REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Provost New Strategic Directions for Research Award
$250,000 Maximum Per Awarded Team

UPDATED 03/16/20:
In response to the current pandemic of COVID-19 specifically, and more broadly, to the need to
address critical gaps in knowledge and response methods, tools, technologies, and strategies related to
viral diseases and disease outbreaks, the Office of Research has expanded the areas of research
interest eligible to be submitted to the Provost New Strategic Directions in Research Award to include
all areas of USC research and scholarship that may provide a broader perspective on viral diseases and
the detection and response to their outbreaks. Eligible topics include biomedical and clinical research
and development, as well as research and development broadly related to public health, legal, economic,
societal, and fiscal implications, among others.

APPLICATION – NEW DEADLINE DATE: 5 pm, Monday, May 11, 2020

PURPOSE
The Provost New Strategic Directions for Research Award (PNSDRA) Program will support innovative,
interdisciplinary, collaborative research that involves faculty groups from multiple USC schools. The goal
of this highly competitive funding opportunity is to identify as-yet undeveloped areas of USC
interdisciplinary strengths that present opportunities for cross-school collaborations, targeting research
problems that have high intellectual value and impact, and are externally fundable so they can be
sustained and scaled up.

PNSDRA invites applications from faculty teams across USC. Applying teams must show how their
team has the qualifications, creativity, and ability to make USC a national and international leader in a
significant area of study. PNSDRA grants will provide up to $250,000 in support over two years.

AREAS OF RESEARCH INTEREST
PNSDRA will support research on the following topics:

1. Artificial Intelligence to address health and social good: extracting knowledge for disease
diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and well-being
2. New therapeutics for Alzheimer’s disease
3. Innovative STEM approaches for training the next generation of scientists and engineers
4. Enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit: new approaches to living longer and living healthier
5. Basic biology, bioengineering, and translational science: on the path to new therapeutic
discoveries
6. Neuroimaging and other tools to enhance understanding of the mammalian brain
7. Detection and analysis of environmental exposures and their effects on health and illness
8. Utilizing data science to enhance the impact of basic biology in understanding disease
9. Reducing health disparities and improving access to care
10. Regenerative medicine, stem cells, and bioengineering
11. Tobacco/e-cigarette policy and health outcomes
12. Bioengineering and other innovative technologies for health promotion in aging &
Alzheimer’s disease
13. mHealth, telehealth, and digital wearable technology for empowering patient-centered healthcare
14. Synthetic biology and engineering
15. Innovative strategies to ameliorate substance abuse and mental health issues in young adults
16. Digital media for social change
17. Artificial intelligence analytics and storytelling in the arts and humanities
18. Convergent and cross-sectional approaches to social innovation research
19. Parsing the complexities of immigration and diverse communities: social, economic, and health considerations
20. Exploration of the intersection of race and gender
21. Innovative strategies and technologies for sustainability solutions
22. Sustainable coastal urban centers and long-term population and ecological health
23. Sustainability in integrated socio-environmental systems
24. Policy and implementation for technological societal and sustainability advances
25. Food, energy, and water (FEW) system sustainability
26. Advancing health by improving health literacy and understanding cultural competence
27. World building for sustainable futures
28. Arts-based placemaking for health and well-being
29. The arts and climate change
30. Urban screens and the networked city
31. Response methods, tools, technologies, and strategies related to viral diseases and disease outbreaks: COVID-19 and beyond

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
Eligible applicants are full-time research-active tenure-track and non-tenure track USC faculty with sufficient time to devote to the proposed work. Adjunct and teaching faculty are not eligible for this program.

To be eligible, a proposing team must include at least two faculty members who hold primary appointments from two different USC schools, and must include at least one assistant professor (tenure-track or non-tenure track).

BUDGET SPECIFICATIONS
- Faculty salary up to 1 month per person; total faculty salaries plus fringe should not exceed 1/3 of the overall grant budget.
- PhD student, undergraduate research student, and postdoc support
- Equipment, to be located at USC
- Materials & supplies for research, including core facilities costs
- Publications costs
- Travel costs, not to exceed $10,000 total
- No indirect costs will be charged on the grant; fringe must be included.

GRANT CONDITIONS
- PNSDRA does not supplement currently funded efforts or provide interim or bridge funding.
• Awardees have discretion in the budgeting and re-budgeting of funds to meet their research needs within the general guidelines of the fund and the terms of the proposal; however, funds may not be transferred to another project.
• Awards are not transferable to other institutions or researchers. Recipients must be faculty of USC during the entire award period.
• Awards do not fund student tuition and other student fees (such as health insurance).
• Awards do not pay for consultants.
• All USC rules, with respect to conflict of interest, human subject research, animal research, etc., apply to projects funded under this program. Funding will not be provided until all pertinent reviews are complete.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated by interdisciplinary faculty panels. Typically, reviewers will be USC faculty members, but when the necessary expertise does not reside on campus, external reviewers may be used. The panels advise the Provost and Vice President of Research on which proposals merit funding and at what amount.

