# Research Canvas

**Applying business tools in academic context to secure funding for doing research and achieving impact from research findings.**

Are you planning to develop your own research project; start a research or industry collaboration? Are you planning to apply for a fellowship? What will you use the funding for?

Doing research and creating impact from research outputs requires funding and securing funding is tough and competitive.

To convince a funder to fund you, you need a compelling and evocative case for funding – A research value proposition. This requires you not only to focus on the quality of the research but on all aspects that can increase your credibility to achieving the research outputs and its intended impact. You may not like the idea of self-promotion, but in essence, your research value proposition, as expressed in a grant or fellowship application is the means through which you market yourself and your research..

In the commercial and nonprofit world, entrepreneurs and business managers use **the Business Model Canvas (BMC)** to describe, design, challenge, and change how a business creates, delivers & captures value. It is designed to help create a quick snapshot of the idea in a visual and digestible format to share it with key stakeholders for feedback and for iteratively validating assumptions related to the business idea. It helps define what they do and why; who will benefit from what they do and whether the business is viable.

We adapted the BMC tool into a **Research Canvas** for use in Academic context to quickly and easily define and communicate research ideas and plan for impact. It is intended to be used before starting to write a grant or fellowship application; to develop clarity and help researchers think through the various aspects related to their proposed research and discuss with a range of stakeholders with an objective viewpoint. It does not need to be publishable quality before you share it to discuss your proposed research as you will iteratively improve on the initial version.

**The Benefits of using the Research Canvas to you and your team:**

* It helps you to put your thoughts and assumptions that may require validating related to the research programme/project onto one page
* It helps focus your mind and those of the team on the key assumptions that need validating before writing applications
* It helps to highlight the points that need to stand out across all sections (not only research excellence) to produce a compelling and evocative case for funding.
* It helps you distill the essential info into a clear short research value proposition
* It helps create a personal pitch – how to introduce you and your research to non experts e.g in networking events

**The Benefits of using the Research Canvas to individuals who can help you succeed in securing funding:**

* This easily digestible format makes it much quicker and more efficient for range of stakeholders (PI, research facilitators, Impact facilitators, collaborators, funders) to understand your research and expected outcomes & impact.
* They can not only highlight what is still missing or weak areas but also identify appropriate funders before you start writing a draft proposal

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**Note:** The Research Canvas is also appropriate for planning to secure funding for translational research. In this case, the “Research response” and “Research output” is the research already caried out/output already achieved. Funding is required to develop the research outputs and show experimental proof of concept and that it has practical potential, to further technology validation testing for specific application etc

For Further advanced projects, with an identified customer/market/ application, the Business Model Canvas is more appropriate tool

# Research Canvas

# Follow the numbered sequence, which will lead you to your Unique Value Proposition. For each box, capture the key details in bullets or note form. A blank canvas is included below.

*Key:*

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| **Desirability**   * Why the research is needed? * Who will benefit, and how? |
| **Feasibility**   * How will you solve the problem? * What is your competitive advantage? |
| **Viability**   * How much funding do you need, and what will you spend it on? * What sources of income are suitable? |

*Credit:*

This Research Canvas was created by Dr Katia Smith-Litière for the Postdocs to Innovators (p2i) Network and is reproduced with permission.

*Sources:*

* Business Model Canvas by Alexander Osterwalde:

[www.strategyzer.com](http://www.strategyzer.com)

* Lean Canvas by Ash Maurya: [www.leancanvas.com](http://www.leancanvas.com)
* Postdocs to Innovators Network:

[www.p2i-network.eu](http://www.p2i-network.eu).

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| **(4)**  **Research response**  **(Solution)**   * What are the overall aims of your research? * How do these aims address the problem you have identified (1)? * What are the ethical issues you need to consider? * What is your data management plan? * How will your users/beneficiaries be involved as your research progresses? * Include: alignment with the Responsible Research & Innovation agenda (RRI). | **(5)**  **Research objectives**   * What are the objectives (specific activities) to achieve your aims? * What methods or techniques will you use? * To what extent are your objectives SMART? | **(9)**  **Competitive advantage**   * What makes you/your team best placed to carry out this research and deliver its impact? * What is different/better about your solution? * What makes your host organisation the right place? | | **(2)**  **Users and beneficiaries**   * What is the level of demand for a solution to the problem you have identified? * Who will use your solution or research outputs? * List all possible users, in research and beyond. * Who will benefit, directly and/or indirectly? * What do your users and beneficiaries think about your proposal? | **(1)**  **Research problem and context (Challenge)**   * What specific research question or problem will your work solve? * What is the importance and scale of the problem? * What can’t currently be done that needs doing? * What evidence do you have to back up that your problem statement? * What work have you already done to address the problem? * What are the key recent contributions made by others in your field to addressing this problem, and how does your research build on these? |
| **(8)**  **Collaborators,**  **partners & resources**   * What collaborators or partners do you require? * What resources will be needed, e.g. equipment, consumables, staff time, skills/expertise, etc? * Remember (7) as well as (5). | **(13)**  **Unique Value Proposition**  Short, clear message, in simple terms, to capture what you propose to do, who will benefit and how, what the impact will be, and why you are the right person/team to deliver it. | |
| **(6)**  **Research outputs**   * List all of the outputs * Consider: outputs beyond traditional papers and talks, e.g. workshops/training, software, reagents, IP/patents, websites, etc. * What about archiving, future use, and sharing? | **(12)**  **Risks**   * What are the key risks associated with the proposed research? * Consider: resources, duty of care, political, financial, reputational, consequences of non-completion, etc. * How will you mitigate risks? | **(7)**  **Actions to outcomes/impact**   * What will you do to make users/beneficiaries aware of the research? * What steps will you take to help them successfully use/integrate your solution? * How will you evidence your impact? How will you collect and store the evidence? | | **(3)**  **Outcomes and impact**   * What will the short-term outcomes of your work be? * In the medium to long term, what positive impact will your work have on your identified users/beneficiaries? * Consider: academic, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, health, political, social, technological impacts. * What will they be able to start doing or do differently? Why is that better? * What would happen if nobody did this research? | |
| **(10)**  **Research expenses (costs)**   * What will it cost to deliver your research and its impact? * Incorporate costs associated with (6), (7), (8), and (12) * Consider: salaries, capital equipment cost or rent, institute overheads, travel, conference fees, IP fees, web development, training, event costs, etc, etc. | | | **(11)**  **Funding streams (income)**   * What funding do you already have in place? * What funders support this kind of research, and what do they offer? * What about other potential investors, co-funders, etc? | | |

# Project title:

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| **(4)**  **Research response**  **(Solution)** | **(5)**  **Research objectives** | **(9)**  **Competitive advantage** | | **(2)**  **Users and beneficiaries** | **(1)**  **Research problem and context (Challenge)** |
| **(8)**  **Collaborators,**  **partners & resources** | **(13)**  **Unique Value Proposition** | |
| **(6)**  **Research outputs** | **(12)**  **Risks** | **(7)**  **Actions to outcomes/impact** | | **(3)**  **Outcomes and impact** | |
| **(10)**  **Research expenses (costs)** | | | **(11)**  **Funding streams (income)** | | |

A good way to fill in the canvas is to use post-it notes, either physically by printing out the canvas A3 size or larger or using an online whiteboard system like Teams Whiteboard, Mural, Miro (import the canvas as image). This allows you to think flexibly, and makes it easier to adapt your responses as you work through the different sections. Electronic versions are easier to share with stakeholders and update.