

RCI Award Review Rubric: Stronger Response Examples by Award Category

This document provides examples of strong responses that align with the **RCI Awards evaluation rubric** across three award categories: **Small Scale and Preliminary Projects, Artistic Productions and Performances, and Publication Subvention**. For each evaluation criterion, specific examples illustrate responses that may contribute to a higher ranking for each of the four primary review criteria: Research and Creative Merit, Disciplinary Significance and Broader Constituencies, Faculty Developmental Stage, and Research Development Strategy. Proposals may or may not use or respond to one or all of the sub criteria, but these serve as good examples for what could be considered by reviewers as they interpret the responses. These example responses are fictional, and they only provide a partial example of what might be considered a complete description. However, the goal is to share examples for how better responses might be constructed and communicated.

1. Research and Creative Merit

When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal relative to its Research and Creative Merit, stronger responses may differentiate and elaborate on activities in ways that demonstrate Exceptional and Transformative Potential with a Highly Organized and Synergistic Plan for Carrying Out the Activities.

Small Scale and Preliminary Projects

- **Advancing discovery and knowledge-building:**
 - *Example:* "This project will use computational methods to analyze spatial distribution patterns in urban heat islands, integrating remote sensing data with socio-demographic information to advance predictive modeling techniques. By combining machine learning and GIS analytics, this research will generate new insights into urban microclimates, informing sustainable urban planning strategies. The outcomes will include a predictive model that policymakers can use to prioritize climate resilience initiatives."
- **Exploration of creative, innovative, and transformative concepts:**
 - *Example:* "By synthesizing cognitive anthropology with digital design methodologies, this project redefines how participatory urban planning can integrate diverse community narratives. Through a novel AI-assisted co-design platform, it will enable real-time collaborative input, enhancing inclusivity in urban decision-making. This approach allows communities to visualize potential urban transformations dynamically, fostering deeper engagement."
- **Well-organized project objectives and deliverables:**
 - *Example:* "The project is structured into three phases: (1) pilot study data collection, (2) model calibration and validation, and (3) stakeholder workshops for iterative feedback. The final output will include a refined urban climate risk assessment tool and a policy brief for local governments. These outputs will be shared through interdisciplinary research forums to maximize dissemination."

- **Applicant positioning and preparedness:**
 - *Example:* "The PI has extensive experience in AI-driven spatial modeling and has led interdisciplinary collaborations integrating public health and urban informatics. Their prior work on climate resilience has been published in leading urban studies journals, and they have secured prior seed funding to develop the initial computational framework."
- **Adequate resources for execution:**
 - *Example:* "Collaborations with UM's Data Science Initiative and the College of Public Health provide access to high-performance computing and relevant expertise. Additional support from the City of Denver ensures access to real-world urban datasets, enhancing the practical applicability of findings."

Artistic Productions and Performances

- **Advancing discovery and knowledge-building:**
 - *Example:* "This installation investigates the intersection of responsive building envelopes, performance, and artificial intelligence, creating new frameworks for interactive storytelling. It contributes to the growing discourse on AI's role in contemporary performance and explores how audiences interact with adaptive narrative and building systems."
- **Exploration of creative, innovative, and transformative concepts:**
 - *Example:* "The project uses generative AI to augment choreographic design, dynamically adapting building automation and control movements in response to real-time audience and environmental inputs. This innovation merges cutting-edge technology with traditional art forms, redefining audience engagement and the role of building as an actor in performance spaces."
- **Well-organized project objectives and deliverables:**
 - *Example:* "The work consists of three key phases: (1) creation of a generative AI model for choreographing the socio-environmental cues and envelope responses, (2) integration with live performance, and (3) a public showcase with post-performance discussions and technical talks. The outcomes include both the live event and a control-logic plug-in for integrating AI and responsive building envelope actuation into future performances."
- **Applicant positioning and preparedness:**
 - *Example:* "The lead artist has produced award-winning multimedia performances and has collaborated extensively with technologists to explore new artistic mediums. Their expertise ensures a seamless integration of technology into the choreographic process."
- **Adequate resources for execution:**
 - *Example:* "UM's Duderstadt Center will provide state-of-the-art equipment and technical support. Partnerships with the School of Music, Theatre & Dance ensure access to experienced performers, graduate student collaborators contribute specialized AI expertise, while an ongoing collaboration with senior computational design faculty in the Architecture Department will enable prototyping and scaled-up assembly of the responsive envelope modules."

