



USC University of Southern California

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Request For Proposals Collaborative Research Planning Award

FUNDING ORGANIZATION	USC Research and Innovation (OORI)
APPLICATION DEADLINE	5PM Pacific Time on May 15, 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 severe weather, the application deadline is automatically extended to the next business day.
SCIENTIFIC MERIT REVIEW	May - June
PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW	June
NOTIFICATION	June - July
EARLIEST AWARD DATE	July – August
EARLIEST START DATE	August
AWARD PROJECT PERIOD	Small Program Award: 2 years Large Program Award: 1 year
AWARDS (UP TO)	Small Program Award: \$ 50,000 Large Program Award: \$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 University of Southern California (USC) is committed to enhancing and expanding its current institutional infrastructure through increased support of faculty teams interested in pursuing funding from federal agencies and other external sponsors. A critical aspect of many funding opportunities requires planning and the development of collaborations among researchers across disciplines, departments, and even institutions, resulting in a cohesive research program and singular objective that would not be feasible through a standalone research project. The aim of this Request for Proposals is not to fund specific research projects, but rather to support teams of faculty who aim to plan and establish or foster a community of researchers at USC and potentially at external, partnering organizations, organized around a broad topic of shared interest. Support will be provided for groups of investigators to communicate, plan, and coordinate their efforts across disciplinary, organizational, institutional, and geographical boundaries. The objectives are to facilitate open communication and exchange of information and resources; to integrate research, infrastructure, and the activities of a multidisciplinary team of scientists working independently on topics of common interest; to nurture a sense of community amongst researchers; and to minimize isolation and maximize cooperation so as to eliminate unnecessary duplication of efforts.

OPPORTUNITY

USC Office of Research and Innovation (OORI) Collaborative Research Planning Award is meant to support the configuration of research teams among USC faculty interested in applying to federal agencies and other external sponsors for the funding of collaborative research efforts. The award will equip researchers with the skills needed to successfully build multidisciplinary, cross-institution research networks and apply for funding from a federal agency or other external sponsor. Collaborative Research Planning Awards may support the extension and expansion of existing networks or established collaborations. Collaborative Research Planning Awards support the means by which investigators can share information and ideas; plan the myriad of activities necessary for the development of a research proposal; coordinate ongoing or planned research activities; foster synthesis and new collaborations; develop community standards; and in other ways advance science and education through communication and sharing of ideas. Collaborative Research Planning Awards bring together a team of researchers to plan and organize efforts to enable the submission of a grant proposal to an external sponsor. While financial support may be obtained from any external sponsor, proposals that target federal funding agencies are of greatest interest.

The Collaborative Research Planning Award is meant to support planning and other activities by which research teams and partnerships are developed, and planning activities that will enable submission of a competitive research proposal. This program is meant not to support research but to facilitate the development of a collaborative research team that is well prepared to take the next step in preparing for the generation of a grant proposal. This next step typically requires the generation of preliminary study data, which demonstrates the cohesiveness of the team and its ability to collaboratively work together. OORI's Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award is a logical internal funding mechanism to pursue, in order to generate such preliminary data. Applicants funded under this program are encouraged – after funding has ended - to apply for Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award funding.

The Collaborative Research Planning Award program includes two subprograms described below. Funds will be awarded after the completion of a competitive scientific peer review and a programmatic review.

SMALL PROGRAM AWARD

The Small Program Award is meant to support the formation of a team of researchers that are the very beginnings of their collaboration. Applicants may request up to \$25,000/yr. The full extent and scope of the proposed work may not be identified at the time of the submission of an application to this program. Researchers who receive a Small Program Award may use funds to identify collaborators, hold workshops or planning sessions, and support activities that promote the broad sharing of intellectual ideas. The duration of the award is two years. It is expected that in the first year, the PI and co-PIs will explore multiple topics and engage a broad group of researchers. It is not expected that the PI and co-PIs will specify a Funding Target at the time of submission of an application for a Small Program Award. Researchers across multiple disciplines will be identified and will come together to begin to form a cohesive team of researchers. By the end of the first year, the team will focus their efforts on identifying a unifying research theme that will focus their efforts.

