

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Strategic Integration of Research Cores Program

Request for Proposals

Announcement Release Date:	August 15, 2023
Application Receipt Date:	November 15, 2023
Award Announcement Date:	January 5, 2024

Purpose: The USC Office of the Vice President for Research invites qualified multi-disciplinary research core directors to submit proposals for the centralization of research core services at USC. This initiative aims to streamline and enhance the efficiency of our research facilities by consolidating various research cores into a centralized and integrated system.

Overview: The goal of this RFP is to centralize multiple research cores into a unified framework that facilitates seamless access, resource sharing, and efficient management of core research facilities. Currently administrated at the college level, USC’s many research cores operate without a uniform framework, budget, and oversight, which in some cases, has resulted in redundant administrative tasks, data silos, and fragmented services. The proposed centralized research core system will provide financial support, a user-friendly interface, standardized administrative processes, and data management tools to optimize the following key aspects:

- a. Resource Scheduling and Management: An efficient system for researchers to schedule and utilize core resources, such as equipment, instruments, and expertise while ensuring equitable access for all researchers.
- b. Billing and Financial Tracking: Streamlined billing processes to track core facility usage, allocate costs to individual projects, and generate financial reports.
- c. Data Integration: Integration of data generated within the research cores with existing USC systems, fostering collaboration and data-driven research.
- d. Training and Support: Provision of comprehensive training and support to core facility staff and researchers to maximize utilization and ensure smooth operations.
- e. New Technologies: Evaluation of emerging technologies and determination of which are most suitable for the USC and external user base. Application to external sources for funding for such new instruments or upgrades to existing equipment.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include Directors of interdisciplinary research cores on the USC Columbia campus (including the School of Medicine). If you have questions regarding your eligibility for this initiative, please contact Dr. Lumi Bakos at 777-0969.

Funding: Funding range will depend on research core needs. Eligible costs include salary for the core director, service contracts, integrated research cores, and upgrade/purchase equipment.

Application Procedure: Proposals should be submitted via USCeRA by 5:00 p.m., on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, using the following instructions. Check “yes” to “Internal Request,” then “VP for Research,” and choose the category type “Research Cores” from the drop-down menu to ensure proper proposal routing.

Proposal:

1. Provide a brief overview of the current state of the research core, including the respective area of expertise, existing management structure, and any challenges or inefficiencies that arise from the current decentralized approach.
2. Organizational information and experience related to research core management.
3. Current organizational structure.
4. Plan for enhancing access to shared resources and equipment (internal and external users).
5. Plan for equipment acquisition and equipment upgrade for the next 3-5 years.
6. Include the following supporting documentation:
 - a. List of existing equipment and associated service contracts, including purchase date and the date of last major upgrade, if any.
 - b. List of current personnel and calendar months currently supported by the research core budget.
 - c. Budget for the consolidated core, including maintenance costs, personnel, training cost, core promotion events, and any other anticipated expenses.
 - d. List of facility users and their respective departments that have used the research core in the past five years (separate funding sources based on ‘funded vs. non-funded’ and ‘internal vs. external’).
 - e. Financials for the past five years (income and expenditures).
 - f. Letter from the Dean and Associate Dean for Research agreeing to the centralization of the research core.

Review Process: Responsive applications will be evaluated by a group of external expert reviewers. The reviewers will prioritize their recommendations based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria (see below), and awards will be made based on the reviewers’ recommendations.

- a. Interdisciplinary nature of the research core (internal and external user base).
- b. Feasibility and easiness of the integration of the research core.
- c. Cost-benefit analysis.

For more Information: Please contact Dr. Lumi Bakos, The Office of the Vice President for Research, bakos@mailbox.sc.edu, (803) 777-0969.