REQUEST FOR BRIDGE FUNDING
Schools of the Health Sciences
(Revised, April 2019)

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 Dr. Michelle Broido, Associate Vice Chancellor for Biomedical Research.

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. Bridge funding awards will not support PI salary, nor will they support salary for faculty-level collaborators or co-investigators.

There are six categories of bridge funding; four of these are application-based and two are investigator-based. The elements of the bridge funding application differ for these two classes of application. ***Note, if an investigator is eligible for any one of Categories One – Four, he or she is not eligible for consideration under Category Five or Category Six.***

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), and it must be based on an application that was submitted to, and peer reviewed by, an external funding agency (other than an application for Category Six). 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.

  Please see below for the criteria under which a non-tenure track faculty member will be eligible for bridge funding.

- ***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 (which under current NIH policy may be submitted as a new 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 that the application for which the bridge funding request is made was for a competitive renewal. If the applicant chooses to submit a new application that is clearly derivative of the previously funded application, this will be considered as a renewal application under Category Two. See instructions.

Please see below for the criteria under which a non-tenure track faculty member will be eligible for bridge funding.

- ***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 the 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. See instructions.

  Please see below for the criteria under which a non-tenure track faculty member will be eligible for bridge funding.

  Note: 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 (significance of publications for all ranks and history of funding for associate and full professors) of the applicant and a compelling assessment by the applicant's department chair (or institute/center director) as to the potential for the proposed project to result in seminal contributions to the field. Eligibility will also require an explicit statement from the department chair (institute/center director) that there are funds available to support the investigator at full-time effort for the period of time before external funding can be acquired and for the period of time that would ensue if the application for external funds upon which the bridge funding request is based is awarded. A determination by the Bridge Funding Review Committee that the proposed project would make an important contribution to the University's portfolio of research will be a key factor in the recommendation for or against bridge funding.

- ***Category Four; may be submitted at any time:*** An investigator was informed by the funding agency that his or her reviewed application will be, or is likely to be, funded but that there will be a delay in the release of funds relative to the normal funding date. 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 that there is an urgent need for funding.

Investigator based categories:

- ***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 these applications 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.

- ***Category Six; may be submitted at any time:*** An investigator who has an established track record of externally funded, cutting-edge research is suffering from a long-term, severe illness or condition (such as cancer or stroke or other severe illness that required hospitalization and requires extended long-term care) or the life-threatening illness or death of a spouse (registered domestic partner) or child. (Other disastrous situations, such as the loss of a home through catastrophic weather or fire events will be considered on an *ad hoc* basis.) The investigator has an established track record of external funding of peer-reviewed applications for independent research projects. Career development awards are not considered, for these purposes, as independent research projects. The investigator has received at least one NIH R01 or the equivalent from another funding agency/foundation. Because of the unfortunate circumstances suffered by the investigator, the submission of a renewal application for funding is delayed, and his or her laboratory is or will soon be without funding. Category Six bridge funding, as described below, may be requested under such a scenario.

  A tenure track, junior investigator may request Category Six bridge funding if his or her start-up package has been completely expended and if he or she has received some level (including career development awards) of external funding for peer-reviewed applications. Further, new investigator Category Six funding will be contingent, in part, on the argument made by the investigator's supervisor (department chair, division director, institute director if the institute affiliation dominates the departmental affiliation) that the investigator has demonstrated research success subsequent to that which was the basis for his or her being hired by the University.

Note: An acute but temporary illness (such as pneumonia or severe influenza) is not the basis for Category Six bridge funding. Such illness may, however, fall into the category of NIH approved late submission applications; see https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-039.html.

****** Such review may be through the Office of Research, Health Sciences (http://www.oorhs.pitt.edu/application-assistance) or under departmental or institute policies such as those in the Department of Psychiatry, the Department of Pharmacology & Chemical Biology, or the Hillman Cancer Center.

INSTRUCTIONS

The following formats 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.

<u>Items that must be provided for Categories One – Four:</u>

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 and a detailed and explicit justification for the choice of category. Simply identifying the category is not sufficient. Please note that if the review committee does not agree that the category is appropriate, the application will be rejected. A continuation page may be used, if necessary.

