

Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) Program for Resources to Bridge and Realign Federal Research Grant Efforts

This program provides two mechanisms of funding for VUMC faculty with lapses in federal grant support: **bridge** funds, and **realignment** funds.

Bridge funding has been in place since 2005 to help faculty sustain their research programs when competitive federal grant renewals are unfunded. Bridge funding provides the resources necessary to secure data for resubmission that will enable competing renewal, while minimizing the need to terminate laboratory personnel during the grant lapse.

Realignment funding 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 authorization of up to \$50,000 in expense reimbursement.

General guidelines for bridge and realignment funding requests

- All requests for bridge and realignment funds require the PI to submit a proposal for review via the VICTR studio process. Information on VICTR studios is found here: <https://starbrite.app.vumc.org/research/studios.html> (VUMC login required)
Note: An application for bridge or realignment funding will not be reviewed until the VICTR studio report is received by the Office of Research; therefore, it is strongly recommended that the PI schedule a studio for the earliest possible date.
- The PI should work with her/his department chair, center director (if applicable) and administrators to prepare the application for bridge or realignment funds.
- R01 and P01 series awards are eligible.
- The PI should document any applicable and appropriate grant carry-forward from the original grant, or a bridge award from the same funding agency, and show how it will be used for priority expenses during the funding gap.
- The PI should have no other unrestricted resources available. The application should include documentation that all endowed funds, gifts, royalties, training grants and other resources have been or will be used first, verifying that there are no other department or center resources available to support the PI.
- Applications for concurrent bridge and/or realignment funding support may be allowed for a second grant. If two grants are simultaneously supported for a single PI, the level of support for the second grant will generally be reduced. Bridge and/or realignment funding is not available for more than two grants from a single PI at any given time.

- Final decisions regarding bridge funding will be made by the VUMC leadership with recommendations from the Bridge Review Committee, with careful consideration of the following criteria:
 - PI requests and financial resources
 - Endorsement, recommendation and matching fund commitment from the PI's chair, and center director if applicable
 - VICTR studio recommendations regarding the approach and feasibility of addressing the reviewer concerns during the bridge funding period
 - Institutional budget available to support bridge funding

Feedback from the Bridge Review Committee will be provided to the PI, and her/his department chair and center director.

- If the grant supported by bridge or realignment funding is funded, all bridge or realignment funding reimbursements will ended be 3 months pre-award (per date of NGA).
- Departments will provide a 1:1 match for Office of Research (OOR) bridge or realignment funding awards. PI should work with their department to spend department matching funds first; OOR funds will then be provided in the form of expense reimbursement.
- A brief final progress report is due within 6 months from the end of the bridge or realignment funding period. The report should include:
 - Outcome for bridged competing renewal or realigned grant application
 - Financial summary showing use of all institutional and departmental funds during the bridge/realignment award period
 - List of publications resulting from the bridged/realigned project
 - Other new or renewed related grants and contracts (federal, foundation, corporate)

For additional guidance and application requirements, see:

Section I. Bridge Funding of Competitive Renewal Applications

Section II. Realignment Funding

Section I. Bridge Funding of Competitive Renewal Applications

A. Eligibility and Support for Bridge Funding

- An applicant must be the Principal Investigator (PI) on a federal award that was submitted as part of a timely competing renewal process.
- The request for funding and all information must be received within three months after the date the PI has received the summary statement from the grant review.
- The PI is expected to resubmit the competing renewal proposal no later than the next appropriate application cycle.
- The bridge funding period is limited to 9 months. The PI may request a no cost extension of up to 6 months, for a total maximum funding period of 15 months.
- If additional funds beyond the original bridge award are needed, the PI should submit a new request for bridge funding.
- The Bridge Review Committee may determine that a request for bridge funding is more suitable for realignment funding (see Section II. Realignment Funding).

