



USC University of Southern California

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Request For Proposals Institutional Training Planning Award

FUNDING ORGANIZATION**USC Office of Research and Innovation (OORI)****APPLICATION DEADLINE****5 PM PST, February 25, Annually.** Proposals submitted after this deadline will be rejected without review. When a due date falls on a weekend, federal holiday, or when USC offices are closed due to weather or other circumstances, the application deadline is automatically extended to the next business day.**SCIENTIFIC MERIT REVIEW****March – April****PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW****May****NOTIFICATION****June****EARLIEST AWARD DATE****August****AWARD PROJECT PERIOD****Maximum project period is one year****AWARDS (UP TO)****\$100,000**

The number of awards is contingent upon the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. All awards are subject to the yearly availability of funds, terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations.

BACKGROUND

The USC Office of Research and Innovation (OORI) Institutional Training Planning Award (ITPA) will assist in developing and enhancing USC's institutional research infrastructure by preparing faculty to submit competitive institutional training applications to federal agencies like the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. Institutional training awards are the primary driver in improving a university's ability to educate the next generation of skilled researchers and prepare them to pursue scientific careers and competitive research funding opportunities. To submit an institutional training grant application, faculty members must collect a wealth of data from university departments and mentors, conceptualize program administration, identify mentoring faculty, develop a comprehensive training plan, and design a program evaluation framework. Awards funded under this program will assist faculty in these planning activities and help them to prepare for proposal submission.

OPPORTUNITY

Federally supported predoctoral and postdoctoral training programs can provide highly stable sources of funding, promote multidisciplinary training, and help prepare trainees to obtain independent research support. Also, such programs augment the prestige of mentors and the institution as “trainers for the field” in one or more scientific domains. An important downstream effect of such institutional training programs is to enhance the ability of trainees to ultimately pursue careers in research, obtain independent research funding, compete for faculty positions, and assume scientific leadership roles. Institutional training grant directors need to have exemplary research and training experience. It is also very important for institutional training programs to include mentors with histories of being funded by the subagency to which a proposal is submitted, and with a history of mentoring individuals who ultimately receive independent research support from the subagency. For example, a training grant awarded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), a subagency of the National Institutes of Health, likely will include a PI and mentors well-funded by NIA and with a history of mentoring trainees who later obtain NIA independent research support.

FOCUS

The application submitted in response to this Request for Proposals will be led by a Training Program Director/Principal Investigator (Training PD/PI). The participation of multiple PDs/PIs is encouraged, particularly when each brings a unique perspective and skill set that will enhance training. Proposals funded under the ITPA program will support the planning and preparation needed to submit applications to federal institutional training programs that:

- Catalyze and advance cutting-edge interdisciplinary or convergent research in high federal funding agency priority areas.
- Develop innovative approaches and knowledge to promote transformative improvements in graduate education.
- Increase the capacity of pre- and postdoctoral programs to produce diverse cohorts of interdisciplinary STEM, biomedical, behavioral, and clinical researchers.

FUNDING TARGET

Proposals submitted to ITPA are required to submit an application to a targeted federal agency institutional training program. Typical examples include:

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grant (T32) (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-142.html>). Annual Deadlines: January 25, May 25, and September 25. (**Note:** most NIH institutes only accept new submission in May).
- NIH Clinical Scientist Institutional Career Development Program Award (K12) (https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html#/?query=K12&type=active,notices,activenosis&foa=all&parent_orgs=all&orgs=all&ac=K12&ct=all&pfoa=all&fields=all&spons=true). Deadlines vary by sponsoring institute.
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Traineeship Program (NRT) (<https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/national-science-foundation-research-traineeship>). Annual Deadline: September 6.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

It is expected that instrumentation funded under this program will yield a return on investment of at least 10 times the funding received for an application submitted to this Request for Proposals. For both programs, this will be determined by considering the magnitude of future funding awarded by federal agencies or other external sponsors that was enabled by inclusion of preliminary data and publications generated through use of the instrument. This highlights the importance of awardees tracking all publications and research activities supported wholly or in part by instrumentation acquired under this program.

