

PART C — THE BRIDGE PERIOD: Award Notice ? Funds Available

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Objective

The period between receiving an award notice and receiving funds should be treated as a Project Readiness Phase rather than a waiting period. Its primary purpose is to ensure that projects can commence immediately once funds are available.

By the time funding is received:

- Hiring processes should already be underway.
- Implementation plans should be finalized.
- Project management systems should be operational.
- Procurement plans should be approved.
- Compliance requirements should be substantially complete.
- Partnerships should be formalized.
- Reporting structures should be established.
- Teams should understand their roles and responsibilities.

The goal is to eliminate avoidable delays and achieve implementation readiness before project launch.

Overview

Phase	Typical Timing	Focus
Phase 1	Days 0-7	Immediate Response and Award Acceptance
Phase 2	Weeks 1-4	Administrative and Financial Setup
Phase 3	Weeks 2-8	Team and Resource Planning
Phase 4	Weeks 2-6	Project Infrastructure Development

Phase 5	Weeks 4-8	Compliance and Reporting Setup
Phase 6	Final 1-2 Weeks	Pre-Launch Activities
Phase 7	Months 1-3	First 90 Days of Project Execution

“ Note: Timelines may vary depending on the funder. Some grants release funds immediately after award notification, while others may require contract negotiations or compliance approvals that take several months. The activities outlined below should therefore be adapted to the requirements of individual funders.

Phase 1 — Immediate Response (Days 0–7)

Objectives

- Understand the terms of the award.
- Confirm acceptance requirements.
- Notify all relevant stakeholders.
- Establish project ownership and immediate next steps.

Activities

Review the Award Documentation

Read the complete Notice of Award (NOA), Grant Agreement, or Award Letter.

Pay particular attention to:

- Total award amount.
- Budget periods and funding schedules.
- Approved versus requested budgets.
- Project start and end dates.
- Reporting requirements.
- Compliance obligations.
- Procurement restrictions.
- Intellectual property provisions.
- Data sharing requirements.
- Publication requirements.
- Branding and communications obligations.
- Required approvals before fund release.

Prepare an Award Summary Sheet

Develop a one-page document containing:

- Project title.
- Funder name.
- Award amount.
- Project duration.
- Budget periods.
- Reporting deadlines.

- Special award conditions.
- Required approvals.
- Internal project lead.
- Expected disbursement timelines.

Phase 2 – Administrative and Financial Setup (Weeks 1–4)

Objectives

Establish the administrative, financial, and contractual foundations necessary for implementation.

Activities

a)Review Grant Agreements

Confirm:

- Payment schedules.
- Cost-sharing obligations.
- Allowable costs.
- Procurement requirements.
- Partner obligations.
- Reporting timelines.
- Amendment procedures.

b)Financial Setup

Prepare:

- Project budget tracker.
- Financial reporting templates.

c)Establish Project Files

Create dedicated folders containing:

- Proposal documents.
- Approved proposal.
- Contracts.
- Budgets.
- Reporting templates.
- Procurement documentation.
- Communications materials.
- Ethics documentation.

- Partner agreements.

d)Partner Agreements

Where applicable, finalize:

- Memoranda of Understanding.
- Sub-award agreements.
- Consultancy agreements.
- Collaboration agreements.
- Data-sharing agreements.

Outputs

- Financial management systems established.
- Partner agreements initiated.
- Procurement plans completed.
- Project documentation organized.

Phase 3 – Team and Resource Planning (Weeks 2–8)

Objectives

Ensure the necessary people, tools, and resources are ready before implementation begins.

Activities

Staffing Plan

Determine:

- Required positions.
- Duration of appointments.
- Reporting structures.
- Recruitment timelines.

Potential roles include:

- Project Manager
- Research Fellows
- Data Scientists
- AI Researchers
- Research Assistants
- Policy Analysts
- Monitoring and Evaluation Officers
- Communications Officers
- Consultants
- Administrative support staff

Recruitment Preparation

Prepare:

- Terms of Reference (TORs).
- Job descriptions.
- Interview schedules.
- Selection criteria.
- Consultancy agreements.

Resource Planning

Identify required:

- Software licenses.
- Research tools.
- Survey platforms.
- Computing infrastructure.
- Data storage requirements.
- Workspace requirements.
- Meeting platforms.

For AI projects, consider:

- Cloud computing requirements.
- GPU access requirements.
- Data management infrastructure.
- Responsible AI compliance tools.
- Security requirements.

Outputs

- Staffing plans completed.
- Recruitment packages prepared.
- Resource requirements documented.
- Procurement needs identified.

Phase 4 – Project Infrastructure Development (Weeks 2–6)

Objectives

Build the systems required to manage implementation effectively.

Activities

Develop the Implementation Roadmap

Prepare a detailed project roadmap outlining:

Month 1

- Project kickoff
- Partner meetings
- Recruitment activities
- Procurement initiation

Month 2

- Pilot activities
- Team onboarding
- Tool development
- Stakeholder engagement

Month 3

- Research implementation begins
- Baseline assessments
- Monitoring activities commence

Develop Workplans

Prepare:

- Annual workplans.
- Quarterly plans.
- Monthly activity schedules.
- Deliverables tracker.

- Milestone calendar.

Develop Monitoring Systems

Create:

- KPI trackers.
- Risk registers.
- Activity trackers.
- Budget monitoring tools.
- Reporting calendars.

Outputs

- Implementation roadmap completed.
- Project workplans finalized.
- Monitoring systems established.

Phase 5 – Compliance and Reporting Setup (Weeks 4–8)

Objectives

Ensure all ethical, legal, and reporting requirements are met before implementation.

Activities

a) Ethics and Compliance

Determine whether the project requires:

- Institutional ethics approval.
- Data protection compliance reviews.
- Partner approvals.
- Government permissions.
- Procurement approvals.
- Participant consent procedures.

For AI-related projects, additionally assess:

- Responsible AI requirements.
- Data governance frameworks.
- Bias mitigation strategies.
- Privacy and security measures.
- Transparency requirements.
- Algorithmic accountability considerations.

b) Reporting Framework

Prepare:

- Financial reporting templates.
- Narrative reporting templates.
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Communications reporting requirements.
- Risk reporting procedures.

c) Develop a Reporting Calendar

Include:

- Quarterly reports.
- Financial reports.
- Partner reporting deadlines.
- Monitoring activities.
- Dissemination activities.
- Funder meetings and presentations.

Outputs

- Compliance requirements documented.
- Reporting templates completed.
- Reporting calendar established.

Phase 6 – Pre-Launch Activities (Final 1–2 Weeks Before Project Start)

Objectives

Confirm implementation readiness across all project functions.

Activities

1. Conduct a Project Readiness Assessment

Confirm that:

a) Administration

- Contracts are signed.
- Budgets are approved.
- Procurement plans are complete.

b) Human Resources

- Recruitment processes are complete.
- Consultants are onboarded.
- Team responsibilities are documented.

c) Operations

- Project tools are operational.
- Communication channels are established.
- Documentation systems are functioning.

d) Compliance

- Ethics approvals are secured.
- Reporting requirements are understood.
- Partner agreements are finalized.

2. Conduct the Project Kickoff Meeting

Agenda items should include:

- Project objectives.
- Deliverables.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Communication protocols.
- Risk management procedures.
- Reporting expectations.
- Budget considerations.
- Implementation timelines.

Outputs

- Project readiness checklist completed.
- Kickoff meeting conducted.
- Team onboarding completed.