

OVERVIEW

The USC Institute for Addiction Science (IAS; ias.usc.edu) is pleased to announce a new Pilot Projects Program. The program aims to support developmental projects to collect preliminary data to support subsequent submission of larger externally funded research grants and contracts addressing transdisciplinary and collaborative addiction research. Pilot projects can address any aspect of addiction science with the requirement that they are transdisciplinary in nature (i.e., integrate theories, methods, or applications from 2 or more academic disciplines) and involve investigators from 2 or more different schools/colleges at USC. All areas of addiction science (cell to society) and all types of research (preclinical, clinical, population, social/behavioral, quantitative, qualitative, primary data collection, secondary analysis) will be eligible; projects addressing health equity are highly encouraged.

ELIGIBILITY

This mechanism is dedicated to early career addiction scientists who require support launching a research program consistent with the goals and mission of IAS. **Scholars from racial/ethnic and other demographic groups historically underrepresented or minoritized (URM) in addiction science are highly encouraged to apply.** The program is open to applicants from career stages as early as doctoral students and as late as newly-promoted associate professors (at this rank less than 2 years) or non-faculty research scientists within 8 years of receipt of their terminal degree. Senior investigators are encouraged to serve as Co-investigators and/or mentors on these projects. Undergraduates serving in volunteer research assistant roles on projects is encouraged. *Pilot funding is also available for senior investigators seeking support for preliminary data to aid submission of large R01s, Program Projects, or Center Grants through a different mechanism. For more information about senior investigator support contact Reid Whaley directly at rwhaley@usc.edu.*

Prior to submitting their application, applicants who are not current members of USC IAS must reach out to one of the existing USC IAS faculty investigators to include them as a co-investigator on the newly proposed pilot project and join as a member prior to submission. Consult the [IAS Website](#) for additional information about requirements and benefits of joining the IAS membership as well as a listing of current IAS investigators.

All proposed projects MUST be collaborative in nature. This includes the following requirements:

- Principal investigators must be a member of IAS and a USC employee.
- Proposals must include investigators from *at least two USC schools*
- If a predoctoral scholar is the project PI, they must be currently enrolled in a USC doctoral program and in good standing, have a primary faculty mentor co-investigator from their own school who is an IAS member, and secondary faculty co-investigator advisor from another school.
- Co-Is can be a senior level faculty member, but the primary PI must be an early career scientist describe above.
- All co-investigators do not need to be IAS members
- Future USC post-doc recruits are also eligible (see next page for details)
- Multiple PIs are permitted but both PIs must meet the below requirements.

Program sponsored by

Keck School of
Medicine of USC

USC School
of Pharmacy

USC Norris
Comprehensive
Cancer Center
Keck Medicine of USC

USC
Suzanne
Dworak-Peck
School of Social Work

Keck School of Medicine of USC
Department of Preventive Medicine

USC Office of Research

AWARD SIZE, DURATION, RESTRICTIONS

Predocctoral Scholar Mechanism: Awards of up to \$15,000 will be granted. Funds spent on stipends can be no more than three calendar months of a standard 20-hour per week RA/TA-ship depending on the school or department's funding allocation for graduate students. Projects should be completed within 12 months of funding. Funding should be used to provide preliminary research to support the submission of a predoctoral fellowship or dissertation grant (e.g., NIH F31) by: (a) providing support for publications led by the trainee to support a track record of successful research in addiction science; or (b) proof of concept of project methods or scientific premise. *Supplemental funding (\$10,000) is available for URM trainees on top of these funds.*

Postdoctoral Scholar Mechanism: Awards of up to \$30,000 will be granted. Projects should be completed within 12 months of funding. Funding should be used to provide preliminary research to support the submission of a grant appropriate to the career stage (e.g., NIH F32/K01/R03/R21/R01/R34) either showing a track record of successful research in an area or proof of concept. *Supplemental funding (\$15,000) is available for underrepresented minority URM post-docs on top of these funds. Faculty who have identified a URM post-doctoral scholar that they wish to recruit to USC can use this mechanism as a recruitment tool and should contact Reid Whaley directly at rwhaley@usc.edu for additional details.*