In order to demonstrate a return on investment:

- The future institutional training proposal to be submitted to a Funding Target must have as PD(s)/PI(s) the same PD(s)/PI(s) of the project funded under this Request for Proposals;
- The future institutional training proposal submitted to a Funding Target must have USC as the recipient institution (Note: Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) may be the recipient organization for the future proposal if the PD(s)/PI(s) and mentors have USC faculty appointments); and
- There is scientific commonality between the project funded under this Request for Proposals and the future institutional training proposal to be submitted to a federal funding agency.

RESOURCES FOR SUBMITTING GRANT PROPOSALS

Applicants selected for funding are required to contact Research Strategy & Development (RSD), a Research & Innovation suboffice dedicated to supporting faculty in the preparation of competitive applications to federal funding agencies. RSD has considerable experience in generating and submitting proposals to federal agencies. RSD can provide support services to applicants, including science writing, budget preparation, and supporting documentation collection. Specific support provided is contingent on RSD workload and prior commitments. Applicants should contact RSD by sending an email to robbyngil@usc.edu.

RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING INNOVATION

Applicants selected for funding are required to contact USC Stevens Center for Innovation (USC Stevens). USC Stevens is the university’s technology licensing office, responsible for the translation of USC research into products for public benefit through licenses, collaborations, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation. USC Stevens staff can provide critical guidance related to the invention disclosure and technology licensing processes, as well as an overview of USC’s policies related to intellectual property, researcher IP rights, and responsibilities, amongst other topics. Specific support provided may include organized events through Research and Innovation’s Center for Excellence in Research, and is contingent on USC Stevens workload and prior commitments. Applicants should contact USC Stevens by sending an email to stvinfo@usc.edu.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must carefully follow instructions. Information uploaded beyond what is requested will not be included in the proposal package provided to reviewers.

- Brief description** (not to exceed 60 words): A brief description of the proposed work.
- Abstract** (not to exceed 20 lines of text): Provide a stand-alone succinct description of the targeted training areas interested in.
- Program Plan:** (not to exceed 5 pages): Page limits are inclusive of figures and tables and include 1” margins of single-spaced text in 11-point standard font (Arial, Times New Roman, etc). The following headers should be included:
 - Research Focus:** Describe the basis and focus of the research at the center of training activities; identify whether this is a predoctoral or postdoctoral program (or both). Explain ongoing research in these areas and how/why a training program with such focus would be of value to the university and to the federal subagency identified as a Funding Target.
 - Training Plan:** Describe the training plan, including but not limited to coursework, seminars, opportunities for mentorship, attending meetings/conferences, and career development workshops.
 - Scientific Expertise:** Identify a USC PI (or Co-PIs) and key mentors (this does not need to be an exhaustive list of all mentors). Proposals should include a discussion of the PI/Co-PIs and key mentors’ past and current funding history, track record in mentoring trainees, and whether they have been successful at obtaining independent research support. The proposal should clearly indicate whether the funding histories of the PI and key mentors have been

from the targeted subagency. Discuss why the proposal team would be successful in pursuing this opportunity, and how the research expertise of the PI/Co-PIs will be integrated through the proposed project. This section should also describe the potential USC schools and departments anticipated to be involved as part of the training program.

