

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Excel Funding Program for Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
Request for Proposals

Application Deadline Date EXTENDED:	October 22, 2024
Award Announcement Date:	February 4, 2025

Purpose: Sponsored by the Offices of the President, the Vice President for Research, and the Provost, the Excel Program for Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences will provide funding to USC Columbia and Palmetto College faculty to support their pursuit of creative and scholarly excellence. The specific purpose of this grant program is to support faculty scholarship, facilitate the production of scholarly and creative works, and encourage future applications for external funding. Projects should support and advance a faculty member's scholarship and research agenda. Proposals that focus on pedagogy or student experiential learning are not eligible for Excel funding.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include USC faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track) in liberal arts, humanities, and social science disciplines employed by USC Columbia or any of the Palmetto College campuses (Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, Union, and Palmetto College Columbia sites).

- Applicants may only submit one proposal to this competition as project lead per round.
- Proposals may include multiple investigators, but one investigator must be designated as the project lead.
- Faculty funded previously through this program as lead PIs are not eligible to submit as lead PIs for this round, but may be co-Is.
- Faculty may resubmit a revised proposal that was not funded in a previous funding cycle. *Please see the Application Procedure below for additional guidelines for resubmissions.*

Funds Available and Project Period: Projects may be funded up to \$18,000. An applicant may request a project period of up to 15 months beginning May 1. Under certain conditions and with justification, exceptions to these dates may be requested.

Budget Information: It is *required* to use the [budget and budget justification forms here \(with instructions\)](#) or found on the program webpage. Provide the project budget in the general categories listed on the form. The Budget justification form is used to provide details and explanations for all project expenditures. While the intention is to fund projects as closely as possible to the requested amount, grant awards may be reduced depending on the number of proposals received and the funds available. Cost share is not allowed.

Allowable costs

- 1 month of summer salary + fringe benefits for project research personnel or (for tenured and tenure-track only) up to 2 course buyouts (course buyouts require approval prior to submission from department chair/college/school; *Course buyout rates vary, please consult your department/college/unit business manager*)
- Salary and fringe benefits for graduate and undergraduate students working on the project
- Graduate student tuition
- Consultants and/or contractors
- Travel essential to conduct the project
- Project supplies including software and participant incentives
- Publication and/or dissemination costs
- Travel to professional meetings, exhibitions, performances, etc. to present scholarly and creative work resulting from this grant

Unallowable costs

- Costs in connection with faculty degree requirements
- Laptops, desktop computers, tablets, and related hardware
- Food (for use in research, as subject incentives, related to project events or activities, etc.; *only travel per diem permitted*)
- Undergraduate student tuition

Dissemination: The Excel program is intended to facilitate the production of scholarly and creative works. Once complete, grant recipients are expected to share their work with a broad audience through a publication, presentation, exhibition, performance, etc. At the end of project period, the scholarly and creative work resulting from this grant program will be showcased on a dedicated website through the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Application Procedure and Proposal Preparation: Please use 11-point standard font (such as aptos, calibri, arial, times, etc.) and 0.5-inch margins. Assemble the following into a single PDF file:

- Cover Page with descriptive title of project; name of lead investigator and home unit/department; names and units of co-PIs and key personnel involved; a maximum 150-word abstract that includes a summary of the project, the proposed work to be accomplished, and potential impact. Please note, the abstracts for all funded projects may be published on the Office of the Vice President for Research's website.
- Proposal Narrative*: Maximum of 3 pages; To include as appropriate for discipline and proposed work: background or overview of the topic to provide context for reviewers; the significance and/or innovation of the work in relation to the present state of knowledge in the field; specifics on the goals, objectives, plans, tasks and/or methodologies; expected accomplishments, specific outcomes from the work, and Dissemination Plan; as appropriate, the benefits that might be realized from the project; a detailed and specific project schedule or timeline; and the roles and qualifications of the project personnel. Applicants should clearly state/describe how this work will be shared, demonstrate where they are in their timeline towards completion, and how this grant will help to reach that goal on time.

**As per the review criteria below, this section must be written in language clearly comprehensible to academic scholars outside the applicant's field of study.*

- Bibliography (no page limit)
- CV/resume* (max 2 pages for each faculty member – PI and co-PIs) that includes:
 - Education
 - Professional experience
 - Evidence of scholarship: most significant refereed journal articles, books, book chapters, etc.
 - Significant accomplishments and contributions
 - Other information as appropriate

**Please do not format the CV/Resume as a narrative biographical statement.*

- Current and pending support form Include current grant funding and pending grant funding using [this form](#) (also on the program website).
 - Separate form needed for each PI and co-PI
 - Form is required even if you have no other support; mark “no other grant support”
 - Include all grant funding for any project, not just funding related to the proposed project
- Budget form and justification It is *required* to use the [budget and budget justification forms here \(with instructions\)](#) or found on the program webpage. The budget will be provided in two documents: 1) A detailed budget spreadsheet summarizing project costs consistent with the list of allowable costs above and 2) a budget justification, with details and descriptions of project expenditures, including purpose or role in the project if not obvious or not included in narrative.
- Appendices are allowed if highly relevant (e.g., letters from outside collaborators confirming role, access to resources such as special collections, from publishers, etc.); however, do not use appendices to circumvent page limits. *Recommendation letters are not permitted.*
- Resubmissions Investigators may revise and resubmit proposals that were not funded previously by Excel. Resubmissions need to include a one-page (max) response to the reviewers and a copy of the reviewer

comments. Attach both the response page and comments after the cover page and before the current Proposal Narrative. *Resubmissions lacking the response page and previous reviews will not be reviewed.*

Submission: Combine all of the above documents into a single PDF and submit in USCeRA by 5:00pm on deadline above.

- Please use this USCeRA submission guide to help with the process.
- Be sure to check *yes* to "Internal Request," then "Vice President for Research" and choose the request type "Excel 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 into USCeRA as a single PDF under the "Proposal/Proposal Summary" or "Other" category. *Do not separate or upload the budget or any other proposal sections or forms as separate documents.*
- Proposals must be submitted in USCeRA by the 5pm deadline but approval by administration/chairs/deans can be pending at that time. *Signatory approval is not required by 5pm.*

Review Process: Applications that are complete, responsive, and submitted by the deadline will be evaluated by a review panel. Reviewers will prioritize their recommendations based on the quality of the proposals in accordance with the review criteria below. Recommendations will be reviewed by the President and VPR, who will make final funding decisions.

Review Criteria:

- Does the proposal provide a compelling argument for the funding?
- To what extent do the proposed activities explore creative, original, or innovative concepts with the potential to advance knowledge in the field of study?
- Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale with clear statements of overall project objectives, actions, and expected outcomes?
- Are there clear strategies to monitor and improve planned actions, and to evaluate the achievement of desired outcomes?
- Is there a timeline, and is it realistic?
- Is there a clearly defined and discipline appropriate dissemination plan? How will this work be shared?
- Is the text clearly comprehensible to other academic scholars, some of whom may not be experts in the applicant's field of study?
- How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
- If applicable, does the project have the necessary support from all relevant stakeholders?
- If relevant, is there evidence for strong interdisciplinary collaboration in developing the project?

For questions, please contact Julie Morris, Program Coordinator, jamorris@mailbox.sc.edu, 803-563-8376.