

ScientifyRESEARCH: An equalizer for research funding information

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Abstract. This paper offers an overview of the conference presentation given by Judy Mielke, Founder of *scientificRESEARCH*, at Academic Publishing in Europe (APE) 2023 in Berlin on January 11. *ScientifyRESEARCH* was honored to receive the 2nd place award in the “dot coms to watch” at APE 2023. *ScientifyRESEARCH* is a research services company founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 2021, which initially launched an open research funding database to solve the challenge researchers have with identifying suitable funding. In this paper, we present the issues researchers encounter during their search for research funding and the solution that we have developed. Our aim is to disrupt the current approach to research funding information and ensure that the best research is funded globally.

Keywords: APE 2023, *scientificRESEARCH*, research funding, funding database, open funding database, funders, global funding, researcher workflows, equity, disruption

1. The challenge with research funding

Research starts with research funding. Great research can only happen if the research funding competition is fair. Fair research funding is only possible if everyone eligible knows about the funding information. Yet, access to funding information is a privilege. With over 30,000 research funders [1], it is impossible for individual researchers to optimize their research funding applications without some form of assistance and usually, researchers at prestigious institutions receive the most support.

As a consequence of the number of funding opportunities available and a lack of access to well-structured research funding information, researchers focus on the well-known funders. This leads to the hypercompetitive research funding situation that we see today. As an example, the success rate of the ERC Advanced Grants in 2020 was 8% [2].

2. Researchers' time wasted: more time for research

Scholarly communication relies on the data and results generated by researchers. Today, researchers spend almost half of their working time [3] seeking and applying for funding. Imagine a world where researchers are removed from some of the burdens of the grant cycle and can focus on research – we could achieve so much more – not just more published articles but more knowledge and solutions.

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3. Open research funding information as a solution to inequity

At scientifyRESEARCH, we seek to equalize access to funding information with our open and curated research funding database. We provide the most accurate and extensive eligibility criteria filters so that researchers can focus on grants for which they are eligible. This means a better match between grants and researchers. This better match means less wasted time on rejected grants and more time for research.

While research funding databases exist today, they have one significant barrier to uptake by researchers: the subscription paywall. A subscription paywall hinders the discoverability of the service, even if institutions have subscriptions. Researchers' natural workflow involves search engines – by having an open access research funding database, we can ensure researchers' uptake of our service. To date, funding information on scientifyRESEARCH has been viewed more than 1 million times since we launched in May 2021.

Our open and curated research funding database not only equalizes access to research funding information but even more importantly, we provide a smooth workflow for researchers to optimize their information discovery journey.

4. The competitive advantage

Over the past year, we have been iterating our research funding database with input and feedback from researchers and research offices around the world. Our research funding database provides the following benefits to researchers and research administrators:

- An openly available version online – to ensure equal access to funding information
- Clear timelines and deadlines on all funding opportunities – so that researchers can plan their schedules accordingly
- Filter by eligibility – so that researchers can easily find the grants they are eligible for
- Customizable [grant alert service](#) – so that researchers can be informed as soon as a relevant funding call is open
- [Curated funding lists](#) – to make finding the right funding information even easier and promote special causes, such as research funding opportunities for women researchers and funding that address the UN's Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – to the best of our knowledge, we are the only funding database presenting continuously updated funding lists for women researchers and the UN's Global SDGs. Our research funding list for researchers in developing countries is our most viewed funding list.

5. A sustainable business

To ensure that our business is scalable and sustainable, we will monetize using multiple revenue sources including:

- (1) Bespoke advertising revenue: paid boosting of funding opportunities in our database, ad space in our grant alerts, newsletter, and website.
- (2) Advertising via ad networks such as Google AdSense.
- (3) Subscription revenue for our premium version of the database.
- (4) Paid sponsorship options, e.g., sponsorship of our educational webinars which we provide free of charge to researchers.

- (5) White-label agreements with organizations.
- (6) Other agreements with organizations paying for special curated lists or subsets of our grant information.

We have been entirely self-funded but started to generate revenue in 2023 from several of the revenue sources listed above via direct invoicing and our e-commerce set up with Stripe for paid users. During this early stage, we are also actively applying for European grants which support small businesses, technology, and innovation.

6. The disruption needed to move research forward faster

In today's world, where information technology, global access to the internet, and rapidly evolving AI tools are becoming increasingly prevalent, it is no longer sensible to rely on word-of-mouth recommendations for research funding. Furthermore, there is a growing trend among funders to diversify their applicant pools and support inter-disciplinary research teams.

At scientifyRESEARCH, we provide the most accessible and well-structured research funding information to researchers. Better access to more funding information means a better match between researchers and funders and thereby reducing some of the hypercompetition in research. We are just getting started on this journey – with funding support from Vinnova (Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems), we are incorporating Natural Language Processing (NLP) to our database to provide even more research funding information to even more researchers worldwide. We look forward to the day when researchers can spend more time on research and provide us with more solutions to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

References

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