

RISE Grant Evaluation Rubric (7-point scale; A-F)

Scale (for every criterion)

7 = Outstanding | 6 = Excellent | 5 = Strong | 4 = Adequate | 3 = Limited | 2 = Weak | 1 = Poor

A. Completeness, Specificity & Clarity of Proposal (7 pts)

What to look for (evidence prompts)

- Clear and coherent objectives/research questions situated in literature
- Design/activities, timeline, milestones, roles of participants, ethics, risks/mitigation are specified (if applicable)
- Realistic, feasible plan in which objectives, methods, timeline, resource, and partnerships etc. are mutually aligned
- Plain language for an interdisciplinary panel (minimal jargon; key terms defined)

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** Thoroughly covers all components (e.g., objectives, methods), with clear, organized, and specific details that make the objectives/research questions and approach easy to understand.
[**Anchors:** *defined focus; aims operationalized; method-fit; specified milestones; specified roles/risks; plain-language; informative figures (if applicable).*]
- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** Mostly complete, though some details are lacking. Generally clear and organized but may require more coherence in certain areas.
[**Anchors:** *partly defined focus; some method rationale; coarse milestones; brief roles/risks; uneven plain-language.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Incomplete, lacking key sections and specificity, with unclear organization that makes it hard to understand the project's scope.
[**Anchors:** *ill-defined/overly broad focus; unclear aims; method misfit; no milestones; no roles/risks.*]

Common red flags

- Academic integrity concerns (e.g., use of literature or AI without appropriate citation/disclosure)
 - Unoperationalized, vague aims (stated at a high level with no theoretical frame; indicators and data sources unspecified; methods described only in generalities).
 - Implementation gaps: No timeline/milestones; heavy dependence on unconfirmed, unspecified access to participants, data, or sites
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B. Originality, Theoretical Perspectives & Methodology (7 pts)

What to look for

- Statements about the originality of the topic or approach are well justified
- Theoretical frame/methodological approach is operationalized
- Clear justification for the choice of methodologies and methods to address the study objectives/questions
- Clearly described validity/reliability or trustworthiness strategies and analysis plan

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** Clearly articulated statement about the novelty of the topic or approach, with well-justified theoretical perspectives and clearly defined and well-articulated and logically supported methodologies, understandable to reviewers across disciplines.
[Anchors: *Clear contribution; theory tightly tied to design; justified methodologies and methods; specified analysis; rigour stated; accessible to non-specialists.*]
- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** Limited explanations re: project's originality, relying heavily on established ideas. Theoretical perspectives and methodologies are adequately explained but could benefit from more depth or clearer explanations to ensure accessibility to reviewers from different fields.
[Anchors: *Some originality; theoretical or analytic depth uneven; partial justification for methodologies and methods.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Lacks a statement about the project's originality, with poorly aligned or unclear methodologies. The explanation lacks sufficient detail or clarity, making it difficult for reviewers outside the specific field to understand the research approach.
[Anchors: *Minimal novelty; methods misaligned or underspecified; unclear to readers outside the niche.*]

Red flags

- No statement about the originality
 - Opportunistic “method picking” without a coherent rationale or alignment to objectives
 - Plans or procedures for data collection and/or data analysis are missing.
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C. Expected Contribution / Impact (7 pts)

What to look for

- Specific advances to knowledge AND/OR practice/policy/community; plausible pathway to uptake
- Knowledge dissemination to diverse audiences (journals, PD, open resources, policy briefs etc.); evaluation of impact

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** Clearly stated and justified potential for meaningful advancement in the field, with a clear, well-reasoned approach that could enable substantial benefits.
[Anchors: *Compelling significance; clear deliverables; credible impact pathway (who benefits, how, when).*]
- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** Shows moderate potential for contribution, with plausible but limited scope.
[Anchors: *Reasonable contribution; outputs plausible but the impact pathway is not clear.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Limited impact potential, with minimal or unrealistic outcomes and little originality, raising concerns about the project's overall contribution.
[Anchors: *Aspirational claims without mechanism; unclear benefits.*]

Red flags

- “We will publish in top journals” without target fit
- No clear plan for disseminating the findings to more than one type of audience when relevant

D. Research and Scholarly Activity of the Applicant (7 pts)

What to look for

- Track record appropriate to career stage; prior outputs; successful completion of similar work; roles on team

Note: Research and scholarly activity include, but are not limited to, publications in refereed and non-refereed journals, books and book chapters, review articles, conference proceedings, technical reports, invited and contributed conference presentations, patents, research grants, artistic exhibitions or performances, innovations developed for technology transfer, and other forms of academic and creative dissemination, as well as outreach and extension activities that demonstrate broader impact.

