


 UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



Creating a proposal

Don Weenink



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Your golden idea

- Create a sense (for yourself) that the idea is not just your thing, but that it serves a common goal
- That goal is to move the field forward
- Check the idea with an inspiring/leading person in your field whom you trust
- Preferably an idea that is simple so that everyone else forgets how much thought had been invested in developing it

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Writing: style

- The first five lines must be carved in gold: surprise, move, excite the readers ('something is going on here')
- Find a high-end and committed editor
 - Keeping the energy in the text high
 - Weeding and attractiveness
 - Team work
- Use lay out to emphasize questions or hypotheses, so that reviewers find their way easily

Writing: B1

- Showcase the innovative methodology and theory, the main question and research questions
- Show the components of the programme and how they contribute to the whole

Writing: B2

- Position your research programme in the field, state of art
- Give elaborate descriptions of the projects, be as concrete as you can:
 - The reviewers must 'see' you doing the research (how this, how that)
- Order in writing: first B1, then B2 and then back to B1 again

Writing: the process

- Details, details, details
- Don't be afraid to bother your colleagues (and team IRIS) and ask them to read your work
- Consider to give them separate chunks to read, depending on their expertise

Writing: convince the reviewers

- Give concrete names of persons who will collaborate with you
- High risk/high gain: the most important thing is to have a new idea that immediately shows that “you are on to something” but that can be done as well
- Feasibility: name access to data, equipment, technology, mention pilot studies, preliminary findings etc
- Don't be (too) explicit in how path-breaking your work is, take care that readers automatically infer this themselves

Writing: the big move

- A huge amount of money: make sure the programme is coherent
- Indeed: a research programme
- The idea is to make a big move in your field, so all the projects should contribute to that move, working together in that direction

Focus

- Two weeks prior to submission: the ERC proposal is the only thing in your life that matters now
- Start soon, reserve some time to digest what you wrote before, create room to take some distance
- Even then, the two weeks before submission, the proposal will probably demand all your energies and time
- After submission: take a day off and see that life is much more than an ERC proposal

Your profile

- 'evidence of creative independent thinking'
- 'achievements typically gone beyond the state of the art'
- 'level of commitment to the project'
- Don't feel intimidated, you are the only one with that great idea

Finally..

- Whether you receive the grant or not, writing the proposal is an excellent way to generate and polish ideas
- In that sense the exercise is fruitful anyhow (a form of intense reflection)
- Lots of luck!