

Office of the Provost

University of South Carolina

Research Engagement Collaboratives Request for Proposals

Program Guidelines

Application Receipt Deadline: September 15, 2014

Description

The Office of the Provost announces a new Request for Proposals (RFP) to create the **Research Engagement Collaboratives (RECs)** – academic focal points for teaching, research, creative activity and service that address important, difficult and complex problems facing society. These “grand challenges” addressed by the RECs may be local, national or global in scale. The overall goals of the RECs are to (1) form new interdisciplinary faculty teams focused on local, national or global grand challenges, (2) grow and support efforts to enhance the knowledge base and experience of students and faculty in grand challenge areas, (3) build workforce expertise in key areas to serve the needs of private and public sector employers in the state, and (4) prepare faculty teams to compete for external funding to sustain the RECs’ activities for long-term impact.

The primary mission of the University of South Carolina (USC) is the education of the state’s diverse citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and service. As South Carolina’s flagship university, USC is committed to preparing its citizens for productive careers, enabling them to not only enrich the communities where they live, but also to help solve important, difficult problems – the grand challenges facing the state, nation and society as a whole. The USC academic community continually evaluates its instructional offerings and portfolio of research and scholarly pursuits to ensure that these efforts fully support our vision to build a prepared and engaged workforce, assist in economic development and contribute to the solution of societal problems on local, national and global scales.

Eligibility

Principal investigators must be tenured faculty members in a unit on the USC Columbia campus. However, any USC faculty member with a current appointment (tenured, tenure-track, research, clinical) may serve as an REC co-investigator or collaborator.

Funds Available and Project Timeframe

- **Stage #1: REC Seed Projects.** Each successful REC proposal will receive one year of seed funding that will provide selected applicants with initial financial support and sufficient time to continue team development, build relationships with external partners, begin to generate manuscripts, external proposals or other relevant products, and develop comprehensive, compelling second-stage proposals eligible for funding of full REC implementation. Four to eight proposals may be approved for one-time seed funding grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$25,000 for up to 12 months.
- **Stage #2: REC Implementation Projects.** Seed project teams have 12 months to develop compelling applications for funding to support full-scale REC implementation. Multiple proposals may be approved for full-scale implementation with direct cost funding of \$100,000 to \$300,000 per year, for project periods of up to five years, subject to annual performance review.

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Key Review Criteria

Concepts for RECs should aim to:

- Build an interdisciplinary focal point for research and teaching that addresses a societal need or grand challenge problem of local, national or global significance
- Engage and prepare students to serve the workforce needs of the state's employers, now and in the future
- Compete for significant external funding and other forms of support to ensure long term viability as a recognized center, institute, collaborative or conservatory
- Catalyze the evolution of the university's research priorities and the creation of new ones
- Leverage recent university investments in faculty and infrastructure
- Promote recruitment of high-quality students and faculty
- Enhance USC's institutional reputation

Proposals most likely to be successful will be those that (1) build interdisciplinary groups of faculty, (2) focus on clearly defined "grand challenge" problems, (3) address workforce needs and (4) have strong prospects for long-term sustainability via external funding sources.

REC Seed Project Application Instructions

All REC seed funding applications should contain the following items:

- I. A one-page cover letter from the principal investigator with project title, proposed funding amount and a succinct overview of the REC and the societal need or grand challenge problem it will address.
- II. A list of participants with organizational affiliations, including principal investigator, co-investigators and other key personnel.
- III. The project description. **The length of the Project Description (Section II) must be no more than three pages with one inch margins using at least 11 point font size.** All REC seed funding proposals must answer the following questions: ¹
 - a. What is the problem or opportunity, and why is it challenging?
 - b. How is the problem solved today? What are the limitations of today's solutions?
 - c. What is your new idea or approach? Why can you succeed now? Are there existing programs located within (or outside) the state doing similar work? What differentiates this idea/approach/project from others?
 - d. Is the proposed approach focused on advancing fundamental knowledge, or is it primarily outcome driven?
 - e. What is the impact if successful?
 - f. How will the program be organized? Does it involve more than one department of college? Will the program have external partners? How will seed funding be used?
 - g. What kinds of results, outcomes or products will be generated in the course of the project? How will you measure progress?
- IV. Curriculum Vitae (2 page maximum, current) or résumés for the principal investigator, co-investigators and other key personnel.
- V. Budget with Justification. The budget should provide a concise, realistic estimate of the seed project's direct costs. The budget section should include narrative justification with sufficient detail to help reviewers to evaluate how funding will be used to advance project objectives.

¹ Adapted from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/yyt/bolts&nuts/TheHeilmeierCatechism.pdf>

Submission, Review and Selection

Proposals must be submitted through USCeRA (<https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera>). The submission deadline is 5:00 pm on Monday, September 15, 2014. For assistance with USCeRA, email uscera@mailbox.sc.edu.

A committee appointed by the provost will review all proposals and provide to the provost a list of proposals recommended for seed funding.

Principal investigators of proposals selected for funding will be notified by **Monday, November 4, 2014**.

Questions?

Questions concerning the REC initiative, proposal preparation and selection process may be directed to Dr. Harry Ploehn (Ploehn@mailbox.sc.edu).

A list of frequently asked questions and answers will be posted on the Office of the Provost website.