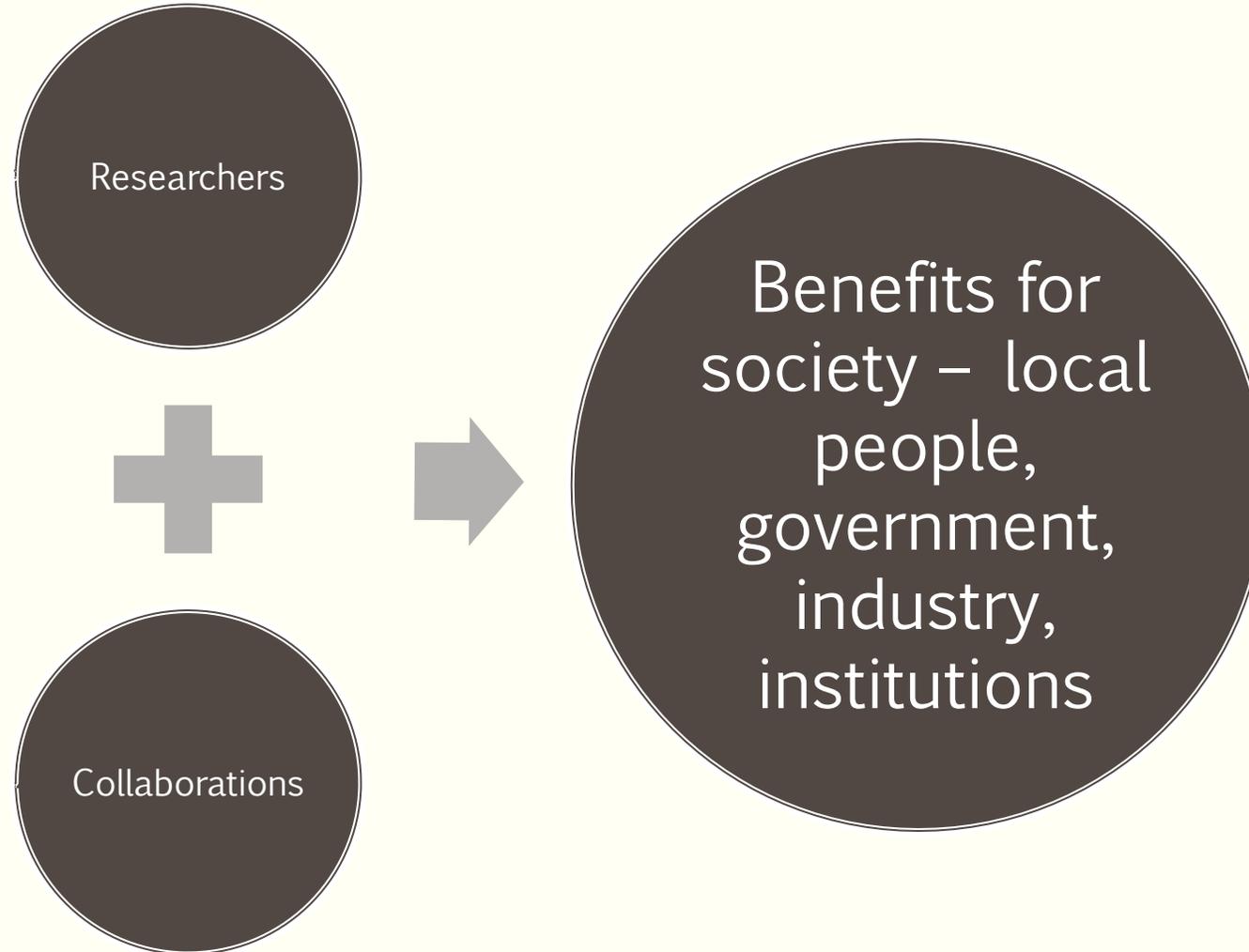
Building Research Collaborations

- Strategies for establishing and building effective research collaborations:
 - be a good team player;
 - ensure effective communication;
 - requisite skills and competences – ‘the qualities and capacity of researchers to engage in collaborative research’ (Jeuken & Mourik, 2018, p. 18); e.g., good interactions and skills in project management.

Concluding summary



Concluding summary



Thank you

Email: oj08@hotmail.com

References

- Jeuken, Y.R.H. & Mourik, R.M. (2018). Collaborative research strategies in energy and sustainability related Social Sciences and Humanities: A literature review and practical guide. Cambridge: SHAPE ENERGY.
- UKCDR, (2020). 'UK Research Funding for Development in Nigeria. An analysis of funding and reach (2014-2019)', available at: <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/UKCDR-UK-research-funding-report-Nigeria-Jan-2020.pdf> (assessed: 06/03.21).
- University of Lancaster (2017). 'Research Grant Handbook', available at: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/res/ResearchGrantsHandbook.pdf>; (assessed: 06/03.21).