

RAC-Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

February 2025

1. What is the budget, and what are my chances of getting funded?

The Research Allocations Committee (RAC) has a limited budget of approximately \$100,000 for the Spring 2025 cycle. In the past funding periods, the acceptance rates were 30% for Spring 2024 and 39% for Fall 2024. For context:

- The NSF overall funding rate in 2024 was 26%.¹
- The NIH funding rate in 2024 was about 20%.²
- The NEH funding rate is approximately 16%.³

While competition is strong, submitting a well-written proposal with clear objectives and a well-justified budget can significantly improve your chances of being funded.

2. How is the final decision on my proposal made?

The reviewers' evaluations determine whether a proposal will be funded. RAC proposals are reviewed and ranked by individual RAC reviewers (typically 3–4 reviewers per proposal). These reviewers are faculty members from across the university with diverse disciplinary expertise.

3. Are the reviewers subject matter experts in my field?

Not necessarily. RAC reviewers are faculty members from a broad range of disciplines, meaning they may not have direct expertise in your specific area of research. For this reason, it is important to write your proposal in clear language so that it can be understood by reviewers outside your field. While there will usually be 2 reviewers with some related expertise, it is important to make your proposal accessible to a wider audience.

4. What are reviewers looking for in my proposal?

Reviewers evaluate and rank proposals based on several key factors:

- **Significance and innovation:** Proposals that introduce new ideas or creative approaches to research or creative work. Reviewers look for originality and potential to advance knowledge or art.
- **Methods and work Plan:** A clear plan for executing the project, including a timeline, specific tasks, and a discussion of challenges and alternatives.
- **Budget justification and transition to extramural funding:** A well-structured, itemized budget with clear justifications for each expense. Applicants should provide documentation of anticipated costs and explain why RAC funding is required.
- **Broader Impacts:** How your project will impact areas beyond your own success. This could include various aspects, such as (but not limited to) training students, community engagement, supporting minority groups, developing new technologies, addressing

societal challenges, and interdisciplinary and collaborative work. A successful project typically has about 3 broader impacts.

5. What if there is no extramural funding available for my area of research?

A: While researching a fundable topic and identifying external funding opportunities are important for a sustainable research program, RAC recognizes that some research areas have limited external funding options. In such cases, applicants should explain their specific circumstances in the proposal.

6. Is teaching-related research or creative work an acceptable topic for a proposal?

Yes, teaching-related research is acceptable. However, historically, teaching-focused RAC proposals have not been reviewed as favorably by the RAC reviewers, as they tend to prefer research or creative works with broader scholarly impacts. If your project is heavily teaching-focused, we recommend also considering the Teaching Allocation Grants, which is designed specifically for teaching-related initiatives.

7. How important is the budget in my proposal?

The budget is a critical component of your proposal. Given the limited funding pool, it is essential to provide a detailed, itemized budget with clear justifications for each item. Ensure that you provide quotes for any large purchases (over \$1,000) and include a brief explanation of why RAC funds are necessary rather than using other available resources. A strong budget, with appropriate justification and transparency, is essential for a favorable review.

8. Should I follow UNM policies regarding per diem and payments for participants?

Yes, applicants are required to follow UNM policies for per diem and payments to participants. Be sure to consult the UNM policies for any specific guidelines related to research-related travel, participant compensation, and ensure that these are appropriately reflected in your budget justification.

9. Are letter of collaboration required?

Yes. Letters of collaboration are required if you are submitting a collaborative project. Letters should be provided by collaborators involved in the project and only state the intent to collaborate, without endorsing or evaluating the project. Applicants are encouraged to use the [RAC collaboration letter template](#), which is based on the NSF template, for this purpose.

10. Are resubmissions reviewed favorably?

Resubmissions of proposals are accepted and reviewed favorably, provided that the applicant has addressed previous reviewers' comments and made substantial revisions to the proposal. If you are resubmitting, be sure to include an Introduction to Resubmission (1-page maximum) that clearly outlines the changes you have made, including any modifications to the proposal narrative

or new research directions. Proposals with extensive revisions should clearly mark changes in the document (using highlights, different fonts, etc.) for reviewers.

References

1. <https://dellweb.bfa.nsf.gov/awdfr3/default.asp>
2. https://report.nih.gov/funding/nih-budget-and-spending-data-past-fiscal-years/success-rates?utm_source=chatgpt.com
3. <https://www.neh.gov/grants/application-process>