

**Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) Program for  
Resources to Bridge and Re-align Federal Research Grant Efforts**

This program supports two types of investments for assisting VUSM faculty with lapses in federal grant support. Funds for these programs are provided directly by VUSM leadership to Departments and Centers through Academic Program Support (APS). For bridge purposes, both re-budgeting of previously allocated APS funds and requests for additional APS funds must receive prior VUSM approval. Overall, this program results in a true reallocation of funds – APS funds spent on the Bridge Program will reduce funds for recruiting new faculty.

**I. Resources for Federal Grant Bridge Funding of Competitive Renewal Applications**

Since 2005, this program has been in place to directly help faculty sustain their research programs when competitive federal grant renewals are unfunded. Supporting our investigators is a top priority as demonstrated by:

- 1) Providing the resources necessary to secure data by the next submission deadline and allow competing renewal.
- 2) Minimizing the need to terminate laboratory personnel during the grant lapse.

***A. Eligibility and Support***

- 1) An applicant must be the Principal Investigator (PI) on a federal award that was submitted as part of a timely competing renewal process. R01 and P01 series awards are eligible.
- 2) The PI should have no other unrestricted resources available, with documentation that all endowed, Research Reward, gift, royalty, training grant and other resources are used first. Carry-forward on the original grant should be documented and used for priority expenses (B2b).
- 3) The request for funding and all information (below, B1, B2) must be received **within one month after the date the PI has received the summary sheets** from the grant review.
- 4) The PI will normally resubmit the A1 proposal no later than the next application cycle (typically 3-4 months from receipt of the summary sheets). If a resubmitted A1 proposal is not funded, the PI may petition for one final bridge support period to enable submission of new grant. In total, no more than 15 months of bridge support will be allowed for a given competitive renewal and its subsequent proposals.
- 5) Applications for concurrent bridge funding support are allowed for a 2nd grant. If multiple grants for a single PI are simultaneously supported, the level of support for the 2nd grant will generally be reduced. Bridge funding is not available for a 3rd, or more, grant from a single PI.
- 6) Final decisions regarding A1 bridge funding, and that for any new research proposals, will be made by the VUSM leadership with consideration of the Bridge Review Committee (see B3), chair/center director, and PI requests/recommendations.

***B. Process for Application and Review of Requests for Bridge Funds***

- 1) Faculty applying for bridge funds should email their Chair, Center Director, and Dr. Susan Wentz (with a copy to Jeannine Courtney) with a well documented proposal.
- 2) The Office of Research should receive, or will request the following documentation, copying all necessary parties:
  - a) A copy of the full original grant application and the grant agency summary sheets with the reviews and score.
  - b) A detailed analysis of the cost of advancing the research in the manner outlined by the grant renewal during the bridge period. The PI, working with the Department/Center Administrator that manages the grant, should assemble the proposed bridge budget and take into account the following items:
    - (1) PI salary support at or below the percent effort in the unfunded submission, up to the NIH salary cap.

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(2) Only personnel included on the unfunded submission. New personnel may not be added, and TBA positions should be deferred. Names and essential activities for proposed supported personnel should be provided in detail.

(3) Supplies and other expenses detailed with all possible cost restrictions considered. Justification should be based on the prior 12 months direct expenditures. Travel and equipment expenses are restricted.

c) Data on the financial resources of the PI and Department/Center.

(1) Documentation on all current restricted and unrestricted funds available to the PI, with a forecast on expenditures for the proposed bridge period.

(2) Documentation on Departmental/Center APS and SOM allocation expenditures to-date, and a forecast for continued expenditures during the FY. If APS for new faculty recruits has been allocated it should also be identified, and if offers have not been made or accepted, re-budgeting potential for bridge funding should be proposed.

(3) For investigators jointly supported with startup funds by multiple Departments and/or Centers, the Chairs and/or Center directors involved should jointly supply the information requested. A fair split of APS for bridge funding budget (in B2b) among their operating units should be proposed.

3) Within two weeks of receiving all the bridge funding documentation (B2a, B2b, B2c), if eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the Office of Research will form an ad hoc Bridge Review Committee (BRC) of up to three senior faculty (Vanderbilt faculty preferred), based on recommendations from the PI and Chair/Center Director.

a) The BRC will have one month to evaluate the items supplied from B2a above, the approach and feasibility of addressing the reviewer concerns (summary sheet) during the bridge time interval, and the resources (staff, supplies) required to execute the needed work. The BRC is intended to provide peer support, and will submit a written recommendation report to the Office of Research, which will be shared with the PI and Chair/Center Director. There must be significant evidence and a reasonable expectation for a successful A1 resubmission.

b) If the time line is met, the PI and institution will have at least one month to consider the recommendations prior to the earliest A1 submission date and the date for activation of any approved bridge funding. If the A1 is not funded, the same BRC, or an alternative, will be used to recommend next steps (as per the overall maximum institutional bridge support allowed).

c) If the PI or Department/Center does not meet the time line required for BRC review prior to the needed bridge funding activation, the PI and Department/Center will assume responsibility for the funding required until the review and approval process is completed. Note, it is advisable to initiate the application process for a borderline score.

