The European Research Council

An overview of ERC Advanced grant and lump sum funding

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An introduction to the ERC

1. What is the ERC
2. How to apply
3. Evaluation Procedure

ERC is….

1. Part of Horizon Europe

EUR 16 billion

ERC budget in Horizon Europe

17%

of the entire
Horizon Europe budget

ERC is….
2. Scientific Council Members

Life Sciences


Prof. Liselotte HØJGAARD (Medicine)


Prof. Dirk INZÉ (Plant Biology)


Prof. Leszek KACZMAREK (Neurobiology)


Prof. Geneviève ALMOUZNI (Biology)


Prof. Luke O'NEILL (Biochemistry & Immunology)


Prof. Jesper SVEJSTRUP Vice-President (Biology)


Prof. Maria LEPTIN ERC President (Biology)


Prof. Eveline CRONE Vice-President (Psychology)


Prof. Eystein JANSEN Vice-President (Earth Science)

Social Sciences and Humanities


Prof. Giovanni SARTOR (Law)


Prof. Harriet BULKELY (Geography)


Prof. Gerd GIGERENZER (Psychology)


Prof. Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL (History)


Prof. Milena ŽIC FUCHS (Linguistics)

Physical Siences and Engineering


Prof. Tom HENZINGER (Computer Science)


Prof. Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU (High-Energy Astrophysics)


Prof. Björn OTTERSTEN (Electric Engineering)


Prof. Nicola SPALDIN (Materials Theory)


Prof. Ben FERINGA (Organic Chemistry)


Prof. Sylvie LORENTE (Mechanical Engineering)


Prof. Alice VALKÁROVÁ (Physics)


Prof. László LOVÁSZ (Mathematics)

ERC is….
3. The ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA)

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure

Implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council and manages ERC operations

By courtesy of Art & Build Architect / Montois Partners / credits: S. Brison

ERC in figures

Over **13,000**
top researchers funded since the ERC creation in 2007

Over **90,000**
researchers and other professionals employed in ERC research teams

Over **2,400**
patents and other IPR applications generated by ERC funding

Over **400**
start-ups identified as founded or co-founded by ERC grantees

Over **220,000**
articles from ERC projects published in scientific journals

Over **900** research institutions hosting ERC grantees – universities, public or private research centres in the EU or Associated Countries

89
nationalities of grant holders

14 Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

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ERC Basics:

1 researcher, 1 Host Institution, 1 project, 1 selection criterion

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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

LONG TERM GRANTS

TO AMBITIOUS PIONEERING PROJECTS
IN ANY FIELD OF FRONTIER RESEARCH

- Life Sciences
- Physical Sciences and Engineering
- Social Sciences and Humanities

ERC grants are substantial long-term grants …

Starting Grants
starters (2-7 years after PhD)
- normal max € 1.5 Mio for 5 years

Consolidator Grants
Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
- normal max € 2 Mio for 5 years

Advanced Grants
track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
- normal max € 2.5 Mio for 5 years

Reasons for additional funds:
- start-up costs for moving to Europe
- access to large facilities
- major equipment
- other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.

Synergy Grants
2 – 4 Principal Investigators
- normal max € 10.0 Mio for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/AC

Proof-of-Concept
bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum €150,000 for ERC grant holders

… with excellence as the sole evaluation criterion!

Excellence of the Research Project

- ✓ Ground-breaking nature
- ✓ Scientific Impact
- ✓ Scientific approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- ✓ Intellectual Capacity
- ✓ Creativity
- ✓ Commitment

Panels will primarily evaluate the excellence of the project, while evaluating the above aspects of the PI

2024 ERC Work program

Grant	Objectives and Principal investigator	Max amount and duration of the grant	Type of Funding
ADG	Support for excellent Principal Investigator at the career stage at which they are already established research leaders with recognized work record of research achievements. Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambitious, and feasibility of their research proposal. An ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator is expected to be an active researcher and to have a track record of significant research achievements.	Up to EUR 2 500 000 for a period of 5 years. Additional funding up to EUR 1 000 000.	Lump sum

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Step 1: Get the information (early on)!

- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's Funding and Tender portal and download the templates

  https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

- Read the call documents (Information for Applicants, Work Programme, Frequently Asked Questions) that explain how to prepare your proposal
- Talk to your Institution's grant office
- Talk to ERC grantees
- Contact the ERCEA to ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline– e.g., ERC-2024-ADG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
- Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)

Host Institution

- Your choice (in an EU Member State/Associated Country)
- You can change it during the project's life
- Negotiate with the HI (your position, equipment, administrative support, access to infrastructure, etc.)

Rumour: *The quality/fame of the HI is increasing my chances/scores.*

✘**NOT true**: the HI is not an evaluation criterion!

Step 2: Choose your Panel!

Evaluation Panel Structure 2024

Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Physical Sciences & Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences
- PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials
- PE6 Computer Science and Informatics
- PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering
- PE8 Products and Process Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Texts and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts

Step 3: Start writing …

PART A – admin forms online

Section 1 Proposal and PI info
Section 2 Host Institution info
Section 3 Budget
Section 4 Ethics
Section 5 Call-specific Questions

Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equiv. (StG & CoG)

If applicable:
- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory info on ethical issues

Seen by the panel

PART B1 – submitted as .pdf

Abstract and Cross-Panel explanation	1 p.
Extended Synopsis	5 p.
CV & Track Record	up to 4 p.

PART B2 – submitted as .pdf

Scientific Proposal	14 p.
Funding ID	1 p.

CV and Track Record

No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles

1. Personal details: PI's education and key qualifications, current position(s) and relevant previous positions they have held.
2. Research achievements (<=10) and Peer Recognition

*The applicant can provide a **short, factual narrative** on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project.*

- demonstrating advancement in the field & emphasis on more recent achievements
- prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.

3. Additional information:

Relevant additional information on their research career to provide context when assessing their research achievements and peer recognition.

- career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
- other noteworthy contributions to research community

Evaluation **primarily focused** on the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the **proposed research project**

No numerical scoring of the Principal Investigator, instead an overall assessment of PI's intellectual capacity and creativity, with a focus **on the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project**

When writing your CV and Track Record

- Use the recommended template as much as possible.
- Remember that the CV/Track Record part of B1 are important, so do put time and effort in them!
- Convince the panel that you are the forefront of your research field – this may be (very) different for different people. Highlight your key strengths and accomplishments.
- Explain what has been your own contribution to your publications and how they have impacted the field (incl. papers published without your PhD and postdoc supervisor). Quality is way more important than quantity!
- Explain publishing habits in your field and country if needed.
- If you know that you have gaps or other issues in your CV, explain them.
- Describe accurately any other activity which can indicate scientific maturity.

