# Bridge Funds Program

**Overview**

The strength and reputation of a research university are inseparably tied to the continuous achievement of high-quality research by its faculty. A great deal of university research and scholarships require funding from external sources. Faculty research at the University of Houston (UH) has been supported from a multitude of sources, ranging from long-established federal agencies (such NEA, NEH, NIH, NSF, DOE, DOD, and NASA), state and local government agencies (such as CPRIT), private foundations (for example American Cancer Society, the Petroleum Research Fund), and private industrial grants, contracts, and partnerships (for example from Shell, Pfizer). The availability of these funds has fluctuated over time, depending on governmental and agency budget decisions as well as the overall economic climate. In recent years, competition for all of the funds that support research, both public and private, has increased considerably, and the percentage of all applications that are successfully funded has dramatically decreased to historically low levels, requiring multiple applications to obtain funding for research and scholarship projects.

Scholars with long track records of productivity have often spent many years working with highly trained personnel and specialized equipment essential to running the laboratory and maintaining continuity. In many cases, these staff have unique skill sets that cannot be readily replaced, even if funding is restored some time later. Organizationally, a funding gap for a scientist with the loss of these highly trained staff necessitates retraining once funding is restored, meaning significantly diminished productivity and loss of faculty competitive edge.

It is in the best interest of universities to protect and foster the research careers of productive scholars from factors that may lead to early termination of productivity. In recognition of this, most top-tier research universities have set aside funds to provide a bridge to support productive faculty who face a gap in their funds. The purpose of the present document is to describe a similar program that will be administered by the Division of Research (DOR) at UH.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Bridge Fund Grant (BFG) program is to ensure the continuation of research projects that have the highest likelihood of restoring external funding. The UH BFG is intended to support full-time tenured faculty, or in rare cases, tenure-track faculty, who have no other source of funds and who can demonstrate that their programs have a reasonable likelihood of renewed funding. This program is not intended as seed funding for high-risk projects (the Grants to Enhance and Advance Research (GEAR) program may be a venue for such projects) or for new faculty who have not yet developed a sustained track record of external funding or for senior faculty who have not had external funding for more than one or two of the funding cycles from their historical sources. For the year 2024-2025, the total funding allocated to the BFG program is $200,000.

**Eligibility**

1. Full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty in residence. Investigators with a previous track record of consistent funding as principal investigators that has terminated within the last nine months or prospectively over the next three months and who have submitted renewal or new applications that can sustain the program.  Priority will be given to faculty whose external funding is from federal sources that pay the full negotiated overhead, and who have high but non-fundable priority scores on previous submissions, or those who have attracted private funds with a high likelihood of being re-established within the next nine months.

2. At the time of application
   a. funding must have terminated within the last nine months or will terminate over the next three months;
   b. applicants must have submitted renewal or new applications that can sustain their program;
   c. proposals must have been reviewed and received high but non-fundable priority scores, suggesting that the proposal just needs some additional work to become fundable; and
   d. permission to submit a proposal for BFG has been granted by Dr. Claudia Neuhauser ([cmneuhauser@uh.edu](mailto:cmneuhauser@uh.edu)), Vice Chancellor/Vice President for Research.

**Scope of Award and Use of Funds**

Requests for up to $50,000 should be limited to the minimum funding necessary to maintain a defined project over a short period (generally less than nine months). These funds are not expected to cover the maintenance of an entire lab or all current personnel, and a reduction of scope will generally be necessary.  The Principal Investigator(s) (PI) is expected to re-budget all available resources and to reduce activities to the minimum necessary to maintain the program. Bridge funds cannot be used to support faculty salary but can be used to provide funds for NTT faculty and research scientists, students, research staff, consumable supplies or animal costs, instrumentation use, or travel if it is necessary to carry out the project (for example to field sites).  BFG awards are not renewable, and faculty are only eligible to receive this award once every seven years.

Bridge Fund grantees who later secure external funding will be required to return the bridge amount to the DOR by the following Indirect Costs (IDC) return mechanism. When a PI is funded by external grants that allow for IDC, the DOR will retain IDC received by the DOR prior to dispersal to units (colleges, departments, and DOR) until the funds awarded are fully recovered. This money will be recouped into the BFG pool for subsequent years.

The amount of funding provided will be commensurate with the impact of the research program, the applicant's past record of sponsored funding, and the prospects for securing new sponsored funding, including peer review.

**Application**

All documents must be prepared on US Letter size paper (8.5"x11") with 1-inch margins on all sides, Arial font size 11 pt or greater. The proposal narrative must have exactly 1.5 line spacing; all other documents may be single-spaced. An Arial font size of no less than 8 pt should be used for the captions to graphics and tables and may be single-spaced. The text in the captions must be legible. Applications that fail to follow the formatting requirements will not be reviewed.

