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# Hints & Tips for a Successful ERC application



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*ERC Panel Chair, 2020, 2022*

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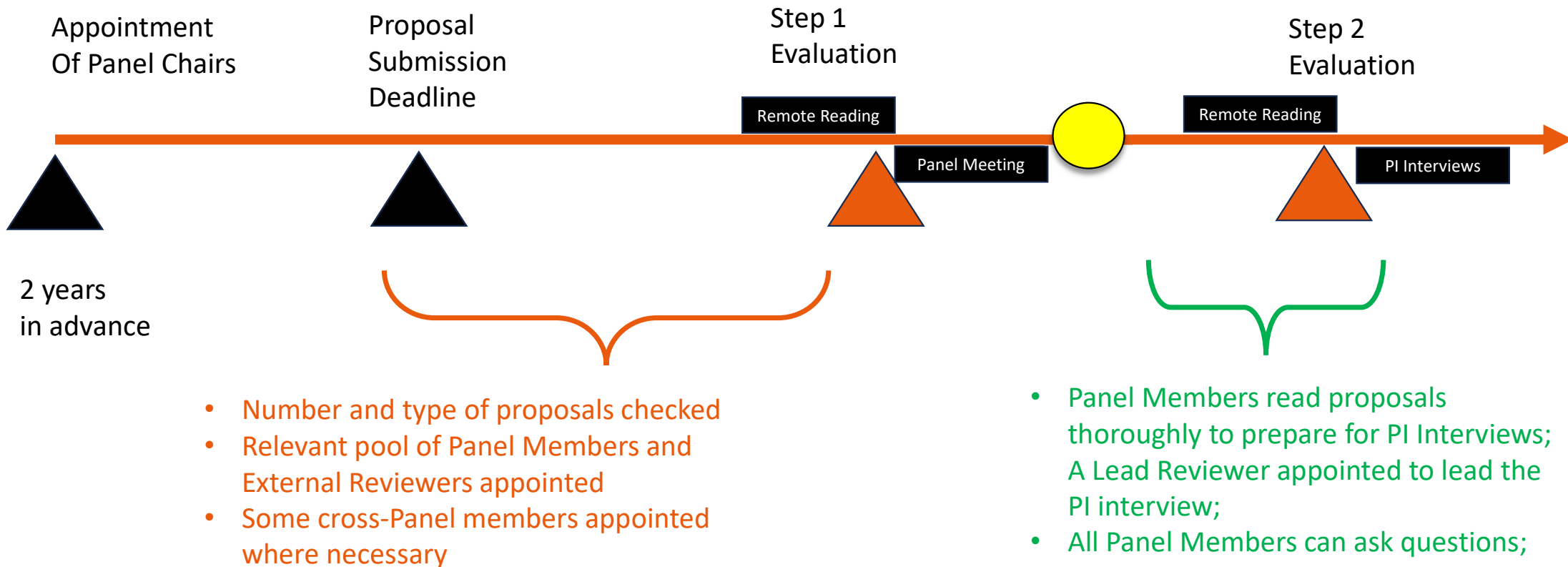


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# Outline

- Typical Evaluation Process Outline
  - Some Emerging Tips
  - Conclusions

# Typical Process Outline





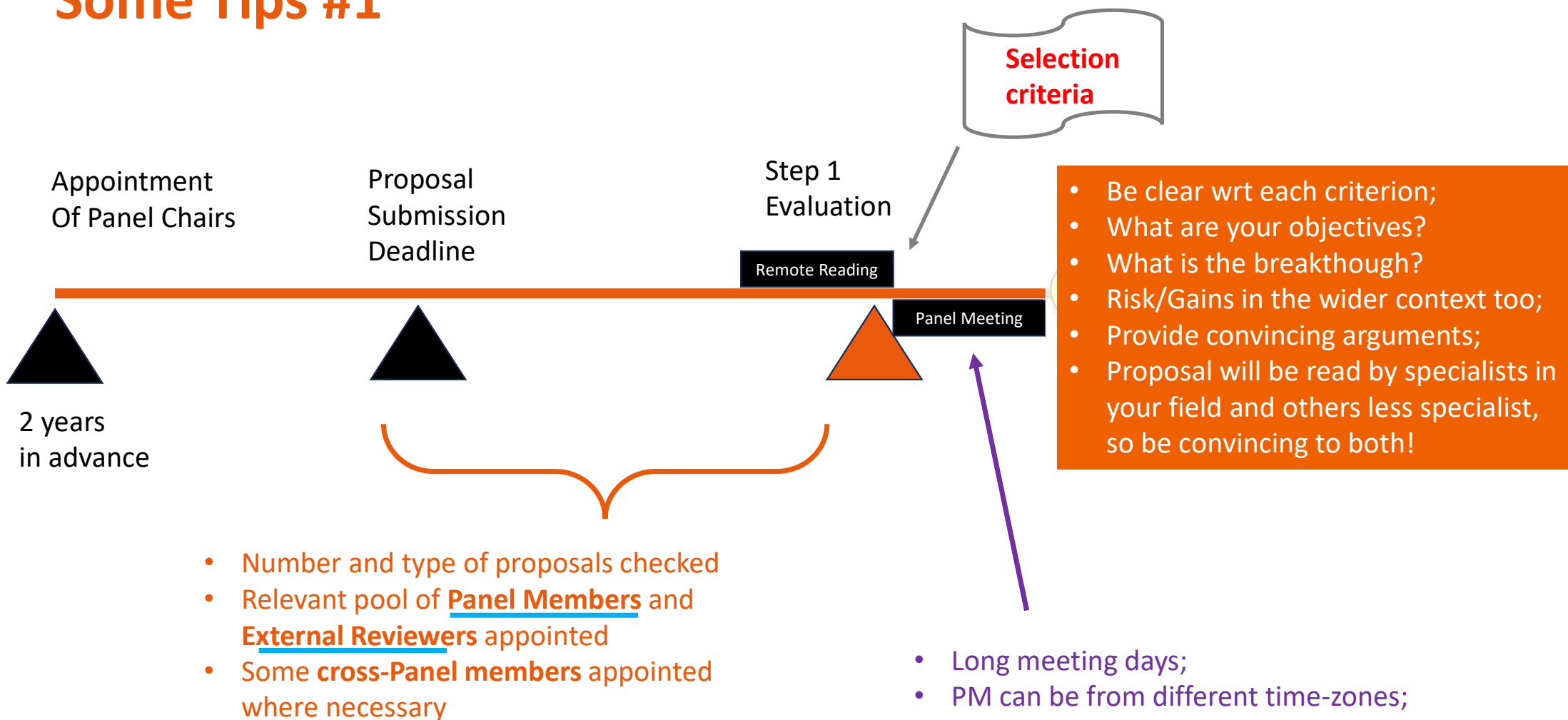
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# Some Tips #1