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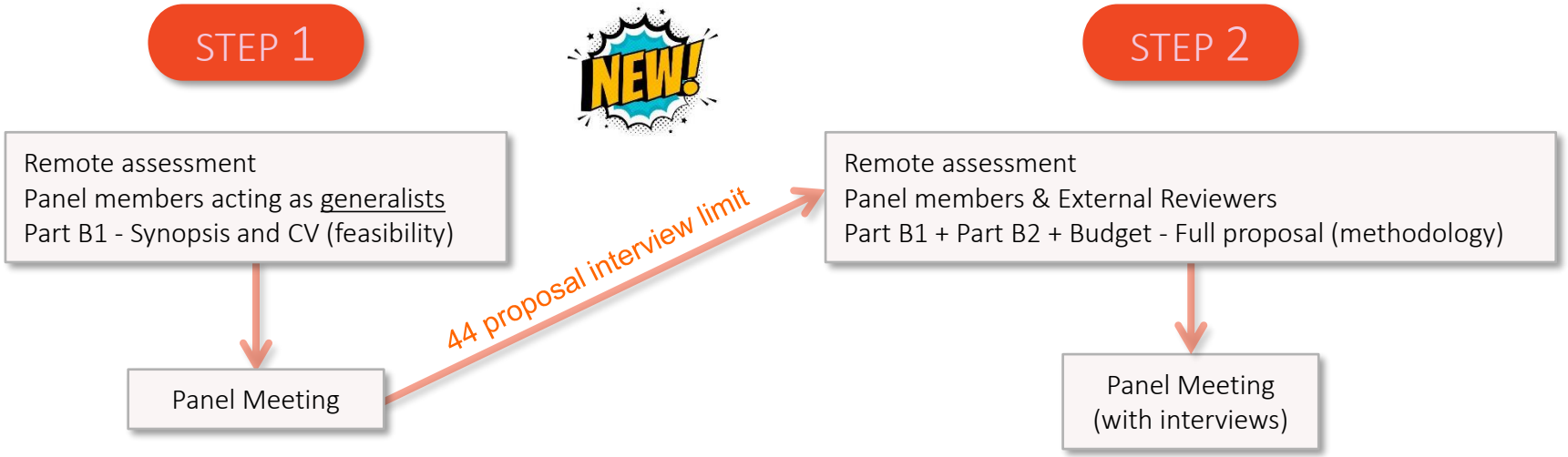
3. **Evaluation Procedure**

Evaluation procedure and scoring system - **individual** grants



A The proposal is of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

B The proposal is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

C The proposal is not of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

Feedback to applicants

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I did not get the grant, can I apply next year?

In order to make the evaluation process more effective, in 2014 the Scientific Council introduced re-submission restrictions.

Research Project

- Streamlined evaluation questions
- No explicit reference to ‘high-risk/high-gain’
  - Instead: ‘ground-breaking, ambitious, and feasible’.
  - The ERC will always encourage risky research.
- No explicit reference to ‘novel methodologies’
  - ‘Novel methodologies’ is an element that may be positive but is not strictly necessary for an excellent proposal.

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility

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)?***

*To what extent is the outlined scientific approach **feasible** bearing in mind the groundbreaking nature and ambition of the proposed research (Step 1)?*

*To what extent are the proposed research **methodology and working arrangements** appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (Step 2)?*

*To what extent are the **proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment** adequate and properly justified (Step 2)?*

Part B1 is all about finding the right balance

STEP 1

Remote assessment by **Panel members** of **section 1 – Synopsis and CV** (B1)

Part B1 gives the first impression of your project/yourself and will determine if you pass to Step 2. Thus,

- avoid jargon
- no excessive highlighting
- do not oversell it
- make sure there are no typos (or track changes)
- make sure that there are proper legends to the figures/tables as well as that the figure axes are clearly visible

Questions to ask yourself
a) Research Project

- Is my project new, innovative, bringing in new solutions/theories?
- Does it promise to go substantially beyond the state of the art? Focus on the ground-breaking nature! Something significant, that will last, not just something that will be improved in 5 years (one major step better than several small steps).
- Why is my project important? Answering a complete question (not only ‘what’ but also ‘why’) - Think Big! Make sure that your idea needs an ERC to do it!
- How can I prove/support my case? Do I have a hypothesis? Do I have supporting evidence? Have I proven the project's feasibility? Are my goals realistic?
- Is it timely? (Why wasn't it done in the past?)
- What's the risk? Is it justified by a substantial potential gain? Do I have a plan for managing the risk? Make sure that your risk is not too early on in the project. Have I proposed alternatives? (proof of maturity?)
- Have I given a realistic picture of my collaborations? Show that you can drive the collaborations but that it is *you* who will be leading the project.

Questions to ask yourself
b) Principal Investigator

- Why am I the best/only person to carry it out? Know your competitors – what is the state of play, and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding compared to them?
- Am I able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget? List prior research endeavours, explain your role and contribution.
- Am I internationally active? Speaker in international conferences, served in committees, have become an editor, given expert service, etc. Do I have any international collaborations?
- Have I shown my scientific leadership in my CV and track record?

