



Analysis of Reviewer Comments for UofA JELF Proposals

To ensure that RSO can provide high quality guidance to JELF applicants, we have analyzed the reviewer comments for recent UofA JELF applications.

Please see [RSO Tips for successful JELF proposal development](#) for tips on how to develop proposals that are based on this analysis.

CFI Review Process for JELF Projects

As described in the [CFI JELF Guidelines for Completing a Proposal \(2021\)](#) (the JELF Guidelines), proposals are evaluated based on standards related to the following five assessment criteria:

- Research or Technology Development
- Researchers
- Infrastructure
- Institutional Commitment and Sustainability
- Benefits to Canadians

The [JELF Guidelines](#) expand on each criterion standard, specifying a number of aspects that must be addressed in the proposal under each. Failure to adequately address the required aspects for any of the criterion standards can significantly weaken a proposal.

While all proposals are expected to include the same sections, the steps in the expert review process vary depending on the total amount being requested from the CFI. In all cases the CFI Board of Directors makes the final funding decisions. The steps are as follows:

- If the CFI Request is less than \$400,000:
 - Two expert reviewers are asked to assess and provide a rating for each of the five assessment criteria, and
 - If necessary (e.g. if opinions of expert reviewers diverge) the CFI seeks input from one or more additional expert reviewers, and/or seeks input from a multidisciplinary JELF Advisory Committee
- If the CFI Request is more than \$400,000, an expert review committee assesses the proposal

For more information on the CFI JELF review process, please see the [CFI JELF Guidelines for Reviewers \(March 2021\)](#).

JELF 2017-2020 Allocation: Summary of Results

The CFI provides a funding allocation to the UofA every three years. Table 1 lists the CFI decisions for all UofA JELF applications for funding from the UofA’s 2017-2020 JELF allocation.

	Number of Projects	Percent of total
Funded:	51	75%
Not Funded:	17	25%
Total:	68	

Table 1. CFI decisions for UofA JELF applications submitted to the CFI between June 2017 through October 2019.



Project	Research or Technology Development	Researchers	Infrastructure	Institutional Commitment and Sustainability	Benefits to Canadians	Funded (Y/N)	total score
1	5	5	4	5	5	Y	24
2	5	4	5	4	5	Y	23
3	5	5	5	4	4	Y	23
4	4	5	5	5	4	Y	23
5	4	4	5	4	5	Y	22
6	4	5	5	4	4	Y	22
7	4	5	5	4	4	Y	22
8	5	5	4	4	4	Y	22
9	5	5	4	4	4	Y	22
10	5	5	4	4	4	Y	22
11	5	5	4	5	3	Y	22
12	4	4	5	4	4	Y	21
13	4	5	4	4	4	Y	21
14	4	5	4	4	4	Y	21
15	4	5	4	4	4	Y	21
16	3	5	4	5	4	Y	21
17	5	5	3	4	4	Y	21
18	3	5	5	4	3	Y	20
19	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
20	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
21	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
22	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
23	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
24	4	4	4	4	4	Y	20
25	4	5	4	3	4	Y	20
26	3	4	4	4	5	Y	20
27	3	4	4	5	4	Y	20
28	3	5	4	4	4	Y	20
29	3	5	4	4	4	Y	20
30	4	5	2	5	4	N	20
31	5	3	4	3	4	Y	19
32	4	4	4	4	3	Y	19
33	3	3	4	5	4	Y	19
34	3	4	4	4	4	Y	19
35	3	4	4	4	4	Y	19
36	3	4	4	4	4	Y	19
37	4	4	3	4	4	Y	19
38	4	3	4	4	3	Y	18
39	3	3	4	4	4	Y	18
40	3	3	4	4	4	Y	18
41	3	4	4	4	3	Y	18
42	3	4	3	4	4	Y	18
43	3	3	4	3	4	N	17
44	2	3	4	3	4	N	16
45	2	4	4	3	3	N	16
46	3	3	3	4	3	N	16
47	3	4	3	3	3	N	16
48	2	5	3	4	2	N	16
49	2	2	4	4	3	N	15
50	2	3	3	3	4	N	15
51	2	3	3	3	4	N	15
52	2	3	3	4	3	N	15
53	2	4	3	3	3	N	15
54	3	4	2	4	2	N	15
55	2	4	2	4	3	N	15
56	2	2	3	4	3	N	14
57	2	3	3	3	3	N	14

CFI Assessment Criteria Scores

We have analyzed the scores for all recent UofA JELF applications submitted to the CFI. Figure 1 shows the outcomes for proposals submitted between October 2017 through October 2019; an updated figure which includes results for more recent JELF submissions can be found [here](#). For the October 2017-October 2019 period we noted the following:

- 11 of the 16 unsuccessful applications were given a score of 2 for the Research or Technology Development criterion.
- In unsuccessful proposals, reviewers often raise concerns about research or technology plans lacking sufficient detail. Along with a comment about lack of detail in a research plan, it is common that reviewers also comment that, without a clear understanding of the research plan:
 - they are unable to fully assess whether the proposed research activities are feasible,
 - they are unable to determine if the proposed research is sufficiently innovative to merit CFI funding, and/or
 - they are unable to ascertain if the benefits to Canadians stated would actually be achieved, as they are not sure that the project can be done as proposed.
- In unsuccessful proposals, it is also quite common for reviewers to identify concerns that the infrastructure is insufficiently justified, either in relation to the research plan described or in relation to other similar infrastructure that exists and could be accessed by the PI.
 - A striking example of this is project #30 in Fig. 1. This project had scores of 4 and 5 for all other criteria, but received a 2 for the infrastructure section. The project was not funded.
- There are examples of unsuccessful proposals that received scores of 3 or higher for all of the assessment criteria (projects 43, 46, 47 in Fig. 1). However, the total score for these proposals was lower than the total score for any of the successful applications.

Figure 1. Heat map showing consensus scores for five Assessment Criterion for UofA JELF applications submitted to CFI between the October 2017 and October 2019 JELF intakes. Scale for consensus scores: 5 = Significantly exceeds the criterion; 4 = Satisfies the criterion; 3 = Satisfies the criterion with only a few minor weaknesses; 2 = Partially satisfies the criterion standard with some significant weaknesses.