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** Strong record of scholarly contributions that demonstrate expertise, originality, and a clear capability to successfully carry out the proposed project. The applicant's work reflects a sustained impact in their field. The applicant also demonstrates their experience and capacity to effectively mentor and supervise RAs (especially, if the grant is used to hire RAs).
[Anchors: *Strong record showing expertise and completion; leadership evident; prior grants/outputs align.*]

- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** An adequate record of research and scholarly activity, demonstrating competence but with room for further development in certain areas. The applicant has relevant experience that meets the project's requirements.
[**Anchors:** *Adequate record; shows capacity, some gaps.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Limited scholarly output, with insufficient evidence of prior research contributions. The applicant's record raises concern about their readiness to successfully complete the proposed project.
[**Anchors:** *Sparse outputs or misaligned experience; feasibility concerns.*]

For Early Career Applicants:

- **(6,7) Excellent:** Shows strong promise with early achievements that indicate growing impact and preparation.
[**Anchors:** *Clear promise: early outputs, pipeline, relevant skills; mentoring/RA plan.*]
- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** Some emerging competence with limited outputs, though suitable for career stage.
[**Anchors:** *Emerging competence; outputs limited but appropriate; support plan present.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Minimal activity or outputs, indicating limited readiness for the project.
[**Anchors:** *Minimal evidence of readiness; little mentorship/support structure.*]

Red flags

- All outputs “in prep” (e.g., manuscript under preparation, manuscript submitted, etc.)
- No evidence of finishing projects
- Unclear role in prior work
- Publishing in predatory journals and/or conferences
- Authors of retracted publications
- Academic misconduct in CVs

E. Budget, Feasibility & Funding Plan (7 pts)

What to look for

- Costs aligned with activities; participant/community compensation; RA/student roles; equipment justified; quotes if needed
- Feasibility within time/funds; access to sites/data/partners

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** The budget is realistic, well-justified, and clearly aligned with policy guidelines. The proposed expenses are appropriate for the project's objectives, and the research plan is feasible within the requested funding.
[Anchors: *Budget proportional and justified; feasibility is clearly evidenced; access to sites/data/partners secured; aligns with policy.*]
- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** The budget is generally appropriate but may have minor justification gaps or require slight adjustments to better align with policy guidelines. The research plan is mostly feasible, though some aspects may need further clarification.
[Anchors: *Mostly reasonable; conditional feasibility (feasible with revisions); a few unclear lines or optimistic pacing.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** The budget lacks justification, is unrealistic in relation to the project's needs, or does not align with policy guidelines. Feasibility concerns exist due to unclear, inappropriate, or insufficiently detailed budget planning.
[Anchors: *Misaligned or inflated budget; no credible feasibility; policy conflicts.*]

Red flags

- Bulk funds to equipment not used in plan; missing community honoraria where engagement is central

F. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (7 pts)

What to look for

Concrete strategies and ethical considerations around

- **Team & training:** inclusive roles; reflexivity/EDI training
- **Recruitment & consent:** barrier-reduced processes; fair compensation; accommodations
- **Design & data:** accessible instruments/procedures; privacy; harm mitigation; Indigenous data governance where relevant
- **KM & partnerships:** plain-language, multimodal outputs; return-of-results; relationships/reciprocity with communities (as applicable)

Criteria and Anchors [in bracket]

- **(6,7) Excellent:** EDI principles are deeply integrated into team composition, training, and, where applicable, research design.
[Anchors: *EDI is integrated across team → recruitment → design → data → KM, with specific mechanisms, roles, timelines, and resources; relevant community/Indigenous protocols are named and feasible.*]

- **(3,4,5) Satisfactory:** EDI considerations are present, though partially integrated or lacking depth.
[**anchors:** *Present but generic; partial integration; some actionable elements.*]
- **(1,2) Unsatisfactory:** Minimal EDI consideration, with no clear inclusivity strategies, raising concerns about the project’s inclusiveness.
[**anchors:** *Minimal or tokenistic; risks to inclusion or ethics not addressed.*]

Red flags

- “We welcome all” statements without mechanisms
- Engaging communities without evidence of relationship or reciprocity
- Convenience sampling that excludes key groups
