TIPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR FACULTY INVESTMENT PROGRAM (FIP) PROPOSAL

This document is intended to supplement, not replace, the instructions and details provided in the FIP webpage: https://www.ou.edu/research-norman/research-support/research-council/funding-opportunities/faculty-investment-program

Before you start writing
Read the FIP overview, eligibility requirements, proposal preparation and submission, and proposal review details available on the OVPRP website completely and thoroughly. This is the most effective tool Principal Investigators (PIs) have for writing the best proposal that meets FIP expectations. *A careless or uninformed reading of the FIP details is the most common mistake made that leads to a declined proposal*.

Create a checklist outlining the 6-7 required components of a complete FIP application: 1) cover sheet; 2) Project Description; 3) References; 4) Budget and Budget Justification; 5) Investigator and Co-Application CVs; 6) Funding History; and 7) Supplementary Documentation (as appropriate).

General tips for writing a proposal
The fundamentals of success in grant writing are well known and can serve as a basic guide to PIs. Basically, all proposals are expected to answer the same core questions, and your FIP proposal will need to do the same:

- What will you do?
- Why will you do it?
- How will you do it--what is your research rationale and plan?
- What is the significance and context of the research to the field?
- What is your capacity and expertise to perform the research?
- What resources do you need to do it?

Your proposal should reflect clear and organized thinking and effective communication. Aim for economy, enthusiasm, and directness. Use basic English, avoiding jargon or excessive language so that a non-expert may understand the proposed research. Be consistent with terms, references, and writing style. Use the active, rather than passive, voice. Ask a colleague for feedback on your proposal. Revise and proofread your draft.

Addressing the specific sections in the FIP Proposal Project Description
Intellectual Merit: Intellectual merit does not reveal itself to reviewers. The significance of your work is created by carefully written claims made in the first few paragraphs of your proposal. Use this section to describe how your proposed research/creative activity will fill an important gap in existing knowledge in your field. *As you refine this section, ask yourself*: *Did I include sufficient background of what is known and, more importantly, what is not known in my field that provides a context for the proposed project? Have I completely and effectively described the project's significance and innovation? Have I convincingly described how the proposed research/creative activity will advance the field in some significant way within the context of the state-of-the-art in the field as it exists?*

Technical or Creative Approach: Present your approach with details and specifics. Consider that a cascade of technical jargon, acronyms and minutia can make a research narrative inaccessible to reviewers. Keep in mind that the Research Council is a multidisciplinary review panel—PIs should write

to a scientifically literate reviewer, not an expert in their field. **As you refine this section, ask yourself**: *Did I include sufficient detail about methodology for the planned experiments or activities? Is my description understandable to a broad audience within the research domain? Have I provided a detailed timeline for this short-term project that indicates when the proposed activities will occur?*

Outcome and Impact on the Field of Scholarship: In this section, describe how you will know if your project is successful (the outcomes). Include a description of the benefits that you expect if the project is successful and who will benefit from the success of the project (the impacts). Avoid vague descriptions in this section—clearly articulate your expected outcomes and impact goal(s). **As you refine this section, ask yourself**: *Have I made a compelling case for investing OU Research Council funds in this project? Have I included documentation (in supplemental documentation section, if needed) that supports the project's intended outcomes?*

Impact on Investigator(s) Scholarship: Explain how this short-term project will contribute to your overall research/scholarship plan. This is your opportunity to describe the potential impact to your research/scholarship and should include specific details.

Qualifications and Collaborative History of the Investigator(s): Focus on providing enough specific detail to demonstrate that you (and any co-applicants) have sufficient expertise and experience to conduct the work. For collaborative proposals, show that your research team has successfully worked together in the past or, if it is a new collaboration, explain why a collaborative approach is necessary to achieve the project outcomes and how the partnership(s) will be supported. **As you refine this section, ask yourself**: *Have I secured access to specialized facilities, archives, or samples necessary to complete the project? Have I clearly described the roles and responsibilities of all the team members?*

Rationale for Funding Request: Explain why funding is being sought from the Research Council in comparison to other available sources. If you are in the first 1-2 years of your tenure with OU and had received start-up funding by the university, include a rationale for requesting Research Council funding rather than using your start-up support for the proposed project.

Notes on preparing your budget and budget justification documents: The budget should only include costs incurred to conduct the work outlined in your proposal. The accompanying budget justification should be specific, and each budget item should be presented in the same order as they appear in the budget table. Use the same terminology you used in the project narrative and link each budget item back to a specific activity. **As you refine this section, ask yourself**: *Is my budget feasible (enough resources to do the work), complete (all the costs required by the project), reasonable (based on actual costs when possible) and transparent (links budget with project activities)? Does my Budget Justification relate every proposed expenditure to an activity in the Project Description?*

Tips for Resubmissions
Resubmissions must include a cover letter describing how each of the reviewer comments provided to the PI has been addressed in the resubmitted proposal. When lacking specific guidance from reviewer comments, use the fundamentals described in the General Tips section above to guide your proposal revisions. Similarly, for reviewer comments that were neither unfavorable nor sufficiently favorable to result in a positive funding decision, brainstorm improvements guided by the core questions asked of every successful proposal—for example, the explanation of your project's significance can almost always be improved.