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 NIH format found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm, updated March 25, 2016 or subsequent to that date, Note that:
   - The personal statement must be appropriate for the application that is the basis of the bridge funding request. The contributions to science will be weighed heavily by the bridge funding review committee during the evaluation of the bridge funding application.
   - 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.
   - If necessary, the biosketch may exceed the NIH limit of five pages.

4. Applicant's ACTIVE and PENDING support information, as described in the document found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SupplementalInstructions.pdf, pages beginning at III-6. Be sure to include all requests for bridge funding in the pending support, whether those requests are to internal or external funding sources. Include the actual funding (direct costs) available to the applicant from each grant listed; if he or she is a collaborator on a grant for which someone else is the principal investigator, list only the funds available to the Bridge Funding applicant.

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.) If all of this information is already provided in the "contributions to science" section of the biosketch, refer explicitly to the biosketch. Note, however, that if all required information is not provided, the bridge funding application will be administratively withdrawn.

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 and publication costs will not be supported through this mechanism. Travel will not be supported unless the applicant makes a compelling argument that the travel is necessary in order to conduct the research (such as travel to a synchrotron to obtain x-ray crystallography data). In general, equipment maintenance will

not be supported unless the applicant makes a cogent argument as to why such support is critical. Requests for supplies (or animals) should be limited to those supplies (animals) that are absolutely necessary for the short-term continuation of the proposed research. Questions about budget should be directed to Dr. Broido.

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 Dr. Broido.***

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.

<u>Items that must be provided for Category Five:</u>

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.***

<u>Items that must be provided for Category Six:</u>

A letter, on the appropriate official letterhead, from the department chair, division chief, or institute director (see above) must be sent to Dr. Broido

- That affirms that the letter author is aware of the applicant's submission to the bridge funding program.
- That provides the chair's assessment of the impact of research conducted to date by the applicant and the potential impact of proposed research.
- That provides sufficient details about the unfortunate circumstances that warrant this application so as to allow valid assessment as to whether or not the applicant is eligible for Category Six bridge funding. **Note: if the bridge funding request is predicated on a serious health situation, details of that illness should not be disclosed unless the investigator provides written permission for such disclosure.** Rather, this letter should state the duration of any hospitalization (without disclosing the hospital), that ongoing treatment is in place, that the illness has caused debilitation to a level that has impacted the investigator's scientific productivity, and any other relevant information that can be disclosed without compromising the investigator's right to privacy.
- If the investigator is a junior investigator, that includes a statement that the investigator's start-up package is exhausted.

If the investigator authorizes the disclosure of his or her illness and of treatment details, a brief, signed letter from the investigator must be included that states the nature of the information that may be disclosed.

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 included that affirms that the chair is aware of the applicant's submission to the bridge funding program and chair agrees to co-fund any bridge funding award that is made. If the more substantive support letter (described above) is written by the chair, this information should be included in the more substantive letter.

These 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 Six.

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. A statement (three-page, maximum) as to the need for bridge funding, the consequences if a bridge funding award is not made, and a specific statement that the application is for Category Six bridge funding. In the case of severe illness/medical condition, and if the investigator was hands-on in the laboratory before illness, it may be appropriate to request funding for additional "hands" that can assume the investigator's physical role. Such non-standard budget requests must be addressed in this statement. This statement should also address the applicant's assessment of the importance of the research.

5. A detailed, justified budget for the bridge funding that is being requested. 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 and publication costs will not be supported through this mechanism. Travel will not be supported unless the applicant makes a compelling argument that the travel is necessary in order to conduct the research (such as travel to a synchrotron to obtain x-ray crystallography data). In general, equipment maintenance will not be supported unless the applicant makes a cogent argument as to why such support is critical. Requests for supplies (or animals) should be limited to those supplies (animals) that are absolutely necessary for the short-term continuation of the proposed research.

6. If the Category Six bridge funding request is based upon illness, two years of bridge funding may be requested. However, a decision as to whether or not to award the second year of funding will be contingent on research progress being made during the first year and will require consultation with the investigator and his or her supervisor (as defined above).

Requests for bridge funding are to be submitted electronically, as a single pdf document, 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.