UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

ASPIRE-II
Request for Proposals

Announcement Release Date: October 27, 2014
Application Receipt Date: February 25, 2015
Award Announcement Date: April 24, 2015

Purpose: ASPIRE-II (Advanced Support Program for Integration of Research Excellence-II) funding is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research to support research involving at least 2 or more colleges within USC or, with justification and pre-approval from the VPR’s office, 2 or more departments within extremely diverse colleges such as Arts and Sciences. This call is aimed to promote interdisciplinary collaborations between at least three or more faculty members to develop preliminary data to apply for targeted Program Projects, Centers of Excellence Grants, or similar mechanisms of extramural funding. If you have questions about your eligibility for collaboration, please contact Beth Herron at 777-2885. The goal of this internal grant program is to seed new projects or to support existing collaborative interdisciplinary research that is nationally and internationally competitive and has a high potential to be supported and sustained by external funding agencies.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include all tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty who have independent research programs on the USC Columbia Campus and USC Senior or Regional Campuses. However, the lead PI must have a strong track record in securing extramural grant funding and in leading interdisciplinary research teams.

Faculty serving on the ASPIRE-II review committee are not eligible to apply for ASPIRE-II funds during the funding cycle in which they serve.

Faculty may resubmit a revised proposal that was not funded from the 2014 ASPIRE-II funding cycle; If so, they should clearly indicate that it is a revised proposal and should include an introduction (maximum: one page) responding to reviewer comments. The reviewers’ critique must be attached to the proposal. This introduction will not be included in the narrative page limit. In addition, the revised applications should highlight the changes made in the research narrative. Resubmitted revised proposals lacking the introduction page will not be reviewed.

Faculty may submit a revised ASPIRE application only one time. Faculty can submit an application on a similar theme that was not funded during the previous funding cycle as a new grant. In such an instance, there should be major revisions in the proposal. If they submit an unfunded application as a new application without making substantial conceptual changes, it will not be reviewed.

Funds Available: ASPIRE-II grants may be funded up to $100,000. An applicant may request a project period of 15 months beginning May 16, 2015 and ending August 15, 2016. Under certain conditions, exceptions to these dates may be requested. Proposals may be submitted by more than one investigator, but only one investigator can be designated the project lead. The number of proposals granted will depend on the innovative character and academic quality as well as the demonstrated funding potential of the proposed interdisciplinary research.
**Budget Information:** Budgets will need to be presented in general categories and require detailed explanation. Although the ASPIRE Review Committee intends to fund projects as closely as possible to the requested amount, it reserves the right to alter the amount depending on the number of proposals received and funds available. Cost share is not encouraged.

**Allowable Costs**
- Salary and fringe benefits of research personnel including undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and technicians directly involved in providing data for the project
- Up to one month of summer salary may be included for each PI if used directly to work on this project (or one month salary for research faculty)
- Equipment (The formal definition of “capital equipment” is any article of non-expendable, tangible property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition, or valuation cost of at least $5,000). For more expensive equipment support please refer to ASPIRE-III
- Project supplies
- Animal maintenance
- Travel essential to conduct the project. Justification needs to be provided.
- Graduate Student Tuition

**Unallowable Costs**
- Costs in connection with faculty degree requirements
- Food
- Travel to professional and not project-related meetings
- Undergraduate Student Tuition

**Application Procedure**

1. Develop a five page proposal narrative that provides:
   a. A brief discussion of the background and significance of the proposed interdisciplinary research, including its relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and its anticipated future impact.
   b. A detailed narrative of the project that includes the objectives, significance of the research, the research task and expected accomplishments during the course of the project, the specific outcome of the project, a timeline, and a discussion of securing potential external funding sources.
   c. A maximum of one page should be devoted to discussing how the proposed research/scholarship/creative activity will grow and be sustained in the future without internal funding.
   d. Proposal should be single-spaced with margins not less than one-half inch and using a font size not less than 11 pt.
   e. Attach a cover sheet to your proposal (not included in the page limit) that includes the project title, the total budget request, the PIs’ names, colleges/departments, and e-mail addresses.

2. Attach the following supporting documentation to the end of the proposal narrative:
   a. Bibliography (should be included as appropriate, but will not be counted in the narrative page limitation).
   b. Two-page biographical sketch of the principal investigator and each of the co-investigator(s) that includes:
      1. Education
2. Professional experience
3. Evidence of scholarship: most significant refereed journal articles, books, and book chapters, etc.
4. Significant accomplishments and contributions
5. Other information as appropriate
   c. Current and pending support. Include current grant funding and pending grant funding using the form provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.
   d. If you have received support from the Vice President’s Office for Research in the past, include a short paragraph on each award which includes the funding amount and the benefits of the funds to your research/creative activity program. If you previously received an ASPIRE-I grant, detail how those funds helped you to build your collaborative team and/or to apply for extramural funding. These should be completed for each of the principal faculty members involved, not just the lead PI.
   e. A detailed budget on the form provided on the ASPIRE Program web site and budget justification for total project costs consistent with the list of allowable costs shown above. Please see the information regarding the budget justification provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.

3. Submit the completed proposal packet:
   a. Through USCeRA (https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera/) before 5:00 pm on deadline date. Proposals submitted after 5 pm on the deadline date will be returned without review.
   b. Application Receipt Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2015.
   c. Select "Internal Request VP for Research" and choose the category type (ASPIRE II) from the USCeRA drop down menu to ensure proper proposal routing. Failure to check the box will result in your proposal NOT being reviewed.
   d. The Internal Commit Form should be used to list the amount that you are requesting from the VPR. Do not enter an amount in the Start-Up box. Enter in the amount that you are requesting for each year in the corresponding box. The total will calculate automatically for you.
   e. Upload your proposal following the directions in USCERA. PDF files are strongly encouraged.
   f. Questions about submission? Contact: Beth Herron, Research and Grant Development Office, bherron@mailbox.sc.edu, 777-2885.

**Review Process:** Applications that are complete and responsive to this announcement will be evaluated by a Peer Review Committee. The Committee will provide a prioritized list of recommendations for funding to the VPR based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria (see below). The VPR will make awards based on the Committee’s recommendations and available funds.

**Research Merit:**
- Does the proposal provide a compelling argument for interdisciplinary research?
- Does the proposed project represent a significant advance to the investigators’ fields of study? If so, how?

**Nature of Proposal:**
- Does the proposal provide a clear statement of the overall project objectives?
- Are the proposed methodologies appropriate and accurate?
• Does the proposal provide a sound justification with clear and specific budget information? Is there a timeline, and is it realistic?
• Is the text of the proposal well-written?

Leverage:
• Will the project lead to the development of preliminary data to apply for specific Program Projects, Centers of Excellence Grants or other similar mechanisms of extramural funding?
• Does it significantly improve chances for funding from existing sources?
• Does the project offer significant opportunities for funding from new sources?
• Does the project help build interdisciplinary research networks within the university?

For more Information: Please contact Beth Herron, Research and Grant Development, bherron@mailbox.sc.edu/803-777-2885.