AVF PROPOSAL TIPS  
(Based on Peer Reviewer Comments from Past Proposals)  

Strong Proposals

- The relationship to sustainability is articulated, not assumed.

- There is a compelling rationale for the project and a strong connection to sustainability. Recognizing that there are 3 Es and multiple definitions of the term—the definition must be clear, justified, and relevant in a broad context.

- The project is well written. The abstract is clear and concise and can be understood by readers outside your discipline.

- The project has a clear methodology with metrics or milestones for evaluating progress. It contains deliverables and outcomes.

- The “pathway to impact” or next steps after the project is completed are defined. The ultimate impact is a real-world change at a scale that will make a substantive difference in local, regional or global sustainability. The pathway describes the additional capability needed to achieve impact at scale and provides a rough timeline and engagement plan.

- The proposal brings together a strong interdisciplinary team and makes it clear that all team members contributed to designing the project. It identifies the interaction across the disciplines and includes descriptions of the role of all team members.

- As a “seed” project, the research presents a new solution or approach or field of inquiry and brings together a new internal team or external partner.

- The project is high-risk or cutting-edge and unlikely to receive funding from traditional sources.

- The project will provide early data or groundwork needed to establish this research as an ongoing endeavor, without continued ACSF financial support. The proposal outlines the plans for developing collaborations or attracting future funding.
Weak Proposals

- The proposal is not clearly linked to sustainability or does not explain the project’s larger sustainability contexts.

- The proposal is poorly written. The abstract describing the project is vague, unclear, or uses excessive jargon.

- The project has a multidisciplinary team, but it isn’t clear how each member will contribute or how they will work together. A member without a clearly defined role may have been added to the team to boost the proposal’s chances.

- Deliverables and outcomes are hazy or never discussed.

- The project’s impact is limited to “publish papers and present at conferences” or other similar impacts that are largely academic in nature.

- The proposal is a “top-up” for a project or team that is already well established. The team proposes, for example, to analyze previously acquired data, buy equipment, or bridge funding gaps in an ongoing research project.

- The project closely resembles a previous AVF-funded project.