REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RESEARCH COLLABORATION FUND AWARD

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Monday, February 28th, 2022

PURPOSE
The Research Collaboration Fund supports research collaborations among faculty and students working on interdisciplinary societally-relevant research topics, such as pandemic-related topics, equity and inclusion, climate change, neuroscience, mindfulness and behavioral science, digital humanities, and climate change, among many others.

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. We seek proposals that creatively overcome current pandemic limitations on travel and in-person meetings, proposing new and engaging ways to bring people together with activities that develop the impact of the collaborative group.

The proposed activities should establish the foundation for members of the collaborative group to create new research projects as well as contribute to strengthening the individual research programs of its members and others as USC. Encouraged activities include an educational component, providing students an opportunity to not only participate but assist in the design and organization of events.

Each collaboration should engage a large group of faculty (normally 10 or more), representing at least two schools at USC. The proposed support can be for up to three years, with the possibility of competitive renewal thereafter based on impact.

ELIGIBILITY
Awards under this program are made through a competitive process, based on proposals submitted by a team of faculty investigators whose primary appointments are in at least two different schools.

The collaboration should engage a large number (normally 10 or more) of participating faculty.

In addition to the representation from two schools at USC, team of faculty may include key collaborators from non-USC organizations or institutes with which the group will interact.

A list of current Collaboration Fund groups can be found here.

OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
Faculty Rank. Applicants must be permanent, full-time faculty at USC at the start of the award period. Tenure track and non-tenure track faculty are eligible. Adjunct, visiting or part-time faculty are not eligible to apply but may be included as participating faculty. Key collaborators 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 Research or may be carried over to complete the subsequent year’s funding (as applicable). At the end of three years, collaborations may reapply, on a competitive basis, for an additional three years of funding. Funds may be used:

- For the costs of holding events.
- For travel costs for outside speakers visiting USC to participate. 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.
- 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.
- PI summer salary plus fringe benefits (up to $5,000 max per award cycle, *not per PI group leader*). Each group can determine how funds are to be distributed between the co-PIs. Funds allocated for PI salary cannot be used for administrative costs.

**GRANT CONDITIONS**

- Funds may not be used for costs related to pilot research projects designed to produce data.
- 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).
- Funds may not be used for travel to or registration at seminars or conferences or for memberships to external organizations.
- 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.
- Awards do not pay for non-USC consultants.
- 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 Director of Research Initiatives & Facilities and the Vice President of Research.

The second evaluation step will consist of a brief oral presentation to the Office of Research followed by 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:

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

   b) **Creativity:** Level of creativity displayed in the organization of collaboration activities.

   c) **Participation:** Number of faculty who will actively participate, and the degree to which the participants span multiple schools.

   d) **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:** Project 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 June, 2022. Copies of the notification of the award will be sent to school vice deans of research.

Funds will be available for expenditure by August, 2022. Funds that are not expended at the end of the award period will be returned to the Office of Research 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, 2023, 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, including promotional materials, should acknowledge the Research Collaboration Fund and the USC Provost’s Office (e.g., This event was supported/partially supported by 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 orif@usc.edu.

*For submission instructions, see the 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.

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.

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

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

a) Collaboration Fund Group leadership team contact information and 10-digit USC ID number - faculty investigators whose primary appointments are in different schools (at least two).

b) Proposal title.

c) Amount requested: budget should not exceed $30,000.

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 20 lines) A stand-alone succinct description of the proposed work.

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 only. Budget should not exceed $30,000.

 d) Participating Faculty (not to exceed one page) List the faculty (name, school and email) 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 the online application system to log in (or create an account for yourself), using your USC email address.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Monday, February 14, 2022
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 orif@usc.edu.