

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Strategic Directions for Research Award



**APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Monday, October 4, 2021**

### **PURPOSE**

The Strategic Directions for Research Award (SDRA) Program supports innovative, interdisciplinary, collaborative research that involves faculty groups from multiple USC schools. The goal of this competitive funding opportunity is to identify areas of USC interdisciplinary strengths that present opportunities for cross-school collaboration and sustainable future external funding.

We invite applications from faculty teams across USC. Applying teams must show their qualifications, creativity, and ability to make USC a leader in a significant area of study, as well as the sustainability of the proposed research with external funding. SDRA provides \$150,000 - \$300,000 for one year.

### **AREAS OF RESEARCH INTEREST**

Eligible topics include interdisciplinary research targeting problems that have high intellectual impact and are externally fundable so they can be sustained and scaled up. Examples of such research topics are listed at the end of this solicitation; the list is not meant to be exhaustive.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Proposing PIs must be full-time tenure-track or non-tenure track faculty. Visiting and adjunct faculty are not eligible to apply.

To encourage interdisciplinarity and engagement across faculty ranks, 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). To encourage research sustainability, the teams are expected to provide specific external funding targets for continuing the research beyond the end of the award, including the funder, program name, and application/proposal submission dates.

### **ELIGIBLE BUDGET ITEMS**

- Faculty salary up to one month per person; total faculty salaries plus fringe should not exceed 1/3 of the overall grant budget.
- Support for PhD students, undergraduate research students, and postdocs.
- Equipment (to be located at USC).
- Materials & supplies for research, including core facilities costs.

- Expenses related to researching materials and fabrication to actualize arts projects, including renting temporary studio space, renting time in a specialized lab(s), renting specialized equipment.
- Costs for publication, including manuscript permission fees and picture permissions fees, where grants will not cover page charges.
- No indirect costs may be charged on the grant; fringe must be included.
- Travel funds (US and international) related to conferences and research collaborations that lead to publications or other scholarly products. Guidance for COVID-19 related limitations on travel can be found [here](#). If, due to the pandemic, travel is not allowed at the time of proposal submission, it may not be included in the budget.

## **GRANT CONDITIONS**

- SDRA 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 regarding conflict of interest, human subject research, animal research, etc., apply to projects funded under this program. Funding will not be provided until the Office of Research Initiatives and Facilities receives confirmation that a full application for approval has been submitted to the relevant office.
- Recipients have 12 months from the date funds are received to complete projects. Funds not expended by that time will be returned to support other Provost grants.

## **PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

Proposals will be evaluated by interdisciplinary faculty panels. Typically, reviewers will be USC faculty members, but if the necessary expertise does not reside on campus, external reviewers may be used. The reviewers will consider:

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

## **NOTIFICATION AND TERM OF AWARD**

Award amount: \$150,000 - \$300,000 in support may be requested; smaller budgets are welcome.

Awardees and their school deans and research vice deans will be notified by November, 2021 of the amount and conditions of the awards. If review committee approval (e.g., IRB) is required for the applicant's project, confirmation that a full application for approval has been submitted to the relevant office must be submitted to [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu) prior to payment of award.

## **REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT**

All awarded teams will be required to submit a short (3 pages max) report by December 2022, summarizing results and accomplishments of the grant, covering the key findings relative to the proposed goals, publications, expenditures, and plans for sustaining the work with external funding targets.

All publications arising from work supported this program should acknowledge *the USC Strategic Directions for Research Award Program*. The Office of Research Initiatives and Facilities should also be informed of any grant submissions/awards for which SDRA funds were used.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION**

Questions about the SDRA Program should be sent to Melody Pham at [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu).

