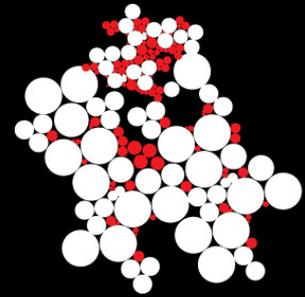


UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

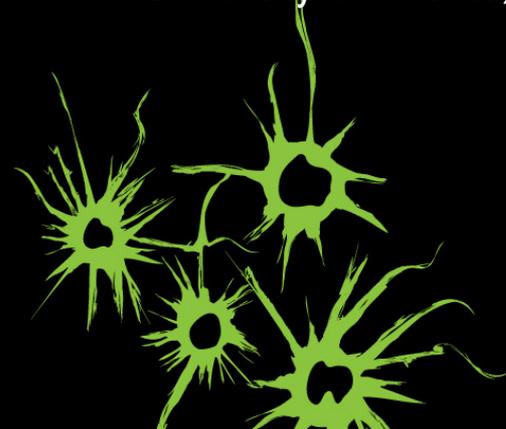
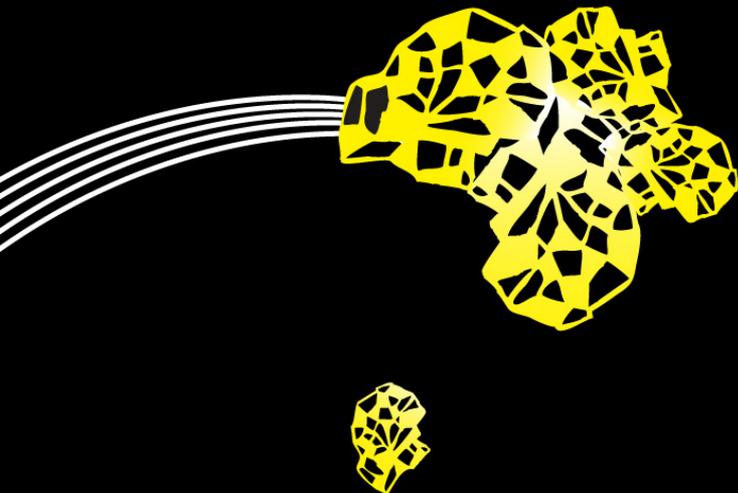


ERC Consolidator proposal writing

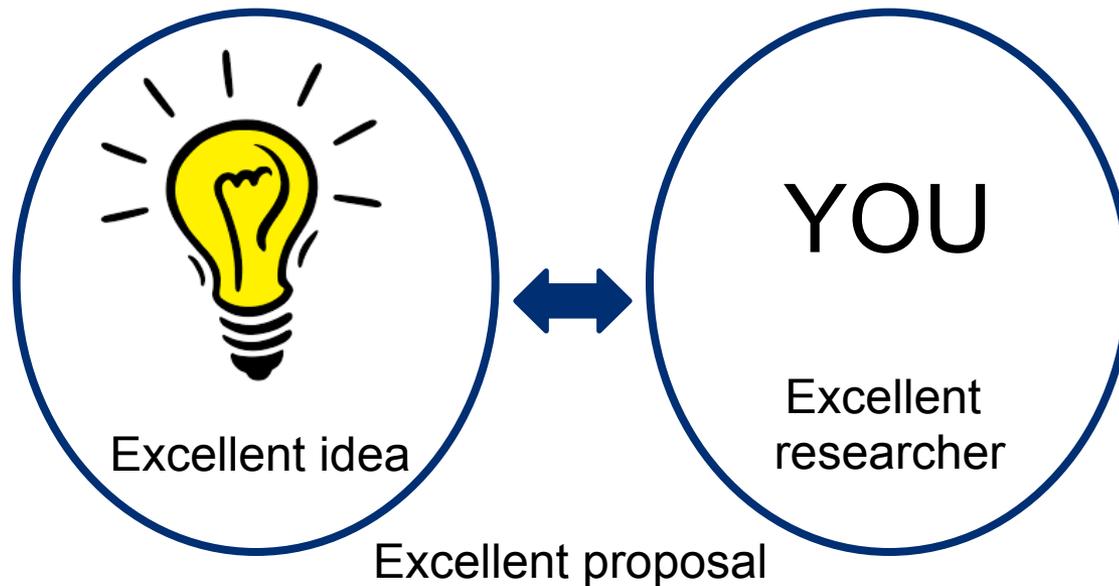
Personal observations

Sonia M. García-Blanco
Optical Sciences Group
University of Twente, Netherlands

ERC info
session
March 2017



ERC PROPOSAL IN A NUTSHELL



New research program: High risk, high gain

PERSONAL VIEWS ON ERC PROPOSAL WRITING

THE THREE WHY'S

TIP: Be really explicit:

