

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
JAMES H. ZUMBERGE FACULTY RESEARCH & INNOVATION FUND  
MULTI-SCHOOL INTERDISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH AWARD**



**APPLICATION DEADLINES**

**Large Grants: 5 pm, Monday, March 21, 2022**

**Small Grants:** Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Applicants should contact Silvia da Costa at [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu), prior to submitting a proposal, to receive confirmation that the proposed research is consistent with the aims of the Zumberge Interdisciplinary program.

**PURPOSE**

Zumberge Multi-School Interdisciplinary Research Awards provide seed funding for broad, collaborative research activities that are interdisciplinary and involve groups of faculty from multiple schools across USC. Successful proposals are led by faculty with strong records of previous research accomplishments. Interdisciplinary awards are intended for teams of such faculty who are preparing a proposal for an externally funded multi-investigator grant on the scale of an interdisciplinary center, training grant or program project award.

To be considered for this award, applications must (a) plan to apply to a specific externally-funded grant, (b) provide a realistic plan for sustained funding or support beyond the end of the award, and (c) demonstrate that a Zumberge award will make a difference in attracting further research support.

**AWARD TYPE**

There are two types of Zumberge Interdisciplinary Research awards:

**Large Research Grants:** provide up to \$85,000 in funding and are intended to support activities that take place over a one-year period.

**Small Research Grants:** provide up to \$10,000 and are intended to support projects that typically last no more than three months.

**ELIGIBILITY**

- Applicants must be permanent, full-time faculty at USC. Tenure track and non-tenure track faculty are eligible; visiting and adjunct faculty are not eligible to apply.
- Proposals must designate a team that includes one Principal Investigator (PI) and at least one co-Principal Investigator; at least two separate schools within USC must be represented between the primary appointments of the PI and Co-PI. Applications should also specifically describe the involvement of other faculty or key personnel who have agreed to participate in the project.
- The corresponding PI must have a record of sustained funding from outside the university over the past 5 years.
- The Zumberge Interdisciplinary program accepts proposals in a diverse range of research areas, scholarship, and artistic and cultural expression, including, but not limited to, social sciences,

humanities, arts, literature, STEM, political sciences, social work, education, business, law, architecture, among others.

- PIs and Co-PIs who received a Zumberge Interdisciplinary Award in 2020 or later are not eligible to apply for another award in the same category (Small or Large research grant). However, faculty may apply for a Large grant to support an activity that was previously supported by a Small research grant. Listing of previous awardees can be found [here](#).
- Neither type of grant provides financial support beyond the duration of the award and neither carries the opportunity for renewal. Rather, applicants should use these grants as a step toward securing external funding or other forms of support for a sustained collaborative research program. Additionally, the Zumberge award will not fund the same work that is being funded under other provost programs or external sponsors.

## **TYPES OF ASSISTANCE**

- Costs of pilot research projects designed to produce data that can lead to future external funding.
- Research expenses related to data acquisition, including research participant incentives, use of core or shared resource facilities.
- Salary support for postdocs, graduate student RAs, undergraduate researchers, and other student wages.
- Staff salaries associated with organizing events or preparing major proposals. Administrative costs may not exceed \$10,000.
- Organization of workshops or conferences.
- Creation of a website or other electronic resource.
- Travel to meet with potential research sponsors, or to attract collaborators or visitors to USC. 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**

- Sub-contracts are not permitted under this program.
- Awardees have discretion in the budgeting and re-budgeting of funds to meet their research needs within the guidelines of the fund and the terms of the proposal. However, funds may not be transferred to another project or to other researchers or institutions.
- Awards include fringe benefits but are not assessed facilities & administration costs (i.e., indirect costs).
- Recipients have 12 months (for the Large) and 3 months (for the Small) from the date funds are received to complete projects. Funds not expended by that time are returned to support other Zumberge grants.
- Awards do not fund faculty salary for the PI or collaborating PIs.
- Awards do not pay for non-USC consultants.
- Awards do not fund student tuition and other student fees (such as health insurance).
- All USC rules, with respect to conflict of interest, human subject research, animal research, etc., apply to projects funded under this program. Funding will only be provided following confirmation that all pertinent reviews have been submitted for approval by relevant committees (e.g.: IRB, IACUC).
- Faculty funded by the NSF are required to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research. Funding will only be provided following confirmation of course completion. Click [here](#) for more information prior to transfer of award funds.