Publication Subvention

- **Advancing discovery and knowledge-building:**
 - *Example:* "This book reexamines 19th-century architectural practices along the southern coast of Tamil Nadu through a postcolonial lens, uncovering overlooked narratives in global design history. The work advances the field by incorporating newly translated manuscripts and migration logs, challenging established paradigms and proposing alternative theoretical frameworks for understanding multi-generational extended-family homes."
 - **Exploration of creative, innovative, and transformative concepts:**
 - *Example:* "By integrating newly discovered artisan stories with archival research, this publication identifies previously invisible voices in architectural discourse, offering a groundbreaking perspective on colonial-era construction practices. The innovative methodology combines digital humanities with traditional historiography. Detailed construction material recipes and fabrication techniques are illustrated within, creating a guide to previously obscured practices."
 - **Well-organized project objectives and deliverables:**
 - *Example:* "The final copy editing will be completed by the third quarter, with layout finalized in quarter four. Additional deliverables to follow publication include an open-access database of digitized architectural plans, material recipes, illustrated fabrication techniques linked to a companion website hosting the interactive visualizations."
 - **Applicant positioning and preparedness:**
 - *Example:* "The author's prior publications on architectural history have been widely cited, and their expertise in archival research positions them to make a significant contribution to the field. Their previous book received an award for excellence in architectural scholarship."
 - **Adequate resources for execution:**
 - *Example:* "The UM Library's Open Access Publishing Fund will subsidize publication costs, while additional support from the author's department ensures timely manuscript preparation. Copyediting and layout will be paid for from the author's discretionary fund. The academic press provides the necessary editorial and distribution infrastructure. The digital asset development is happening as part of an engaged research course between the South Indian area studies department, seminars in architectural history, and a seed award from the TVLab fund."
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2. Disciplinary Significance and Broader Constituencies

When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal relative to its Disciplinary Significance and Broader Constituencies, stronger responses may differentiate and elaborate on activities in ways that demonstrate Clearly Articulated and Inclusive with Constituencies Identified and Actions Defined.

Small Scale and Preliminary Projects

- **Creating impacts within and across disciplines:**
 - *Example:* "This project bridges architecture, environmental psychology, and public health by quantifying how urban green spaces impact cognitive function. The study findings will inform urban design guidelines to improve mental well-being in dense metropolitan areas, empowering city planners and advocates with effective guidelines to improve the lives of residents. Additionally, this interdisciplinary approach will facilitate participatory action research-driven collaborations between urban planners, environmental scientists, local neighborhood and community groups, and public health officials."
- **Enhancing UM's scholarly distinction:**
 - *Example:* "Findings will contribute to UM's urban resilience research and align with broader initiatives on climate adaptation. This work strengthens UM's role as a leader in climate-conscious urban planning, positioning it at the forefront of sustainable city development through the production of tools to guide decision making among policy makers and planners. It will also serve as a basis for seeking larger-scale federal and regional foundation funding in this area in order to extend the impacts of the research and the lessons learned to other locations. It also helps provide a "front-door" for municipalities and community groups to access and engage with U-M's experts on these issues."

Artistic Productions and Performances

- **Creating impacts within and across disciplines:**
 - *Example:* "By blending computational fabrication techniques with real-time urban data visualizations, this project fosters new collaborations between performing arts, urban technology, and data ethics. The resulting performances will inspire interdisciplinary dialogue on the societal implications of algorithmic systems, while creating new grammars for navigating intermodal transportation options around SE and SW Michigan, NE Ohio, NW Indiana, Chicagoland, and SE Ontario."
- **Enhancing UM's scholarly distinction:**
 - *Example:* "This innovative performance will premiere at UM's Stamps Auditorium before touring to cities and venues in Chicago, Detroit, Toledo, and Toronto. It positions UM as a leader in integrating urban technology and the arts, expanding its reputation in interdisciplinary creative research."

Publication Subvention

- **Creating impacts within and across disciplines:**
 - *Example:* "The book's integration of architectural design, health, and plant physiology bridges the humanities, biology, and medicine, creating new research questions and subfields. It invites scholars from diverse fields to reconsider the methodologies and tools available for historiographical analysis and the ontologies of non-human actors in the design of improved health outcomes."
 - **Enhancing UM's scholarly distinction:**
 - *Example:* "Published by a leading university press, this volume will solidify UM's reputation in STS-based studies of architectural and medical history, positioning it and the research pavilion at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens as a hub for innovative academic scholarship and the active testing of design-based health interventions."
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3. Faculty Developmental Stage

When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal relative to its Faculty Developmental Stage, stronger responses may describe how it will support their development, advancement, and/or impact as Tenure-Track Faculty. Other analogous cases may be made for mid-career and senior faculty, but early-career faculty are prioritized.