- d. **Funding Target:** Describe the specific federal funding institutional training opportunity (including URL) to which you commit to applying. If the NIH T32 is identified as a Funding Target, the application needs to specify which subagency (NIH institute) will be the Funding Target.
- d) **Return on Investment:** Identify a Funding Target of at least 10x the funds requested under this RFP. For example, proposals requesting \$60,000 in funding from this opportunity would need to identify an NIH institutional training grant that will generate a cumulative awards of \$600,000 or more (this includes total costs summed over all award years).
- e) **List of Key Mentors:** This does not need to be an exhaustive list of all mentors. Provide the name, title, email address, and funding history of at least mentors who have active funding from a source such as a federal agency, private foundation, or academic institution that is a sponsor of a Funding Target. For each mentor, describe his/her past and current funding history and track record in mentoring trainees. The proposal should clearly indicate whether the funding histories of the mentors have been from the targeted subagency.
- f) **Subagency Funding Interest:** Federal agencies typically only will fund institutional training grants that are not duplicative of other institutional training programs that they have funded or intend to fund, at USC or at other universities. The proposal must include a statement that the applicant has identified a program official at a federal subagency who has expressed an interest in funding the proposed institutional training program, and also that the program official agrees that the proposed PD(s)/PI(s) is a suitable leader. An email from the program official, while not required, is strongly encouraged and can be submitted with this proposal.
- g) **Grant Submission Commitment:** The proposal must include a statement in which the applicant commits to submit a proposal to the opportunity identified as the Funding Target.
- h) **Innovation Ecosystem Commitment:** OORI is very committed to establish a thriving innovation ecosystem at USC that will build collaborations between USC researchers and venture capital firms, accelerators, incubators, small and large businesses, and foundations. OORI is working closely with Research Initiatives in USC University Advancement to develop these partnerships. The proposal must include a statement in which the applicant commits to contacting Research Initiatives at hpourman@usc.edu to discuss the potential for obtaining funding for research from venture capital firms, accelerators, incubators, small and large businesses, and foundations that are part of USC's developing innovation ecosystem that may arise from the research activities of trainees and mentors.
- i) **Budget and Budget Justification** (not to exceed 2 pages): Specify a project start and end date. Utilize standard budget categories, only including the allowable budget cost categories as detailed in the **Grant Conditions** section.
- j) **Current Funding:** List all sources of internal and external support awarded during the past five years, current or pending, for the PI/Co-PIs and key mentor. For each source, specify who on this proposal was involved, their role on the project, title of the award, period, award amount, and sponsor (including subagency).
- k) **Letters of Support:** Provide letters of support from a USC school and department head for the future training program.
- l) **Scientific References** (not to exceed 1 page): This includes citations listed in the narrative.
- m) **Curriculum Vitae** (not to exceed 5 pages per PI/Co-PI/key mentor): Applicants may use any standardized CV format (e.g., NIH Biographical Sketch, NSF Biographical Sketch, etc.).

ELIGIBILITY

All tenured, tenure track, and Research, Teaching, Practice, and Clinical (RTPC) faculty (with the exception of lecturers, adjunct, and part-time faculty) may serve as Principal Investigators on [Sponsored Research Projects](#) at USC. Retired faculty may be called back and asked to serve as Principal Investigators as described in Chapter 10 of the [Faculty Handbook](#). Voluntary faculty may not serve as Principal Investigators. Eligibility requirements of our internal research programs are the same as those for being a PI on an external sponsored research project. Applications should also specifically describe the involvement of other faculty or key personnel who have agreed to participate in the project.

The following employee types may serve as Principal Investigators if a specific waiver is granted upon recommendation by the appropriate department chair(s), appropriate dean(s), and the Senior Vice President of Research and Innovation:

- Part-time faculty
- Certain staff positions, if eligible, including Research Scientists, Senior Research Associates, and Research Associates
- Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Teaching Associates

Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Teaching Associates, as defined by USC's Postdoctoral Scholars Policy, can also serve as co-principal investigators on sponsored projects without a waiver. To review the Postdoctoral Scholars Policy, please visit <https://policy.usc.edu/postdoctoral-scholars/>.

GRANT CONDITIONS

OORI's awards and grant programs are administered by the Research Initiatives and Infrastructure (RII) office.

- If a faculty has an industry relationship, an approved management plan must be in place prior to receipt of award (<https://disclose.usc.edu>). Teams that will form a startup should anticipate submitting a conflict of interest disclosure. Questions regarding conflict of interest and disclosures can be directed to Ben Bell in the Office of Compliance (benjamab@usc.edu).
- If a faculty has an industry relationship, an approved management plan must be in place prior to receipt of award (<https://disclose.usc.edu>). Teams that will form a startup should anticipate submitting a conflict of interest disclosure. Questions regarding conflict of interest and disclosures can be directed to Ben Bell in the Office of Compliance (benjamab@usc.edu).
- At the time of being notified by RII that an award will be made and as a condition of funding, awardees will provide to RII the name, title, and email address of a USC senior business official who will establish an internal funding account in which RII funds for the award will be transferred.
- Within one month of being notified by RII that an award will be made and as a condition of funding, awardees will provide RII with an account number and enable view access for the account, such that RII staff will be able to view the account balance. If this information is not provided to RII within this timeframe, RII may elect to rescind the award and use the funds to make an award to another applicant.
- Awardees commit to attend an in-person ceremony with OORI leadership.
- Awardees commit to submitting in the future an application or applications to a funding opportunity (Funding Target) sponsored by a federal agency.
- Awardees commit to contacting Research Strategy & Development (RSD) to explore obtaining support services for external agency grant submissions, including science writing, budget preparation, and supporting documentation collection. Awardees contact RSD by sending an email to robyngil@usc.edu.
- Awardees commit to contacting USC Stevens Center for Innovation to obtain guidance related to the invention disclosure and technology licensing processes, as well as an overview of USC's policies

