

# Washington University School of Medicine Dean's FY21 Bridge Funding Program

## Description

Continuous extramural funding for research projects can be challenging. Bridge funding can be an effective investment to allow an investigator to complete the experiments necessary to secure continued funding for a research project or maintain minimal laboratory personnel to keep a laboratory competitive for extramural funding. Bridge funding is not meant to sustain a laboratory at the same level that extramural funding does, nor can all projects be bridged, but it can provide limited support to allow highly trained staff or trainees to continue and to keep the project moving forward.

Bridge funding has normally been the responsibility of the departments, but for the past few years, the Dean's office has been providing some additional support of approximately \$750,000 per year. These funds are meant to supplement, not replace, the bridge funding that is done by departments. This program is reviewed annually, so there is no commitment to continue beyond this fiscal year.

Importantly, the Dean's Bridge Funding Program is meant to help support a laboratory during a gap in funding. This program will prioritize funding to laboratories that have few other resources, and might be at risk of downsizing to the point of being non-productive. The program will prioritize projects that have a high likelihood of obtaining extramural funding. It requires that an investigator had been awarded a substantial extramural grant (e.g. the grant being bridged) that has ended recently or is close to ending, and for which there have been efforts to renew or replace the extramural grant.

The funding provided through this program is not sufficient to bridge all meritorious projects and preference will be given to those laboratories with limited resources that are likely to be refunded after a short gap.

**Importantly**, these applications are read and evaluated by a panel of highly-respected and busy faculty members. In order to fairly review the applications, this panel needs a complete, coherent, and well-organized application.

**Application deadlines:** The Dean's office will be accepting applications for Dean's Bridge Funding in this fiscal year with deadlines of November 10, 2020, and March 10, 2021. Revisions may occur annually, and will be sent to the business managers of the departments, so faculty should check with their departments to ensure they are using the most current form.

**Budgets:** Requests from the Dean's office can be made for up to 25% of the modified total direct costs of the last budget period of the grant being bridged, not to exceed \$75,000. This amount must be matched by a departmental contribution of the same magnitude. The department and the Dean's office will deposit their contribution into a joint account that the investigator can use for expenditures that were considered "allowable" under the terms of the grant that is being bridged, with some exceptions. The Dean's funds cannot be used for faculty salaries, travel or subawards, but the department has flexibility to use their portion of the funds for those purposes. If approved, the Dean's funds are available to the applicant for 12 months following the award. Investigators may request a one-year, no-cost-extension (NCE) without additional funding through the office of the Associate Dean for Research, and can also apply for a second year with additional funding through this application process. No more than two years of bridge funding will be awarded from the Dean's office.

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### **Eligibility:**

- Applicants must be full time faculty on any track with their primary appointment at the School of Medicine at the level of Assistant Professor or higher.
- Bridge funds are available to bridge grants on which the applicant is the PI, a Co-PI on a multi-investigator grant, or PI on a subproject of a P- or U- type grant.
- For a multi-PI grant, the amount of funding requested should be based on the Co-PI's portion of the original grant.
- The grant being bridged may have already ended, be in no cost extension, or end prior to the next Dean's Bridge Funding Program application date.
- The applicant should have submitted a renewal or a replacement proposal within the 12 months prior to the bridge funding application. Exceptional circumstances may be considered.
- Dean's Bridge funds are only available to extramurally funded projects that have full indirect costs associated with them (normally at least 50% of modified total direct costs for on campus projects, or 26% for off-campus) and are administered through the School of Medicine.
- An investigator can only bridge one grant at a time.

### **Other stipulations:**

- Before spending the Bridge Funding dollars, the investigator must first spend down any remaining grant funds for the project (e.g. carryover on a NCE), and any discretionary funds available to him or her that could be used to support their research project (e.g. startup, endowment, gifts, patent income, or other unrestricted funds). Exceptions will be allowed to retain sufficient discretionary funds to support student stipend supplements or for exceptional circumstances. Departments may also make a request to retain reasonable discretionary funds for an investigator for unallowable costs, however the requests should not exceed the historic spend rate. These exception requests should be included in the letter of support from the department.
- If the investigator receives a notice of award for a new grant or competitive renewal in excess of \$100K/yr direct costs for research, then the bridge fund account will be closed no later than the start date of the NOA, and the remaining funds will be split and one half returned to the Department and one half returned to the Dean's Bridge Funding Program to be distributed to other faculty in need of bridge funding. During the interim period between receipt of the NOA and the start date of the new award, the expenditures for the bridge fund account should not exceed the account's historic spend rate, and investigators will be expected to use the 90 day pre-award spending that is allowed by the NIH.
- If the investigator submits a letter of resignation, the bridge fund account will be closed and any remaining funds returned proportionally to the Dean's office and the department.

