Top Tips to Know About FIP Proposals

This list summarizes some of the things you should consider when preparing your proposal, based on concerns cited by reviewers. It is intended to supplement, not replace, the basic instructions provided in the proposal guidelines.

1. Follow the proposal preparation instructions carefully. Use the Checklist to make sure you have included all of the required components. Proposals that are missing required items or that do not follow the formatting and length instructions may be returned without review.

2. Make effective use of all available resources for preparing a successful proposal. Seek peer feedback from colleagues (including those outside your discipline) and read successful Research Council proposals (when available).

3. Demonstrate, through a compelling Abstract and Project Description, why reviewers would want to recommend that OU Research Council funds should be invested to support your scholarly work. The abstract should be a clear, concise, and meaningful summary of the project, including how the requested funds would be used. The Project Description should include sufficient background information to provide a context for your project, so that reviewers understand why it is significant and innovative.

4. Write your Abstract and Project Description in general language that can be understood by colleagues outside your discipline. Look at the list of Research Council members for more insight in to the range of disciplines represented on the Council (https://www.ou.edu/research-norman/research-support/research-council/current-members).

5. Create a structure for your Project Description that organizes material into the sections described in the guidelines and in the review criteria, which can be found on the Research Council web site (https://www.ou.edu/research-norman/research-support/research-council/funding-opportunities/faculty-investment-program). Research Council reviewers will evaluate your proposal with a rubric that uses these criteria, so organizing your Project Description in this manner will aid in their review.

6. Prepare your Project Description in the same formal tone you would use for an educated, academic audience, avoiding colloquial or overly familiar language.

7. Use non-technical language to provide sufficient detail about the methodology for the planned experiments or activities and incorporate these details into the "Technical/Creative Approach" section and the project timeline.

8. Be strategic in the use of literature references, making sure they are well-placed, timely, and provide supporting evidence for key points made in your proposal. At the same time, avoid the use of online references that are critical to understanding the proposed idea. That information should be incorporated into the Project Description, as reviewers are not obligated to refer to online sources when evaluating your proposal.

9. Include specific details about the dissemination of project results, including names of journals, publishers, and names/dates/locations of professional conferences where your work might be published or presented. Do not be vague.

10. Prepare a sufficiently detailed Budget Justification that relates every proposed expenditure to the activities described in the proposal, and that anticipates and responds to reviewers' potential questions. However, do not use the Budget Justification to circumvent the Project Description page limits. The justification should expand on funding need information presented in the project description.

11. Explain and justify any travel requests. Provide details that convince reviewers that the project could not be conducted without the travel. Include a statement regarding whether you have requested travel funds from your Department and College.

12. Document all claims made in the proposal by attaching copies of book contracts, email correspondence with journal editors, letters from prospective collaborators, or other funding sources (internal and external) available for this project. For example, if you request funds to build a resource that will be available through the OU Library, provide evidence that you have discussed this with the Library. Failing to provide documentation may mean your claim is questioned by reviewers.

13. Demonstrate, in the supplementary information, that you have been a good steward of previous Research Council funds, that you achieved the intended outcomes of previous projects, and (where appropriate) that you have made a good-faith attempt to identify other possible funding sources.

14. Use the calendar deadlines on the FIP web page (https://www.ou.edu/research-norman/research-support/research-council/funding-opportunities/faculty-investment-program) to determine when to submit your proposal. Work backwards from the date on which you need the funding to determine the most appropriate Research Council deadline. Begin working on the proposal 6-8 weeks before that date to allow time for effective proposal development. This program has a set budget for the fiscal year, so you may want to consider this for proposal submission times also.

15. Prepare a thorough and thoughtful one-page Cover Letter when resubmitting a proposal. Address each of the review comments in the feedback letter, cross-referencing the corresponding page in the proposal to guide reviewers to your response to the feedback.

16. Be sure to clearly state how the existing project differs from existing funded projects and why existing funding including startup money cannot be used for this project.

17. When requesting funds for course buyouts and summer salary, the text of the proposal should include clear explanations for the need for this funding.

18. Under the funding history section of the proposal, list all current (active) and pending (submitted, under review) internal and external funding with a statement of how this funding is or is not related to the proposed FIP project. If no relevant funding history exists, indicate this. Also provide a brief synopsis of accomplishments (outcomes and impacts) from the most recent project(s) funded by the Research Council, whether or not related to the current submission.