Intellectual capacity and creativity

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the **ability** to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide **evidence of creative and original thinking**?

To what extent does the PI have the **required scientific expertise and capacity** to successfully execute the project?

Part B2 is for filling in the details

- Do not repeat the synopsis, go into details on your methodology and work plan!
- Explain your hypothesis or provide supporting evidence (if it exists)
- Do and redo the structure of the WPs* until you are fully convinced
- Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences to the state-of-the-art are clear and referenced - show you did your homework!
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risks.
- Make sure that there is an obvious link between B1 and B2!

Part B2 is for filling in the details

- Make the project "easy to read and attractive" – use paragraphs and correct typos!
- Check coherence of figures
- Use full space available (14 p.)
- Make sure you give full references (these are excluded from page count so there is no excuse)
- You should add/describe some sort of timeline
- Think the project as a team - explain involvement of team members and collaborators (be careful though: ERC proposals are NOT consortium proposals)

Explain properly your resources and budget

- Budget analysis carried out in Step 2 evaluation.
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified.
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal-by-proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts).
- Costs are often cut when they have not been explained!
- Panels do not “micro-manage” project finances.
- Awards made on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis: no negotiations.
- Ask for funding for Open Access – this is obligatory in HorizonEurope!

I have been invited for an interview – now what?

- Have clear and representative slides and focus on SCIENCE!
- Anticipate questions. Prepare also for cases where you do not have an answer ….
- Know the details of your proposal and methods, as well as your research area – who are your main competitors/collaborators?
- If you have new work on the topic – present it!
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Typical reasons for rejection

Research Project

- Scope: Too narrow ←→ too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental research
- Collaborative project, several PIs
- Work plan not detailed enough/unclear
- Insufficient risk management
- Part B2 did not give sufficient information on the methodology

Principle Investigator

- Insufficient track-record

Interview

- Vaguely addressed questions
- Panel not convinced it's their own idea/project
- Lack of supporting evidence
- Unaddressed issues

If rejected, KEEP TRYING

Reapplications have a higher success rate

Use the feedback from evaluation reports

Advanced Grants 2024* lump sum model – General principles

- The groundbreaking and ambitious nature of ERC grants will not change
- Applicants should not change the way they imagine, write up and structure their project
- Part B.1 (Extended Synopsis, CV and track record) and Part B.2 (full proposal) are the same under the actual cost and lump sum models
- Evaluation criteria will remain the same based on scientific excellence only
- The lump sum model will have no impact on the quality of the scientific evaluation

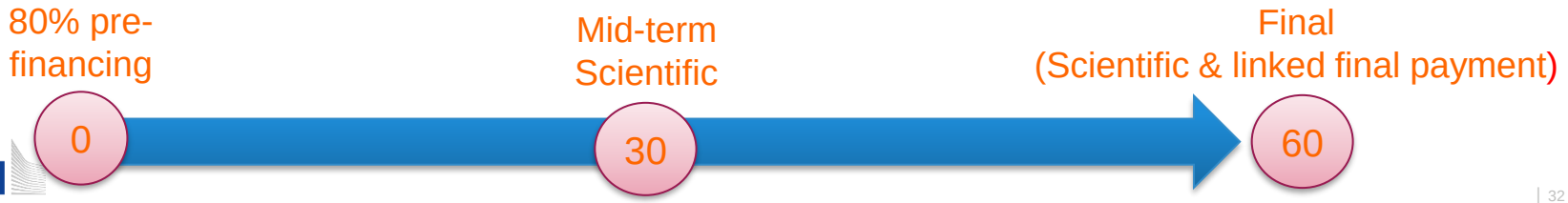
*Starting and Consolidator Grants 2024 will continue to run under the actual cost model

