DRAFT - ERC STARTING GRANT (StG) TRAINING PROGRAM 2026

SUBMISSION DEADLINE—(expected October 2025)

	Action	What	Date	Time	Location
1	Information session	ERC INSIGHTS & STRATEGIES	03-03-2025	10:00 – 12:00	Agora 1
	Deadline	Deadline for application for the program	28-3-2025	17:00	
2	Checkpoint	PRE-SELECTION	First two weeks of April	n/a	n/a
	Checkpoint	Confirmation of participation	11-4-2025	17:00	n/a
3	Meeting	MEET YOUR SUPPORT GROUP	mid-late April	Individual planning	Individual planning
4	Workshop	WRITE YOUR PROPOSAL LIKE A PRO	8-5-2024	t.b.d.	t.b.d.
5	Guidelines	ETHICS AND DATA MANAGEMENT	13-5-2024	n/a	n/a
6	Information session	BUDGET AND ERC PANELS	20-5-2024	t.b.d.	t.b.d.
7	Review	FEEDBACK FROM SUBJECT EXPERTS, FOCUS ON SCIENTIFIC CONTENT	First two weeks of June	Individual planning	Individual planning
8	Review	FIRST REVIEWS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS & GRANTS OFFICE	July-August	Individual planning	Individual planning
9	Interactive Demo	STARTING SUBMISSION, ENTERING PIC CODE IN THE EC PORTAL	2-9-2024	t.b.d.	t.b.d.
10	Review	FINAL FEEDBACK	2-3 weeks before deadline	Individual planning	Individual planning
	Deadline	Deadline submission step 1	Deadline: t.b.a. (October?)	t.b.a.	EU portal
	Checkpoint	Invitation to the interview round			
11	Training	HONING YOUR PITCH	t.b.d.	t.b.d.	t.b.d.
12	Training	MOCK INTERVIEW	t.b.d.	t.b.d.	t.b.d.

Contact details for IXA-GO, VU Grants Office:

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Grant Advisor: Scott Hayes, s.hayes@vu.nl / 06-395 902 96
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Website: https://vunl.sharepoint.com/sites/ResearchFundingValorisation

STEP 1: ERC INSIGHTS & STRATEGIES

What: This information session by RVO (the Netherlands Enterprise Agency) offers general insights into the ERC Starting Grant call, including requirements for the researcher's profile and research idea. We'll discuss examples of funded proposals to illustrate what it takes to secure a grant. Open to all university members. **Expected Outcome**: Participants can determine their eligibility for the ERC grant and assess their chances of success. **Delivered by**: IXA-GO in collaboration with RVO.

STEP 2: PRE-SELECTION

What: This program supports up to 10 participants per faculty. Faculties are responsible for selecting these candidates. Participants are selected based on their CV, abstract, and a letter of support from their department head. **Expected Outcome**: To select participants with a high likelihood of securing the grant, who have strong departmental support. **Communicated by**: Faculties (IXA-GO will be notified).

STEP 3: MEET YOUR SUPPORT GROUP

What: Selected participants are introduced to their grant advisors and (depending on faculty) their committee members who will support them throughout the application process. Initial meetings will focus on discussing profiles, research ideas, proposal narratives and collaboration methods. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will receive hands-on guidance from their grant advisor and develop a pitch or project summary for the next workshop. **Delivered by**: Grant advisors will contact participants and introduce them to the committee members.

STEP 4: WRITE YOUR PROPOSAL LIKE A PRO

What: This workshop covers the evaluation criteria, ERC jargon, and application form structure. Presenters will share writing tips, do's and don'ts, and best practices, with input from a guest speaker who is an ERC laureate. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will gain the skills to craft strong proposals (B1 and B2), effectively use visuals, and write compelling narratives for track records and CVs. **Delivered by**: Scott Hayes (IXA-GO) and a guest speaker (an ERC laureate).

STEP 5: ETHICS AND DATA MANAGEMENT

What: Participants receive written guidelines detailing the ethical and data management aspects of their proposals, with practical examples and general information. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will know how to draft ethical and data management sections, understand VU and EU regulations, and identify contacts for further questions. **Developed by**: LEAR, IXA-GO, BETHCIE, and RDM.

STEP 6: BUDGET & ERC PANELS

What: Learn how to design a 5-year ERC StG budget with examples, understand the types of costs involved, and gain insights into ERC panel composition to choose the right panel for your project. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will know how to start creating their budget and who to contact for further guidance. They'll also understand how to tailor proposals to convince the chosen ERC Panel. **Delivered by**: Fleur Verbiest (IXA-GO) and project control.

STEP 7: FEEDBACK FROM SUBJECT EXPERTS (FOCUS: SCIENTIFIC CONTENT)

What: Participants are encouraged to seek feedback on the novelty and feasibility of their scientific approach from at least two senior researchers in their field. These reviewers can be internal or external. Ask your departmental head if you would like help in finding reviewers. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will check the novelty and refine the scientific elements of their proposal based on received feedback. **Delivered by**: The participant takes the lead in organizing these reviews. Grant advisors can provide additional support.

STEP 8: FIRST REVIEWS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS & GRANTS OFFICE

What: ERC committee members and IXA-GO grant advisors will review proposals (B1 and B2), providing feedback on the narrative, layout, structure, readability, and alignment with evaluation criteria. Meetings will be held to discuss feedback in detail. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will improve their proposals based on comprehensive feedback. **Delivered by**: VU ERC committee members (two per project) and IXA-GO (at least one grant advisor).

STEP 9: STARTING SUBMISSION, ENTERING PIC CODE IN THE EC PORTAL

What: Hands on guidance through the submission process in the portal, including entering the PIC code. **Expected Outcome**: Avoid last-minute issues with the EC portal. **Delivered by**: Martijn van Houten (LEAR-IXA-GO).

STEP 10: FINAL FEEDBACK

What: Participants will send their final proposal drafts to internal reviewers, ERC committee members, and grant advisors for a last round of feedback. **Expected Outcome**: Fine-tune the final details of the proposal before submission. **Delivered by**: ERC committee members, IXA-GO, and ideally internal reviewers from the department.

FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE SELECTED FOR THE INTERVIEW

STEP 11: HONING YOUR PITCH

What: Participants who pass to the second round will receive one on one training from a professional instructor on preparing and delivering an excellent presentation. **Expected Outcome**: Participants will understand what constitutes a strong presentation for the interview. **Delivered by**: Rikkert Stuve (TextConsultant).

STEP 12: MOCK INTERVIEW

What: Participants will experience a realistic mock interview followed by detailed feedback from ERC committee members, grant advisors, and potentially RVO. **Expected Outcome**: Enhance the narrative of the pitch, prepare for common questions, and boost confidence. **Delivered by**: ERC committee members and IXA-GO.