

UK GRANT FUNDING & INNOVATION

Recruitment Market Report: 2025





CONTENTS

01. INTRODUCTION	3
02. THE STATE OF INNOVATION FUNDING IN THE UK	4
03. THE SHIFT FROM R&D TAX TO GRANTS: A STRATEGIC PIVOT	5
04. KEY HIRING TRENDS IN GRANT FUNDING	6
05. SALARY GUIDES	7
06. OUTLOOK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIRING MANAGERS	9
07. CONTACT US	10

01.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Leonid's UK grant funding talent landscape guide. We've gathered insights and key data which will help specialist consultancies in the UK to make more informed decisions about their hiring strategies.

As the UK's innovation ecosystem continues to flux and evolve, grant funding is further establishing itself as a critical pillar of R&D support, alongside the more established R&D tax relief schemes.

The turbulence and uncertainty surrounding the UK R&D tax regime in recent years has prompted many specialist accounting firms to diversify, with a notable trend: expanding into grant funding advisory.

This report explores the current state of the UK grant funding market, the talent implications for firms operating in the space, and the key hiring trends affecting the remainder of 2025 and beyond.

As the UK's leading R&D tax and grant funding recruiter, we are proud to be working with many of the UK's leading consultancies and so we are well placed to understand the dynamics of this growing sector.



Ben Worsley

Team Leader – R&D tax & Grant Funding Recruitment
Leonid Group



02.

THE STATE OF INNOVATION FUNDING IN THE UK

Key streams of innovation funding

The UK offers a diverse range of innovation grants through both domestic and international programmes. The most active funding channels include:

- **Horizon Europe (via UK association)** — Ongoing access post-Brexit to EU collaborative R&D funding, now fully rejoined as of 2024.
- **ATI Programme / Faraday Battery Challenge** — High-profile funding routes for aerospace, advanced manufacturing, and clean tech.
- **Regional Growth Funds** — Devolved funding initiatives via Scottish Enterprise, Invest Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Government.
- **Innovate UK Smart Grants** — the UK's primary innovation agency has paused its grants for 2025/26 while preparing new A number of UK firms have specialised in grant funding applications for several years now, including PNO, Myriad Associates, Iconiq Innovation and Grantify.

Meanwhile, both firms which have historically specialised in R&D tax credits and accounting firms are now diversifying — and this includes grant funding.

Current talking points in grant funding

- **Greater competition and complexity:** Before it was paused, success rates for Innovate UK Smart Grants were dropping to between 5 - 10%, placing greater pressure on firms to deliver high-quality, strategically aligned applications. It will be interesting to see how the new support looks, once it is rolled out.
- **Thematic funding focus:** Strong bias towards net zero, digital infrastructure, AI and health innovation. These themes are shaping the demand for technical consultants with deep sector knowledge.
- **Compliance and post-award scrutiny:** Grant audits and clawbacks are becoming more frequent, requiring firms to ensure robust compliance systems from bid stage to reporting.





03.

THE SHIFT FROM R&D TAX TO GRANTS: A STRATEGIC PIVOT

Changing nature of R&D tax relief

HMRC's tightened compliance regime, mandatory additional information forms and ongoing clampdown on error and fraud have made R&D tax advisory more complex and challenging.

Furthermore, the merging of SME and RDEC schemes and reduction in rates on offer have cut the financial return for many claimants, which has in turn led to a dampening of claims.

Resulting market shift

Both specialist R&D firms and accountancy practices are responding to the changing market dynamics by building dedicated grant funding practices.

This is a smart strategic move, as clients are increasingly seeking integrated innovation funding strategies, combining grant scouting, consortium management and R&D tax claims.

Implications for hiring

Firms previously focused on R&D tax are now proactively hiring professionals with:

- Experience in writing or managing grant applications
- Sector-specific knowledge in clean tech, digital health, or engineering
- The ability to align innovation strategy with funding eligibility

We are also seeing a rise in the number of hybrid roles (e.g. "Innovation Funding Manager") emerging, that cover both grants and tax incentives.





04.

KEY HIRING TRENDS IN GRANT FUNDING

Increased demand for sector-specific experience

Hiring companies are increasingly seeking candidates with backgrounds in life sciences, energy, AI, and aerospace, since these are the fields where most grants are concentrated.

Candidates with both technical writing ability and client-facing commercial skills are particularly sought-after.

Increased demand for international experience

As international funding options — particularly from Europe — are being made available to UK businesses (such as Horizon Europe), those professionals who have experience of working on European grant funding initiatives are highly sought-after.

Grant consultants as strategic advisors

Firms previously focused on R&D tax – that are now also Grant consultants – are no longer just bid writers, they're now expected to:

- Engage in strategic R&D roadmapping
- Lead consortium-building
- Manage post-award compliance and reporting

This evolution requires higher-calibre hires, often with more diverse career paths and international funding exposure. Salaries have risen to compensate for this expectation.

Talent pressure in boutique and mid-market firms

R&D tax has always been a highly competitive field, given the relatively small talent pool available. Now, with R&D specialists increasingly branching out into grant funding, the competition for talent with both grant and tax experience is hotting up further.

