Some pointers on writing a proposal for Research Council funding.

1. **Major components.** A proposal for research council funding should contain clearly stated objectives, a plan for carrying out the work, and have a clear link to the amount of funds requested.

   **A. Objectives.** What is the main research or creative activity outcome that you expect from your research? Why is this significant? How does it fit into your overall research program or into the broad setting of your field?

   **B. Plan.** How do you plan to undertake this research or creative activity? Is there a breakdown into subtasks? Do you have a timeline for these tasks? Are there contingency plans in place in case some steps yield unexpected results?

   **C. Budget.** How would Research Council funding help you achieve your objectives? Are you expecting cost sharing? Do you have other funding pending?

2. **Keep the narrative simple.** Keep the use of jargon or highly technical language in your proposal narrative to a minimum. You should try to write your proposal so that the importance, significance, goals, and plan of work for the project can be understood by faculty across disciplines. Remember that the Research Council is comprised of faculty from a broad spectrum of disciplines, and that the reviewers of your proposal are unlikely to be experts in your field.

   Cutting and pasting large sections of existing proposals to external funding agencies is likely to overwhelm reviewers, and the Research Council may not be able to evaluate your proposal fully. This is not a request to “dumb down” the presentation of your research or creative activity. Actually, it is a request to strengthen the presentation so that the diverse Research Council can understand the nature and significance of the scholarly activity proposed. Proposals that are broadly understood within the Research Council have a greater chance of being recommended for funding.

3. **Keep the narrative interesting.** You are requesting funds to undertake a research, scholarship or creative activity about which you are passionate. Your proposal narrative should convey some of this passion and excitement. Make every effort to set the background and to explain some details of your work in a nontechnical fashion. What is unique and cool about this project? Why are you the right person to be undertaking it?

   A terse narrative with little or no motivation for the proposed activities will be hard for the Research Council to evaluate.

4. **Work plan.** One common flaw in proposals is the lack of detail given to the proposed work plan. Tell us what you plan to do and how the work will accomplish your
goals. If your project involves data collection and analysis, please give details of your experimental design and how you propose to analyze data.

If your proposal includes travel (such as to critical collections), surveys, focused writing and other creative activity, you should provide also, an explicit plan and purpose of these activities.

5. **Budget.** Provide a detailed budget together with a budget justification. It is good practice to provide an itemized budget (perhaps in table format) with a total. This should correspond to items addressed in the narrative.

A common flaw in proposals involves a lack of connection between the budget and the proposal narrative. There may be items in the budget that are not mentioned/justified in the narrative, or there may be discussion of materials/supplies in the narrative that do not appear in the budget. These discrepancies can create the impression of a project that is not carefully planned.

It is important to include documentation showing costs of various items in the budget (this can include downloads from vendors websites, price quotes for travel and accommodation, email correspondence with vendors etc.).

It is also important to include evidence of any cost sharing that you may have obtained.

Become familiar with federal sites such as [http://www.gsa.gov/](http://www.gsa.gov/) for maximum allowable per diem rates.

6. **What can funds be requested for?** Keep in mind that Research Council funds are typically used to support new research, scholarship or creative activity.

   A. Travel to a conference or meeting to present a paper or talk or to accept an award is not typically considered to be a research or creative activity. This is considered dissemination of completed research, and there are other funding sources for such travel, for example, the VPR Faculty Travel Assistance Grants Program.

   B. Travel to venues in order to have face-to-face meetings with collaborators is considered a research activity. However you should justify why this particular collaboration is important to your research program, and why this venue is appropriate for the collaboration. You should also discuss why internet-conferencing or other technological approaches are not sufficient.
C. You may request Research Council funds in order to travel to archives or collections to conduct archival research. It is important to justify why you need to be in person at the archive or collection, and to indicate the potential impact on your research program.

D. Performances and exhibitions are generally considered to be new research and/or creative activities.

7. Graduate student support. Because of the limited amount of funds available, the Research Council does not routinely provide stipend support for graduate students. However, the Research Council has funded proposals involving graduate student stipends in the past. The funded proposals were clearly written according to the guidelines discussed here, and provided convincing justification why graduate student support was essential to the project.

8. Read the solicitation carefully. Make sure that your proposal is appropriate for the program.

Make sure that you have included all information requested including the following.
   a) A 2-page curriculum vitae with a publication list.
   b) For requests over $1,200, a complete funding history for the past five years, including successful and unsuccessful efforts to obtain external funding.
   c) If you have received support from the Office of the Vice President for Research and/or Research Council within the past three years, include a short paragraph on each award, which includes the funding amount and the benefits of the funds to your research/creative activity program.
   d) A budget, which is within the limits of the program for which you are applying, and a budget justification.

9. Grammar, spelling, use of complete sentences. Please make sure that your proposal is free of grammatical and spelling errors. We suggest that you have one or more colleagues review the proposal prior to submission. Frequently, the Research Council receives proposals that contain many spelling and grammatical errors. Such proposals indicate poor planning and a lack of attention to necessary details.

10. Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment (CRPDE). CRPDE is available to assist faculty with enhancing their research programs, including pursuit of funding for their research. Prior to submitting proposals for Research Council funding, faculty are strongly encouraged to seek input and guidance from CRPDE. Dr. Alicia Knoedler, CRPDE Director, can help faculty determine the most competitive way to write
proposals for Research Council funding, including refining the project idea, writing clearly for a general audience, and including the requested detail in a compelling narrative. CRPDE maintains a website (http://crpde.ou.edu/) with many resources regarding competitive research programs and research funding. If faculty wish to meet with Dr. Knoedler, they should email CRPDE (cprde@ou.edu). Dr. Knoedler is also available to provide comments on proposal drafts, which can be emailed to the CRPDE email address.

11. Junior Faculty Program. Applicants to the Junior Faculty Research Program should be aware of the following items in addition to pointers above.

A. Please keep in mind that you are requesting funds to work on your research/creative activity for one summer and not for three to five years. With that in mind, your work plan should focus primarily on what you wish to accomplish during the summer of the award. You should place your research project in the broader context of your overall research/creative activity program, and it is important to indicate the potential impacts that the project will have on your trajectory towards tenure. However, it is important to provide details of the work plan for the given summer of the award. An application that focuses exclusively on the broad picture, and fails to tell the reviewers what will be accomplished in the summer will be unlikely to receive funding.

B. It is also important to discuss the significance of your project in a nontechnical language, so reviewers who are outside of your discipline will understand why the work should be supported.

C. Keep in mind that the supporting letter from your chair or director is an important part of your application package. Please take the time to talk to your chair or director about your research plans for the summer. Also, make sure that you give your chair or director plenty of time (before the application deadline) to compose a letter of support.