A Funding Target as described below will be identified and will be a requirement for the award of a second year of funding. During the second year, the team will plan and engage in the myriad of activities required for submission of a grant submission to the Funding Target. It is expected that the Funding Target will be smaller in scope than a Funding Target (see examples below) that would be identified under the Large Program Award.

The Small Program Award accepts and encourages 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.

LARGE PROGRAM AWARD

The Large Program Award is meant to support the formation of a team of researchers that already have an

idea of the specific research theme of their proposed activities. The PI and co-PIs already may utilize the Award to bring together researchers from identified subfields for which a collaboration supported by this Award permits logical synergies to develop.

A Large Program Award provides support to bring such a group together, in order to catalyze and support all of the activities necessary to assemble a large proposal that will be submitted to a federal funding agency or another external sponsor. PIs are strongly encouraged to include researchers from other universities and institutions as part of their application for a Large Program Award. The duration of the award is one year.

Major differences between this program and the Small Award Program include: (1) identification of a significantly larger Funding Target, that typically will be a center, program project, etc.; (2) this Funding Target is specified at the time of the submission of an application for a Large Program Award; (3) the PI and co-PIs are strongly encouraged to include researchers from other universities and institutions, given the fact that the large research programs of many federal funding agencies and other external sponsors targeted by the team expect a competitive proposal to include multiple universities and other partners; and (4) by virtue of the need for such larger efforts to have a well-developed and integrated research vision, it is expected that the PI and co-PIs will have already developed a sufficient focus and an idea of specific collaborators at USC or other institutions.

TOPICS

Proposals should focus on a research question of interest to an external sponsor. Proposals supported by funding through the Collaborative Research Planning Award include the planning and configuration of multi-school, multi-institution, and cross-disciplinary teams with a coherent, defined research theme or system of research activities, with the intentions of moving forward post-planning stage and applying to a federal or external sponsor to support these efforts. Research topics can focus on any scientific domain for which an external sponsor has a funding program and include but are not limited to the physical sciences, information & data sciences, biological & life sciences, and social sciences.

Of particular interest to the Small Program Award are proposals that focus on the arts, which include a wide range of human practices of creative expression, storytelling, and cultural participation. They encompass multiple diverse and plural modes of thinking, doing and being, in an extremely broad range of media. language arts (literature, writing, oratory, rhetoric, poetry), visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography, filmmaking), fine and performing arts, digital media and cultural studies, arts education, dance, design, folk & traditional arts, literary arts, local arts agencies, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, opera, presenting & multidisciplinary arts, and theater.

FUNDING TARGETS

Teams of researchers funded under the Collaborative Research Planning Award program are required to submit an application to a targeted grant program of an external sponsor. Large Program Award applications are expected to identify a Funding Target at the time of submission; Small Program Award applications are expected to identify a Funding Target by the end of the first year of funding. Examples include but are not limited to:

Funding Targets for Small Program Award

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Small Research Grant Program
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-200.html>
Deadline: February, June, October
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research Project Grant
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/pa-20-185.html>
Deadline: February, June, October
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant Program
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-195.html>

Deadline: February, June, October

- NSF Computer and Information Science and Engineering: Core Programs, Large Projects
https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf23524
Deadline: September, biannually

Funding Targets for Large Program Award

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research Program Project Grant (P01)
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/ac_search_results.htm?text_curr=p01&Search.x=0&Search.y=0&Search_Type=Activity.
Annual Deadline: January, May, and September
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Center Core Grants (P30)
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/ac_search_results.htm?Activity_Code=P30&Search_Type=Indiv.
Annual Deadline: January, May, and September
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Science and Technology Centers: Integrative Partnerships (STC)
<https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/science-technology-centers-integrative>.
Annual Deadline: January – February
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Expeditions in Computing (Expeditions)
<https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/expeditions-computing-expeditions>.
Annual Deadline: March
- Multidisciplinary University Research Initiatives (MURI) Program
<https://www.nre.navy.mil/education-outreach/sponsored-research/university-research-initiatives/muri>.
Annual Deadline: September
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Engineering Research Centers (ERC)
<https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/gen-4-engineering-research-centers-erc>
Deadline: May, biannually
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers (MRSECs)
<https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/materials-research-science-engineering-centers>
Deadline: November, biannually
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Silvio O. Conte Centers for Basic Neuroscience or Translational Mental Health Research
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-22-155.html>
Annual Deadline: June
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) NINDS Morris K. Udall Centers of Excellence for Parkinson's Disease Research
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/rfa-ns-21-001.html>
Deadline: New announcement forthcoming, anticipated deadline September

