

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RESEARCH COLLABORATION FUND AWARD



APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Tuesday, February 19, 2019

PURPOSE

The Research Collaboration Fund supports research collaboration among faculty and students working on interdisciplinary research topics, such as water, neuroscience, genomics, digital humanities, or climate change. Example uses of funding include organization of workshops, seminars, application of collaborative technologies, retreats and development of online resources. Each collaboration should engage a large group of faculty (normally 10 or more), representing at least two schools at USC. Funding can be for up to three years, with the possibility of competitive renewal thereafter.

The aim of these awards is not to fund specific research projects, but rather to support teams of faculty who aim to establish or foster a community of scholars at USC organized around a broad topic of shared interest. The awards fund the activities that help to develop this collaborative group. These activities should lay the groundwork for members of the collaborative group to create new research projects, and should contribute to strengthening the individual research programs of its members. Activities are encouraged to include an *educational component*, providing students an opportunity to not only participate, but assist in the developing and organizing events.

Awards under this program are made through a competitive process, based on proposals submitted by a lead faculty investigator along with at least one additional investigator holding a primary faculty appointment in a different school than the lead investigator.

ELIGIBILITY

The Lead Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigator(s) (Co-PI) must have *primary appointments from at least two schools* and the collaboration should engage a large number (*normally 10 or more*) of faculty (key collaborators).

In addition to the representation from two schools at USC, leadership of the proposed Collaboration Fund Group may include a Co-PI from a non-USC organization or institute with which the group will interact.

OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Faculty Rank. Applicants must be permanent, full-time faculty at USC at the start of the award period. Research faculty are eligible. Tenure track and non-tenure track faculty are eligible. Individuals who are adjunct or visiting faculty are *not eligible* to apply. Co-PIs from non-USC organizations or institutes need not hold a faculty position, but must be associated (staff or faculty member) with the external organization or institute.

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

Collaboration Fund Grants provide up to **\$30,000/year**; awards will be made for a three-year period, subject to an annual progress review and activity plan, and continued availability of funding. As part of

the annual review, faculty identified as participants will be surveyed to assess the strength of their participation. Funds that are not expended at the end of a fiscal year will be returned to the Office of the Provost or may be carried-over to complete the subsequent year's funding (as applicable). At the end of three years, collaborations may reapply for funding on a competitive basis. Funds may be used:

- For the costs of holding events (e.g. meals, rental of space, advertising);
- For travel costs for outside speakers visiting USC to participate;
- For staff or student salaries/benefits to assist in organizing events (*Administrative costs may not exceed \$10,000*);
- To apply technologies to enable collaboration, including websites;

GRANT CONDITIONS

- Equipment and computer purchases and sub-contracts *are not* permitted under this program.
- Awards include fringe benefits but *are not* assessed facilities & administration costs (i.e., indirect costs);
- Awards *do not* fund student tuition and other student fees (such as health insurance);
- Awardees have discretion in the budgeting and re-budgeting of funds to meet their needs within the guidelines of the fund and the terms of the proposal. However, funds *may not* be transferred to another project, to other researchers or other institutions.
- Funds *may not* be used for faculty or researcher salaries/benefits
- Awards *do not* pay for consultants;
- Funds *may not* be used for costs related to pilot research projects, designed to produce preliminary data;
- Funds *may not* be used as cash advances for expenses.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL EVALUATIONS

Grant proposals will be evaluated in two steps: first by referees with expertise in collaborative research, who will provide a prioritized list to the Vice President of Research.

The second evaluation step will consist of a brief oral presentation to the Office of Research combined with a question and answer period. The purpose of this step will be to assess whether the applicants will work as an integrated team and determine whether the applicants have a realistic plan for sustaining the proposed activity. A final decision will be made by the Vice President for Research after completion of interviews.

In reviewing research grant requests, the referees will consider:

- Impact:* Degree to which the collaboration makes a substantial different in USC's research activities, and the degree to which the collaboration fills an unmet need at USC;
- Creativity:* Level of creativity displayed in the organization of collaboration activities;
- Participation:* Number of faculty who will actively participate, and the degree to which the participants span multiple schools;
- Leverage:* Priority is given to requests that are leveraged against supporting commitments from other units at USC;

- e) *Synergy with Education Programs*: Degree to which program involves students, and provides or expands educational opportunities;
- f) *Reasonableness of Budget*: Projects costs relative to the proposed work. Applicants should not apply for more funds than are needed to accomplish their goals.

