UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

ASPIRE-III
Request for Proposals

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

Purpose: ASPIRE-III (Advanced Support Program for **Infrastructure** in Research Excellence-III) funding is provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research to develop infrastructure such as multi-user equipment and facilities with cutting edge-technology that is critical to the growth and competitiveness of USC's research portfolio. To pursue interdisciplinary research, it is critical that we have a state-of-the-art research infrastructure that can be used to sustain existing and develop new interdisciplinary Centers of Excellence. This internal grant program is aimed at providing support for such ventures. Funds also may be used to complement extramural support for purchase of major equipment.

Eligibility: Eligible applicants include all tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty who are USC employees and have independent research programs on the USC Columbia Campus, USC School of Medicine Greenville, and USC Senior and Regional Campuses.

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

Faculty may resubmit a revised proposal that was not funded from the 2018 ASPIRE-III 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 reviewers' critiques 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 funding cycle as a new grant. In such an instance, there should be major revisions in the proposal. If an unfunded application is submitted as a new application without substantial conceptual changes, it will not be reviewed.

Funds Available: ASPIRE-III grants may be funded up to **$100,000**. 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 as project lead*. The number of awards will be based on the innovative character and quality of applications received.

Budget Information: Budgets will be presented in general categories but require detailed explanation; in cases of major equipment purchases or facility upgrades/renovations, quotes are **required**. For facilities work/renovations, a project manager/responsible person must be identified. 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. If your department or unit is contributing to the cost of the equipment or upgrade, however, a letter of commitment is required.

Allowable Costs
- Project costs for work done by the USC facilities management office or external vendors or contractors
- Equipment (The formal definition of "capital equipment" is any 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 and materials
- Limited travel *essential* to conduct the project (e.g. training to learn how to use equipment, or for a technician to come to USC to train users on equipment). Strong justification needs to be provided.

Unallowable Costs
- Costs in connection with faculty degree requirements
- Travel to professional or non-project-related meetings
- Food
- Tuition
- Salary, summer salary, and fringe for PI's, Co-PI's, graduate assistants, or technicians except USC facilities management staff/external contractors essential to the project.

Application Procedure

1. Develop a four-page proposal narrative that provides:
   a. A brief discussion of the demonstrated need and significance of the proposed equipment/facility, including its projected future impact on a wide variety of research and scholarly activities, including the opportunity to secure external funding. Note priority for ASPIRE III funding is given to instruments that do not duplicate others on campus.
   b. Where will the equipment/facility be located? Are there remediation issues that need to be addressed for the instrument/facility to work within its designed specifications?
   c. Who will operate and maintain the equipment/facility? Can the operation and maintenance be sustained? What funding sources currently support this or similar equipment/facilities?
   d. Who will have access to the equipment/facility? How will this access be guaranteed, supported and what type of cost recovery is envisioned? **Successful applications will allow access across units and not limit access to a small research group.**
   e. What is the proposed timeline for ordering and installing the equipment or making facility upgrades?
   f. What is the projected life time of the equipment/facility? What expansion and/or upgrade plans are being envisioned?
   g. How many faculty members from how many different campuses, colleges, departments, centers and institutes will use this equipment/facility?
   h. Proposal should be single-spaced with margins not less than one-half inch and using a font size not less than 11 pt.

i. 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, along with a brief summary of the proposed project.

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 each of the co-investigator(s) 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 such as project management skills
    c. Current and pending support. Include current grant funding and pending grant funding using the form provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.
    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. *Quotes for renovations, equipment, or other capital expenditures must be attached.* Please see the information regarding the budget justification provided on the ASPIRE Program web site.
    e. Letters of support from potential users of the equipment/facility are allowable and, in many cases, encouraged.
    f. If you have received support from the Vice President's Office for Research in the past (not including SPARC or Magellan awards), include brief information on each award which includes the funding amount and the benefits of the funds to your research/creative activity program.

3. Submit the completed proposal packet:
    a. Through USCeRA (https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera/) before 5:00 pm on deadline date. *Proposals submitted into USCeRA after 5:00 pm on the deadline date will be returned without review*.
    b. Application Receipt Date: Monday, February 25, 2019.
    c. Select "Internal Request," "VP for Research" and choose the category type (ASPIRE III) 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 the total amount of your request in the Year 1 box.
    e. ***Upload your proposal following the directions in USCERA.*** Use of PDF files is strongly encouraged.
    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 committee. The Committee will then provide a prioritized list of recommendations for funding to the VPR based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria (see below). The VPR will make awards based on the Committee's recommendations

and available funds.

Research Merit:
- Does the proposed equipment/facility have the potential to enable and strengthen existing and new disciplinary and interdisciplinary research? If so, how?
- Will the proposed equipment/facility help secure extramural funding?

Nature of Proposal:
- Does the proposal demonstrate a clear and demonstrated need of the proposed equipment/facility? Will the equipment/facility be accessible to a wide range of users, including students?
- 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? When applicable, are there quotes and other clear supporting information?
- Will the operation of this equipment/facility be sustainable? Is there evidence that the equipment/facility will be supported after the end of the ASPIRE III funding?
- Is the text of the proposal well-written?
- In case of facility design/upgrade: has USC Facilities been contacted and involved in design and budgeting?

Leverage:
- Does the project significantly improve chances for additional external funding from existing and new sources?
- Does the project help sustain and build new interdisciplinary research networks within the university?

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