

REQUEST FOR BRIDGE FUNDING
Schools of the Health Sciences
(Revised, October 2014)

In light of the low success rates at the NIH and other agencies that provide research funding, many of the highly successful faculty members in the Schools of the Health Sciences have experienced difficulty in obtaining research funding from external entities. In order to minimize the need to close productive or promising (in the case of new investigators) laboratories, Dr. Arthur Levine, Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences and John and Gertrude Petersen Dean, School of Medicine, will provide limited bridge funding as permitted by the scientific merit of the project to be bridged, the documented need for such funds, and funds available. A committee has been established to review the requests for bridge funding and to make prioritized recommendations for awards to Dr. Levine. This process will be managed by the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) under the direction of Dr. Michelle Broido, Associate Vice Chancellor for Biomedical Research and Co-director of the CTSI.

The criteria on which funding decisions will be made include

- The significance of the proposed research, *as determined by the potential to lead to a paradigm shift in scientific understanding or a significance advance in clinical treatment.*
- The level of research funding available to the applicant. If an applicant has active research funding for other projects, bridge funding will not be awarded unless there is a demonstrable urgency to conducting the research for which bridge funding is being sought or if a trainee (especially a graduate student) or a critical research (animal or human subject) cohort will be placed in peril because of lack of funds.
- The track record of the investigator *in making important contributions to his or her field.* For new investigators, the potential to make seminal contributions will be assessed.
- The commitment of the department (institute/center) to the investigator.

As detailed below, specific information is requested that addresses these criteria.

For any given application to this program, if a decision is made to award bridge funding, that award will be co-funded, in equal part, by Dr. Levine and the department/institute/center that has primary fiscal responsibility for the applicant's faculty position. Applicants may not request salary for themselves. If funds for applicant salary are an issue, the applicant's departmental chair should discuss the issue directly with Dr. Levine.

There are five categories of bridge funding; four of these are application-based and one is investigator-based. The elements of the bridge funding application differ for these two classes of application. Please note that the investigator-based category will have the highest priority for funding. *Note, also, that if an investigator is eligible for any one of Categories One – Four, he or she is not eligible for consideration under Category Five.*

For any given bridge funding receipt date, an investigator may submit only one request for bridge funding. This request must be specific to a single project (with the exception of a Category Five request). Only one request for bridge funding may be made for any given application (including revisions thereof) and for any given project that has been subjected to external peer review. (Note, a project described in a new application that is derived directly from a previously submitted, but not funded, application is not considered to be a new project.) If an application does not meet all of the requirements associated with the designated category, the application will be administratively withdrawn and given no further consideration. Questions about these requirements should be directed to Dr. Broido (broidoms@pitt.edu ; 412 648 2232).

An investigator who has been awarded bridge funding in any previous award cycle may submit a request for bridge funding for another project if both of the following are true: (1) the project for which bridge funding was previously awarded received external funding subsequent to the bridge funding award; and (2) the applicant is, or will soon be, without research funding. Note, however, even if scientifically meritorious, the request will receive lower priority for funding than other meritorious requests. Additionally, the information requested in Item 5 of the instructions (below) will be of heightened priority in the evaluation of the bridge funding application.

An application considered under Categories One – Four must be for an award that is the equivalent of an NIH R21 grant or greater. Applications for NIH K awards, R03 awards, or the equivalent from other funding sources are ineligible for consideration under the bridge funding program.

- ***Category One; September 1, January 5, and May 1 submission deadlines:***
During the period in which a tenure track junior investigator was supported by his/her start-up package, he or she did not any obtain external funding (as defined above). During this period, a grant application was submitted for external, peer-reviewed support that did receive highly favorable reviews. The score on that application was sufficiently meritorious that a revised or new application that derives from the original application has a high probability of receiving funding within two years of the request for bridge funding. Typically, this means that an application to the NIH received an impact score of 30 or better (lower number). The investigator's start-up package is, or will soon be, exhausted, and the applicant has no other significant source of support. The investigator must meet the criteria established by the NIH for a new investigator; see http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new_investigators/. However, he or she may only have received a single R21 grant to be eligible under this category of bridge funding. If the investigator has received external funding from an organization other than the NIH, the level of funding must be within the limitations set by the NIH policy.