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

It is expected that projects 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. 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 this award.

For Small Program Award applications focused on the arts, return on investment is defined in terms of a return on investment significantly less than 10 times future funding. Rather, USC Office of Research & Innovation (OORI) views return on investment as developing and enhancing the reputation of our faculty as nationally recognized artists who will have a significant creative impact on society and their field.

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.

- a) **Award Program:** Specify the program to which you are applying (Small Program Award or Large Program Award).
- b) **Brief Description:** (not to exceed 60 words): A brief description of the proposed work.
- c) **Abstract:** (not to exceed 20 lines of text): Provide a stand-alone succinct description of the proposed work.
- d) **Narrative:** (not to exceed 5 pages): Page limits are inclusive of figures and tables and include 1" margins of single-spaced text in Arial font. The following headers should be included:
 - a. **Background, Significance, & Broader Impact:** Discuss the importance of the problem or critical barrier to the field that this project revises/addresses. In general, what is the importance of the project to USC, the research community, and society? What is the state of the research activity and scholarship at USC and elsewhere, and what are the important research questions for the topic?
 - b. **Approach:** Describe the scientific hypotheses and specific activities to be supported by the research award, and how these will contribute to the submission of a successful proposal to a federal agency or other external sponsor.
 - c. **Funding Target (Large Award Program Applications Only):** Describe the specific federal or other sponsor funding opportunity to be pursued (including URL) to which you commit to applying.
 - d. **Project Team:** Clearly identify a USC PI (or Co-PIs) and any USC Co-Is. Specify any key personnel from other academic institutions or external organizations (Large Award Program applications only). Proposals should include a detailed description of the proposal team, including a discussion of each team member's past and current research that is relevant to this effort. Discuss why the proposal team would be successful in pursuing this opportunity, and how the research expertise of the PI/Co-PIs and any Co-Is will be integrated through the proposed project. Discuss how the individual contributors to the project are complementary and how the team will ensure the coherence of the project and maintain a multidisciplinary focus.

- e. **Timeline:** Provide a detailed timeline of activities and milestones to be completed, including a targeted submission date for the opportunity identified as the Funding Target.
- e) **Return on Investment:** All proposals (other than those focused on the arts) must identify an external sponsor grant program to which an application will be submitted and also identify future Funding Targets of at least 10 times the funds requested under this RFP. For Small Program Award applications focused on the arts, return on investment can be significantly less than 10 times future funding.
- f) **Grant Submission Commitment:** Large Award Program Applications: The proposal must include a statement in which the applicant commits to submit a proposal to the opportunity or opportunities identified as the Funding Target. Small Award Program Applications: The proposal must include a statement in which the applicant commits to identify a Funding Target by the end of Year 1 funding and that they agree to submit a proposal to the opportunity or opportunities identified as the Funding Target.
- g) **Innovation Ecosystem Commitment:** Research & Innovation is committed to establishing 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. Research & Innovation is working closely with 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 that may arise as a result of this research project.
- h) **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. For Small Award Program applications, include a detailed Year 1 budget; awardees will be required to submit a report at the end of year one (see Progress Report below), and include a projected year 2 budget and identification of sponsor target for year 2 grant submission. Large Award Programs may include subcontracts from other organizations.
- i) **Progress Report** (not to exceed 3 pages – for existing Collaboration Fund groups only): Describe the group’s activities for the previous award period and completed to date, as well as those scheduled to occur by the end of the fiscal year, including a list of faculty/students who participated in the group’s events. Also upload and submit the **Budget Report** for FY22 (download template [here](#)).
- 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 Co-Is. 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) **Letter(s) of Support:** Provide a letter(s) of support from the applicable individual(s); i.e., School/Department heads. Large Program Award applications need to include letters of support from collaborators at other institutions, if there is no subcontract to those institutions.
- 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/Co-I): Applicants may use any standardized CV format (e.g., NIH Biographical Sketch, NSF Biographical Sketch, etc.).