The ERC lump sum model

- Under the ERC model, **a single lump sum contribution** is foreseen for the entirety of the project
- The lump sum **amount is defined by project** (different for each project) and capped at funding scheme ceiling (2,5 Mio normal maximum grant amount + up to 1 Mio additional funding)
- If selected for funding based on the scientific evaluation, **resources needed and related cost estimates are assessed and approved by the panel**
- No more claims of actual costs incurred during the project lifetime
- Deviations to the work plan can be reported, amendments to the grant agreement are possible as in the actual cost model

The ERC lump sum model

- 80% of the lump sum contribution is paid out as **pre-financing**
- Principal Investigators **report on scientific implementation** of the project at mid-term and at the end)
- A **final payment** is made (20%) is made if all efforts have been made towards implementation of the project, i.e.
    - all essential tasks have been completed, and/or
    - equivalent tasks have been carried out and/or
    - deviations have been justified



The ERC lump sum model – Changes in submission form

- **Additional declaration by applicants and host institutions** that cost estimates have been established following usual accounting principles and applicable eligibility conditions, and that principles of sound financial management have been applied
- **Budget table**: a new column to record the number of person-months per staff category, for a better view of personnel costs
- **Budget narrative**: the section ‘use of resources’ under the budget table is **more structured**, for a better overview of budget
- It will be **important to build a budget based on reliable cost estimates**, but the budget breakdown does not need to be more detailed than a well-constructed budget of a proposal under the actual cost model

Budget table (Part A) - Information on person-month

	PI			Senior staff			Post Docs			Students			Other staff			A. Total personnel costs/€
Beneficiary Short Name	Person Months	Cost/€	Average salary	Person Months	Cost/€	Average salary	Person Months	Cost/€	Average salary	Person Months	Cost/€	Average salary	Person Months	Cost/€	Average salary	
Participant X																
Participant Y																
Linked 3rd party X																
Linked 3rd party Y																
Total																

New cost fields for AdG 2024

- Person months
- Average salary (automatic calculation)

B. Subcontracting Costs/€ (No indirect costs)	C.1 Travel and subsistence	C.2 Equipment Equipment costs (including major equipment under additional funding)	Consumables incl. fieldwork and animal costs	Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination	Other additional direct costs	C.3 Total other goods, works and services	C. Total Purchase costs/€	D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services/€ (No indirect costs)	E. Indirect Cost/€	Total Eligible Costs	Requested EU contribution /€

All other cost categories remain the same

Narrative resources section (Part A) – New structure

Section C. Resources	
A. Personnel	**D. Internally invoiced goods and services**
Maximum 2500 characters allowed	Maximum 1000 characters allowed
B. Subcontracting (if applicable)	**Request for additional funding justification**
Maximum 1000 characters allowed	Maximum 1000 characters allowed
C. Purchase cost ***(Travel - Equipment - Consumables - Field work - Animal costs - Publications - Other additional direct costs)***	**Funding from other sources**
Maximum 3500 characters allowed	Maximum 1000 characters allowed

- Single box split in 6 sub-sections (text boxes) to provide a more structured format for PIs to justify
- Overall character limit to justify resources extended from 8.000 to 10.000 character

Summary of Novelties – Work Programme 2024

Assessment	No prescriptive PI profiles	Evaluation Procedure	Lump Sum Pilot	Panels
FOCUS ON RESEARCH • Ground-breaking • Ambitious • Feasible	• Up to 10 research outputs • Short narrative • Career breaks, diverse paths	• Up to 44 proposals in step 2 (exc. SyG) • 'A not invited' can reapply next year	• AdG only • One amount • Payment based on the work done (not success) • Additional funding and portability	• New Panel – SH8 • Changes in description of LS3/LS5 panels