Only under extraordinary circumstance will a non-tenure track junior investigator be considered eligible for bridge funding. Such eligibility will require an explicit statement from his or her department chair (institute/center director) that

- garnering significant independent funding will likely lead to a transfer to the tenure track and that there are funds available to support the investigator at full-time effort for the period of time that would ensue if the application for external funds upon which the bridge funding request is based is awarded. The department chair must also provide an assessment of the importance of the applicant's research contributions to date and the potential for the project under consideration to advance the relevant field in a significant way.
- **Category Two; September 1, January 5, and May 1 submission deadlines:** An established tenured or tenure track investigator was funded for a defined period of time, and towards the end of that period, he or she submitted a competitive renewal application to continue or extend the research performed under the previous award. The renewal application, while receiving highly favorable reviews, was not funded. The score on that application was sufficiently meritorious that a revised or new application that derives from the original application has a high probability of receiving funding within two years of the request for bridge funding. Typically, this means that an application to the NIH received an impact score of 30 or better (lower number). Note, Category Two requires evidence that the application for which the bridge funding request is made was for a competitive renewal.
 - **Category Three; September 1, January 5, and May 1 submission deadlines:** An established tenured or tenure track investigator seeking to make a *significant* change in the direction of his or her research submitted a new application to support this new area, and the application, while receiving favorable reviews, was not funded. The score on that application was sufficiently meritorious that a revised or new application that derives from the original application has a high probability of receiving funding within two years of the request for bridge funding. Typically, this means that an application to the NIH received an impact score of 30 or better (lower number). ***It is incumbent upon the applicant to convince the review committee that this is, indeed, a new research direction that is not simply a natural extension of ongoing activities, that this new direction will represent a major focus in the laboratory, that previous established lines of research will have diminished activity, and that there is an urgency to beginning this new project.*** If these issues are not appropriately addressed in the bridge funding application, the application will be administratively withdrawn.

Note: For Categories Two and Three, the eligibility of non-tenure track investigators will be determined on a case by case basis during the review of a bridge funding application. Factors contributing to this determination will be the track record of productivity (both funding and publications) of the applicant and the assessment by applicant's department chair (or institute/center director) as to the potential for the proposed project to result in seminal contributions to the field.

- **Category Four; may be submitted at any time:** An investigator was informed by the funding agency that his or her application will be, or is likely to be, funded but that there will be a delay in the release of funds. If the delay in funding will necessitate the termination of key personnel or have a disastrous impact on

maintaining a cohort of human subjects or animals, the investigator may request a short term bridge funding award to avert such a setback. It is incumbent on the applicant to provide a compelling case that there is an urgent need for funding.

Investigator based category:

- ***Category Five; may be submitted at any time:*** An investigator who has an established track record of externally funded, cutting-edge research, or a junior investigator whose training and, albeit limited, track record of independent research suggest great promise for future research endeavors, is without funding or will soon be without funding. A junior investigator must have had success, in the past, in garnering external funding beyond that at the level of a career development award. Over the course of the past three years, the applicant has been aggressive, but unsuccessful, in seeking funding (at least five applications were submitted during this period), and there are no immediate prospects for funding. At least three of the applications submitted during this time frame were favorably reviewed by the funding organization to which it was submitted, and it is likely that this application would have been funded in a more favorable funding climate. In the case of applications to the NIH, this means that at least three applications must have received impact scores of 30 or better (lower numerical value); for applications submitted to other funding agencies, the scores must have been the equivalent of “excellent” or better. The applicant has taken well-defined and documented efforts to seek scientific and/or editorial review of applications prior to submission.**If all of these criteria are met, the investigator may apply for modest funding that will allow him or her to keep an active laboratory. See below for more details.

