I. **Reinforcement Grants for Operational Support**  
(formerly Tier 4)

**Purpose:**
Provide operating support to cover activities critical to the execution of a proposed large-scale externally-funded research award, when grant funding is not available to cover certain operational expenses.

Such operating support is intended to help build infrastructure for new center-level research awards whose establishment improves the university’s overall impact and reputation. Reinforcement Grants aim to make major funded research programs more productive and more competitive for future renewal.

**Submission Cycle:**
- Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed monthly.
- Applications must be submitted prior to funding agency decision.
- Meeting with the Research Development Office is mandatory prior to submission.

**Support Provided:**
- Up to the equivalent of 10% of awarded IDC that stays at UMD.
- Start-up operating support can be provided for up to the first 5 years of award depending on the term of the establishing grant/contract.
- Reinforcement Grants are eligible for a one-time renewal of up to a second five years. If renewed, in years 6–10 the percentage of support from the VPR and the Provost will decline 1% per year.
- Funds are distributed on an expense reimbursement model from ledger expenditures, reimbursed twice a year.

**Cost Share:**
For new applications and applications for renewal,
- VPR will fund 25% of the requested amount.
- Provost will fund 25% of the requested amount.
- The benefiting Unit(s) cost shares 50%.

**Note:** Funds are distributed on a front-loading (vs. reimbursement) model. Applicants must document how the funds will be used, via a detailed budget with accompanying justification.
Eligibility Criteria:

- Both tenured/tenure-track and professional track faculty (assistant research scientist or higher) whose full-time, home position is at UMD are eligible to apply.
- PI must be actively pursuing a large externally-funded award (typically ≥$2M/year for multiple years) involving multiple investigators.
- Proposal must be UMD-led with the majority of the funds remaining at UMD. The award if won should contribute to UMD overall impact and reputation.
- The application for Reinforcement Grants must be submitted prior to the funding agency decision; funds are only awarded if the proposal is successful.

Award Fund Use:

Uses include administrative and operational support activities, including but not limited to:
- Coordinator/administrator support;
- New proposal generation;
- Outreach to partners;
- General equipment and operating expenses;
- Training;
- Required travel not covered by award;
- Data archiving costs;
- Center communication efforts (graphics, website, social media platforms etc.).

Review Criteria and Process:

All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:
- The extent to which the research initiative reflects University priorities;
- The perceived long term value to the research effort of the activities to be supported.
- The degree to which the proposal has demonstrated a plan for long-term financial sustainability of the research initiative, given the eventual expiration of Reinforcement Grant funds;
- Demonstrated, significant advocacy from department(s)/college(s).
Application Process and Materials:

In addition to completing the electronic submission form, all application materials must be uploaded in one PDF file and submitted at [https://umd.infoready4.com/](https://umd.infoready4.com/).

Application materials include:

- **Universal Funding Form** with department/college/unit signatures affirming willingness to support 50% of the request
- **Project Narrative**: Prepare a one (1) to three (3) page project narrative that describes the overall project, the targeted externally-funded research opportunity, and the proposed activities to be supported by the Reinforcement Grant. This document should clearly outline:
  - The project’s intellectual merit;
  - How the project fits into the university’s stated priorities;
  - Project research plan;
  - How the activities/expenses to be covered by Reinforcement Grant funding will help to ensure the success of the research program, if funded;
  - All UMD co-PI’s and any university sub-contracts;
- **Budget and Justification**: Please provide an estimated budget and justification for the planned expenditures. The budget justification should detail the following:
  - Which expenses will be borne by the agency program (if awarded);
  - Which expenses will not covered by the agency program;
  - Detailed outline of how the equivalent 10% IDC will be spent and justification for how/why this will best support the program
- **Biosketch or CV** for the submitting principal investigator and for any co-investigators if applicable (up to two pages each)
- **Letter of Endorsement** from department/college leadership

Expectations of Applicants and Awardees:

- Applicants must provide a complete copy of their proposal to the VPR’s Research Development Office following submission to the agency.
- Applicants must notify the VPR’s Research Development Office in writing when a decision (either funded or not funded) has been made by the agency.
- Awardees must submit yearly progress reports on the research program progress.
- Unit-earned DRIF distributions will be allocated directly to departments and colleges whose faculty participate in the research program, based on level of faculty contribution negotiated at time of proposal submission.