related to intellectual property, researcher IP rights and responsibilities, amongst other topics. Awardees contact USC Stevens by sending an email to stvinfo@usc.edu.

- Failure to spend at least half of the awarded funds within six months of the project start date may result in the suspension of the remaining funds.
- This award will not provide financial support beyond the duration of the award and does not carry the opportunity for renewal.
- Funds not spent by the end of the project period will be returned to OORI.
- 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 other researchers or institutions.
- Awards are not transferable to other researchers or institutions. Recipients must be faculty of USC during the award period.
- Awards include fringe benefits but are not assessed Facilities & Administration Costs (formerly known as Indirect Costs).
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- Allowable budget expenses:
 - Postdocs/graduate/undergraduate student RAs/administrative personnel salary and fringe, excluding funding student tuition and other student-related fees.
 - Faculty salary and fringe
 - Other expenses
- Non-allowable budget expenses:
 - Equipment
 - Consultants
 - Materials and Supplies
 - Travel
 - Subcontracts
- All USC rules, concerning 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).

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a standing committee of researchers with expertise in federal institutional training programs. The committee will be convened yearly to review applications submitted to this program. Review criteria will be based on the following:

1. *Research Focus:* The applicant clearly defines the prospective research focus of the future institutional training program as well as the benefit of a training program in this area of research. The research focus is relevant for the identified subagency sponsoring the Funding Target.
2. *Scientific Expertise:* The applicant describes his/her relevant and necessary experience in research and administrative duties in direct relevance to the research focus area and regarding potentially leading a future institutional training program. The PI/Co-PIs and key mentors identify a past or current history of funding from the subagency sponsoring the Funding Target, and track records in mentoring trainees successfully funded by the identified subagency sponsoring the Funding Target.
3. *Training Program:* The training plan includes key activities that promote skills development and successful transitions into careers in the research workforce. Elements of the training plan synergistically enhance trainees' abilities to conduct rigorous and reproducible research.
4. *Funding Targets:* The application identifies an appropriate Funding Target.

5. *Potential of Future Funding:* A Funding Target expecting to yield a return on investment of at least 10x the funding requested has been specified, and this is an appropriate and realistic Funding Target based on the PI/Co-PIs/key mentor's expertise and funding history with the specific subagency sponsoring the Funding Target.
6. *Budget:* Reviewers will consider whether the budget and the requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities.

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

RII will incorporate aspects of existing policies and procedures regarding funding decisions that are utilized by major federal funding agencies like NSF and NIH, i.e., proposals will be subject to scientific peer review and programmatic review. Programmatic review assures maximum efficiency for funding awards and strategic alignment with this program's and the university's strategic research priorities. While financial support may be obtained from any external sponsor, proposals that target federal funding agencies are of greatest interest.

Ultimate funding decisions will be made based on both scientific peer and programmatic reviews.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

OORI and RII strongly support a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Proposals should incorporate meaningful DEI practices across the project team and proposed activities. This will be a consideration during the programmatic review.

