EARLY CAREER RESEARCH FIRST GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

TOP TIPS
1: ALWAYS LEARNING

- Training (UG / MSc / PhD)
- Consolidation (Postdoc)
- Independence (Running a Group)
- Collaboration (Scale / Partnership)
Look at and talk to funders:
- What schemes are you eligible for?
- Which funder supports your research as a strategic priority
- What are their expectations in terms of your career achievements?

Example Grants:
- Look at successful and unsuccessful grants
- Recognise the importance of writing for a non-specialist audience
- Understand the rationale for different sections:
  - Lay summary
  - Case for support
  - Justification of resource
  - CV and researcher team
  - Environment
What do I mean by an expert?

- **Scientific expert:** someone in your field who understands the current state of knowledge, and the key needs to progress the area [idea; level of ambition; hypotheses]

- **Technical expert:** someone who is knowledge about the methods you wish to apply, if they are new to you [technical feasibility; training]

- **Grant expert:** someone who knows the funder / scheme you are applying to [strategy, research fit and how long to write it]

- **Funder expert:** advice from the funder around research fit, their expectations of different schemes [fellowships level]
I told you it was a bad idea to fix the waste disposal with a tie on
5: COMMON MISTAKES

- No pilot data
- Researcher doesn’t have the relevant skills
- Over-ambitious - too many techniques and / or too many projects
- No clear hypotheses or outcomes
- No risk management (e.g., if Project 1 doesn’t work, Project 2 and 3 are worthless)
- Not competitive - work being done by well-funded other groups
- No obvious career development - doesn’t build on prior experience
- Lack of institutional support - mentoring (first grants)
Good interesting idea that will progress the field

"It's black, and it looks like a hole. I'd say it's a black hole."

Got to be the right person with right skills to deliver the work

Got to be in the right environment, with right support and facilities
7: REVIEWERS AND INTERVIEWS

- Get expert advice and input into the writing of your response to reviewers: critical component of the assessment process

- Prepare for interviews well in advance via discussions about reviewer responses, talk practice and mock interviews

- Prepare to answer questions about independence; technical details; preliminary data (feasibility)

- Lots of blogs / information online about experiences and how to prepare
8: GOING TO FAIL, TRY AGAIN

I asked Santa for a research grant.

Why?

Because you're always learning.