

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

**Advanced Support Program for Innovative Research Excellence-
(ASPIRE-I)**

Request for Proposals

Announcement Release Date:	October 19, 2011
Application Receipt Date:	January 17, 2012
Award Announcement Date:	April 6, 2012

Purpose: ASPIRE-I funding is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research to encourage faculty to develop individual innovative research projects leading to the pursuit of external funding or to the promotion of scholarly activities. This program will have 4 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** funds will be awarded to research faculty (non-tenure track, Assistant Professor level and above, but not for Post-Doctoral Fellows) to encourage the development of research projects for further extramural funding.
- **Track III** funds will be awarded as bridge funds to faculty (tenure-track, tenured or research faculty) who have not been able to renew their recent grants.
- **Track IV** funds will be awarded as innovative and exploratory grants for Senior Faculty (Tenure-Track or Tenured Associate and Full Professors) to expand or re-focus their research.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include all faculty who have independent research programs on the USC Columbia Campus and USC Senior/Regional Campuses.

Faculty previously awarded Research Opportunity Program (ROP) or Promising Investigator Research (PIRA) awards must have completed a final report as per the award terms and conditions. Faculty who have a current PIRA award are not eligible to receive ASPIRE funding. Faculty who are awarded a Provost's Internal Grant are not eligible to receive ASPIRE funding.

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

Funds Available: Track I, III, and IV projects may be funded up to **\$15,000**. Track II projects may be funded up to **\$10,000**. An applicant may request a project period of 16 months beginning April 16, 2012 and ending August 15, 2013. 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.

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 encouraged.

Allowable Costs

- Salary and fringe benefits of project research personnel including undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and technicians
- In certain cases up to one month of summer salary may be included for a PI if used directly to work on this project. However, a strong justification for this needs to be provided.
- 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; justification must be provided

Unallowable Costs

- Costs in connection with faculty degree requirements
- Travel to professional meetings
- Tuition
- Salary and fringe for Co-PI's

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 outcome of the project, and a discussion of potential external funding sources.
 - 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.
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 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 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. 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/>) and APPROVED by your chair, dean and/or chancellor before 5:00 pm on deadline date.
 - b. **Application Receipt Date: Tuesday, January 17, 2012.**
 - c. Select "Internal Request VP for Research" and choose the category type (ASPIRE I) 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. Do NOT use the Internal Commit Form to enter cost share. Use the Cost Share form to enter cost share. For more detailed instructions, please go to the ASPIRE Program website.
 - e. Upload your proposal as ONE file using Adobe PDF or MSWord formats.
 - f. Questions about submission? Contact: Beth Herron, Office of Research Development, bherron@mailbox.sc.edu, 777-2885 and/or Dr. Pam Benicewicz, pamela.benicewicz@sc.edu, 777-5458

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?

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 the timeline 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?

Reporting:

- If the investigator(s) has received previous funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research, have all required reports been appropriately completed?

For more Information: Please contact Beth Herron, Research Development, bherron@mailbox.sc.edu, 803-777-2885 and/or Dr. Pam Benicewicz, pamela.benicewicz@sc.edu, 803-777-5458.