ELIGIBILITY

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.

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.

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).
- 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. The account must be unique to this award with no additional funds added.
- 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 Research & Innovation leadership.
- Awards include fringe benefits but are not assessed Facilities & Administration Costs (formerly known as Indirect Costs).
- Awardees commit to submitting in the future an application or applications to a funding opportunity (Funding Targets) sponsored by a federal agency.
- Awardees funded under the Small Program Award are required to specify a Funding Target by the end of the first year. Funds for the second year will not be released unless the Awardee has identified a Funding Target.
- 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 robbyngil@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 Research & Innovation.
- Prior to release of funds, all awardees will attend an in-person ceremony with Research & Innovation leadership.
- 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.
- 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).
- Small Program Award Allowable Budget Expenses:
 - Faculty salary & fringe
 - Postdocs/graduate/undergraduate student RAs/administrative personnel salary & fringe, excluding funding student tuition and other student-related fees.
 - Consultants
 - Subcontracts
 - Other expenses
- Small Program Award Non-allowable Budget Expenses:
 - Equipment
 - Travel
 - Materials & Supplies
- Large Program Award Allowable Budget Expenses:
 - Faculty salary & fringe
 - Postdocs/graduate/undergraduate student RAs/administrative personnel salary & fringe, excluding funding student tuition and other student-related fees.
 - Travel
 - Materials & supplies
 - Other expenses
 - Consultants
 - Subcontracts
- Large Program Award Non-allowable Budget Expenses:
 - Equipment

SCIENTIFIC REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a standing committee of researchers with a broad range of scientific expertise, and experience in large-scale, multidisciplinary research projects. The committee will be convened yearly to review applications submitted to this program. Review criteria will be based on the following:

1. *Scientific Approach*: Rigor and technical merit
2. *Significance/Broader Impacts*: Impact on knowledge, practice, outcomes, or policy; societal benefit; contribution to scientific inquiry and discovery
3. *Technical Expertise*: Large Award Program Applications. The proposal includes an appropriate team of researchers with appropriate scientific expertise who will engage in activities expected to culminate in the submission of a proposal to an identified Funding Target. The PI/co-PIs, and the team have a history of funding from the agency sponsoring the Funding Target. Small Award Program Application: The PI / co-PIs have identified collaborators or have a plan to identify a

multidisciplinary team of collaborators.

4. *Feasibility*: Ability of the project to be completed within the designated project period
5. *Potential of Future Funding (Large Award Program Applications Only)*: All proposals (other than those focused on the arts) specify a Funding Target expecting to yield a return on investment of at least 10 times the funding requested has been specified, and this is an appropriate and realistic Funding Target based on the PI/Co-PI/Co-I's expertise and funding history with the specific subagency sponsoring the Funding Target. Small Program Award applications focused on the arts can specify a return on investment significantly less than 10 times future funding.
6. *Budget*: Cost-effectiveness and availability of any support/match funding from a USC school or program. Reviewers will consider whether the budget and the requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities.

In addition to a peer review, applications will be evaluated programmatically in terms of this program's and the university's strategic research priorities. Funding decisions will be made based on both peer and programmatic reviews.

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

We 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

The Office of Research 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.

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 "Collaborative Research Planning Award" in the subject line.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Award Program | Broader Impacts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brief Description | ○ Approach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abstract | ○ Funding Target |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative | ○ Project Team |
| ○ Background, & Significance | ○ Timeline |

- Return on Investment
- Grant Submission Commitment
- Innovation Ecosystem Commitment
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Current Funding
- Letter(s) of Support

- Scientific References
- Curriculum Vitae

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: How does the Collaborative Research Planning Award differ from the large-scale, federally funded grant programs identified as funding targets?

