

Bridge Funding Policy

November 5, 2008

Purpose

The recent decline in NIH support for research has prompted the creation of a Bridge Funding policy by the College of Medicine to assist COM investigators. Bridge Funding is not intended to substitute for outside research funding, but rather is intended to provide limited, interim funding to an investigator who has applied for, but failed to receive, renewal funding for ongoing research. Thus, Bridge Funding is intended to support College of Medicine faculty members with temporary, reduced support in order to keep key personnel and continue laboratory or research operations while full support is being sought from outside agencies.

1. The Dean has created the Dean's Bridge Fund with a one time contribution of \$400,000. The College of Medicine will add to the Fund 1% or \$100,000 per year, whichever is more, of the total Indirect Costs returned to the College.
2. These set-aside funds are designed to award modest annual funding from the Dean's Office of \$30-\$70K per award and will only be given when **equal matching funds are obtained from the Department or Center, or other Unit**. The total contribution for bridge funds cannot exceed the expected IDC of the submitted grant.
3. The Dean's Bridge Fund is designed to be self-sustaining. Faculty who receive support from the Dean's Bridge Fund will **pay back the funds they receive using the indirect costs generated by the newly funded grant**. The payback will be "in-kind" to each participating Dept. or Center and will be generated from the IDC returned to the College by the new grant, prior to any other commitments. IDC funds remaining after pay back of the bridge funds will be distributed according to the current policy for their distribution. The time period for the pay back will not exceed the funding period of the grant. The pay back funds to the COM will be added to the Dean's Bridge Fund to increase its size for the funding of other investigators in future years.
4. Eligible requests for Bridge Funding will be accepted semi-annually and reviewed by a COM Dean's Research Council Subcommittee. A recommendation will be made to the Dean on each request. Eligible requests for review are restricted to proposals with an outstanding chance of obtaining funding by a national agency in the next round of submission (For example, an NIH grant **proposal must have received a review and a score**). **Proposals with the best priority scores will be the ones selected for funding**.
5. The Bridge Award shall be for a period of **one year**, beginning on what would have been the normal start date of the interrupted extramural grant or end of grant monies in the case of an application for no-cost extension.
6. 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 COM upon receipt of the Notification of Award. Thus, **all bridge funding terminates upon refunding**.
7. Awarded funds must be spent according to the budget provided by the investigator. Use of funds for other activities will result in cessation of the award.

Eligibility

Any **full time faculty members**, tenured, tenure track, or research track, who is the PI on a grant **funded for at least three consecutive years** (on the same grant or project) by a national agency with a bona fide scientific peer-review (e.g. NIH, NSF, American Heart Association) and whose application for continued support from that or another national funding agency with a bona fide scientific peer-review has not been funded, shall be eligible for bridge funding.

Only grants that support a **research project** will be eligible for bridge funding. Grants that are primarily for a demonstration project, a training program, or a postdoctoral fellowship are ineligible.

Applying for additional funding is one of the major requirements for receiving bridge funding. Normally, the applicant should have submitted a **competitive renewal of individual awards** such as a R01 application during the last year of the extramural funding cycle. If funding runs out without a renewal application for continued funding having been submitted and scored, then the PI is not eligible for bridge funding. Furthermore, the faculty member must agree to continue reapplying for extramural funding (in the same research area or a new research area).

Application format

Submit the fillable form available on the COM Research Office website. The following information will be requested:

1. Account number and name of the interrupted grant,
2. Amount of Bridge Funding requested and the allocation (including pertinent information about personnel, equipment maintenance or service contracts, supplies, etc.). See example of required information. Be aware that the awarded funds will be allocated according to the specific budget requested.
3. A requested start date and end dates for bridge support (maximum of one year),
4. The anticipated schedule of reapplication,
5. A brief statement of additional information from the PI that strengthens the case, and
6. The signed statement at the end of the application: "I certify that I have applied for extramural funds on [date] and will continue to reapply within the next 12 months."

Submit the following supportive documents:

1. The budget pages for the final year of the previously funded, but lapsed, grant; a copy of the cover sheet and abstract of the unfunded grant,
2. An endorsement and commitment statement from the PI's Chair providing the amount and nature of matching support from other funds (e.g. for the PI's salary or graduate student stipends, etc.), describing the strengths and weaknesses of both the PI and the research project and a recommendation for action by the Bridge Funding Committee,
3. The NIH pink sheets or equivalent evaluations of the competitive renewal application,
4. A draft of the three page rebuttal to be submitted with the revised applications
5. A copy of the PIs CV with a complete history of grant funding and pending applications.

Review Process

A committee of 3-6 faculty, two of whom shall be members of the Bridge Funding subcommittee of the Dean's Research Council will be appointed to review the bridge funding applications and to make appropriate recommendations to the Associate Dean for Research regarding the distribution of bridge funds. These individuals should be presently funded by at least one grant from the NIH (or other peer-reviewed granting agency) and have successfully received a competitive renewal from this agency.

The resources available to the investigator will be reviewed by the committee and used to determine both the need for bridge funding and the level of support required to maintain the project. The committee will take into consideration the length of previous funding for the grant under deliberation for bridge funding as well as the productivity of the investigator as indicated by high impact publications.

Those faculty members with only one project funded extramurally will receive top priority, whereas those with multiple projects may receive bridge funding only if sufficient funds are available. Awards will be competitive and all applications may not be funded.

In special circumstances the committee may grant bridge funding even if the application does not strictly conform to the guidelines. In most cases general guidelines will be followed but the final recommendation will rest with the committee.

Follow-Up

A procedure will be established to evaluate the success of this bridge funding program. Evaluation of the program should be based on the number of individuals who receive bridge funding who are subsequently funded for that specific project.