Strategic Growth Fund for Proposal Support

Purpose:

The Strategic Growth Fund (SGF) aims to incentivize faculty to **pursue and be more competitive for high-visibility, externally-funded research awards in areas in which the University seeks to quickly build capacity and/or visibility**. SGFs support proposals that are not large enough to qualify for Big Opportunity Funds but have high strategic potential for the University. They also broaden and diversify the base of faculty who can be supported by proposal development funds.

There are three competition tracks:

Track A: **Priority Topic awards**
Track B: **Headliner Awards**
Track C: **Future Research Leaders**

SGF Priority Topic awards catalyze research relevant to priority research areas identified by the Vice President for Research and Provost.

As of October 1, 2018, SGF priority topics are:

- Aging
- Trusted Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy
- Medical or Environmental Humanities
- Water Security

Future updates will be posted at https://research.umd.edu/development/MarylandCatalystFund.

SGF Headliner Awards support faculty to be more competitive for particularly prestigious extramural research awards not eligible for Big Opportunity Funds. Eligible award programs for the **2018–2019 academic year** are:

- Department of Defense Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURIs); and
- Foundation proposals requesting > $1M total.

SGF Future Research Leaders awards support talented faculty seeking to lead their first multi-investigator award, that in turn would better prepare them to apply for, win, and succeed in large campus center awards in the future. Applications should support mid-sized awards (at least $1M total) seen as building toward larger initiatives.

Submission Cycle:

- Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed after the 20th of each month. Please allow two weeks to process these applications.
- Applications **must** be submitted prior to incurring proposal development expenses, preferably at least two months prior to the agency submission.
- **Meeting with the Research Development Office is highly encouraged prior to submission.**

Support Provided:

Up to $15,000 per award

Funds are distributed on an **expense reimbursement model** from ledger expenditures, reimbursed on a rolling basis to accommodate the shorter proposal development timeline.

Cost Share:

- VPR will fund 50% of the requested amount;
- The benefiting Unit(s) cost share the remaining 50%.

Funds are distributed on a **reimbursement model from ledger expenditures**. All applicants must document in the proposal how the funds will be used, via a 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.
- PIs must be actively pursuing a high visibility award with a total budget over $1M and average annual budget ideally over $400 K, with the majority of the funds remaining at UMD.
- Track-specific eligibility criteria:
  - *Priority Topics:* External proposal under consideration must be multi-investigator and propose a novel approach to one of the priority topics defined above.
  - *Headliner Awards:* External proposal under consideration must be in one of the eligible award programs, or the PI must make a compelling case for how winning the targeted proposal would significantly raise the visibility and external recognition of the University.
  - *Future Research Leaders:* Application must include a letter of support from the Dean or Associate Dean for Research of the PI's College.
- Faculty chosen as the principal investigator for past Strategic Growth Funds awards **are not eligible** to compete for SGF awards of the same track **within the next five (5) years**.

Strategic Growth Funds may be requested prior to the release of the agency's formal request for proposals if an expected announcement date is known. If the opportunity to be pursued is a limited submission, Strategic Growth Funds cannot be requested until the university has officially designated its nominees.

NOTE: All Maryland Catalyst Fund Awards are subject to availability of funds.

Award Fund Use:

Funds used for this award should be considered moderately flexible but must be outlined in the proposal budget because funds will only be awarded as a **reimbursement for expenses already posted to the ledger**.

Uses include but are not limited to:

- Collection of pilot data;
- Student support;
- Required travel;
- Planning workshops;
- Hiring of outside technical editors/writers;
- Proposal graphics development;
- Use of specialized consultants such as programmers or web developers

Review Criteria and Process:

All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

- **Quality of Proposed Research:** Does the PI indicate a solid research plan, responsive to funder priorities, that is likely well-placed for funding consideration? Do the proposal and team have a high probability of funding success?
- **Increased Competitiveness:** Do the proposal and team have a high probability of success? (e.g. strong research plan well-aligned to the solicitation and priorities of the funding agency) Will funding this SGF application lead to the development of an outstanding research proposal? Will the proposed planning and research tasks make the team more competitive in obtaining external funding?
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Will the funds enhance collaboration and yield a well-integrated proposal?
- Track-specific evaluation criteria:
  - *Priority Topics:* Will the proposed interdisciplinary research advance the field of the priority topic in a novel way? Is the proposed effort likely to inspire follow-on work by others in the field? Will research success lead to new lasting technical capacity that could help establish UMD as a leader in the discipline?
  - *Headliner Awards:* External proposal under consideration must be in one of the eligible award programs.
  - *Future Research Leaders:* Does the applying PI have a record of success in securing grants and working with teams? Does the PI articulate a long-term research vision and frame how this project might build toward a larger initiative? The proposal should clearly articulate significance or expected impact on the faculty member's professional development.

Application Process and Materials:

In addition to completing the electronic submission form, all application materials must be uploaded in one PDF file and must be submitted electronically. The electronic submission form can be found at https://umd.infoready4.com/.

Application materials include:

- **Universal Funding Form** with department/college signatures affirming willingness to support **50%** of the request.
- **Project Narrative:** Prepare a two (2) to three (3) page project narrative that describes the targeted externally-funded research opportunity and the proposed research effort, and details all proposal planning activities. This document should clearly outline:
  - The project's intellectual merit;
  - How the project fits into the university's stated priorities;
  - Project research plan;
  - Pre-proposal preparation plan and how the activities/expenses to be covered by SGF will help to make the external proposal more competitive for funding;
  - All UMD co-PI's and any university sub-awards.
- **Budget and Justification:** Please provide an estimated budget and justification for planned SGF expenditures. The budget and justification should demonstrate that you have thought through all aspects of your project and the costs associated with them. Please include any other sources of funding that will be supporting the project (if applicable) and whether those funds are committed or pending.
  - Include details of any of unspent start-up, gift, or retention funding
- **Biosketch or CV** for the submitting principal investigator and for any co-investigators if applicable (up to two pages each)
- *Future Research Leaders* **track only***:* Letter of support from the Dean or Associate Dean for Research of the PI's College

The InfoReady online submission form will also request: Title, Co-investigator information (names, titles, affiliations and emails), and Project summary (suggested length: 150 words max).

Expectations of Applicants and Awardees:

- Applicants **must** provide a complete copy of their proposal to the Research Development Office following submission to the agency.
- Strategic Growth Fund (SGF) awardees **must** notify the Research Development Office in writing when a decision (either funded or not funded) has been made by the agency. Failure to do so may impact eligibility for future Maryland Catalyst Fund consideration.
- SGF awardees may submit expense ledger reimbursement reports to the VPR and Provost business offices on a rolling basis; funds will be reviewed for adherence to the proposal budget and allowable uses before reimbursement occurs.
- *Future Research Leaders* **track**: Program success will largely be measured by assessing not only proposal success but impact on the faculty member's professional development. In a brief annual report, awardees should alert the VPR to large proposals (>$1M) submitted to external funding agencies and along with other professional milestones for at least two years following SGF award.

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