A1: The Collaborative Research Planning Award will provide the necessary time, support, and preparation needed to solidify and bolster your application to a federal funding agency grant program with a multidisciplinary, collaborative focus. There are various aspects of these grant programs that make for a highly competitive review process; aspects of an application, such as the composition of the team, relevance, and expertise of team members and partner universities, and the complementary, integrated nature of the researchers involved have incredible weight on the success and review of an application. This Request for Proposals will assist in ensuring all guidelines and requirements are met, and that the strongest applications are put forth to such federal grant programs.

Q2: How does the Large Program Award differ from the Small Program Award?

A2: The Large Program Award requires identification of a significantly larger Funding Target that typically will be a center, program project, etc. This Funding Target is specified at the time of the submission of an application for a Large Program Award. The USC PI/co-PIs are strongly encouraged to include researchers from other universities and institutions, given the fact that the large research program of many federal Funding agencies and other external sponsors targeted by the team expect a proposal to include multiple universities and other partners. By virtue of the need for such larger efforts to have a well-developed and integrated research vision, it is expected that the PI and co-PIs will have already developed a sufficient focus and an idea of specific collaborators at USC or other institutions.

Q3: I have an idea of a collaborative project, but I haven't refined it and I think there are other people I haven't identified yet with whom I'd like to work. Is this a program for me?

A3: The Small Program Award is perfect for you! The idea is that in Year 1 you work to build your collaborative team and develop the research idea and focus. You have a year to do this, and by the end of the year we expect you to crystalize what you want to focus on and also to identify a Funding Target. You spend Year 2 developing and preparing, in order to submit a grant application to the Funding Target.

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

A4: Absolutely—we strongly encourage applicants to work with colleagues across multiple USC schools and are not supporting singular research project applications as part of this Request for Proposals. The foundation of the Collaborative Research Planning Award is to support teams of researchers interested in obtaining federal funding via mechanisms that are specifically geared towards multi-institution, multidisciplinary research program development.

Q5: Why does my team have to provide information on our current funding from federal agencies?

A5: The Collaborative Research Planning Award Program intends to position applicants and future awardees to apply for and obtain federal funding from large-scale, collaborative grant programs. It is imperative that applications submitted in response to this Request for Proposals detail previous and ongoing research project management experience at the federal level.

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: What is the difference between the Small Program Award and the Large Program Award?

A7: The Collaborative Research Planning Award has two award tracks—the Small Program Award, has a two-year project period and offers longer support for faculty and research teams who are seeking additional

time and support to build and solidify their team prior to submitting an application to a federal agency grant program. The Large Program Award, in contrast, is for those who have identified a specific funding target and have conceptualized their multi-institution, multidisciplinary proposal team, and research activities and are looking for additional support and assistance to submit an application within the year.

Q8: If I am awarded in August, it may be too soon for me to apply to the NIH Program Project and Center Core Grant deadline in September, as well as the MURI deadline in September.

A8: 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. You can certainly apply to NIH's Program Project and Center Core Grant deadlines in the following January, May, or September, as well as any NSF or MURI deadlines in the following year at the time of their annual submission.

Q9: What is the difference between Collaborative Research Planning Award and the Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award?

A9: The Collaborative Research Planning Award is meant to support planning and other activities by which research teams and partnerships are developed, and planning activities supported that will enable submission of a competitive research proposal. This program is not meant to support research but to facilitate the development of a collaborative research team that is well prepared to take the next step in preparing for the generation of a grant proposal. This next step typically requires the generation of preliminary study data, which demonstrates the cohesiveness of the team and its ability to collaboratively work together. OORI's Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award is a logical internal funding mechanism to pursue, in order to generate such preliminary data. Applicants funded under this program are encouraged – after funding has ended - to apply for Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award funding. The sequential pursuit of first the Collaborative Research Planning Award and then the Zumberge Preliminary Studies Research Award provides multi-year support to bring a collaborative group of investigators together through the planning stages, through to the collection of preliminary data that will enhance the competitiveness of a research proposal to an external sponsor.