NOTIFICATION AND TERM OF AWARD

In the event of a favorable panel recommendation, and approval by the Vice President of Research, applicants will be notified of the amount and conditions of the award by the beginning of **June, 2019**. Copies of the notification of the award will be sent to school deans.

Funds will be available for expenditure by the beginning **August 1, 2019**. Funds that are not expended at the end of an award period will be returned to the Office of the Provost or may be carried-over to complete the subsequent year's funding (as applicable).

REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

Awardees are asked to submit a brief progress report by **April, 2020** (including an accounting of expenditures and any external support received). A formal request for a final report will be sent to awardees indicating required information. Reports will be reviewed to determine renewal, or not, of funding for the second and third years. Portions of the report may also be reprinted to build support for the fund among the university community and to make decisions about how best to use the fund to promote productivity in the future.

Any publication, creative endeavor or event arising from work supported by the fund should acknowledge the Research Collaboration Fund and the USC Provost's Office.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about the Research Collaboration Fund Award or the application submission process can be directed to Melody Pham at yprsch@usc.edu or 213-821-8163.

For submission instructions, see Proposal Guidelines.

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GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES:

Before preparing a proposal, applicants should read closely the program description, including the sections on eligibility and evaluation criteria.

Proposals must be submitted using the Office of Research online application system (see page 5).

Format: Proposal documents should be written using a standard font (e.g., Arial or Times New Roman), **12 point, single-spaced, with one inch margins**. Documents should be uploaded as PDFs. *Apart from their use in formulas, preferably do not use “symbols” text format (use “alpha” instead of “α”).*

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Cover page information (*to be filled out on-line*)

- a) Principal Investigator Information;
- b) Proposal title;
- c) Keywords: *provide up to 5 keywords that best describes your research interests;*
- d) Amount requested: *Budget should not exceed \$30,000;*
- e) Co-PI contact information.

Sections to be uploaded: It is requested that applicants follow instructions carefully and **do not** submit additional materials not requested by this RFP. Information that is uploaded beyond what is requested **will not** be included in the proposal package provided to reviewers.

- a) **Abstract:** (*not to exceed 30 lines*) The project abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application.
- b) **Project Narrative:** (*not to exceed 4 pages*) No other ancillary text, appendices, etc., will be accepted; page limits are inclusive of figures and tables and must include the following components (use headers below):
 - i. **Research Impact**
Describe the nature of research, the type of work currently being conducted at USC, and the type of new research that might occur as a result of the collaboration. Describe steps already taken to promote collaboration among the group of faculty, and prior accomplishments.
 - ii. **Activities**
Provide a list of *specific* activities that will occur in the first year of the collaboration. Describe how you will convene the members of your collaboration and foster scholarly exchange among them. Explain the purpose of the activities, and the outcomes you expect to result. Describe how the collaboration will affect educational programs and

opportunities for USC students. Describe the contributions of non-USC organizations to the group's activities (*as applicable*). Describe the *educational component* and student participation in group activities and events.

iii. **Leverage**

Describe any additional resources that will support the collaboration provided by departments, centers or schools.

- c) **Budget Justification** Download the excel sheet (click [here](#)) to provide a budget, explaining the use of funds for year one. Budget should not exceed **\$30,000**.
- d) **Participating Faculty (not to exceed one page)** List the faculty (**Last Name, First Name and E-mail**) who would participate, and explain their potential contributions to the collaboration.
- e) **Curriculum vitae: (not to exceed 5 pages)** Provide a brief CV or Biosketch of the PI and Co-PI(s).

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Submit your proposal application utilizing the Office of Research application submission and reporting portal.

Go to <https://app.wizehive.com/webform/USCgrants> to log in (or create an account for yourself), using your USC email address.

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Signatures: By submitting the online application, applicants indicate their agreement to comply with the terms and conditions of the Collaboration Fund program as well as all other applicable USC policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT

For additional information or inquiries about the Research Collaboration Fund program application submission process, please contact: Melody Pham at vprsch@usc.edu or 213-821-8163.