2024 Call Calendar

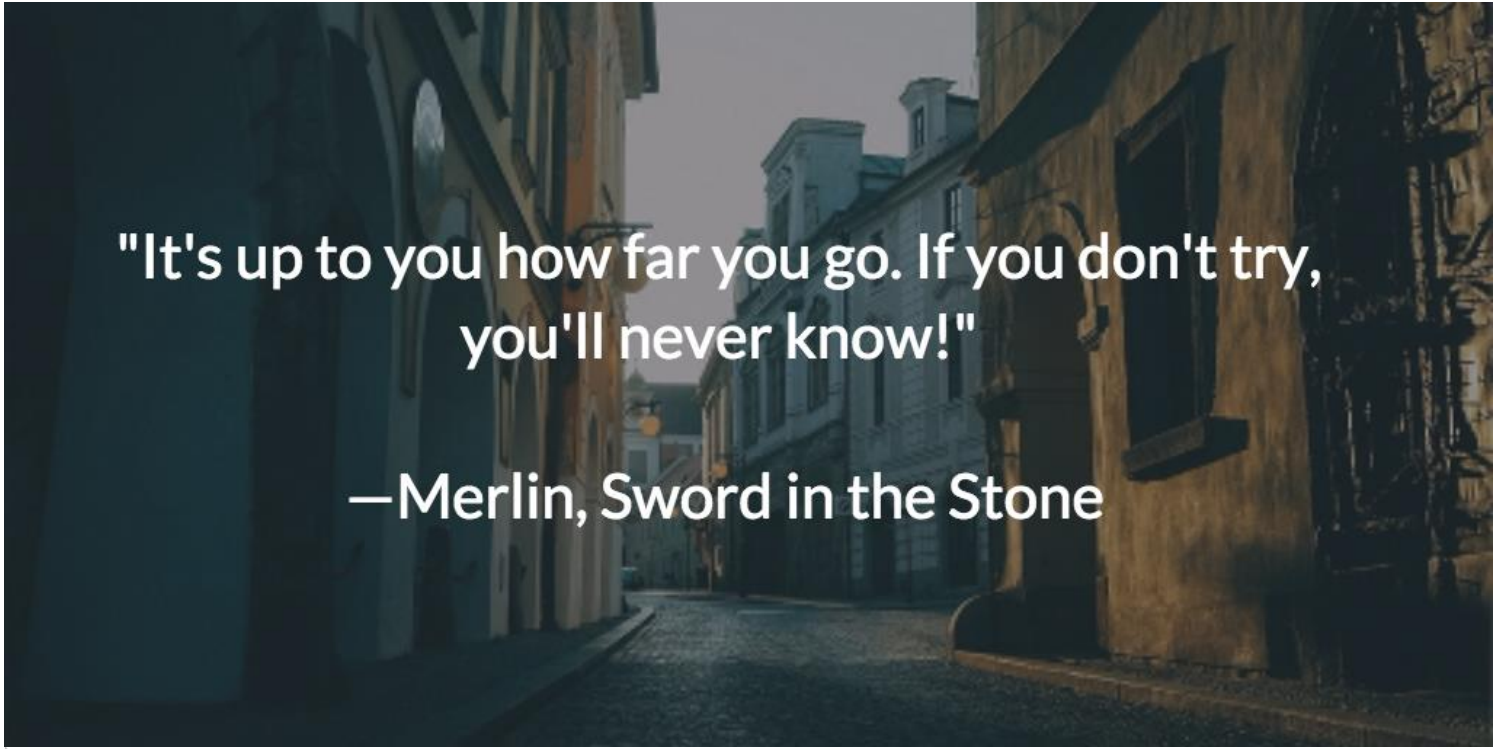
ERC calls	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2024-StG	11/07/2023	24/10/2023
Synergy Grants ERC-2024-SyG	12/07/2023	08/11/2023
Consolidator Grants ERC-2024-CoG	12/09/2023	12/12/2023
Advanced Grants ERC-2024-AdG	29/05/2024	29/08/2024

Where Can You Find More Information?

Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application
- The interview
- How the evaluation works

Take a chance and apply!



Thank You!

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