** Such review may be through the Office of Research, Health Sciences (<http://www.oorhs.pitt.edu/About/AboutEditorialAssistance.aspx>) or under departmental or institute policies such as those in the Department of Psychiatry (<http://psychiatry.pitt.edu/research/research-review-committee>), Department of Pharmacology & Chemical Biology (<http://www.pharmacology.us/FacDevProg.ppt>), or the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (http://www.upci.upmc.edu/funding/docs/UPCI_guidelines.pdf).

INSTRUCTIONS

The following format should be used for a request for Health Sciences Bridge Funding; the items should appear in the order listed below; and each successive item should begin on a new page. Please note: applications that exceed the stated page limits or that are not in 11 or 12 point Arial, Times New Roman, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia font will not be considered.

Items that must be provided for Categories One – Four:

1. First page/cover page must include
 - Date.
 - Full name of applicant with terminal degree(s) (*e.g.*, MD, PhD, MD PhD).
 - Academic rank and tenure status.
 - School, Department, and, if applicable, Division.
 - Campus mailing address.
 - Location and net square feet of laboratory/research space available for the investigator's overall research program. This should include dry/computer space and clinical research space, as appropriate.
 - A table of contents identifying the page numbers for the start of sections 2 –13.
 - A statement as to the bridge funding category under which the application is being submitted.

2. A statement, on the appropriate official letterhead, from the department chair (or center/institute director, if the applicant's primary source of support is through a center or institute) that affirms that the chair/director is aware of the applicant's submission to the bridge funding program and that he or she agrees to co-fund any bridge funding award that may be made. In the case of a new investigator application under Category One, this letter must also address availability of funds from the applicant's start-up package. See above for additional information required when the applicant is not in the tenure track.

3. Applicant's biographical sketch using the four-page NIH format (see page I-71 of the SF424 Application Guide, updated July 25, 2011 or subsequent to that date, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm>). Note that:
 - The personal statement must be appropriate for the application that is the basis of the bridge funding request.
 - The "selected peer-reviewed publications" must include ALL publications that have been published in the past three years; all publications in press should also be included. Do not include publications that are submitted or that are in preparation.
 - In the research support section, list all research projects (grants) that were completed in the past three years and for which external support was provided. Briefly indicate the overall goals of the projects and the

applicant's role (*e.g.*, PI, Co-Investigator, or Consultant) in the research project.

4. Applicant's ACTIVE and PENDING support information, using SF424 (R&R) Application Guidelines, updated July 2011 (see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#inst>, Part III; if applicable, instructions in subsequent revisions should be used). Be sure to include all requests for bridge funding in the pending support, whether those requests are to internal or external funding sources.
5. A list of the five articles that the applicant considers to be the most significant of his or her career. For each article, the applicant must provide a brief statement as to what he or she considers the importance of the research described therein. (If the article is submitted but not yet published, a copy of the manuscript must be included in the bridge funding application.)
6. The summary statement/review of the application that was not funded and for which bridge funding is being requested. ***If the application has been submitted to an external agency more than once, copies of all relevant reviews must be included; the most recent review should be presented first, and the beginning page of each review should be separately identified in the table of contents.*** The date the application was submitted, the impact score/priority score (or equivalent), and, if applicable, the percentile must be clearly indicated.
7. A three-page (maximum) response to the summary statement that clearly indicates how the concerns raised by the reviewers will be addressed in a subsequent grant application. If bridge funding is necessary to address some of the concerns raised (*e.g.*, to generate additional data), this should be explicitly stated.
8. A two-page (maximum) statement that clearly states the need for bridge funding and the consequences if bridge funding were not obtained. The statement must also justify the category under which the application is being submitted. If this request for bridge funding is to support a new research direction for the applicant, the applicant should use this statement to support the position that this new direction will represent a major area of research in the applicant's laboratory and that previously established lines of research will have diminished activity. ***Note, a delay in the start of a new project does not establish need unless it can be demonstrated that there is true urgency in beginning that project.*** This statement should also address the applicant's assessment of the importance of the research.
9. A detailed, justified budget for the bridge funding that is being requested must be provided. Please note that bridge funding will only support direct costs; no indirect costs may be requested. Use the PHS 398 "detailed budget for initial period" form from the June 2009 revision, found at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/fp4.doc>. Later revisions to this form are also acceptable. On a separate sheet of paper, prioritize the items for which support is

being requested; indicate the consequences that would pertain if support were not provided for a given item. Equipment purchases, publication costs, and general equipment maintenance will not be supported through this mechanism. Requests for supplies should be limited to those supplies that are absolutely necessary for the short-term continuation of the proposed research.

