

University of Florida College of Medicine

Bridge Funding Guidelines

Purpose

The College of Medicine has developed a Bridge Funding Program designed to provide research funds for investigators whose federal, peer-reviewed, competitive renewal research applications did not get funded although they were scored within 10 percentile points of funded applications for that Institute or whose reviewed renewal applications received fundable scores but are still pending. Bridge funding is intended to provide limited, interim funding to an investigator who has applied for, but failed to receive, renewed funding for an ongoing individual research grant rather than for large grants such as program projects, center grants or demonstration projects. It is intended to keep key personnel in place and the research program intact during a time when expected support from external agencies is pending. Budget reductions in funded grants are not eligible for bridge funding.

Due Dates

Applications for bridge funding will be accepted three times each year: April 15, August 15, and December 15.

Eligibility

There are two categories: (1) Established investigator and (2) Junior level investigator (Assistant Professor)

Established Investigators Category

Any full-time faculty member who has been a principal investigator on a grant funded by a federal agency for at least three consecutive years is eligible to apply for bridge funding, if, following scientific peer-review of a renewal application, the application scores within 10 percentile points of the Institute's funded percentile, but has not been funded. If the period of no cost extension ends prior to submission of a competitive renewal application, the principal investigator will not be eligible for bridge funding as the project will have closed. The faculty member must continue applying for extramural funding.

Junior Level Investigator Category (less than 4 years)

Junior investigators who have submitted an application(s) to a federal sponsor at least twice, and received a score within 10 percentile points of the

Institute's funded percentile, but not yet received funding, are eligible to apply for bridge funding. This mechanism acknowledges the difficulties facing junior investigators attempting to get their first major research grant and recognizes that even though meritorious, a first grant may require support beyond the time covered by the initial recruitment package. Applicants must have a scored, pending application to be eligible for this program.

Faculty members in this category are not required to have had any previous peer reviewed federal support. In this case, investigator productivity, as determined by preliminary results, publications, etc. will be a determining factor. Also, the faculty member must be in the terminal phase of a start up package as bridge funding will not be considered until after the start-up package (if given) has been fully expended. Bridge funding will not be provided for K awards.

Amount of Support

Bridge funding, whether provided by the COM or by the Department, cannot be used for salary support for the principal investigator or any tenured or tenure-track faculty member involved in the research. For example, bridge funding may not be used to replace that portion of the principal investigator's salary that is derived from the principal investigator's extramural grant. Bridge funding is not intended to provide funds for equipment purchase or travel. Calculation of bridge support is based on and may not exceed (1) the total direct cost (TDC) for the prior year of a continuing grant, or (2) the level of requested funding for the first year of a new grant (junior faculty) exclusive of salaries for the principal investigator and tenured and tenure-track faculty members, equipment purchases, and travel funds.

The typical limit for a bridge grant is \$50,000; a departmental match is expected for a total of \$100,000. Allowable costs include the following: (1) salary and fringe benefits for individuals whose salaries are supported by the interrupted grant, such as non-tenure track faculty members (excluding principal investigators), post-doctoral fellows and graduate students in training, and exempt and non-exempt staff; (2) equipment-related costs, such as service contracts and maintenance costs (but not equipment purchases); and (3) research supplies, including animal care.

Criteria for Support

The following criteria will be considered when support is requested:

1. A pending competitive renewal application
2. Lapse in support for postdoctoral fellows and graduate students in training
3. Productivity of the laboratory
4. Co-investment by the Department
5. Successful research programs that have received extramural funding over several years (senior investigators)

6. Alignment with the COM Strategic Plan and Initiatives

Period of Support

Bridge funding shall be for a period of one year. In the event that the investigator's extramural grant is funded during the period of bridge support, unexpended funds in proportion to the time remaining in the Bridge Award shall be returned to the funding source upon receipt of the Notification of Award. Where the Department has provided matching funds, both costs and refunds will be equally shared. All bridge funding terminates upon extramural funding.

Application Procedure The application procedure is the same for both Established investigators and Junior Investigators:

An eligible principal investigator should submit a letter of request to the Office for Research Development. The application should contain the following:

1. Account number and name of the interrupted grant.
2. Amount of bridge funding requested and the allocation (personnel, equipment maintenance or service contracts, supplies, etc.).
3. Requested start and end dates for bridge support (maximum of one year).
4. The budget pages for the final year of the previously funded, but lapsed, grant.
5. Copy of the unfunded/pending competitive renewal application and the scientific reviews from the study section.
6. The anticipated schedule for reapplication.
7. A statement from the principal investigator's Chair indicating the amount of matching funds and support from other funds (e.g., for the principal investigator's salary).
8. A cover letter of one page or less explaining why bridge funds are needed.

A short Summary of the Bridge Funding Guidelines

1. Submissions for bridge funding will have 3 closure dates/year: August 15, November 15, and February 15. This is approximately 1 month after most study sections have met and P.I's have received their scores. Dean's office funds will be divided into 3 equal portions (\$250,000) for distribution based on the three submission deadlines.
2. Any NIH or NSF application receiving a score within 10 percentile points of a particular Institute's funded percentile or better, but not funded will be eligible for the "extension of funding program".
3. In the event, that the total applications which qualify exceed the total amount of money available exceed the amount of Dean's funds allocated for that 4 month application period, all qualified applications will be reviewed by the Dean's research advisory committee and prioritized for funding. Review

criteria will be based in part on review scores and strategic missions of the College.

4. Qualified applications which do not received funding may be resubmitted for consideration for the next competition
5. The office of the Dean will continue to provide up to \$50,000/application. This does not include the expected matching funds from the host department, Center, or Institute)
6. Prior to resubmission, any qualified application not funded will receive constructive comments from a member of the research advisory committee or qualified departmental member designed to strengthen further resubmission of the application at the National level.