- Why you?
- Why this research program?
- Why now?

In my experience:

- I made a sketch of what “skills” I had from my previous jobs and research projects that were relevant to my ERC proposal and in which way they were necessary for the project
- Ensure that in the description of the state-of-the-art/background leading to what you propose, your contributions in those fields are properly highlighted
- Build the state-of the-art background in such a way that it is “obvious” that what you propose should be done now..... and by you!

PERSONAL VIEWS ON ERC PROPOSAL WRITING

SPELL OUT IMPORTANT POINTS

TIP: Do not overrate the reviewers. Highlight (without being too blunt):

- What are the innovative points of the proposal
- What can lead to a breakthrough or a huge step forward in the field
- Potential
- What are the main challenges and risky points } Feasibility
- Contingency plan per point

In my experience:

- Had a separate point for “Innovations/ breakthroughs”
- Write a clear paragraph about what this research will enable
- In each work-package, highlight the challenges and explain how to deal with them
- Check which questions the reviewers get and answer them clearly so the reviewers are easily “guided” to the answers

PERSONAL VIEWS ON ERC PROPOSAL WRITING

B1 PART (RESEARCH)

TIP: B1 part (research):

- Should be a mini-proposal, answering all the previous points (why you, why this proposal, why now)
- Highlight innovations/ breakthroughs/ challenges
- Add sufficient technical detail!

TIP: Check who has been in your panel in the last few years so that you know who you are talking to in this B1 part

PERSONAL VIEWS ON ERC PROPOSAL WRITING

PART B1 (CV)

TIP: B1 part (CV): spend enough time thinking about this part.

- Always highlight the positive.
- Think ahead of the pitfalls (or what the reviewers might see as pitfall) in your CV and be proactive
- Get feedback/help from the EU office @ UT

In my experience:

- *Time in industry with almost no publications*: highlight how I can convert ideas to innovations, how I was given the responsibility of leading large industrial projects.....
- I explained the *typical impact factor* of the journals recognized in my field
- Since I was *not yet “consolidated”*, show the growing potential of my CV

PERSONAL VIEWS ON ERC PROPOSAL WRITING

B2 PART

TIP: B2-part:

- Sufficient technical details → show clearly the methodology
- If background details are necessary, consider adding them into a Box to avoid disturbing the reading flow
- Self-standing

TAKE CARE OF THE “STYLE”

- Enthusiastic
- Positive
- Precise: every sentence should serve a purpose
- Clean, polished, no typos/mistakes
- Nice pictures
- Logical structure to help highlighting the important points
- No crumpled

TIP: make reading your proposal a nice (easy) experience for the reviewers!

FEEDBACK

- During the building of the idea, discuss with colleagues to ensure that you are in the right path
- Get several colleagues from which you expect honest feedback to read the proposal
- Be very critical with the feedback that you get → at the end of the day it is your proposal
- Use negative feedback in a positive way → the reviewers could have the same thoughts so you'd better answer to them already in the proposal
- Try to get one or two successful proposals to get inspired

INTERVIEW

- Again, highlight why you, why the proposed research and why now
- Practice, practice, practice, practice.....
- Prepare a few practice interviews
- Get a few colleagues to act as reviewers and ask nasty questions: then you can prepare those questions for the interview (typically you get questions from the reviewers)
- Talk to someone that has served in an ERC panel (ideally yours) to have a feeling for what they are looking for during the interview

ENJOY THE PROCESS

- Take time to think and mature your idea
- Block sufficient time to write the proposal, ideally well ahead of the deadline so that you can have plenty of rounds of iterations
- If you get to the interview, enjoy the experience and opportunity

Good luck!