B. Application and Review Process for Bridge Funding

1. The applicant should submit a request by email to their department chair, center director if applicable, and Dr. Jennifer Pietenpol with a copy to Susan Meyn, Office of Research.
Note: it is advisable to initiate the application process for a borderline score.
2. The following documentation is required for each application:
 - a. A letter of endorsement and recommendation for bridge funding from the applicant's department chair, and center director if applicable. This letter should affirm the department commitment to 1:1 matching for the bridge award.
 - b. Copies of the grant agency summary statement with the reviews and score; and the full original grant application.
 - c. Applicant's response to agency/peer review critiques. If the original renewal application was triaged by the grant funding agency, the response to critiques must explicitly address how the PI will overcome significant weaknesses in the application to enable a fundable score on resubmission.
 - d. Confirmation of scheduled date for VICTR studio review of the proposed resubmission, and the VICTR studio report and recommendations as soon as available.
 - e. A detailed 9-month budget with full justification of all expenses to be reimbursed, with reference to the original grant budget. The budget should outline plan for use of departmental matching funds first, followed by OOR awarded bridge funds. Allowable expenses include:
 - PI salary support at or below the % effort on the original grant, up to the NIH salary cap.
 - Other personnel named on the original grant.
 - Supplies and other expenses necessary for sustaining the project during the grant funding gap.*Note: New personnel, TBD positions, travel and equipment expenses are not allowable.*
 - f. Data on the financial resources of the PI, department and center if applicable.

- List of all current restricted and unrestricted funds available to the PI, showing how these funds will be used during the proposed bridge period.
 - Document other department and center funds available to support the PI during the proposed bridge period. If no such funds are available, the department chair's letter of endorsement and recommendation should state this.
3. Once eligibility is verified and all required documentation is received (including VICTR studio report), the Office of Research will forward the application to the Bridge Review Committee. A decision will typically be made within 2 months of the receipt of all required documentation.
 - a. The Bridge Review Committee meets three times a year (typically January-February, May-June, and September-October) to evaluate pending applications.
 - b. The PI or Department/Center assumes responsibility for any funding required by the PI until the institutional review and approval process is completed.

Section II. Realignment Funding

A. Eligibility and Support for Realignment Funding

- An applicant must be the Principal Investigator (PI) on a federal award for which they have elected to not submit a competitive renewal. Instead, a new research grant proposal has been or will be submitted at the next appropriate application cycle.
- The request for realignment funding must be received three months before the original competitive renewal would have been due. The PI is responsible for submitting the new grant proposal in time to avoid a gap in funding between the original and new grants.
- If the new grant is not funded on first submission, and realignment funds are not fully spent, the PI must notify the Office of Research within one month after receiving the grant agency score and summary statement from the new grant proposal review. The PI should provide copies of the summary statement and the full original grant application in this notification.
- Only one realignment award per project is allowed. If the new grant application is not funded, the PI cannot apply for additional support from either the bridge or realignment funding program for this unfunded grant application (or subsequent attempts).
- If realignment funding is approved, a onetime award of up to \$50,000 will be made no earlier than the end date of the original grant funding period.
- Faculty with unspent APS commitments of >\$50,000 are not eligible for realignment funding.

B. Application and Review Process for Realignment Funding

1. The applicant should submit a request by email to their department chair, center director if applicable, and Dr. Jennifer Pietenpol with a copy to Susan Meyn, Office of Research.
Note: it is advisable to initiate a realignment application as soon as possible after decision to not submit a competitive renewal.
2. The following documentation is required for each application:
 - a. A letter of endorsement and recommendation for bridge funding from the applicant's department chair, and center director if applicable. This letter should affirm the department commitment to 1:1 matching for the bridge award.
 - b. A written plan (2 page maximum) from the PI:
 - Summarize the new research direction of the new proposal.
 - Justify the decision to not submit the competitive renewal and provide rationale for realignment.
 - Document 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.
 - c. Confirmation of scheduled date for VICTR studio review of the new proposal, and the VICTR studio report and recommendations as soon as available.
 - d. A detailed 9-month budget with full justification of all expenses to be reimbursed, with reference to the original grant budget. The budget should outline plan for use of departmental matching funds first, followed by OOR awarded bridge funds. Allowable expenses:

- PI salary support at or below the % effort on the original grant, up to the NIH salary cap.
- Other personnel named on the original grant.
- Supplies and other expenses necessary for sustaining the project during the grant funding gap.

Note: New personnel, TBD positions, travel and equipment expenses are not allowable.

- e. Data on the financial resources of the PI and Department and/or Center.
 - Document all current restricted and unrestricted funds available to the PI, showing how these funds will be used during the proposed bridge period.
 - Document department and center funds available to support the PI during the proposed bridge period. If no such funds are available, the department chair's letter of endorsement and recommendation should state this.

3. Once eligibility is verified and all required documentation is received (including VICTR studio report), the Office of Research will forward the application to the Bridge Review Committee. A decision will typically be made within 2 months of the receipt of all required documentation.
 - a. The Bridge Review Committee meets three times a year (typically January-February, May-June, and September-October) to evaluate pending applications.
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