In reviewing proposals, the faculty panel will consider:

1. The novelty and innovation of the proposed work
2. Potential to establish USC as a leader in significant areas of research
3. Methodological rigor
4. Interdisciplinarity, spanning and leveraging strengths from multiple schools
5. Qualifications of the team
6. Likelihood that the work plan will be achieved
7. Appropriateness of the proposed budget
8. Sustainability of the project beyond the award period

NOTIFICATION AND TERM OF AWARD

Award amount: Up to $250,000 total.
Applicants will be notified by the end of June 2020. Awardees will be informed of the amount and conditions of the awards and copies of the notifications of the award will be sent to school deans.

The funds should be spent within two years; special circumstances around COVID-19 will be taken into account in extending the grant period if necessary for up to an additional year. Funds that are not expended at the end of the award period will be returned to the Office of the Provost.

If review committee approval (e.g., IRB) is required for the applicant’s project, approval must be received prior to funding.

REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

All awarded teams will be required to submit a short report (no more than 3 pages) by July 1, 2021, covering the key findings, significant accomplishments relative to the proposed goals, publications, expenditures, and planned remaining work to complete the grant, and a final report (no more than 3 pages) summarizing all findings, results, and accomplishments of the grant, by September 15, 2022.
All publication arising from work supported this program should acknowledge the Provost New Strategic Directions for Research Award Program. The Office of Research should also be informed of any grant submissions/awards for which PNSDRA funds were used.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about the PNSDRA Program or the application submission process can be directed to Melody Pham at Vprsch@usc.edu or 213-821-8163.

For submission instructions, see Proposal Guidelines.
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
PROVOST NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AWARD

GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Before preparing a proposal, applying teams 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 6).

Format: Proposal documents should be written using a standard font (e.g., Arial or Times New Roman), 11 point, single-spaced, with one inch margins.

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

a) Proposal title;
b) Principal Investigator and co-PI(s) contact information;
c) Budget summary: fill in appropriate fields on the online budget form as completely as possible.
d) Innovation: (not to exceed 100 words) Summarize the innovation of the proposed research and how it will help establish as-yet undeveloped areas of USC interdisciplinary strengths that present new opportunities for cross-school collaboration.

Sections to be uploaded: Applying teams must follow instructions carefully. Information that is uploaded beyond what is requested will not be included in the proposal package provided to reviewers.

a) Abstract: (not to exceed 20 lines of text)
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 six 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. Novel Concept
   Describe the original idea that is the centerpiece for the proposal. Explain the significance of the concept and the potential for growing new pathways of research as a consequence of USC’s investment. Explain the “state of the field” and who are the key players. Explain why this is an ideal time for academia to increase research in this area.

ii. Research Approach
   Describe the research activities to be carried out under the award. Explain how you will
address the questions and hypotheses of interest. Explain what obstacles you might encounter and how you might overcome these obstacles.

iii. Expected Results and Impact on Future Research
Describe the expected outcomes from the research funded under the award. Importantly, explain how the project and its findings will help undeveloped areas of USC interdisciplinary strengths and present new opportunities for cross-school collaboration.

iv. Opportunities for Attracting External Funding
Describe how scholarship supported by this grant can help to secure subsequent external funding at USC. Describe the funding agencies, foundations, or programs that may be interested in the topic, and how you will reach out to these sponsors.

v. Timeline & Milestones
A clear timeline with milestones for the completion of the project should be included in the application. Identify clear outcomes and products.

c) References: (not to exceed one page)

d) Budget Justification: (not to exceed one page) Clarify the role of individuals for whom salary support is requested. Justify any request for salary support in terms of the objectives of the project. Explain how travel funds will be used to conduct the research. List major equipment and materials purchases, and describe how they are necessary to carry out the proposed research. No specific format is required so long as the budget and explanations contain the relevant information.

e) Curriculum vitae: (not to exceed five pages per person)
Provide a brief CV or biosketch for each PI and co-PI.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Applications are submitted via the Office of Research application submission and reporting portal, which is found at https://app.wizehive.com/webform/USCgrants; log in (or create an account for yourself) using a USC email address.

APPLICATION – NEW DEADLINE DATE: 5 pm, Monday, May 11, 2020

By submitting the online application, applying teams indicate their agreement to comply with the terms and conditions of the Provost New Strategic Directions for Research Award Program, as well as all other applicable USC policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT

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