UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Research Institutes Funding Program

Request for Proposals

Announcement Release Date:	September 16, 2022
Pre-application Receipt Date:	November 15, 2022
Invited Applications Receipt Date:	February 15, 2023
Award Announcement Date:	April 17, 2023

Purpose: This request for proposals is supported by the offices of the President and the Vice President for Research. It aims to develop research institutes at USC involving at least three to four investigators demonstrating research excellence, long-term vision, and the societal impact necessary to win nationally competitive and sustainable center grants. Applications that target future support from federal funding agencies offering center grants or similar mechanisms are encouraged. Successful institute applications will produce the strategic combination of preliminary results, planning, outreach, organization, vision, and programmatic development necessary to submit high-quality center grant applications. Establishing such federally funded institutes will further enhance the national and international scholarly reputation of USC and its faculty by moving us toward a higher level of sustainable external funding that supports a world-class research enterprise.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include tenure-line faculty who are USC employees and who have independent research programs on the USC Columbia Campus or the schools of medicine in Columbia or Greenville. However, the lead PI **must** have a strong track record in securing extramural grant funding. Multiple PI applications are allowed. If you have questions regarding your eligibility for this initiative, please contact Dr. Lumi Bakos at (803) 777-0969.

All eligible USC faculty members are welcome to submit a pre-application, and up to 10 teams will be invited to submit a full application.

For awarded institutes, all PIs are required to attend the STAR (Series on Training for Advanced Research) Program during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Funds Available: A total of up to five institutes will be funded with a budget of up to **$500,000/year for up to four years.** Projects are expected to begin no later than August 15, 2023. Each team must designate a lead PI (the PI submitting in USCeRA). Funded teams must submit a detailed annual report specifying activities and tangible progress on project goals.

Application Instructions

Pre-application (open to all eligible faculty members)

1. The initial application should include:
   a. Institute title and abstract (one page)
   b. Project outline: Research goals, potential impact and significance, key activities, expected results, institute fit at USC, and timeline (three pages)
   c. Institute structure and collaboration plan. Home department for all team members (one page)
   d. Biographical sketches for major investigators (up to three pages for each investigator)
   e. The targeted center grant mechanism(s): sponsor name and program information

Pre-application Receipt Date: Submit via USCeRA by 5:00 on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, using the following instructions. Check <u>yes</u> to "Internal Request," then "VP for Research" and choose the category type (Research Institutes Funding Program) from the drop-down menu to ensure proper proposal routing. Review criteria:

Pre-proposal Review Process: All pre-applications will be evaluated by a group of external expert reviewers. The reviewers will prioritize their recommendations based on the criteria below. Upon completion of the external review, up to 10 teams will be invited to submit a full proposal.

1. The potential of the research team to conduct interdisciplinary research that is likely to have significant and sustained impact
2. The strength of the research team within the field(s) of research
3. Success in obtaining extramural research funding in the past 5 years
4. The likelihood of securing a large center grant to support research activities of the institute
5. The fit of the research institute at USC

Invited Proposal: The following instructions pertain only to the invited full proposal.

1. Project Summary/Aims (1 page). Each proposal must contain a summary and aims of the proposed project, including a clear description of its potential impact.
2. Proposal narrative (up to 15 pages): Because this call for proposals potentially encompasses multiple federal agencies, the PI should, in general, follow the particular federal sponsor's center grant guidelines for submitting a full proposal, making sure to include:

   a. A discussion of the background and significance of the proposed interdisciplinary research, including its relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and its anticipated future impact.
   b. A detailed narrative of the project that includes the objectives, significance of the research, the research tasks and expected accomplishments, the specific outcomes of the project, and a timeline.
   c. Up to one page should be devoted to laying out a plan for writing a large federal grant proposal, including a proposal timeline and the inclusion of staff that will assist with the process.
   d. The text of the proposal should be single-spaced with margins not less than one-half inch and using a font size not smaller than 11 pt.
   e. A cover sheet (not included in the page limit) should include the project title, the total budget request, the name, college/department and email address for each PI and co-investigator. The cover sheet should also include the center grant mechanism (sponsor name and program information) that will be targeted at the project's culmination.

3. Supporting documentation (not included in the 15-page limit):

   a. Bibliography

b. Biographical sketch of the principal investigator and each co-PI and/or co-investigator. Biosketches should adhere to the style recommended by the funding agency to be targeted.
c. Current and pending support forms must be completed for all Co-PIs and Co-Investigators.
d. A detailed budget for each project year, along with a budget justification. An excel budget form is provided on the Research Institutes Funding Program page of the VPR website.

The invited proposal deadline is 5:00 on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. Invited proposals should be submitted via USCeRA by checking yes to "Internal Request," then "VP for Research" and choosing the category type (Research Institutes Funding Program) from the USCeRA drop-down menu to ensure proper proposal routing. Failure to check the box will result in your proposal NOT being submitted. Upload your proposal following the directions in USCERA.

Questions about submission? Contact: Dr. Lumi Bakos, Bakos@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-0969.

Budget Information: Budgets should be presented in general categories with detailed explanations.

Allowable Costs

- Salary and fringe benefits of research personnel, including undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and technicians directly involved in collecting data for the project.
- Up to one month of salary support for work directly related to the project *may* be included for the PI and co-investigators.
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Animal maintenance expenses
- Travel *essential* to conduct the project; justification must be provided
- Graduate student tuition

Full Proposal Review Process: Applications that are complete and responsive will be evaluated by a group of external expert reviewers. The reviewers will prioritize their recommendations based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria (see below), and awards will be made based on reviewer recommendations.

Overall Impact:

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to lead to a highly competitive grant proposal and ultimately exert a sustained, powerful influence on the field.

Scored Review Criteria:

Reviewers will consider the review criteria listed below in determining scientific merit and render a separate score for each category. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact.

Research Merit:
- Does the proposal address an important problem or a critical barrier in the field?
- How will the successful completion of the research change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
- Is the program of sufficient scope and complexity to warrant a team approach?
- Does the proposed project represent a significant advance in the investigators' fields of study? If so, how?
- Do the PIs and other investigators have a track record of securing extramural grant funding?
- Does the proposed project have significant relevance to USC and its stakeholders?
- Does the proposed project fit at USC in regard to the available research infrastructure and team membership?

Investigators:

- Are the PI and other key personnel well suited to carry out the project?
- Do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise?
- Are the critical mass and diversity of investigator backgrounds and expertise sufficient to address the proposed scientific problem?
- Is there evidence for synergistic interactions among PDs/PIs beyond the additive benefits of additional investigators?
- If the application includes collaborating investigators who will not receive direct support, is it clear how these investigators will participate in the program?

Leverage:

- Will the project lead to the development of preliminary data to apply for specific Program Projects, Centers of Excellence Grants, or other similar mechanisms of extramural funding (e.g., NIH P01, P50, NSF Center Grants, DoD MURI, CDC Center Grant, etc.)?
- Does the project help create a research institute at USC that will spur complementary research opportunities? Does the project help build interdisciplinary research networks within the university?

For more Information: Please contact Dr. Lumi Bakos, The Office of the Vice President for Research, bakos@mailbox.sc.edu, (803) 777-0969