Research Development Fund – FY2021 Request for Applications

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: EXTENDED to Monday – October 26, 2020

A completed 8-page application should be submitted no later than EXTENDED to Monday – October 26, 2020, 12PM Noon CST to: rdf@tamu.edu

NOTE: ** Only those applications that conform to the indicated page limits for any section (see below) and adhere to the application template will be reviewed, all others will be returned **

SUMMARY

The Research Development Fund (RDF) was established as a mechanism to enable one-time, large investments in shared research infrastructure, to enhance competitiveness for multi-project extramural funding requests, and to facilitate new capabilities or technologies for Texas A&M campuses in Brazos County. For example, this fund may be used to support formation of new core facilities or other shared research capacity. Funds are intended to enhance broad research activities and Texas A&M – not individual collaborative research projects. This request for applications provides an opportunity for researchers to help shape and continue to improve research facilities at Texas A&M.

Applications will be accepted twice in fiscal year 2020, with initial evaluation conducted by a faculty advisory committee (RDF-AC). The fund is jointly administered by Texas A&M University (TAMU), Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) and Texas A&M Health Science Center (TAMHSC). Details of the RDF structure and history, submission and evaluation process, updates, frequently asked questions, and the outcome of fund utilization are posted at: http://rdf.tamu.edu.

Requests appropriate for RDF

The RDF is derived from a portion of the Facilities & Administrative earnings from sponsored grants and contracts awarded to Principal Investigators at TAMU, AgriLife Research, TEES, and TAMHSC who are located in Brazos County. The fund is intended to support strategic investment in the Texas A&M research infrastructure. Thus, the RDF is utilized for large investments that are expected to significantly improve Texas A&M’s research and funding competitiveness. These investments will provide over-arching benefit to multiple scientific and technological disciplines.

This fund is intended to result in the acquisition of new resources, the development of new facilities, upgrades or refurbishment of heavily-used technology and instrumentation, or improvement of shared research resources for a large number of researchers.

Successful requests must demonstrate potential for significant impact and benefit for a broad user base in Brazos County, well beyond the scope of a collaborative research team or individual investigators. Examples might include:

- Strategic investments in core research resources and equipment, with a desired outcome of benefit to numerous departments and colleges;
- Strategic investments in research infrastructure, including the acquisition of equipment for existing facilities or creation of new shared facilities (both equipment-based and organism-based), including potential renovation of said facility;
- Strategic support for other creative investments that will make substantial impact on the Texas A&M research infrastructure.
Alternative Resources
It is anticipated that the RDF will be utilized for large investments that will put a program “over the top” with respect to Texas A&M’s competitiveness. Note that these funds are intended to support shared resources – not individual research programs. Alternative resources may exist for smaller requests, or requests beyond the scope of the RDF program. Application to extramural programs that support equipment purchases should also be considered by investigators. Submissions to the RDF program may be redirected to alternative programs or resources, as deemed appropriate by the RDF-AC.

Requests that will not be funded from the RDF
The RDF is intended to be utilized for one-time requests that will make significant improvements to the overall Brazos County research enterprise. Examples of non-responsive requests include:

- Faculty and student salaries, permanent salary lines for staff, training grants;*
- Items or funds of limited scope or only incremental benefit, or for support of an individual investigator’s research program;
- Requests that would be more appropriately funded by other internal or extramural programs or funding sources;
- Travel funds, feasibility studies.

*It is recognized that in some cases, recurring costs may exist, especially in the cases where new personnel, specific technical expertise, or service contracts may be required. Such costs may be included in the request, but the applicants must provide detail as to how these costs will be accommodated beyond the funding period. Documentation of support commitments should be included in the appendix.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE
Applications will be accepted with two (2) closing deadlines per year that will be announced broadly to the campus community. See the website (rdf.tamu.edu) for additional information. COMPLETE APPLICATIONS ARE DUE no later than 12PM NOON CST, Monday, October 19, 2020 and should be submitted in PDF format to RDF@tamu.edu. Questions should be directed to RDF@tamu.edu.

The application should be prepared according to the template and should be typed, with a minimum of 11 point font and 1 inch margins, and will consist of the following components: 1) Cover Page, 2) Resubmission Summary (if applicable), 3) Project Description, 4) Management Plan, 5) Budget and Budget Justification, and 6) Biosketches. The application template can be downloaded from the website.

