



ERC Proposal Evaluation Process: Perspective from an AdG Panel Member



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Panel Procedures

- Panel Chair + 11-15 members (e.g. Pe9 AdG had Chair + 12)
- Expertise of panels spans full range of subjects applicable to the panel
- 2 meetings – Step 1 and Step 2
- All panel members familiar with the contents of all proposals, but submit preliminary grades for a subset . Preliminary grades run from 4 (outstanding) to 1 (non-competitive)
- Each proposal has a primary and secondary reviewer, who present the proposal (in ~5 minute summaries) to the panel. Discussion of the proposal by full panel follows and a preliminary ranking (A, B, C in step 1) is assigned.

Proposal Evaluation Process – Step 1

- Typically between 80-110 proposals for PE9; ≥ 10 oversubscription
 - Step 1: Panels **ONLY** see, assess, mark and rank Part B1 (extended synopsis, CV, PI track record)
 - No external reviewers at this stage
 - Step 1 process – Bring ~ 2 -3 times the expected funding budget through to Step 2. That is, the oversubscription goes from $\sim 10:1$ to $\leq 3:1$
 - Ranking: A – pass to step 2; B - high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2; C – not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2
- ➔ **Part B1 should be clear, compelling and self-contained.**

Proposal Evaluation Process – Step 2

- Step 2 meeting: ~2 months after Step 1
- Panels read, assess and rank full proposals (Parts B1 and B2) from PIs who passed to Step 2.
- At least 3 external reviewers, who are specialists in the field of the proposal, also give assessments
- Outcome is a ranked list of proposals
- Ranking: A – recommended for funding if sufficient funds available; B – some excellence criteria not met, so not recommended for funding
- Normally about 1/3 of proposals passed to step 2 will be funded

Successful Proposal Tips

- Extended Synopsis must be self-contained
- Make clear the broad scientific importance and impact of your proposal.
- Properly reference the work of others – you probably have not done everything in the field, and you cannot know who your reviewers will be.
- Clear, illustrative figures very important
- Use lots of subsections, and highlight the most important take-away points. Avoid massive “walls of text”.
- Workplan is important, but too much detail does not help :
“Postdoc X will work on subproject Y from year 1.5 – 2.5”