Small Scale and Preliminary Projects

- **Supporting early-career researchers:**
 - *Example:* "This funding will enable a first-time PI to develop preliminary data for an NSF CAREER proposal. The ability to generate early results will significantly strengthen the applicant's profile for external funding opportunities. Moreover, it will provide the foundational research experience necessary to build a long-term research agenda in circular design."

Artistic Productions and Performances

- **Supporting career advancement:**
 - *Example:* "This performance will serve as a centerpiece in the PI's tenure portfolio, demonstrating their ability to lead and implement team-based, innovative interdisciplinary projects. The public engagement component will also enhance their visibility as a thought leader in technology-driven performance art."

Publication Subvention

- **Strategic career impact:**
 - *Example:* "This first book is critical for the PI's tenure (or promotion) review and will position them as a leading scholar in the comparative geography of parklets. The publication's interdisciplinary approach will open new opportunities for collaboration and funding."
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4. Research Development Strategy

When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal relative to its Research Development Strategy, stronger responses may elaborate on how they are making use of various modes of institutional support and their strategy for developing their work, communicating a solid plan with high potential to leverage an award toward future research & creative practice prospects.

Small Scale and Preliminary Projects

- **Critical to career stage and external funding prospects:**
 - *Example:* "Preliminary results will inform a joint collaborative NIH R01 application on the built environment's impact on health disparities. This project strategically aligns with federal and international research priorities, increasing its likelihood of securing long-term funding. Additionally, engagement with UM's research development staff from the college, OVPR, and from MICHR will ensure that the project is positioned for broader interdisciplinary impact."
- **Broadening constituencies and external funding potential:**
 - *Example:* "The project is designed to build strategic partnerships with municipalities and housing developers, and to attract funding from diverse sources, including HUD and NSF, while engaging community stakeholders and planning agencies in SW Michigan for broader impact. This ensures the findings will resonate both academically and practically for first time homebuyers and for those involved in retrofitting their homes to adapt to weather-driven impacts."
- **Engagement with research development programs:**
 - *Example:* "The PI has planned consultations with the Taubman College R+CP team and will attend public engagement capacity-building workshops offered by U-M to refine external funding and engagement strategies. This project emerged from a Bold Challenges Pollination event, and aims to coordinate a durable team to pursue funding to implement the planned activities."
- **Integration of prior results and feedback:**
 - *Example:* "This project builds on feedback from a prior internal grant, which identified the need for community-driven data collection methods. Adjustments based on pilot study results have been incorporated, ensuring the proposed methodology is robust and responsive."

Artistic Productions and Performances

- **Critical to career stage and external funding prospects:**
 - *Example:* "This production will serve as a prototype for a larger NEA-funded exploration of AI in performing arts. It aligns with the artist's career trajectory, expanding their work into technologically mediated choreography and improved building performance."
- **Broadening constituencies and external funding potential:**
 - *Example:* "The performance aims to reach interdisciplinary audiences at the intersection of art, building science, and social and environmentally responsive

technology, fostering collaborations with tech incubators, architects, and new media art festivals."

- **Engagement with research development programs:**
 - *Example:* "The artist has scheduled regular meetings with U-M's Arts Initiative and the ARIA program directors, as well as with external advisors and curators to explore scalability and external funding avenues."
- **Integration of prior results and feedback:**
 - *Example:* "Insights from earlier workshops and small-scale prototypes revealed audience interest in interactive elements, leading to the inclusion of live participatory components. These refinements make the production more engaging and fundable."

Publication Subvention

- **Critical to career stage and external funding prospects:**
 - *Example:* "This book will lay the foundation for a Mellon-funded digital humanities project on postcolonial architecture. By securing publication, the author demonstrates to external sponsors of the work their readiness to lead interdisciplinary research collaborations."
- **Broadening constituencies and external funding potential:**
 - *Example:* "The book appeals to historians, architects, local cultural site managers, and archeologists, creating opportunities for cross-disciplinary funding proposals and conferences."
- **Engagement with research development programs:**
 - *Example:* "The author is working closely with academic press and the Taubman College PR consultants, Above the Fold, to broaden the significance and impact of the publication and its capacity to reach new audiences."
- **Integration of prior results and feedback:**
 - *Example:* "Based on the results from the publication of the author's last book, the author has developed a dissemination strategy to reach distinct audiences through "x, y, and z" channels, enhancing the book's academic appeal and distinctiveness."