### **Evaluation criteria:**

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of senior faculty from across the medical school, and will be evaluated on the following criteria.

- The likelihood that the investigator will obtain future funding.
- How well the investigator is able to address the critiques.
- The strength of the recent publication record of the investigator in the area of the application.

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- The appropriateness of the budget request of the bridge funding.
- Investigators that have substantial funding (>\$400,000) from other sources will not be considered for bridge funding through the Dean's office.

The panel of senior faculty will make funding recommendations to the Dean's Office. Funding decisions should be made within two months of the application dates.

### Application Instructions

**Important:** These applications are read and evaluated by a panel of highly-respected and busy faculty members. In order to fairly review the applications, this panel needs a complete, coherent, and well-organized application that clearly explains the efforts made to obtain funding for the project.

Complete electronic applications must be received by 5:00 PM on the due dates.

Submissions should be emailed to Aleatha Harris, Executive Secretary to Jennifer Lodge, Vice Chancellor and Associate Dean for Research. ([aharris@wustl.edu](mailto:aharris@wustl.edu))

Questions should be directed to Aleatha Harris

A list of FAQs is posted on the faculty affairs website.

A complete application has seven parts:

1. A completed FY21 Bridge Funding application (attached) which includes information about the grant that is being bridged, the proposals that have been submitted to replace the grant (either competitive renewals or new proposals), the investigator, and the budget request and justification.

This section should include a budget and budget justification of how the funds will be used (support for personnel, animal costs, supplies, etc.). Include the detail for the entire bridge funding (dean's funds plus department funds). All expenses must be allowable based on the rules of the agency of the grant being bridged. Note that faculty salaries, travel and subawards are not allowable on bridge funding support from the Dean but the department has flexibility to allow them.

2. The NOA(s) for the final year of funding of the grant being bridged.

3. The applicant's biosketch relevant to the grant for which bridge funding is requested.

4. An "Other Support" page. Use the example provided below.

This should include sections for current support, pending support, and projects completed in the last three years. The applicant should not include on this page the grant for which the bridge funding is requested or the proposals that have been submitted to replace the grant since this information will be provided elsewhere.

For current support, each project should include:

1. Principle investigator
2. Role of applicant
3. Name of the agency

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4. Agency project number or identifier
5. Department fund number
6. Project title
7. Project dates
8. Annual direct \$
9. Annual indirect \$
10. % effort of applicant
11. Is the project active, active but in NCE, or completed:
12. Other key personnel

For Pending Support, each project should include:

1. Principle investigator
2. Role of applicant
3. Name of the agency
4. Project number or identifier
5. Project title
6. Requested project dates
7. Annual direct \$ requested
8. Annual indirect \$ requested
9. % effort of applicant
10. Other key personnel
11. Date submitted
12. Date reviewed
13. Insert the abstract and specific aims pages from the application (use NIH format and page limits)
14. Progress report publication list – attach a report of publications, manuscripts accepted for publication, patents, and other items resulting from your last funding cycle.
15. Summarize this information from previous unfunded renewal applications, if applicable.
16. If the project has been reviewed, append a copy of the critiques from the study section.

For completed projects (within the past three years)

1. Principle investigator
2. Role of applicant
3. Name of the agency
4. Project number or identifier
5. Project title
6. Project dates
7. Annual direct \$
8. Annual indirect \$
9. Effort of applicant

5. A letter of support from the Department Head that provides commitments to:

- a. Ensure that any discretionary funds available to the investigator will be used prior to the Dean's bridge support.
- b. Provide matching bridge funds to the investigator and set up the joint account for the bridge funds. The Dean's bridge funds and the department match should be deposited into this account.

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- c. Inform the Dean's office if the investigator's status changes (e.g. they get additional funding or they plan to leave the institution), and to return  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the unspent funds in the joint account to the Dean's office.

The Department Head's letter can also describe any extenuating circumstances for this investigator, and request retention of discretionary funds to pay for unallowable expenses

6. A copy of critiques of application(s) submitted to renew or replace the award (if the application has been reviewed.)

7. The department should provide to the Associate Dean for Research, a list of other research support (excluding startup packages, retention packages, and mandatory cost sharing) being provided to other members of the Department or Division during the fiscal year. This information should include name of the faculty, amount of support, and reason for support (e.g. Bridge funding, supplemental research support, voluntary cost sharing) being provided to other members of the department/division. The department can provide additional information that may be relevant – e.g. an explanation regarding the intent or terms of the support. This information may be used by the Dean to inform final funding decisions, but will not be shared with the review committee.