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OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING FUNDING

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Obtaining and maintaining funding is important for individuals, groups, institutions, and fields. This challenge is easier during times of abundant and growing resources than it is now, when funding is tight and shrinking. Thus, to obtain and maintain funding will require: maintaining healthy funding levels for all of science; maintaining healthy funding levels for the field(s) you work in; and competing successfully for the available funds.

Everyone should pay attention to the overall prospects for science funding and dedicate some effort to working with others to grow the constituency for science. Public support is likely an important prerequisite for keeping future science budgets high. In this context, researchers should share with society at large the benefits of their research, so that taxpayers can see and appreciate some return from the federal investment in science.

Assuming this effort is successful, and there continue to be government and private organizations with substantial resources to invest in research, what can the individual investigator do to improve her chances? She can be clear about her goal(s) and carefully plan her effort to make maximum progress for minimum resources, especially early in her career while she is establishing a solid professional reputation. Specific useful strategies include:

- Brainstorm funding options and select the most promising one(s);
- Be persistent but flexible, responsive to new information and changing circumstances;
- Provide value and assistance to prospective funding sources both before and after receiving funding;
- Know the funding agents and what their goals are: they are the customers;
- Promise a lot and always deliver more;
- Build partnerships and collaboration to leverage interest and resources; and
- Develop capabilities and ideas with a promising, irresistible future.

There is no guarantee of success. For the best chances, consistently contribute positively and productively in all your efforts, and continue to work for healthy funding levels for your field, your institution, and all of science.