USC Core Instrumentation Fund

Proposal Deadlines:
Type A: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2012
Type B*: OPEN
Type C*: NO SOLICITATION IN 2013
(REVISED 3/4/2013)

USC Core Instrumentation Fund

The Core Instrumentation Fund supports acquisition of shared instrumentation that enables major research endeavors in the sciences, medicine and engineering. In addition, the program provides matching funds to support the addition of technical staff within core laboratories. Areas of interest are specified in the USC Plan for Science and Technology Facilities: https://research.usc.edu/files/2011/05/Plan_for_ST_4-10.pdf.

Awards under this program are made through a competitive process, based on proposals submitted by groups of faculty representing shared research laboratories. All equipment or staff supported under this announcement must be made available to the entire university community through a shared-use facility, and evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the user-base spans multiple schools. The faculty recipients of the funding, along with an associated center, department or school, are required to commit to the ongoing support and maintenance of the equipment as a condition of award. A “core laboratory” is defined as a shared-use facility that offers specialized instruments and is open to the entire USC research community.

Who Should Apply to This Announcement

This announcement is for core laboratory directors, who would like to do any of the following:

- Type A: Request full funding for equipment acquisition from the university;
- Type B: Request matching funds toward acquisition of equipment;
- Type C: Request matching funds to support the expansion of technical services.

This solicitation is timed to coincide with the NSF MRI acquisition program, and is the only mechanism by which applicants may request matching support from the provost office for an NSF MRI proposal.

To be considered for selection, a proposal must be submitted by the faculty member who directs the core laboratory in which the equipment is installed, following the guidelines below. All requests must be made in advance of equipment acquisition, and in advance of submitting equipment proposals to external sponsors.

Faculty interested in applying to the NSF MRI equipment development program should not respond to this announcement. This institutionally limited program is not eligible for funding from the USC Core Instrumentation Fund.
Proposal Components

All proposals must be submitted using our online application system (see pg. 4 Proposal Submission box for access information). Cover page information will be entered online, and proposal components will be uploaded.

1. Cover Page Information

   1. Principal Investigator and contact information

   2. Laboratory or Core Facility

   3. Indication of the type of proposal among these categories:
      A. Full funding for acquisition of shared equipment
      B. Matching funding toward acquisition of equipment
      C. Expansion of technical services

   4. Name of center of excellence, as specified in the USC Plan for Science and Technology Facilities.

   5. URL for core facility’s website.

   6. If type A or B proposal, name of proposed Instrument

2. Narrative Section (Must address the following components. May not exceed four pages.)

   (1) Research Impact
   Describe the nature of research that will be supported as a result of the proposed funding. List the faculty who would utilize the laboratory, and explain the relationship of the proposed funding to their research. Provide evidence that the faculty have a strong track record for externally funded research, as well as publications. Describe how the funding will enable expansion of research in new directions, and, if relevant, recruitment of new faculty.

   (2) Need
   Describe the current state of related core laboratories at USC, as well as at other nearby institutions. Provide information on the current condition of USC’s equipment (if any), and the degree to which USC’s equipment is being used at or near capacity. Explain how faculty are currently conducting experiments in the absence of the proposed funding. Explain how the proposal meets a need specified in the USC Plan for Science and Technology Facilities.

   (3) If Type A or B Proposal: Acquisition
   Provide details (supported by quotes) on the full cost of equipment acquisition, including installation, space renovation and taxes. Provide a budget to show the portion of this cost that will be covered by the core instrumentation fund, and the portion that will be covered by other sources, such as federal programs. For external sources, provide details on any cost-share requirements of the sponsor, along with the program from which support will be sought. State where the equipment will be installed, and how potential users will be made aware of, and gain access to, the facility.

   (4) If Type C Proposal: Expansion of Technical Services
   The Provost Office will support 50% of the costs for expanding the technical staff of the core laboratory, up to a maximum of $60,000 per year. The new technical staff must devote 100% of their effort to providing core laboratory services, assisting faculty, students and postdocs in conducting experiments, including the preparation of pilot data for submission of proposals. In this section, describe the type of individual who would be added to the core staff and the new capabilities that will be provided. Describe how the new
position will complement the existing positions within the core laboratory. Also describe the source of the matching funds for support of core services.

