



What if you could listen in on the panel deciding your research funding?

With GrantLab, you can. This unique, hands-on training course provides deep insights into the grant proposal review process through a highly realistic simulation, from writing a grant to selecting fundable projects.

GrantLab is designed to increase your chances of securing funding by putting you inside the review room.

## Why GrantLab?

Traditional grant-writing workshops focus on rules, templates, and best practices. **GrantLab goes further.**

By immersing participants in every stage of the proposal life cycle — including acting as reviewers and observing a panel discussion about their own submissions — GrantLab develops:

- deeper understanding,
- sharper judgement, and
- long-lasting improvements in proposal quality.

The result is simple: **stronger proposals and more competitive researchers.**



## What does GrantLab offer?

GrantLab consists of:

- **Two intensive in-person training days\***
- A 3–5 week **guided interval** with structured exercises
- A **fully simulated review process**, from idea generation to panel evaluation
- **Individualised, actionable feedback** on participants' project ideas

The GrantLab concept was originally developed at Uppsala University (Sweden) and has demonstrated the ability to measurably increase funding success rates for two decades.



## Who is it for?

GrantLab is tailored for **early-career researchers**, from **PhD students to Associate Professors**, who are preparing to submit — or have recently submitted — their first grant proposals. More experienced applicants looking for a brush-up or deeper understanding of the review process will also benefit from participating.

Participants are encouraged to bring real projects to the course, as this directly enhances their current funding prospects.

## Key Learning Takeaways

After completing *GrantLab*, participants will:

- ✓ Understand **how funders select winning proposals**
- ✓ Have gained **insider knowledge** of the review process
- ✓ Have access to a **toolbox** for crafting stronger proposals
- ✓ Understand how to **interpret and apply reviewer feedback**
- ✓ Significantly **improve chances of securing funding**

### Testimonials

- “Great course! Trying to put yourself in the reviewers shoes really gives you a feeling for, how ‘spot-on’ your application needs to be!”
- “The simulated review panel gave the participants a real feeling of what a proposal looks like in the eyes of the reviewers. I highly recommend the course!”
- “I regret not having taken a course like this 1-2 years ago, and I think it should be taken by every young researcher 😊”
- “The course was well-designed and accomplished the aims/outcomes described. I enjoyed especially the second day session in which we put into practice what we learned on day one.”



## How GrantLab Works

GrantLab follows the complete life cycle of a proposal, closely mimicking a real evaluation process.

### 1. Day 1 – Foundations and strategy

Participants learn:

- ✓ How research funding works
- ✓ What makes a proposal competitive
- ✓ How to structure a compelling application
- ✓ How reviewers assess proposals and weigh criteria
- ✓ Funding strategies and pitching techniques
- ✓ How to use AI tools **efficiently and responsibly** in proposal development

Participants draft a **mini-proposal** for submission.

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### 2. Mini-proposal preparation (2–3 weeks)

Participants:

- Finalize and submit their mini-proposals to a **fictitious funder**
- Immediately receive reviewer instructions and materials
- Prepare **written reviews** of 2–3 other proposals

This phase provides first-hand experience in **critical evaluation**, a perspective many researchers never gain early in their career.

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### 3. Peer review phase (2–3 weeks)

Participants act as reviewers, applying real-life evaluation criteria.

They submit structured written reviews ahead of Day 2.

This deepens their understanding of **what reviewers look for** and how proposals differ in quality, clarity, and competitiveness.

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### 4. Day 2 – Mock review panel

The course culminates in a **highly realistic review panel meeting** of the fictitious funder.

The key difference from real evaluations is that **each applicant is allowed to listen to the discussion about their own proposal**.

This creates a secure and eye-opening learning experience that reveals:

- how reviewers debate strengths and weaknesses,



- how critical points influence scoring,
- why some proposals stand out and others do not.

The day concludes with structured reflections linking the experience of the simulation to real-world review processes.

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## 5. After the course

Participants receive:

- ✓ **Anonymised written feedback** from the mock review panel
- ✓ **Targeted comments and improvement suggestions** from the trainer(s)

Optional:

- \* **Individual follow-up meetings** to further refine proposals or prepare upcoming submissions

## Optional modifications

**GrantLab** can be adapted to suit:

- Specific funders (e.g., national research councils, private foundations, European funders, including **ERC**)
- Disciplinary contexts or mixed-discipline groups
- Institutional training programmes or doctoral schools

Delivery options:

- **Day 1** may be offered online, hybrid, or divided into shorter sessions
- **Day 2** (mock review panel) must be delivered **in person** to achieve full impact

## Background

*GrantLab was first developed at Uppsala University in 2005, where it immediately showed a **significant positive effect** on the funding success of early-career researchers.*

*Since then, the model has been continuously refined and delivered at numerous institutions and organisations across Europe and beyond.*

## Interested at offering GrantLab at your institution?

We are happy to discuss formats, pricing, availability, and adaptations to suit your specific needs.

Please contact [Olaf Svenningsen](mailto:olaf.svenningsen@research-lighthouse.com) or check out [www.research-lighthouse.com](http://www.research-lighthouse.com).