# Typical Process Outline

Appointment  
Of Panel Chairs

2 years  
in advance

- Ensure B2 proposal includes a detailed budget with convincing arguments for funds requested;
- Check well 'Interview instructions' e.g. timing, number of slides etc.
- Answer explicitly to questions being asked in a concise yet *convincing* way;

Step 2  
Evaluation

Remote Reading

PI Interviews

- Panel Members read proposals thoroughly to prepare for PI Interviews; A Lead Reviewer appointed to lead the PI interview;
- All Panel Members can ask questions;

# So Where do you start from ?



Find the funding scheme that is suited for you



#### ERC Starting Grant

For promising early-career researchers with 2 to 7 years experience after PhD

[Explore >](#)



#### ERC Consolidator Grant

For excellent researchers with 7 to 12 years experience after PhD

[Explore](#)



#### ERC Advanced Grant

For established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements

[Explore >](#)



#### ERC Proof of Concept

For ERC grant holders to explore the innovation potential of their ERC frontier research project

[Explore >](#)

## ERC Work Programme 2024



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# Some basic tips:

- Study **ERC Programme** very well; Understand **Criteria** that need to be addressed;
- Use a good **TITLE** for your research proposal and a convincing **summary/** abstract; Do not underestimate the impact your title & summary have as these are the first impressions of what your research is all about and what it intends to do;
- Structure your proposal according to the selection criteria; use appropriate **section headings** to help reviewers see how you are addressing criteria;
- Remember a (good) **picture** is worth a 1000 words;
- If proposal is **interdisciplinary**, you should include a statement as to **which panels** best match your proposal and which *one* panel is the main reviewing panel to which you are submitting. Check **Panel Keywords**.



# Some tips:



## 1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility



## 2. Principal Investigator(s)

- Both are scored by the PM / External Reviewers so **both are very important!** Give importance to be convincing in both!
- Some PIs tend to put more emphasis on *1. Research Project*. **Avoid this temptation.**

# Some tips – make it easy for PM!

## 1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility



Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

*Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project*

*To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?*

*To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?*

e.g. How it contributes to relevant high level EU policies; How will science/society benefit with research results?

e.g. ERC supports ambitious projects, so you need to convincingly demonstrate that your proposal is indeed **ambitious** compared to others in your area;

Need to clearly argue/ demonstrate **how** your set objectives will contribute to results substantially beyond the SOA i.e. not just incremental 10

# Some tips – make it easy for PM!



## Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (for Synergy Grants, based on the Extended Synopsis)?

To what extent do the Principal Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled (for Synergy Grants, based on the Extended Synopsis)?

To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the research proposal)?

To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (based on the research proposal)?

e.g. provide a good explanation of your scientific approach /research methodology outlining how the set objectives can be systematically achieved; Add a clear flowchart/diagram.

e.g. provide good arguments backed up with WP descriptions/timing to explain how the goals can be achieved; Convincingly demonstrate the % of time that the PI will be committed to the project;

# Some tips – make it easy for PM!



## 2. Principal Investigator(s)

### Intellectual capacity and creativity

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) provide evidence of creative and original thinking?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

**Keep your Biography/Webpage updated**

e.g. mention **awards** for research performed not just publications; invitations to international research activities;

Original: is your current on-going work proceeding independently of your PhD supervisor?

Demonstrate your expertise by listing relevant publications; outlining reviewing activities; research groups being lead etc. If there is 'missing' expertise, add suitable members to your research team; List your involvement in being part of and/or leading research projects/groups, even at the national level;

# Some tips – Step '2' Interview

- Check well *Interview* instructions

- *Timing*
- *Number of slides*
- *Content allowed*



- Deliver presentation within time allowed;
- Be prepared to answer questions related to **budget** in particular to clarify amounts requested;
- Answer questions being asked in a concise yet **convincing** way;



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# Take-home Message



- Study well 'ERC Funding Programme' & the ***criteria*** of respective ERC Grant;
- Plan well in advance as ***sufficient time*** is required to address all criteria convincingly yet concisely;
- Start..... ***Just start*** and the rest will ***follow***;
- For further clarifications, consult your ***NCPs***!



Prof Jonathan C. Borg

# Thank You For Your Attention