(4) Sustainment
Describe the commitment from a school, department or center to support the ongoing maintenance and operation of the laboratory in a shared-use environment, available to the entire university community. Provide the annual budget for the core laboratory in a format consistent with USC’s policy on recharge centers. Demonstrate the source of funding for ongoing maintenance and operation of any newly acquired equipment and demonstrate the source of funding for matching the expansion of technical staff.

(5) Prior Support
Describe any prior support received under this program, and the outcomes of the prior support, in terms of the equipment acquired and the resulting research.

3. Letter of Support

Upload a letter of support from the unit that has committed to ongoing maintenance and operation of the core laboratory, stating any cost-share equipment. **Any newly proposed core must include a letter from at least one dean describing his or her commitment to create and support the new core in future years.**

4. Vita

Upload brief bio-sketches (no more than 5 in total) for the primary faculty users of the facility.

**Criteria for Support**

a) **Impact:** Degree to which funding makes a substantial difference in USC’s research activities, and the degree to which the funding fills an unmet need.

b) **Strategic Importance:** Proposed equipment must meet a need expressed in the USC Plan for Science and Technology Facilities. The proposal should demonstrate how the equipment meets a strategic need.

c) **Participation:** Number of faculty who would utilize the laboratory, and the degree to which the user-base spans multiple schools and campuses. The annual research expenditure activity of the key users will also be a consideration.

d) **Leverage and Cost:** Priority is given to the requests that are leveraged against other funding sources, thereby minimizing the need for provost office support. Priority will also be given to cases where cost-share is required or expected under the competition. Matching funds are required for Type C proposals, which in most cases would be funded by schools, departments or centers.

e) **Commitment:** As a requirement, commitment for ongoing support and maintenance from a university school, center or department is required.

Applicants are permitted to submit multiple proposals, which will be reviewed individually. However, the program is unlikely to fund multiple proposals originating from the same laboratory. Priority will also be given to labs that did not receive funding from this program under the academic year 2011/2012, solicitation deadlines.
Review and Awards

The annual proposal review will consider requests up to $300,000 for Type A and B proposals. The annual proposal review will consider requests up to $60,000 per year for Type C proposals, with a three year commitment. Selected Type C proposals will be required to demonstrate progress in research activity each year as a condition for continued support, but are not subject to an annual competitive review. Competitive review is required for continuation beyond three years.

A faculty committee will review all annual requests, and provide a prioritized list of investments to the Vice President for Research. In addition, potential users will be surveyed to ascertain the actual impact of the equipment on their research programs. The survey, combined with the prioritized investments, will be the basis for the final award decisions.

Faculty may also submit requests for cost-share on equipment proposals (Type B) on an as-needed basis throughout the year. Such proposals may request up to $200,000 for support. Cost-share requests must be submitted at least six weeks prior to the proposal due date to enable peer review. Priority is given to external competitions that require university cost-share.

All awards made for proposal cost-share are conditional, and depend on success in receiving external support.

The annual review will be used to prioritize awards, which may be made at different times throughout the year depending on the outcome of externally submitted proposals. Investigators will be notified as funds become available.

All recipients are required to endorse a core laboratory agreement, signed by the lab director and research dean of submitting school. Provisions include these commitments:

- Support for ongoing operation and maintenance costs.
- Ensuring equipment is available to the entire university community.
- Adoption of “CORES” software for scheduling and billing.
- Provision of a website that specifies capabilities and how to gain access to equipment.

Proposal Submissions

Deadlines:

- Type A proposal deadline remains December 6, 2012.
- *Type B proposal deadline is open, and proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
- *Type C proposal deadline to be determined at a future date.

All proposals must be submitted using our online application by the deadline indicated above. To start your application you will need to log in using your USC NetID (or “username”) and password:

http://web-app.usc.edu/web/research/

IMPORTANT: You may experience problems with the online application when using the browser Internet Explorer. If you experience problems, please access the online application system through a different browser, such as Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome.

Questions about the application submission process can be directed to Melody Tang at melodyta@usc.edu or 213-740-6709.
Further Information and Program Contact

For additional information or inquiries about the Core Instrumentation Fund program, please contact:

Silvia Da Costa, Ph.D.
Director of Faculty Research Relations
Office of Research
CUB-325
Mail Code: 0706
Email: sdacosta@usc.edu
Phone: 213-740-6709