**Proposal Preparation and Submission**

The application must be prepared using the guidelines below and submitted by the PI or the PI's affiliated pre-award research administrator. Combine all files of the completed proposal into a single PDF, name the file LAST_FIRST_2024 where the LAST is your last name and the FIRST is your first name, and upload it to the online cover sheet using the "Apply for Internal Awards" link on the Division of Research (DOR) webpage: **https://www.uh.edu/research/funding-opportunities/internal-awards/bridge/**

Prior to filling out the online cover sheet, you must obtain permission from your department chair and the dean of your college to submit this proposal. Failure to inform your department chair and the dean of your college about this submission and obtain permission may result in automatic rejection of the proposal or denial of the award if funded. Emails to you, your department chair (or equivalent), your associate dean for research, and your dean will be sent after you submit the proposal. Note that you may be asked to provide evidence that you obtained permission, but we do not ask that you submit the evidence with the proposal.

1. A narrative of the proposed project describing the need for bridge funding, and a statement of how the funds will allow the applicant to maintain an active research career. This section must include a plan for how the PI will reduce research activities to the minimum needed, as well as any re-budgeting that may take place. This could include descriptions of repurposing of reduced staff or reducing the number of projects to those most likely to address critiques of previous applications.

2. Summary of most recent non-funded and current pending grant applications that have been reviewed. An appendix should include the proposal summary page, the specific aims or equivalent, and all summary statements showing the results of the review.

3. List of all pending and planned applications for external funding and their policies regarding overhead.

4. List of all previous external funding in the previous six years. This should include the title of the proposal, the agency, the dates of the award, the applicant's role on the grant or contract (PI, Co-PI, or collaborator), and the amount of funds that were available to the applicant on the project (as opposed to the total award).

5. A budget and justification that explains the basis for the cost estimates. Include information on any staff or students who will be supported by bridge funds (position, role, and salary and benefits). Since some personnel retraction will generally occur even with faculty who receive a BFG, the applicant should state why the people who will be retained are essential to the future research program. If external reviewers for a future grant submission are considered as part of the proposed activities, the PI must acknowledge that they are aware

of the potential for a conflict of interest if the identified reviewer is a member of the agency's review panel. Specifically, if the funding opportunity is from an agency that publishes the roster of their review panels (e.g., NIH), the PI must acknowledge that they will check all relevant rosters and refrain from sending any inquiries for an external review to such members. If the PI plans to pay external reviewers for reviews, this must be explicitly included in the budget.

6. Documentation of matching funds from the college or department. Priority will be given to those applications supported by a match at the department and/or college level.
7. Date you need the funds to be effective. These funds cannot be used on expenses that were incurred prior to the date you establish on the [Cover Page](#).
8. A biosketch for the PI in either NIH or NSF format.
9. A signed memo from the applicant's department chair and dean acknowledging agreement with the policy to return the bridge funds received to the DOR.

**Deadline**
Applications for bridge funding can be submitted at any time.

**Review Process**
Applications will be competitively reviewed and acted upon by subcommittees of the Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC) of the Faculty Senate approximately one month after submission, depending on the date of the RSC meeting, with sufficient time for DOR approval. The RSC will make recommendations to the VC/VP for Research, who will be responsible for awarding and administering the grant. The DOR reserves the right to review and change budgets and ask for clarifications from potential awardees. Reviewers will be internal to UH and may not be disciplinary experts.

**Congruency Review**
Congruency review by the Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office is required for all research submitted to this program. Congruency review includes human subjects, animal usage, biological materials (rDNA, human samples, microorganisms, etc.), and radiation (radioactive materials, lasers, and x-rays).
All oversight committee approvals must be secured within three months of the award announcement, or the funds will be forfeited:

- All projects involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the grant cost center will be established.
- All projects involving the use of animals in research must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) before the grant cost center will be established.
- All projects involving biological materials must be reviewed and approved by the Biological Safety Manager and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) before the grant cost center will be established.

- All projects involving radiation must be reviewed and approved by the Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) & Laser Safety Officer (LSO) and authorized by the Radiation Safety Committee (RSC) before the grant cost center will be established.

**Reporting and Acknowledgement**

Use the *Internal Grant Reports Form* button on the DOR Internal Awards webpage to submit progress reports that are due on the established dates regardless of progress through the congruency review. Interim reports are required at 6-month intervals. These reports should be narrative summaries of progress made toward achieving the proposed research objectives and not exceed one page.

The final report should detail the final product(s) and provide documentation of its completion. More specifically, it should provide a summary of data and/or outcomes as it relates to the proposed research objectives. The final report should not exceed 3 pages. Failure to comply with this reporting requirement will disqualify an individual for future consideration in all internal funding programs.

Notice must be given of publications, presentations, exhibitions, or performances resulting from the award. The grantee must acknowledge DOR support in all products and publications resulting from the award and provide one copy of the publication to the DOR.

**Assistance**

If interested in the opportunity and want additional information please contact: Dr. Claudia Neuhauser (cmneuhauser@uh.edu), Vice Chancellor/Vice President for Research.