



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 \geq \$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/>.

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.