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From Idea to ERC Grant: A Pipeline for High-Potential Research

1 What NOVELTY and level of CHANGE does my idea bring?

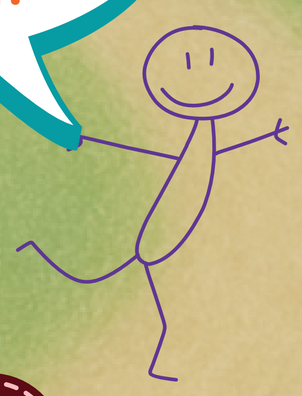
INCREMENTAL RESEARCH

- Continuation of ongoing research work, building on past achievement(s).
- Expands current knowledge through small, progressive steps beyond the state of the art.
- Characterized by lower ambition but higher feasibility.
- A particular challenge for senior scientists, who must demonstrate that their proposals represent genuinely new directions rather than minor additions to their established portfolio.

PIONEERING RESEARCH

- Introduces groundbreaking ideas, drawing on prior work as a point of departure rather than a foundation.
- Pushes knowledge far beyond the current state of the art, representing a significant leap forward in relation to past achievements.
- Characterized by high ambition and high risk.
- It is especially challenging for early-career scientists, who may struggle to gain support for highly unconventional ideas.

2 What is the MOTIVATION behind my research?



RESEARCH QUESTION DRIVEN

- Aims to advance knowledge for its own sake, regardless of immediate applications.
- Driven by a scientific question or a desire to understand a fundamental phenomenon.
- Emphasis on originality, creativity, and risk-taking.
- Success is measured by the significance and impact of the new knowledge generated.

APPLICATION or TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN

- Focused on developing new tools, methods or platforms with broad applications rather than answering a specific scientific question.
- The emphasis is on the how rather than the why.
- Success is measured by the functionality, efficiency, and robustness of the developed technology.

3 What is the overall STRUCTURE and consistency?

FISHING EXPEDITION

- Exploration of large datasets to identify patterns and correlations without a predefined hypothesis. Often serves as a source of new hypotheses rather than a means of testing existing ones.
- Driven by the availability of data rather than a specific research question.
- Characterized by low conceptual novelty, because the research is based on already existing data.

COHESIVE PROJECT

- Presents a compelling and structured research narrative where all elements are essential and interconnected.
- Each component is tightly integrated, building upon the others in a logical sequence. The success of one part directly influences the feasibility and outcome of the rest.
- Overall, the project conveys a clear and coherent story.

FRAGMENTED PROJECT

- Collection of smaller, loosely disconnected studies.
- Composed of research components that are weakly connected and largely independent of one another. Some elements could be removed without substantially affecting the rest of the project.
- The project lacks a clear, overarching narrative or “storyline” that ties all parts together.

4 Is my research too AMBITIOUS for a standard national funding?