1. Research Questions
   a. What are the research questions and sub-questions? To what extent are the questions stated clearly and explicitly? Are the questions testable?

2. Contributions to the Literature
   a. Is the literature synthesized into a focused review on the topic?
   b. To what extent is the contribution to the scientific literature clearly and convincingly presented?

3. Significance of the Problem
   a. To what extent is a public affairs problem clearly and convincingly presented with appropriate data/citations? (e.g., change for the worse over time, comparative difference, failed to meet established standards, violations of ethics/morals, etc.)
   b. To what extent is past research on the topic synthesized and communicated coherently/clearly?

4. Theories, Hypotheses, and Concepts
   a. To what extent is the choice of theory or theories adequately introduced, explained, and justified? How is the theory used, if at all (e.g., to test a theory or to develop a theory)? If not choice of theory, how well has the literature been synthesized and an argument made to generate expectations and/or propositions or to generate a means for answering the research questions?
   b. What causal process is depicted (if any)? How are the concepts/variables related? Is the focus on cause and effect, causal mechanisms, both, or neither? Does this causal process flow from the underlying logic of the theory/theories?
   c. Are there attempts to guard against confirmation bias? (e.g., competing/rival/complimentary hypotheses)
   d. Are the concepts within the hypotheses/propositions/expectations defined?
   e. Is the author taking risks?
   f. Are previous applications of the theories, as relevant to the proposed research, clearly summarized?
   g. To what extent are the major concepts defined clearly and consistently with respect to the theory or related literature? Is there concept-measure consistency?

5. Research Design/Data Sources
   a. To what extent is the research design and data sources clearly presented? Are complementary data sources used if appropriate?
   b. Are sampling methods discussed and justified?
   c. Are the research design and data sources commensurate with the research question, theories, and hypotheses?
   d. Has the design been presented clearly enough that you are convinced the data gathered and analyzed will be both reliable and valid?
   e. Are data limitations discussed and threats mitigated, such as threats to internal validity and external validity?

6. Analytical Techniques
   a. Are the preliminary examples of data collection instruments (e.g., interview protocol, coding guidelines, and questionnaire) adequate operationalizations of the theory and concepts?
   b. To what extent are the proposed analytical techniques appropriate for answering the research question and testing the hypotheses? Are the analytical techniques clearly explained and justified?

7. Policy Implications/Broad Impacts
   a. Are the likely policy implications from the proposed research realistically discussed? Is there a plan within the design for achieving policy/societal impacts?

8. Bibliography
   a. Are the references formatted consistently and claims cited thoroughly?

9. Clarity
   a. To what extent is the writing clear, coherent, and grammatically correct?
   b. Is the proposal written in such a way that people outside of the field can understand its components?