***APPLICATIONS EXCEEDING THE NOTED PAGE LIMITS WILL NOT BE REVIEWED****

Contents:
1. Cover Page (1 page)
   - Title
   - Contact information (name, department, e-mail address and phone number) for the lead submitter of the application.
   - Participating units
   - Total $ amount requested
   - Executive summary of request suitable for publication at rdf.tamu.edu
2. **Resubmission Summary (1 page maximum)**
   This page is required for applications being considered for resubmission. Provide RDF Advisory Committee with a one-page summary of what has changed from the previous RDF submission. Have the RDF questions, recommendations or review comments been addressed or improved?

3. **Project Description (3 pages maximum)**
   Describe the overall scope of the request, including the requested item(s) and required renovation or infrastructure support needed. Address the following considerations as appropriate:
   - Describe how funding of this request will make a substantial impact on the Texas A&M research infrastructure. Be specific. Explain how research and research training will be broadly improved for researchers on the campus.
   - Explain clearly how this resource will result in increased competitiveness for extramural funds, (especially multi-investigator applications), and describe current and planned funding applications related to this request.
   - Specifically describe who (e.g., faculty, departments, students, staff) will be the major users of this resource. Include only those who will most actively and immediately utilize this resource for research on a regular basis.
   - If space, infrastructure, or renovation is required, describe the requirements and the proposed location and/or scope. Specifically denote what, if any, administrative support has already been obtained for the required space or renovations. If so, please provide a letter of support from the cognizant administrative contact (e.g. dean, department head). Letters of support should be included only as evidence of tangible support commitments. Would the project benefit from any reorganization of existing, facilities or infrastructure, including virtual siting?
   - Describe similar resources that exist locally (if any) and why they are inadequate.

4. **Management and Sustainability Plan (1-2 pages)**
   Describe the overall management plan and structure with sufficient detail for evaluation including:
   - Oversight and technical management, user training or supervision, allocation of usage, documentation of usage, planned recruitment of users;
   - Prior experience in managing, supporting, and evaluating major equipment resources or facilities;
   - How the operation and maintenance/service of the requested resource will be sustained beyond the initial investment from the RDF.
   - Explain, if relevant, how this investment will provide revenue for Texas A&M to assist with its sustainability.

5. **Budget and Justification (1-2 pages)**
   Provide the anticipated scope of the request and a budget detail, with justification (as appropriate, quotes and related materials may be included in Appendix):
   - Itemized costs of equipment, instrumentation, or other items to be purchased;
   - Initial service contracts;
   - Additional anticipated costs and technical expertise requirements;
   - Renovation or installation requirements.

6. **Biosketches (maximum 2 pages each)**
   Provide biosketches as appropriate for the people who will assume responsibility for leading implementation of the proposed resource.
EVALUATION PROCESS
At the interval dates posted on the RDF website, rdf.tamu.edu, applications will be reviewed by the RDF Advisory Committee, according to the evaluation criteria. The committee may request additional information. All applications will be forwarded to the RDF Management Committee for award selection.

The RDF application process may include interaction between the applicant and the RDF Management Committee. Appropriate evaluation of these applications may also require the committees to request clarification of application content, or consultation with external reviewers, and/or internal stakeholders.

Evaluations and input from the RDF-AC will be provided to the Management Committee within 4-6 weeks of the deadline. Feedback on submitted applications will be provided, with award notification expected within 8 weeks of submission.

Evaluation Criteria
Successful requests must demonstrate importance for use by the greater research community. The overall vision and plan proposed will be evaluated with respect to the impact and sustainability of the project. Note that cost sharing is not required, but is encouraged, especially when large infrastructure resources are being requested, or support is being requested for instrumentation that will require future staff hires. Resource commitments should be included in the appendix. Requests will be evaluated on:

- The overall benefit to the Texas A&M research enterprise;
- The degree to which this request adds important new technology or resources to Texas A&M (Brazos County); or expands/upgrades heavily-utilized resources;
- The potential to transform the ability of Texas A&M researchers to conduct “cutting-edge” research;
- The ability to which the project positions Texas A&M to be more competitive for federal or other funding requests;
- The importance and value of having the technology or resource locally, as opposed to outsourcing;
- The extent of multi-departmental support for the request as an over-arching technology and/or shared resource;
- The strength of the management plan;
- The plan for sustainability beyond the RDF support.