4) Faculty approved for bridge funding that have unspent APS committed as part of their initial startup packages (but not budgeted for expenditure in the specific FY(s) for bridge funding), will have their total APS commitment debited in an amount equal to bridge funding expenditures.

**II. Resources for Federal Grant Realignment and New Research Proposal Submission**

This program is intended to help faculty transition their research program when they elect to not submit a competitive renewal for a federal grant. Support is only available for a one-time maximum \$50,000 allocation.

**A. Eligibility and Support**

1) An applicant must be the Principal Investigator (PI) on a federal award for which they have elected to

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not submit a competitive renewal. Instead, a new research grant proposal should have been submitted, or be planned/intended for submission, in a timely manner. R01 and P01 series awards are eligible.

- 2) The PI should have no other unrestricted resources available, with documentation that all endowed, Research Reward, gift, royalty, training grant and other resources are used first.
- 3) The request for funding and all information (below, B1, B2) must be received **three months before the original competitive renewal is due**. If the new grant proposal is submitted in a manner such that a grant lapse between the original and new is not anticipated, but the new grant is not funded on the A0, **the PI must follow-up with the unfunded score information within one month after the date the PI has received the summary sheets** from the new grant proposal review.
- 4) The one time allocation of \$50,000 will be made no earlier than at the end of the original grant funding period. Careful management and planning for any possible carry forward/unfunded extension period should be demonstrated.
- 5) If the A0 application is not funded, only the re-alignment program is available for support. The PI cannot apply for support from the bridge funding program for this unfunded A0 (or a subsequent unfunded A1),
- 6) Applications for concurrent bridge and re-alignment funding support will be considered for different grants by the same PI. Bridge and re-alignment funding is not available for a 3rd, or more, grant from a single PI.
- 7) Faculty with unspent APS commitments of >\$50,000 are not eligible for support by this program. If increased APS expenditures will be needed outside of that approved for the given FY budget, re-budgeting must be specifically requested following the above timelines.
- 8) Final decisions regarding re-alignment funding will be made by the VUSM leadership, with consideration of the chair/center director and PI requests/recommendations.

**B. Process for Application and Review of Requests for Re-Alignment Funds**

- 1) Faculty applying for re-alignment funds should email their Chair, Center Director, and Dr. Susan Wente (with a copy to Jeannine Courtney).
- 2) The Office of Research should receive, or will request the following, copying all necessary parties:
  - a) Three months before the original competitive renewal is due, a written plan (2 page maximum) from the PI:
    - summarizing the new research direction of the new proposal.
    - justifying the decision to not submit the competitive renewal.
    - documenting the timing for the new grant proposal submission.

As an appendix, the PI should include a list of manuscripts published under the scope of the original grant.
  - b) A budget proposal for use of an allocation <\$50,000, prepared by the PI working with the Department/Center Administrator. This can take into account:
    - (1) PI salary support at or below the percent effort in the original grant, up to the NIH salary cap.
    - (2) Only personnel supported on the original grant. New personnel may not be added, and TBA positions should be deferred. Names and essential activities for proposed supported personnel should be provided in detail.
    - (3) Supplies and other expenses detailed with all possible cost restrictions considered. Justification should be based on the prior 12 months direct expenditures. Travel and

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equipment expenses are restricted.

c) Data on the financial resources of the PI and Department/Center.

(1) Documentation on all current restricted and unrestricted funds available to the PI, with a forecast on expenditures for the proposed re-alignment period.

(2) Documentation on Departmental/Center APS and SOM allocation expenditures to-date, and a forecast for continued expenditures during the FY. If APS for new faculty recruits has been allocated it should also be identified, and if offers have not been made or accepted, re-budgeting potential for re-alignment funding should be proposed.

(3) For investigators jointly supported with startup funds by multiple Departments and/or Centers, the Chairs and/or Center directors involved should jointly supply the information requested. A fair split of APS for re-alignment funding budget (in B2b) among their operating units should be proposed.

3) Within two months of receiving all the documentation (B2a, B2b, B2c), if eligibility criteria are fulfilled, a decision will be made. If the PI or Department/Center does not meet the time line, the PI and Department/Center will assume responsibility for the funding required. Note, it is advisable to initiate the application process for any re-alignment that involves the decision to not submit a competitive renewal.