Please contact the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities (ORIF) at [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu) should you have additional questions regarding allowable expenses.

**Awardees commit to:**

- submit a proposal application to the identified external sponsor.
- submit a near-final draft of their proposal to ORIF three weeks prior to the external submission date; the draft will be reviewed internally, and reviewer comments provided to the awardee.

**Cost Share for Large Grants:** For Large Grants, participating schools or organized research units are encouraged to provide cost-share support through relief of normal academic duties (e.g., course-load reduction) or financial contributions in support of the effort. Cost-share is encouraged from the home schools of each PI and Co-PI and will be a factor in the selection process.

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL EVALUATIONS**

Research proposals submitted to the James H. Zumberge Research & Innovation Fund are evaluated by interdisciplinary faculty panels. Typically, reviewers are USC faculty members; however, when the necessary expertise does not reside on campus, external reviewers may be used.

**Large Grant Proposals** will be evaluated in two steps: first by referees with expertise in the area of research, and second by the ORIF Director and the Vice President of Research. In reviewing research grant requests, the referees will consider:

- a) Likelihood that the research will receive significant external funding.
- b) Intrinsic significance and originality of the proposed research.
- c) Interdisciplinary nature of the research with clearly defined and achievable milestones and timeline.
- d) Appropriateness of budget.
- e) Extent of sustained collaborative activity that is fostered by the award.
- f) The proposed milestones are identified and achievable.
- g) Prior record of principal investigators in leading externally funded collaborative interdisciplinary research projects. The corresponding PI must have a record of sustained funding from outside the university over the past 5 years.

The second evaluation step will consist of an oral presentation to ORIF and 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.

**Small Grant Proposals** will be evaluated only by ORIF and the Office of Research. The criteria are the same as those for the large grant proposal, but the expectation is that the activity will be in a formative stage.

## **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.

For *Large Grant* awards, applicants will be notified by June, 2022, with funds available in August, 2022. Funds that are not expended by September, 2023 will be returned to the Office of the Provost. Copies of the notification of the award will be sent to school research vice deans.

For *Small Grant* awards, applicants will be notified of award decisions within several weeks of submission, and funds will be available to awardees soon thereafter.

### **REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT**

Zumberge Large awardees are asked to submit a brief report by October, 2023 (including an accounting of expenditures and any external support received). A formal request for the final report will be sent to awardees at the close of the grant period, indicating required information. Portions of the report may 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 or creative endeavor arising from work supported by the fund must acknowledge the *James H. Zumberge Faculty Research and Innovation Fund at the University of Southern California and the USC Office of the Provost*. The Office of Research should also be informed of any grant submissions/awards and/or publications for which Zumberge funds were used.

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

Questions about the award or the application submission process can be directed to Melody Pham at [orif@usc.edu](mailto: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. Applicants are encouraged to consult the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities prior to preparing their proposals (contact Silvia da Costa at [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu)).*

**Proposals are submitted using the ORIF online application system ([here](#)).**

**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.

**PROPOSAL COMPONENTS**

Proposals for the Zumberge Small award may be submitted only after receiving confirmation from the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities that the proposed project fits the aims of the Zumberge Interdisciplinary program. Contact Silvia da Costa at [vprsch@usc.edu](mailto:vprsch@usc.edu) for more information.

