

Top Tips to Know About JFF 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. In recent years, the JFF program has been quite competitive. Often the determination between those who receive awards and those who do not comes down to how well the project is described (especially influential is enthusiasm for the project) and the potential impact on both the career of the applicant and the field or discipline. Clarity, enthusiasm, and innovation are key features of winning proposals.
4. Write in general language that can be understood by colleagues outside your discipline. Look at the list of Research Council members for more insight into 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/current-members>). 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 project timeline.
8. Be clear about the expected outcomes, and how the project will help with progress toward tenure. Mention any external funding opportunities that might result from the project.
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 and clear 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. Be sure to address how you are using or have used startup funds.
11. Request a letter of endorsement from your department chair as early as possible to allow adequate time for a thoughtful letter to be written.
12. 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.