Assistant and Early Associate Professor/ Early-Career Research Scientist Mechanism: Awards of up to \$50,000 will be granted. Projects should be completed within 12 months of funding. Funding should be used to provide preliminary research to support the submission of a grant appropriate to the career stage (e.g., NIH K01/ R21/R34/R01) intended to accelerate the development of an independent research program in addiction science. Projects designed to support future R01 submissions are highly encouraged for faculty investigators. *Supplemental funding (\$20,000) is available for underrepresented minority URM early career scientists on top of these funds.*

Award funds are intended for study-related activities (e.g., supplies, participant incentives, staff salaries) and are NOT intended to serve as primary support of awardees' salaries. Investigator effort support will be limited up to 10% of salary for per investigator, including either for the PI or Co-Is.

All regulatory and IRB approvals for study activities must be obtained prior to the disbursement of funds.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION

Proposal Components (all single spaced with 0.5" margins, 11pt font):

- Cover letter including: (a) the names, professional titles, affiliations (school/department), and email address of each investigator, (b) the title of the proposal, (c) a <250-word abstract, and (d) which of the three career stage mechanisms the applicants wish to be considered for.
- NIH-style biosketches of the applicant and each investigator (<5 pages each).
- A Specific Aims page (1 page)
- Narrative describing the significance, innovation, approach, dissemination plan, and next steps (4 pages)
- NIH-style line-item budget with a budget justification
- Any specialized facilities (1 page; optional). *If specific materials or facilities within IAS clinical core are needed (e.g., breathalyzers, carbon monoxide monitors, lab space with one-way mirrors), please contact Reid Whaley to determine availability for your project if they were to get funded.*

Review: Proposals will be reviewed by the USC IAS Pilot Programs Review Committee, as well as by selected external reviewers. Scoring of proposals will be based on the standard NIH 9-point scoring system. The 4-page narrative should be structured to include each of the following subsections, which are also the criteria the review committee will use to evaluate the project:

■ **Significance.** Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in addiction science? Does the study have potential to generate new transdisciplinary knowledge that can impact science, prevention, clinical practice, or policy?

■ **Investigator(s).** Does the applicant have appropriate experience and training? Is there evidence of productivity and/or potential to become an independent investigator in the area of addiction science research? Do the co-investigators provide additional expertise and experience that will support project and applicant success

■ **Innovation.** Does the proposal utilize novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation?

■ **Approach.** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are study limitations acknowledged and addressed? Is there evidence that project timelines are likely to be met?

■ **Dissemination Plan.** Proposed plan to ensure findings reach the scientific community, including a listing of intended scientific manuscript[s] that will be submitted relevant to addressing each aim, and, if relevant, plan to ensure results reach other relevant stakeholders [e.g., general public, clinicians, community]).

■ **Next Steps.** Applicants must briefly discuss the next step in obtaining external funding including a funding source and mechanism (e.g., NIDA R01 – PAR-20-185) and timeline for submitting the proposals, including the likely investigators on the future proposal).

The review committee will also consider whether the proposed budget and timeline are appropriate for the scope and pilot nature of the project and whether human subject or other regulatory issues are likely to pose problems for study implementation.

Reporting: All projects selected for funding will be required to give a brief presentation of their proposed project scope in late 2021 / early 2022 and separate presentation on the findings from the project upon completion in late 2022 to the IAS membership at an Institute-Wide Meeting or Research Program Meeting.

Application Procedures: Please send your application with all above components in a single PDF document to rwhaley@usc.edu

Due date of application: September 1, 2021

Notification of funding: October 15, 2021

Earliest project start date: October 16, 2021

Project duration: 12 months

Latest project start date: January 1, 2022

Latest project end date: December 31, 2022