

# FRONTIERS

science journalism initiative

## Tips to submit a successful proposal



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# About the FRONTIERS Programme

## Objective

To empower science journalists to deepen their expertise in science coverage and especially in frontier science, and improve their reporting skills.

## Key goals

- Advancing personal growth and skill development in science journalism.
- Fostering networking between science journalists and leading researchers and institutions.
- Promoting nuanced, critical and impactful coverage of frontier science.

## Strategy

Fellowships for science journalist residencies in research institutions

## Important note

The FRONTIERS Fellowship Programme is not a dissemination or public relation initiative but an independent professional development programme, supported by a competitive grant of ERC, designed to elevate science journalism as a discipline. The emphasis is on storytelling and accurate reporting of cutting-edge science.

# FRONTIERS Fellowships key features

## **Flexible duration**

Between 3 and 5 month

## **All-encompassing funding**

Covers stipend, travel, and other necessary expenses, ensuring participants focus entirely on their projects without financial concerns.

## **Distributed geographical location**

Residencies may take place in research institutions in any EU Member State or in a country associated with the EU's Horizon Europe Programme

## **Broad scientific scopus**

Residency projects may be proposed in all scientific areas

# FRONTIERS Tools and Resources

[Curated database of Hosting Institutions](#): a starting point for exploring potential collaborations with leading researchers and institutions in frontier science.

[Database of ERC projects by country](#): a database of ongoing ERC projects to inspire your identification of a frontier science topic.

[Frontiers residency programme guide](#): a comprehensive guidance on how you should submit your application.

[Frontier science](#): a video crash course on what is frontier science.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#): a page with answers to most common questions.

## Pro Tip



While the database is a valuable resource, applicants are encouraged to explore additional sources for host institutions. The geographical and disciplinary diversity is considered as an additional criterion for the selection of the fundable proposals.

# Eligibility criteria

## Who can apply

1. Professional science journalists with demonstrated experience, including freelancers and staff journalists.
2. Non-specialized journalists with a strong interest in reporting on frontier science topics who want to enhance their expertise.

## Who cannot apply

Non-practicing journalists, communication officers, PR professionals, scientists, and researchers—including those in science communication and journalism—who are not working as journalists.

## Important note

Applications from journalists whose permanent residence is in Russia, Belarus, or non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine will not be accepted. For more information, visit [this page](#).

# Important application requirements

- A clear, original proposal idea ***related to frontier science***.
- A ***commitment to completing the fellowship programme***, refraining from working during the fellowship period to fully dedicate your time to it, and attending the training workshops planned as part of the project.
- ***Detailed information on the selected host researcher and institution***, including the type of research conducted and how it qualifies as frontier science. This information will be a critical factor in evaluating the proposal.



## Pro Tip

Ensure your proposal reflects your passion for science journalism and your eagerness to grow through this programme.

# The pathway for a FRONTIERS project

1. Select a topic and an institution
2. Write a strong proposal

# Project development pathway / 1

## Idea

- Start with a Question. What topic in frontier science fascinates you?
- Check for Relevance. Ensure your idea aligns with frontier science. See "[How to Identify a Frontier Science Topic](#)".
- Make a list of questions your topic could address and refine the most compelling one.
- Perform a «gap analysis»: which kind of information do I lack to successfully cover this topic?

## Partner

- [Identify a possible host institution](#) and a researcher conducting frontier science research in your selected topic
- Contact them to assess their availability to host you.
- Collect detailed information about the researcher's expertise and how their work qualifies as frontier science

## Preparation

- Conduct, when possible, a preliminary interview with the scientist who will host you (or at least with the press officer of the institution). Ask questions on how their research fits with your goals..
- Agree on a list of activities you will conduct during your residency (interviews, participation in the research activities, journal clubs, workshops and conferences. etc)



# Project development pathway /2

## Draft

- Begin with a clear outline of objectives, methods, and expected impact.
- Describe goals and actions that will allow you to reach them.
- If you have time, share the draft with the host researcher or the press officer of the host institution.
- [Draft your budget.](#)

## Review

- Ask for «peer-review»: share your proposal with colleagues or a more experienced journalist to gather comments and tips.
- Revise for clarity, conciseness, and impact.

## Submission

- Use the programme's online submission platform.
- Ensure all attachments are formatted as per the submission guideline.
- Ensure all documents needing a signature are duly dated and signed.

# Outline of a successful proposal /1

**Title:** Short, compelling, and reflective of the core idea.

## **Project outline:**

- Clearly define what you aim to achieve during the fellowship.
- Describe your methodology, how you plan to approach and execute your project.
- Justify the requested duration of the fellowship.

**Impact:** explain how the fellowship will enhance your skills and how it will increase your knowledge in the field of frontier science you chose as your topic of interest.

# Outline of a successful proposal /2

**Budget:** Outline estimated costs (aligned with the programme's funding as mentioned in the programme guide).

**Details on host researcher and institution:** Include a description of the researcher's work, the institution's focus areas, and how they align with frontier science.

