

6. Questions

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact

- What is the key concept of your project?
- Why is this project important? Consider science in your field, adjacent fields and potential users.
- What was the major breakthrough in the past 5 years in your field? You can only refer to your own work if you can substantiate this.
- Why is this project timely?
- What are the innovative (novel and original) aspects of the concept and/or approach and/or novel development across disciplines in this project? Please note that the panels are not selecting incremental research.
- Why will this project succeed where others may fail? Check what your competitors and colleagues are doing.
- What will be the short and long term impact of the obtained results on the field of the project and adjacent fields?
- What will be the novel insights or novel concepts obtained?
- To what extent will you change the current research landscape?
- What are possible utilities in the future?
- What are the transition activities that you will undertake to bring the results closer to the market ?

Challenges/risks and feasibility

- What are the major challenges in your project? (intellectual / scholarly, scientific and technical challenges)?
Panels are mainly selecting high-risk/high-gain projects for funding. There are always exceptions - sometimes to dismay of panel members - that a brilliant researcher working at prestigious institutions is selected for funding, but these are exceptions. Therefore be aware why some of these challenges are of a high-risk nature (such as scholarly or research ambitious) and needed to obtain the high-gain.
- What are the key intermediate goals and the impact of these goals and results on research?
- Why is partial progress in one or more of your aims/objectives/work packages already leading to important contributions in relation to the challenge that is being addressed in the proposal?
- What preliminary evidence is available and why does it support the key hypothesis and/or concept?
- Which key factor is crucial for your project to succeed?
- What are the intermediate stages where results may require adjustments to the project planning? What are the alternatives in case adjustments have to be made?
- Do you have the knowledge and expertise and/or access to the methods, facilities, material and data needed for carrying out the experiments?
- Who are your key team members and what is their role?
- Who are your external experts and what is their role?
- Are you the leading researcher with the right expertise and knowledge?

Project plan and methodology

- **How will you synthesise the outcomes of the different aims/objectives/work-packages to an integrated understanding relevant for the overall challenge?**
- How are the expected outcomes relevant for the defined objectives and the challenge?
- Are your chosen methodologies such as strategy, methods, technologies appropriate for achieving the objectives and therefore obtaining the promised results, shedding light on the Big Picture to be addressed through the proposal?
- What will you do if a novel method¹ becomes available in the coming years? Answer: for example accelerate?
- Why are you not using method A?
- Are you able to measure it?
- What about statistics?
- What is your control? Is this the right control? Control being control sample, control experiment, control data.....

Resources

- Do you need the requested personnel for the project?
The panel will not discuss the height of salary costs etc. but will discuss whether all resources are needed to carry out the project. Be aware of any personnel that your university specifically specified as needed as for example support staff. Understand why support staff will actually free up the time of the researchers to work on the project and not on support issues directly related to the project; like booking trips, organizing the lab/fieldwork etc.
- What is the breakdown in equipment for carrying out the project?
In particular when a request is made for the extra budget. Understand how equipment costs are computed by taking into account percentage of use and depreciation rules.
- In the first calls the panel asked applicants whether they can carry out the project if the panel cut the budget with 33%..... You can, but you will not achieve the overarching aim in 5 years time.

Principal Investigator

- What have been your personal major scientific achievement in the past 5 years?
- Why is this an ambitious project, even for you?
- What have been your major achievements after you became an independent group leader?
- Why are you the right person for the project?
- Are you truly independent? Do you decide about the project plan, your commitment to the project, the budget, hiring personnel and publishing? Or does your boss decide? Check Annex 2 in the Information for Applicants.
- Why do you consider yourself to be a main author?