REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (R&D) PRIORITIES AWARD
SPECIAL SOLICITATION - SUSTAINABILITY

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5 pm, Monday, April 18, 2022  New Deadline

PURPOSE
Each year the federal government’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) outline the administration’s priorities for multi-agency federal funding for Research and Development (R&D) for the coming fiscal year. Areas of R&D priority for FY23 were detailed in the “Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies” issued Aug 27, 2021.

The USC R&D Priorities Award provides seed funding for interdisciplinary collaborative research activities involving groups of faculty from multiple schools who are preparing a proposal for an externally funded grant in areas of R&D priorities outlined by the OMB/OSTP. Applications can request up to $75,000; awards are for a period of one year.

Research areas currently identified as priorities for continued federal funding in R&D include science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and engagement; technology transfer and commercialization; and research infrastructure.

ELIGIBLE TOPICS
Within the topics targeted by the federal government for FY23 funding, eligible topics for this Request for Proposals include:

- **Energy Transition**: Research to develop clean power technologies harnessing clean energy solutions to achieve universal access to energy that is sustainable and affordable. Additional areas of research include the development of policy and regulatory frameworks to (a) attract the private sector to help deliver and finance these investment needs and (b) support engagement with communities to make a secure and just transition to clean power and other economic opportunities.

- **Blue Technology**: Research to develop technology that promotes a sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth in areas such as, but not limited to, aquaculture, biodiversity, coastal protection, renewable energy output, seafood production, cultural values, and tourism, while preserving the health of marine and coastal ecosystem. Blue technology is largely driven by “blue thinking,” the idea that eco-sustainability and renewable resources represent a broad range of possibilities for the benefit of social and economic growth.
To be considered for the R&D Priorities Award, applications must

- Identify and plan to apply to a specific externally-funded grant within the areas of research interest outlined above.
- Provide a realistic plan for sustained funding or support beyond the end of the award.
- Demonstrate that the R&D award will make a difference in attracting further research support.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- 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.
- Faculty teams must include at least one Assistant Professor. Applications should also specifically describe the involvement of other faculty or key personnel who have agreed to participate in the project.
- The grant does not provide financial support beyond the duration of the award period (one year) and does not carry the opportunity for renewal. Rather, the aim of the program is to support applicants in securing external funding or other forms of support for a sustained collaborative research program.
- The 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](#).

**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 from the date funds are received to complete projects. Funds not expended by that time are returned to support other Provost grants.
- Awards do not fund faculty salary for the PI, Co-PI or collaborating PIs.
- Awards do not pay for 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).

Please contact the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities (ORIF) at 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.

Examples of funding opportunities include (but are not limited to):

**Aquaculture**


USDA: [https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/aquaculture](https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/aquaculture)

NOAA: [https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/aquaculture](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/aquaculture). It also has a Blue Economy Strategic Plan 2021-2025

**Energy Transition**

NSF: NSF-CBET has an Environmental Sustainability program [https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/environmental-sustainability-1](https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/environmental-sustainability-1)

DOE: Energy Earthshot efforts which will grow from the present three addressing: hydrogen energy, carbon negative, and long duration storage. [https://www.energy.gov/policy/energy-earthshots-initiative](https://www.energy.gov/policy/energy-earthshots-initiative)

**Cost Share for Large Grants:** For Large Grants to external sponsors, 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 R&D Priorities Award 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.

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) Alignment with OMB/OSTP funding R&D priorities
d) Interdisciplinary nature of the research with clearly defined and achievable milestones and timeline.
e) Appropriateness of budget.
f) Overlap of current research: does the proposed research expand on an existing well-funded program and, if so, (a) how do the seed funds introduce a new dimension to the PI's work and (b) justify why the work cannot be done under the PI's current funding.
g) Extent of sustained collaborative activity that is fostered by the award.

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 May, 2022, with funds available in June, 2022. Funds that are not expended by August, 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.

REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

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 Research and Development (R&D) Priorities Award at the University of Southern California. The Office of Research Initiative and Facilities should also be informed of any grant submissions, awards and/or publications for which award funds were used.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about the award or the application submission process can be directed 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 are submitted using the Office of Research Initiatives & Facilities 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

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) Proposal title.
c) Budget, amount requested
d) 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).
e) Budget, amount to be requested to the external sponsor.
f) Expected date of proposal submission to external sponsor.
g) Is USC Committee approval required? (Please indicate all that apply).

Sections to be uploaded: Please follow instructions carefully and do not submit additional materials (such as hyperlinks to websites) 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: (not to exceed 5 pages):** No other ancillary text, appendices, etc., will be accepted; page limits are inclusive of figures and tables. The Narrative 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 the areas identified by the OMB/OSTP? 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 award period 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**
   The target for funding must be specific to the proposed topic and must be external to the university. 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 R&D Priorities 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.

e) **Current Funding:** List all sources of internal and external support awarded during the past three 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:** A letter of support, signed by participating schools is required, describing the specific support (financial or otherwise) provided by the school (center or institute) and should state why the proposed activity is important for the school. The letter should also describe any commitments to sustain the activity beyond the period of the award.

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.).

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

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

Go to the ORIF [grant portal](#) to log in (or create an account for yourself), using your USC email address.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** 5 pm, Monday, April 4, 2022

*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 R&D Priorities Award as well as all other applicable USC policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT

For additional information or inquiries about the program application submission process, please contact orif@usc.edu.