Given the scarcity of experienced professionals, we are seeing more and more firms offering Internal training and upskilling as a way to transition R&D tax specialists into grant roles.





05.

SALARY GUIDES

The below tables are indicative of mid-sized firms' ranges. There are of course variations according to geography and size of the organisation. For a more bespoke salary benchmarking, please contact [Ben Worsley](#), who will be happy to help.

We have also provided a brief description of the general candidate profile for each role. The 'rarest' profiles tend to be paid above market value, as do roles within London-based companies.

Grant funding — consultant roles

Position	Candidate Description	Salary Range
Grants Associate/ Writer	No experience in industry, relevant degree	£25 – £40k
Consultant	Up to 2 years of experience in industry, PhD with no experience in industry	£40 – £50k
Senior Consultant/ Assistant Manager	2+ years of experience in industry	£50 – £60k
Manager	4+ years of experience in industry	£60 – £75k
Senior Manager	5+ years of experience in industry	£75 – £90k
Director	6+ years of experience industry	£90k+

The above benchmarking refers to the base salary only, not including commission or bonuses. These can differ significantly depending on the firm. Boutique and Independent firms commonly offer a higher percentage of commission (typically between 5%–10% on 'new business'). Some firms offer residual commission in lieu of a larger base salary, however.

Similarly to the boutiques, accountancy firms offer commission on all new business brought in. While this percentage is usually lower than the smaller firms, salespeople in the accountancy space benefit from having a much larger line of services to sell to clients and subsequently earn commission from.





Grant funding — Sales & Business Development Roles

Position	Candidate Description	Salary Range
Business Development Executive (BDE)	At least one year's experience	£35k-£50k
Business Development Manager (BDM)	Up to 2 years' experience in the sector	£50k-£65k
Senior Business Development Manager	2+ years' experience	£65k-£80k
Sales Manager	4+ years' experience	£80k-£90k
Director of Sales	6+ years' experience	£90k+

This is reflective of the base salaries only. Commission can vary across the industry, with typical commissions ranging from 5-10% of new business delivered. While BDs working within an accountancy practice have a broader line of services to sell and earn commission on, they tend to earn commission on new business only. BDs in boutiques have a narrower line of services to sell/earn commission on, but tend to earn recurring commission on each year that a client signs with their firm, leading to a potentially lucrative OTE.





06.

OUTLOOK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIRING MANAGERS

We expect the high levels of competition for talent to be an ongoing issue, especially for professionals who have had exposure to both R&D tax and grant funding. As such, we recommend the following:

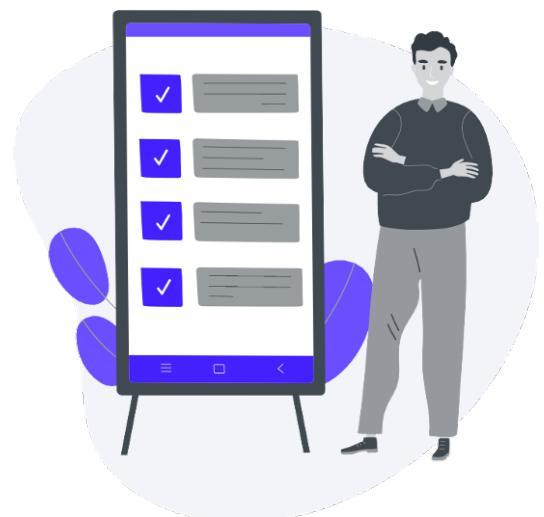
- **Widen your talent lens:** Consider candidates from adjacent sectors, such as public grant agencies, academia, or science-based project roles, with a view to offering training and upskilling. We have witnessed several examples of organisations who have successfully adopted this approach and secured some outstanding long-term employees.
- **Offer career development pathways:** Candidates are favouring firms that invest in upskilling and provide exposure to both tax and grants, with a view to futureproofing their own careers.
- **Act quickly on quality candidates:** it may sound like an obvious one but it's a trap too many fall into. If you find a great candidate — don't hang around, as they will get snapped up. At Leonid, we pledge to fill all open roles within 30 days but within R&D tax and grant funding, we typically fill them much quicker than this.

Partnering with a specialist recruiter

With our deep knowledge of the innovation incentives market and track record of placing talent across R&D tax and grants, we understand how to match the right talent to meet your needs. Whether you're scaling a new grant practice or expanding a multidisciplinary team, we help you hire with confidence.

One of the most unique features of our service is our **LeonidLive** video shortlisting service. This makes the hiring process highly efficient, as we present shortlisted candidates via short video interviews, which enable you to quickly see whether they will be a good cultural fit and have the right soft skills to succeed in your organisation. This innovative way of screening candidates typically saves 10 hours per hire, enabling you to move quickly to interview stage.

To find out more about how we can help you hire the very best talent in record time, please get in touch with **Ben Worsley** for a friendly chat.





leonid



Ready to get in touch with us?

You can reach out via the following methods:

T +44 20 3958 7484

E ben@leonid-group.com

W www.leonid-group.com

LONDON

Tintagel House, 92 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TY