UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Advanced Support Program for Innovative Research Excellence-I (ASPIRE-I, Track IIB for Postdoctoral Scholars)

Request for Proposals

Announcement Release Date:	**October 24, 2018**
Application Receipt Date:	**January 25, 2019**
Award Announcement Date:	**April 29, 2019**

Purpose: ASPIRE-I funding is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research to encourage postdoctoral scholars to develop individual innovative research projects leading to the pursuit of external funding or to the promotion of scholarly activities. **Track II-B** funds will be awarded to postdoctoral scholars to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include all postdoctoral scholars who are USC employees on the USC Columbia Campus, USC School of Medicine Greenville and USC Senior/Regional Campuses.

Postdoctoral scholars may only submit a single *ASPIRE I, Track IIB* proposal.

Postdoctoral scholars who received an ASPIRE I, Track IIB proposal in 2018 are not eligible to apply for funding in 2019.

Postdoctoral scholars may resubmit a revised proposal that was not funded from the 2018 ASPIRE-I 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 and prior reviewer comments will not be reviewed*. Postdoctoral scholars may submit a revised ASPIRE application only one time. Postdoctoral scholars 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. Unfunded applications submitted as new applications without making substantial conceptual changes will not be reviewed.

Funds Available: Track II-B projects may be funded up to $5000. An applicant may request a project period of 15 months beginning July 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2020. 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 and the total budget request cannot exceed $5000. Note that these projects are awards to the Principal Investigator, not to his or her home department. If the PI leaves USC before all project funds are expended, the award must be returned to the Office of Research.

Budget Information: Budgets will 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 allowed.

ASPIRE I, Track II-B for Postdoctoral scholars**:**

Allowable Costs
- Salary and fringe benefits of project research personnel including undergraduate and graduate students, and technicians.
- Project materials and supplies
- Animal purchase and maintenance
- Travel *essential* to conduct the project; justification must be provided
- Travel to one professional meeting (request cannot exceed $1500)

Unallowable Costs
- Salary and fringe for either the PI (postdoc writing the grant) or the postdoc supervisor
- Capital Equipment
- Computers and cameras
- Food (for use in research or as subject incentives)

Application Procedure

1. Develop a three-page proposal narrative that provides:
   a. A brief discussion of the background and significance of the proposed idea, including its relation to the present state of knowledge in the field.
   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 outcomes of the project, a discussion of potential external funding sources, and a timeline. The applicant must clearly delineate what is new about this particular project and how this project is distinct from the supervisor's research.
   c. A maximum of one page should be devoted to discussing how the research/creative activity that you complete will help you in your career, help you bridge funds, or expand your research into a new area. Specify where you plan to publish or present your results and where you plan to submit future proposals.
   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 PI's name, college/department, and e-mail address. Please also include a brief summary of the proposed work.

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/cv of the principal investigator and also of the co-investigator(s), if any, 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 (or similar) provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.

 d. If you have received support from the Office of the Vice President 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.

 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. The budget should clearly detail exactly how you plan to utilize the funds for the project. Please see the information regarding the budget justification provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.

 f. *A letter of recommendation from the postdoctoral scholar's supervisor/mentor at USC*. The letter of recommendation should address the postdoctoral scholar's intellectual ability and creativity, the postdoctoral scholar's degree of independence, the feasibility of the project, what is novel about the proposed project, how this project is distinct from the supervisor's research and the potential career impact of this funding for the postdoctoral scholar. The letter also include a verification of the applicant's status as a postdoctoral scholar at the University. The letter of recommendation is recommended to be one page in length. ASPIRE I, II-B proposals without a letter of recommendation will be returned without review.

 g. Appendices are allowed if highly relevant (e.g. additional letters of support and external review panel comments on related proposals); however, do not use appendices to circumvent page limits.

3. Submit the completed proposal packet:

 a. Through USCeRA (https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera/) before 5:00 pm on deadline date. *Applications submitted after 5:00 PM on the deadline date will be returned without review*.

 b. Application Receipt Date: Friday, January 25, 2019

 c. Select "Internal Request," "VP for Research" and choose the category type (ASPIRE I and Track IIB) 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 total amount that you are requesting in the Year 1 box.

 e. ***Upload your proposal following the directions in USCERA; PDFs are strongly preferred.***

 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 for merit by the Peer Review Committee. The Committee will then provide a prioritized list of recommendations for funding to the Vice President for Research based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria (see below). The VPR will make awards based on Committee's recommendations and available funds.

Research Merit:
- Does the proposal provide a compelling argument for the research?
- Does the proposed project represent a significant contribution to the investigator's field of study? If so, how?
- Does the proposed project demonstrate that the PI has a research agenda independent from his mentor/mentor's lab?

Nature of Proposal:
- Does the proposal provide a clear statement of 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 further scholarly activity?
- 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 research networks?

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