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| Project Description | Purpose and Objectives | Innovative, specific, testable research question defined | Specific, testable research question defined | Unclear, untestable question | Research question not defined |
| | Rationale | Strongly summarizes previous work in the field and how this project will contribute to the literature; clearly explains project significance | Summarized previous work in the field and explains project significance | Limited literature review and/or explanation of project significance | Does not include literature review or does not explain project significance |
| | Merit and Impact | Project supports intended outcomes on RFP with high potential impact | Project supports intended outcomes on RFP with moderate potential impact | Project supports intended outcomes on RFP with minimal potential impact | Project supports intended outcomes on RFP with no potential impact |
| Project Design | Appropriate Methods | Novel approach with well developed methods | Feasible approach with appropriate methods developed | Methods need further development | Methods will not answer research question |
| | Timeline | Detailed and reasonable; explains potential pitfalls or delays | Detailed and reasonable | Lacking adequate detail and/or not reasonable | Missing and/or not reasonable |
| | Budget | Detailed and accurate account of all expenses | Accurate costs; may be missing some details | Limited detail and/or insight into costs | Lacks detail or insight into costs |
| | Undergraduate Research | | | Demonstrates a commitment to training undergraduate researchers | Undergraduate researchers not included in the proposal |
| | Deliverables | Describes deliverables above the minimum appropriate to the scope and depth of proposal | | Includes description of minimum deliverables in proposal | Deliverables not included in proposal |

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| Collaboration | Project collaborates with land owners, farmers or ranchers | | | Project does not collaborate with land owners, farmers or ranchers |
| Writing | Exceptionally written document; strong writing style | Well written document with few errors | Average writing style; some grammatical errors | Poorly written; Numerous writing and/or grammatical errors |