

Research Funding in Biomedical Engineering in the USA

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Funding for graduate students, technicians, laboratory expenses, equipment and faculty salary support is necessary to the academic enterprise. While the degree to which federal and state assistance for these activities varies widely from nation to nation, there are some common themes, both in the approach to obtaining funding and to the types of resources available.

In many environments, funding for these endeavors is becoming increasingly difficult to identify. A clear approach to determine the appropriate agency and the appropriate program officer will enhance opportunities for funding. One must begin with a strategic understanding of the missions of the agencies.

Tools for indentifying the mission and goals of the agency include the World Wide Web, as most agencies have pages. These pages frequently outline future plans, provide an example of the organizational chart, and provide telephone and e-mail information for the employees.

The agency budget is the most useful item. In many countries, this is a publica available document. It is not practical to have lively, optimistic reserach discussions with agency personnel who do not have responsibility for budgets. It can give someone a false sense of security about the certainty of funding.

Much of the world is more politically stable now than during many periods of the past. A corollary to that is that building a strong defense is seen as less critical by many countries so they have more resources to devote to other indices of the welfare of their citizens and pay more attention to societal issues. These can be advanced through increased funding of research.