REPORTING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

Awardees will be required to submit a one-page progress report, which will be due six months into the project period and at the point of project period completion. This report must detail scientific, financial, and research performance over the preceding months. Any and all publications arising from work supported wholly or in part by instrumentation acquitted under this program must acknowledge the *USC Research and Innovation Institutional Training Planning Award*.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Submit your proposal application utilizing the RII application submission and reporting portal. Go to <https://rii.usc.edu/funding/oor-portal/> to log in or create an account using your USC email address.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

We encourage inquiries to RII concerning this funding opportunity and welcome the opportunity to answer questions from potential applicants. For additional information or inquiries, please send an email to rii@usc.edu with "Institutional Training Planning Award" in the subject line.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brief Description | <input type="checkbox"/> Subagency Funding Interest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abstract | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Submission Commitment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation Ecosystem Commitment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research Focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Budget and Budget Justification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Current Funding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific Expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funding Target | <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific References |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Return on Investment | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Vitae |
| <input type="checkbox"/> List of Key Mentors | |

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q1: How does the OORI Institutional Training Planning Award differ from federal institutional training grant programs?

A1: This Request for Proposals will support planning activities needed to generate a competitive federally funded institutional training grant application through staff support and guidance regarding federal agency standards and requirements. It will not fund the creation of an institutional training program per se, but rather enable faculty to submit their most competitive application to a given federal agency.

Q2: How much funding can I request?

A2: Program cap is listed on page 1 of this RFP. You should request an amount you think is scientifically appropriate and justified. The requested budget is subject to both scientific peer and programmatic review, and any RII award made could be for a lesser amount than requested.

Q3: If my proposal is selected for funding, will I automatically receive my requested amount?

A3: Not necessarily. The budget is subject to scientific peer and programmatic review, and a recommended award may be for less than what was requested.

Q4: Can I work with faculty across multiple USC schools?

A4: Absolutely—many ongoing institutional training grants awarded at USC include faculty members that span multiple schools and departments. We strongly encourage applicants to work with colleagues across USC schools who would further strengthen and bolster their application for a federally funded institutional training grant.

Q5: Why does my team have to provide information on our current funding and mentoring histories?

A5: Institutional training grant programs at the federal level are highly competitive and encourage teams that include PIs and mentors with robust research, research project management, and mentoring experience to apply. Our requirement will help determine applicants' likelihood of a competitive application to a federal agency institutional training program.

Q6: Why do I need to document a return on investment?

A6: Much like federal funding agencies, OORI has a budget that needs to be re-authorized yearly. The university has many competing interests, and OORI needs to make a compelling case every year to receive funding. The likelihood of receiving funds – and increasing OORI funding – is contingent upon the demonstration that the activities we support offer a significant return on investment and generate creative and research products that have a significant societal impact. The greater the return on investment that your project offers, the more you help us in advocating for our research funding allocation.

Q7: If I am successful and get an Institutional Training Planning Award in April, I missed the January and May deadlines for the NIH T32 program, and also may not have enough time to apply to the NIH T32 program's third annual submission date in September, nor the NSF NRT program in September.

A7: The program deadlines are not matched to federal funding program deadlines in a given calendar year. You certainly can apply to this program in advance of federal funding deadlines, for submission to the next year's deadlines. For example, funding received in April of a given year can be used to generate an application to the NIH T32 program in the following September, January or May, and the NSF NRT program in September.

Q8: I am dissatisfied with my review. Can I rebut the review and get a new one?

A8: RII goes to considerable effort to ensure that the scientific peer review is fair and impartial. Constituting review committees and organizing reviews takes considerable time and effort. Thus, RII does not have the resources or a mechanism to re-review proposals. Thus, the results of the scientific peer review are final.

Q9: Why does my team need to have funding from a federal agency, and a history of mentoring?A9:

A successful institutional candidate for a training grant must provide an outstanding research and academic environment, with suitable staff and facilities. The proposed PD(s)/PI(s) must be an established, well-recognized scientist, generally with the rank of professor or equivalent, who offers a long training track record. Another key element is a critical mass of fairly senior scientists in the research area who can demonstrate a publications history and funding from NIH, NSF, HHMI, or similar agencies. Too many junior scientists or those without grants may negatively influence the overall impact score and chances of funding. Peer reviewers consider the records of past trainees or graduates, who should demonstrate strong academic ability. Successful applications offer a track record of past trainees who publish, obtain funding, and enjoy distinguished scientific positions. Reviewers highly rate an adequate supply of high-quality potential trainees with genuine interest in research and appropriate academic prerequisites.