**For submission instructions, see the Proposal Guidelines.**

## EXAMPLES OF EXTERNALLY FUNDABLE RESEARCH TOPICS

Examples of topics eligible for SDRA support include, *but are not limited to*:

1. Digital divide
2. Innovative approaches to addressing questions of structural inequality
3. Structural and cultural barriers to enable political participation
4. Research that explores the intersectionality of race and other marginalized status.
5. Response methods, tools, technologies, and strategies related to viral diseases and disease outbreaks: COVID-19 and beyond
6. Social media and contact tracing to investigate infectious disease epidemiology
7. Artificial Intelligence for social good: unlocking the opportunity for positive impact in economically disadvantaged and diverse populations
8. Translating the biology of aging into novel therapeutics for Alzheimer's disease
9. Bioengineering as a new frontier for translation science
10. Cutting-edge neuroimaging to elucidate the structure and function of the nervous system
11. Health and health care disparities: focusing on populations and health care systems
12. Cellular therapies, devices, and tissue engineering in regenerative medicine
13. Innovative STEM approaches to enhance innovation and science literacy
14. Innovative therapeutic approaches for mHealth and telehealth
15. Innovative approaches to substance use and mental health treatment
16. Human-centered artificial intelligence, the arts, and humanities: implications for cultural and societal engineering
17. Social science paradigms to understand race, gender, and class intersectionality
18. Synergistic research program for sustainability solutions
19. Innovative approaches to sustainable coastal ecosystem management
20. Socio-economic aspects of sustainable development
21. Economic, social, and environmental sustainability in urban planning
22. Digital scholarship in the humanities to promote health and well-being
23. Arts-based creative placemaking projects for community transformation to enhance quality of life and promote opportunity
24. The social and cultural potential of urban screens in the urban landscape
25. Innovative applications of quantum information science to large scale social challenges
26. Social science of diversity, equity, and inclusion
27. Fostering the intellectual ecology and connectivity of arts, social sciences, and the humanities
28. Critical arts and humanities scholarship to engage the intersectionality of race and gender
29. Better living through cyber resiliency and trusted computing
30. Cutting-edge robotics to bring manufacturing and health care delivery into a new age
31. Advancing humanistic knowledge through sustained collaboration
32. Creative arts to improve health, wellness, and quality of life
33. Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter: a social science framework of academic excellence for the public good
34. Discovery and innovation in space: a new frontier for physicians, engineers, and social scientists
35. Using a social justice research framework to promote health equity in diverse communities

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AWARD



## GUIDELINES

### PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Proposals are submitted using the Office of Research Initiatives and Facilities online application portal ([here](#)).

**Format:** Proposal should be in a standard font, 12 point, single-spaced, with one-inch margins.

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

- a) Principal Investigator and co-PI(s) contact information and 10-digit USC ID number
- b) Proposal title
- c) Budget: total requested
- d) Innovation (up to 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:** Please 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:** (up to 20 lines of text) A stand-alone succinct description of the proposed work.
- a) **Project Narrative:** (up to 6 pages) Page limits include figures, tables; headers (below) should be included in the narrative:
  - i. *Novel Concept*  
Describe the original idea of the proposal. Explain the significance of the concept and the potential for growing new pathways of research and external funding as a consequence of USC's investment. Explain the state of the research and why this is the time and the team for the proposed research.
  - 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 and risks 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. *Sustainability of the research with external funding*  
Describe how this grant will help to secure subsequent external funding. Describe specific funding sources and timelines for planned external proposals.
  - v. *Timeline & Milestones*  
Provide a clear timeline with milestones for the completion of the project. Identify clear outcomes and products.
- b) **References** (up to one page)
- c) **Budget Justification** (up to one page): Clarify the role of individuals for whom salary, M&S, and other support is requested relative to the objectives of the project. No specific format is required so long as the budget and explanations contain the relevant information.
- d) **Curriculum vitae** (up to five pages)  
Provide a brief CV or biosketch for each PI and co-PI. Applicants may use any standardized CV format, or institutional ones (NIH, NSF, NEH, etc.).

## **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Applications are submitted via the Office of Research Initiatives and Facilities application portal, found [here](#); log in (or create an account for yourself) using a USC email address.

## **APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Monday, October 4, 2021**

By submitting the online application, applying teams indicate their agreement to comply with the terms and conditions of the Strategic Directions for Research Award Program, and 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 [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu).