

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH**

**Advanced Support Program for Innovative Research Excellence-I (ASPIRE-I,  
Tracks I, II-A, and III)**

**Request for Proposals**

Announcement Release Date:	October 27, 2021
Application Receipt Date:	<b>January 20, 2022</b>
Award Announcement Date:	April 29, 2022

**Purpose:** ASPIRE-I funding is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research to encourage faculty and postdoctoral scholars to develop individual innovative research projects leading to the pursuit of external funding or to the promotion of scholarly activities. This program will have 3 tracks of funding:

- **Track I** funds will be for Junior Faculty (tenure-track Assistant Professors only) and will be awarded to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding or other scholarly pursuits.
- **Track II-A** funds will be awarded to research or clinical faculty (non-tenure track, Assistant Professor level and above with full-time appointments to USC); **Track II-B** funds (**see separate RFP**) will be awarded to postdoctoral scholars to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding.
- **Track III** funds will be awarded for Senior Faculty (Tenure-Track or Tenured Associate and Full Professors) to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding or other scholarly pursuits. These funds also can be used as bridge funds to faculty who have not been able to renew their recent grants but anticipate future grant support.

**Eligibility:** Eligible applicants include all faculty who are employees of the University of South Carolina and who have independent research programs at UofSC Columbia, UofSC School of Medicine Greenville, and UofSC Senior and Palmetto College Campuses.

Faculty who received an ASPIRE I award last year (2021) are not eligible to apply for an ASPIRE I award in 2022.

Faculty previously awarded funds from the Office of the Vice President for Research (either ASPIRE or RISE) **must** be up-to-date with submitting reports as per the award terms and conditions.

Faculty may only submit a single *ASPIRE I* proposal (faculty still may submit separate proposals to ASPIRE I, ASPIRE II, and ASPIRE III). Note, however, that only one ASPIRE award will be funded if the faculty person submits to multiple tracks.

Faculty may resubmit a revised proposal that was not funded from the 2021 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' critiques 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 reviewers' critique 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 ASPIRE 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.

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

**Funds Available:** Track I and III projects may be funded up to **\$15,000**. Track II-A projects may be funded up to **\$10,000** for research or clinical faculty. An applicant may request a project period of 15 months beginning July 1, 2022 and ending September 30, 2023. Under certain conditions and with justification, 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.

**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, Tracks I, II-A, and III for Tenure-track, Research, and Tenured Faculty:

#### Allowable Costs

- Salary and fringe benefits of project research personnel including undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and technicians
- Up to one month of salary may be included for the PI only if used directly to work on this project
- Capital Equipment (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)
- Project supplies
- Animal maintenance
- Travel *essential* to conduct the project; strong justification must be provided. All current UofSC travel guidelines related to COVID-19 must be followed. Projects requesting international travel must include ample justification for how this travel will be possible with on-going COVID restrictions. Given on-going COVID-related travel restrictions, the feasibility of completing projects that require travel or that include international travel will be considered in the review process.
- Graduate Student Tuition

#### Unallowable Costs

- Costs in connection with faculty degree requirements
- Food (for use in research/as subject incentives)
- Travel to professional meetings
- Salary and fringe for Co-PI's or Co-Investigators
- Undergraduate Student Tuition

### **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.
  - 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.
  - 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. The cover sheet also should 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, and will not be counted in the narrative page limitation).
    - b. Two-page biographical sketch/cv of the principal investigator and 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. The ASPIRE submission should be included as pending support.
    - d. 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.
    - e. Appendices are allowed if highly relevant (e.g. letters of support and external review panel comments on related proposals); however, do not use appendices to circumvent page limits.
    - f. If you have received funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research in the past (not including SPARC or Magellan awards), you must include a brief appendix to your proposal that includes the titles and funding amounts of these awards, along with a description of the impacts of the award (s).
  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: Thursday, January 20, 2022**
    - c. Select "Internal Request," "VP for Research" and choose the category type (ASPIRE I and the appropriate track) 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 your total request in the Year 1 box.
    - e. **Upload your proposal following the directions in USCERA; a single PDF file is strongly preferred.**
    - f. Questions about submission? Contact: Beth Herron, Research and Grant Development Office, [bherron@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:bherron@mailbox.sc.edu), 777-2885.

**Review Process:** Applications that are complete and responsive to this announcement will be evaluated for merit by a committee of USC faculty. 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?

#### 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](mailto:bherron@mailbox.sc.edu), 803-777-2885.