10. While bridge funding awards are likely to be of no more than one year duration, if the applicant anticipates that it will take two years before an externally-funded award will be made, he or she may request up to two years in bridge funding. However, such a request must include a very detailed justification for the two year period and specific milestones to be accomplished during the first year must be provided. ***The second year of funding will only be provided if funds are available and the first year milestones have been met, as determined by Dr. Levine or his designee.***
11. Plans for resubmission, including the date the application is due to the funding agency, anticipated date by which review results should be available, and, to the extent it can be known, the anticipated date by which the agency will decide whether or not the application will be funded. If the original application was submitted to an agency other than the NIH, the resubmission policy of that agency should be provided.
12. A copy (PDF format) of the full application that was submitted and reviewed and that serves as the basis for the request for bridge funding must be provided.
13. The bridge funding program recognizes the NIH policy that any given application may only be submitted twice (the original submission and one revised submission) before submission as a new application. If the applicant may not submit a revised application (to the NIH or to the relevant funding agency), he or she must provide a new application or draft of a new application that benefits from the previous review and that conforms to the submission requirements of the relevant agency. If Item 13 is not provided, the request for bridge funding will be denied.

Items that must be provided for Category Five:

A letter, on the appropriate official letterhead, from the department chair (or center/institute director, if the applicant's primary source of support is through a center or institute) must be sent to Dr. Broido

- That affirms that the chair is aware of the applicant's submission to the bridge funding program.
- That affirms that the chair agrees to co-fund any bridge funding award that is made.
- That confirms that the applicant has engaged in a process of pre-submission review, as described above.
- ***That provides the chair's assessment of the impact of research conducted to date by the applicant and the potential impact of proposed research.***

This letter should be sent directly to Dr. Broido (c/o Ms. Crawford, sac32@pitt.edu) and must not be included in the application package submitted by the investigator.

The application sections to be provided by the investigator are:

1. First page/cover page must include
 - Date.
 - Full name of applicant with terminal degree(s) (*e.g.*, MD, PhD, MD PhD).
 - Academic rank and tenure status.
 - School, Department, and, if applicable, Division.
 - Campus mailing address.
 - Location and net square feet of laboratory/research space available for the investigator's overall research program. This should include dry/computer space and clinical research space, as appropriate.
 - A table of contents identifying the page numbers for the start of sections 1 – 7.
 - A statement that applicant is applying under Category Five.
2. The applicant's full *curriculum vitae* (not the NIH biosketch); a complete history of research funding must be provided.
3. The applicant's assessment of his or her most important scientific contributions. In addition, a list of the five articles that the applicant considers to be the most significant of his or her career must be provided. For each article, the applicant must provide a brief statement as to what he or she considers the importance of the research described therein. (If the article is submitted but not yet published, a copy of the manuscript must be included in the bridge funding application.)
4. The summary statement/review comments of all applications submitted in the last three years. These must be complete copies of the reviews, not simply summaries of the critiques. The date the application was submitted, the priority score (or equivalent), and, if applicable, the percentile must be clearly indicated.
5. The applicant's description of the pre-review assistance that he or she has received (as defined above).
6. A three page (maximum) summary of the research that would be conducted with bridge funding, including a statement as to the importance/potential impact of the proposed work.
7. A detailed, justified budget that would support the project identified in item 6, above. If the budget request is for two years, specific milestones to be accomplished during the first year must be provided. ***The second year of funding will only be provided if the first year milestones have been met and if funds are available for such support.***

Requests for bridge funding are to be submitted electronically, in pdf format, to Ms. Selena Crawford, sac32@pitt.edu, by 4:00 pm on the receipt dates identified above. When a receipt date falls on a weekend, it will move to the first business day immediately following that weekend.