ERC Starting Grants
Guide for Researchers

AHSS Research Facilitation	University of Cambridge	November 2023

Formatting	• Draft your application using the ERC template, including the relevant section headings. • Follow the formatting guidelines - page size, font, font size and margins. **Top tip:** Use the narrowest margins allowed to maximise space. Same goes for paragraph indentations - shorter indents = more space! • Avoid using bold text to highlight intext words and phrases as this detracts from the surrounding text. Reserve bold text for organisational text, such as headings, subheadings or sequences.
Writing Style	• Write in either the first or third person singular - the only preference is consistency. • Use active language to help sell the project. Saying what you are will do, rather than what you hope/would like to do, is an effective way of instilling confidence in the reviewer. • Avoid jargon and focus on clearly setting out the project plan and implementation. • Consider using bullet points to tease out key aims, questions and/or actions.
Organising Content	• Do as much work for the reviewers as possible. Subheadings are a useful tool for organising the content of the proposal and leading the reviewers through the text. Some examples are: Methodology; Work Plan; Team Structure and Management; Outputs and Dissemination. • The B1 should provide a condensed version of B2. • B2, Section a. should focus on the establishing the state-of-the-art in your field and how this project goes beyond that. Here is where you want to set out your aims, objectives and overarching vision for the project. • B2, Section b. should provide details of the project implementation. What is your methodology, both in terms of intellectual framework and project structure.

Project Details	• Ensure that the novelty is clearly demonstrated. *Show*, don't tell, the reviewer why it's important, who cares, why it is timely and why you are the right person to undertake this project.
	• Include as many details as possible when setting out your methodology and action plan.
	    ○ For example, if you are creating a project website - establish who is going to manage it, who is the intended user, how long is the website going to operate.
	    ○ Similarly with outputs, indicate how many, what type, intended readers and potential publishers.
	
	Top Tip: A Gantt chart is a useful way to help visualise the project in its entirety. It is a helpful summary for the reviewers, but can also guide you as you map out your deliverables.

PI and Team Profile	• When developing your B1 and B2, draw on your existing track record and expertise. However, ensure that these sections are used to detail the proposed project. Set out your professional profile in the CV section of the application. • Demonstrating your leadership skills and vision is an important aspect of the ERC grant. Who do you need on your team to ensure a successful outcome? Team members might include: Postdoctoral Researchers, Research Assistants, Senior Research Associates, PhD Researchers. All projects should include an administrative post to provide organisational support. • Advisory Group: Many ERC projects include an advisory group – experts in your field that would provide guidance and input into your project development. These usually include 2-5 individuals and can be based internationally. **Top tip:** If you are naming individuals, ensure you have obtained their consent in advance. They may be on the ERC review panel - if they are named in the application they can't review it.

Resources

- [Cambridge University Research Operations Office](): Latest updates on EU funding and general guidance on applying through Cambridge.
- [ERC Starting Grants website]()
- [ERC Dashboard](): Search for previously funded ERC projects and information on review panels
- [UK Research Office (UKRO)](): Provide information sessions, recorded and written resources
- [ERC Classes](): Short videos discussing key aspects of applying for ERC Grants