ASPIRE Research Grant Proposal Evaluation Rubric

v. 10/8/2025

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Justification of Need or Scholarly Significance	Presents a compelling, well-substantiated rationale of the proposed work's importance in the field, grounded in disciplinary context; clearly articulates a gap or problem.	Provides a strong, clear justification with good disciplinary grounding and relevance to the field.	Presents a reasonable argument; may lack depth or specificity.	Justification underdeveloped or general; lacks specific relevance.	Justification is weak, unclear, or missing; fails to demonstrate relevance to the field.
Presentation of Research Question, Hypothesis, or Problem Statement including the Aims, Goals, and/or Objectives for this work	Clear, specific, logically structured, and tightly aligned with the overall project rationale.	Clearly stated and well aligned with project rationale; may have minor ambiguities.	Stated in general terms but may lack clarity, specificity, or logical alignment with project rationale.	Vague, overly broad, or does not clearly define project rationale.	Unclear, unrealistic, or absent.
Appropriateness of Approach (Plan of Work or Methods) for proposed project	Approach demonstrates disciplinary rigor; thoroughly appropriate and justified; well-aligned with the proposed project.	Approach is appropriate and aligned, though some details of the approach or justification may be lacking.	Approach is generally suitable; some aspects may be underdeveloped, misaligned, or not fully justified.	Approach is minimally described or justified; lacks depth; weakly connected to proposed project.	Approach is inappropriate, not justified, poorly defined, or missing.
Significance and/or Innovation of Outcomes or Deliverables	Outcomes/deliverables are significant; demonstrate clear innovation or advancement in the field.	Outcomes/deliverables are meaningful with potential of innovation and contribution to the field.	Outcomes/deliverables are reasonable; may be limited in significance or innovation.	Outcomes/deliverables are weakly defined or lack meaningful impact.	Outcomes/deliverables are unclear, insignificant, or poorly developed.
Feasibility of Scope of Work Within Time Period	The scope of work is well-defined, with detailed milestones/deliverables tied to timeframe; appears realistically achievable within the proposed timeframe; clearly demonstrates realistic planning.	Scope appears feasible and well considered in relation to the timeframe, with only minor concerns.	Scope seems reasonable but may require adjustments to fit within the proposed timeframe.	Scope seems overly ambitious for timeline or vague; does not provide sufficient evidence the work can be completed within the timeframe.	Scope appears unrealistic within the proposed timeframe, with significant concerns about feasibility.
Clarity and Accessibility of Writing (*Please provide specific guidance for improvement in comments below*)	Writing is exceptionally clear, well-organized, focused, accessible, and engaging for readers across disciplines.	Writing is clear, generally well-organized, and mostly accessible with occasional jargon, complexity, or vagueness.	Writing is generally understandable with moderate areas of improvement needed; such as jargon-use, complexity, or vagueness.	Writing overall is somewhat unclear or difficult to follow; may include significant jargon-use, complexity, or vagueness.	Writing is unclear, disorganized, or inaccessible to non-specialists.

While the following criteria are not rated they will be taken into consideration in final funding decisions

The proposal justifies this work as a necessary step towards competitive external funding including identifying specific funders and articulating alignment with program priorities
Budget seems appropriate to accomplish the proposed project