*Example: "The hosting institution specializes in quantum computing, with my host researcher leading groundbreaking efforts in developing a novel and yet unexplored approach to quantum algorithms for healthcare applications, the focus of my project."*



## Pro Tip

Focus on originality and feasibility. Avoid overly ambitious or generic proposals. Provide a clear and achievable description of your goals.

# How to identify a frontier science topic

## **Check project tools**

Explore the ERC Grantees Map for a better grasp of the frontier science concept.

## **Stay curious**

Keep up with the newest methodological approaches in your field of interest.

## **Engage with the researchers**

Ask if their project fits with the definition of frontier science and to briefly explain why.

## **Leverage social media**

Follow institutions and researchers on social media platforms

## **Collaborate with your editors**

Discuss potential ideas with your editor or peers to refine your topic.

## **Check for alignment**

Ensure your topic fits within the programme's definition of frontier science.



## **Pro Tip**

Choose a topic that aligns with both your personal interests and societal importance. Highlight its potential to inform the public.

# Finding a host institution /1

Start with the **database institutions** in the FRONTIERS website but explore further. Remember that not more than one application for host institution will be selected.

## Other sources for finding a match:

- Personal recommendations from peers, editors, or mentors.
- Independent research on leading institutions in your chosen field.
- Contacts with the press offices of the main research institutions in your field of interest.
- National contact point for the main EU funding initiatives to get suggestions (here is the list for the [Horizon Europe](#) Framework Programme).

# Finding a host institution /2

- Identify institutions that match your topic of interest.
- Ensure the host researcher and institution align with the programme's definition of frontier science.
- Collect information for the proposal

## Information you will need

- Details about the host researcher's expertise and recent projects.
- Description of the host institution's research focus and achievements.



### Pro Tip

When reaching out to a potential host institution, demonstrate alignment between your project goals and the host institution's expertise

# Humanities and Social Sciences

## Frontier science in Humanities and Social Sciences

These fields can produce frontier science through innovative methodologies, interdisciplinary approaches, or groundbreaking insights into societal challenges.

### Verification criteria

- Evaluate the methodology and goals of the host researcher.
- Ensure their work aligns with the definition of frontier science—pioneering, impactful, and addressing previously unexplored areas.

### Information to include

- A detailed description of the host researcher's projects.
- Evidence of innovation or interdisciplinary relevance.



### Pro Tip

Highlight the societal relevance and transformative potential of the research you want to follow.

# Outcomes of your project

## **Flexibility in outcomes**

FRONTIERS is not a dissemination project but a professional development initiative aimed at fostering meaningful growth and impactful independent science journalism. While tangible outcomes are welcomed and should be described in the proposal, they are not mandatory. Nonetheless, you need to identify a clear goal or purpose for your fellowship.

## **Personal growth as an expected outcome**

If personal growth is your primary goal, clearly explain how the fellowship will impact your professional trajectory or on the coverage of your field of interest in your country/region/community.

## **Tangible outcomes**

Books, articles, podcasts, videos, photo essays, or interactive multimedia content, among others.



### **Pro Tip**

Focus on outcomes that align with your professional goals and the program's objectives. Provide measures of impact of your fellowship whenever possible.



# Proposals with multiple host institutions

## When to choose multiple host institutions?

Some projects benefit from the expertise and resources of different institutions or researchers.

## Requirements

- A leading institution and researcher must be identified and ***comply with the frontier science criteria***.
- Additional institutions or researchers must have a clear, complementary role in your project, even when they don't conduct frontier research on their own.
- All institutions must provide a letter of commitment for hosting the fellow.



### Pro Tip

Clearly explain the "fil rouge" that connects all institutions and researchers in your project, emphasizing why this multi-institutional approach is essential for achieving your goals.

# Tips for writing a creative proposal

## **Be specific**

Avoid vague statements. Clearly define your goals and methods.

## **Tell a story**

Frame your proposal as a compelling narrative. Engage reviewers with your vision and curiosity.

## **Highlight relevance**

Address why your chosen topic matters and its significance to society.

## **Edit thoroughly**

Seek feedback from trusted colleagues or mentors. Proofread for clarity and precision.

# Common mistakes to avoid /1

## **Vague objectives**

Ensure your goals are clear and actionable.

## **Ignoring guidelines**

Carefully follow all instructions in the call for applications.

## **Fail to grasp the concept of frontier science**

Avoid assuming basic science or multidisciplinary science as frontier science (it can be, but not always).

## **Poor budget planning**

Present a realistic budget, including a few items like necessities for daily life, lost income, travel costs (including those related to the training workshops of the project itself), etc.

# Common mistakes to avoid /2

## **Messy outline**

Write in a simple, accessible, coherent style.

## **Lack of hosting institution information**

Failing to provide sufficient detail on the hosting researcher and institution can weaken your proposal.

## **Lack of originality**

Avoid overly broad or well-covered topics.

## **Administrative issues**

Double-check and upload all the requested documents, duly signed when needed, before the call deadline (no additional materials will be accepted after the deadline).

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