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

- a) Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI(s) contact information and 10-digit USC ID number.
- b) Have you received a Zumberge Interdisciplinary Award since 2020?
- c) Proposal title.
- d) Budget, amount requested to the Zumberge Program.
- e) Budget, amount to be requested to the external sponsor.
- f) Link to the specific solicitation or program targeted (if the Request for Proposal has not yet been released, provide the link to the most recent RFP available).
- g) Expected date of proposal submission to external sponsor.
- h) Is USC Committee approval required? (Please indicate all that apply).

**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) **Brief description** (*not to exceed 60 words*) A succinct description of the proposed work.
- b) **Abstract:** (*not to exceed 20 lines of text*) A stand-alone description of the proposed work.

c) **Project Narrative:** No other ancillary text, appendices, etc., will be accepted; page limits are inclusive of figures and tables. The Zumberge Small must not exceed 1 page. The Zumberge Large must not exceed 5 pages and must include the following components (use headers below):

i. *Research Description*

Describe the area of research to be supported from the following perspectives: What is the goal of the research in terms of advancing fundamental knowledge? In general, what is the importance of the project to USC, the research community, and society? What is the state of the research activity at USC and elsewhere, and what are the important research questions for the topic? Who at USC is engaged in the area of research and how would their research be integrated through the proposed project?

ii. *Project Design / Research Methods*

Describe what activities will be undertaken during the project to accomplish project goals, and the research methodologies involved. Activities may include pilot data collection and analysis, workshops or seminar series that involve groups of researchers, or other relevant activities. Identify key collaborators and describe their roles and participation in the project. Describe preliminary planning or research activities that the team of investigators has already carried out for this project.

iii. *Sustainment*

Targets for funding must be specific to the proposed topic and must be external to the university. Describe the plan for sustaining the research beyond the award period. It is important for the proposal to present a clear plan of action for the team of investigators to be competitive for a specific funding opportunity. Provide a realistic plan for sustained funding or support beyond the end of the award and indicate how the Zumberge award will make a difference in attracting further research support.

iv. *Expected Results and Impact on Long-Term Research Program*

Describe the expected outcomes and deliverables. Explain how the project and its findings will help generate scholarship beyond the period of the award.

v. *Timeline*

A clear timeline for the completion of the work should be included in the application, identifying specific milestones associated with project goals.

vi. *Commitment Statement*

The proposal must include a statement in which applicants commit to submit a proposal to the intended external funder/target program and to submit a near-final draft of their proposal to the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities three weeks prior to the external submission date (the draft will be reviewed internally and reviewer comments provided to the awardee). This statement will be an obligation for the investigators and participating schools.

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, if applicable. No specific format is required so long as the budget and explanation contain the relevant information. 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 of the project.

e) **Current Funding:** List all sources of internal and external support awarded during the past five years, current or pending, both as PI or co-PI. For each, give the title,

period, award amount, sponsor, and describe the relationship of each to the current proposal (if applicable). If existing funding appears similar to the proposed project, explain the differences.

- f) **Letter(s) of Support: (Required for Zumberge Large grants)** A letter of support, signed by the deans of the participating schools, must be provided for Large Grant proposals. The letter should describe any financial support provided by their schools and should state why the proposed activity is important for their schools. The letter should also describe any commitments to sustain the activity upon project completion.
- g) **References: (not to exceed one page)**
- h) **Curriculum vitae: (not to exceed 5 pages)** Applicants may use any standardized CV format, or institutional ones (such as the NIH Biosketch, NEH, etc.). *CVs must demonstrate sustained external support for the corresponding PI for the past five years.*

## **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

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

Go to <https://orif.usc.edu/oor-portal/> to log in (or create an account for yourself), using your USC email address.

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***Proposals submitted after to the above-mentioned deadline will be rejected without review.***

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

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT**

For additional information or inquiries about the Zumberge Multi-School Interdisciplinary Research Award program application submission process, please contact: Melody Pham at [orif@usc.edu](mailto:orif@usc.edu).