


Funding Creative and Innovative Research

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Challenges

1. Exploration of new alternatives and exploitation of existing research paths
2. Appropriate governance structures for research organizations
3. Matching demand and supply for research funding
 - Budget size
 - Funding duration
 - Spending flexibility

Funding schemes reviewed

Investigator Program (Hughes Medical Institute, US)

Förderpreis für junge Hochschullehrer (Krupp Stiftung, DE)

21st Century Science Initiative (McDonnell Foundation, US)

Europ. Young Invest. Award (European Science Foundation)

Showcase Award (Wellcome Trust, UK)

Off the beaten track (Volkswagen Stiftung, DE)

Ideas Factory (Eng. & Phys. Sciences Research Council, UK)

Focal Research Initiatives in S&T (Israel Science Foundation)

Two broad classes

1. Target group: top scientists

Budget size: large annual program spend

Funding type: individual grants, 5 years

Selection criteria: track record, candidate potential, leadership qualities

2. Target group: any researcher

Budget size: small annual program spend

Funding type: projects, 1-3 years

Selection criteria: originality of idea, speculativeness, multidisciplinary

Program strengths

1. Self-nomination procedures instead of nomination by institution
2. Multidisciplinarity as important selection criterion
3. Efforts to balance problems inherent in peer review mechanism

Program shortcomings

1. Arbitrary funding thresholds, no matching with de facto talent pool
2. Administrative burden of programs above-average
3. Matthew effect not taken into consideration

Conclusion

1. Only few funding agencies set aside sizeable budgets to support creative and innovative research
2. Little systematic knowledge about program impact so far
3. Funding needs to be accompanied by complementary institutional conditions in order to encourage creative, high-risk research

Paper

More detailed information about the results of this presentation are available at:

<http://www.nest-promise.net/news.html>