

Research Development Fund – FALL 2023 Request for Applications

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: **Monday – October 23, 2023**

A completed 8-page application should be submitted no later than **Monday – October 23, 2023, 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 broadly defined 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 the 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 and infrastructure at Texas A&M.

Applications will only be accepted once in fiscal year 2024 (Fall 2023), with initial evaluation conducted by the RDF Faculty Advisory Committee (RDF-AC) who makes funding recommendations to the RDF Management Committee. 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 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 investments in broadly defined facilities and programs, including innovation hubs, think

tanks, policy-focused centers, and visual and performing arts facilities, among others.

- Strategic support for other creative investments that will make a 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 or similar infrastructure 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 by the RDF program

The RDF is intended to be utilized for *one-time requests* that significantly improve 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 cases where new personnel, specific technical expertise, or service contracts may be required. Such costs *may* be included as part of the start-up phase of the facility, but the applicants *must provide details* as to how these costs will be accommodated beyond the funding period, i.e. a sustainability plan. Also note these costs are typically supported in the RDF Recurring Fund (RFP in the spring semester). Documentation of support commitments should be included in the Appendix.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications will be accepted once per year (Fall 2023) 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 23, 2023** 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, required for all resubmissions, should include a list of changes made in response to the RDF questions, recommendations, or review comments from previous submission/s. This document should also explain how the resubmitted proposal was 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 in detail how funding of this request will make a substantial impact on the Texas A&M research infrastructure. Explain how research and research training will be improved for a broad range of 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 current projects and associated personnel (e.g., faculty, departments, students, staff) that will make immediate use of the requested resources and/or infrastructure. Also, describe the broader campus community who will likely benefit from these resources and/or infrastructure and why.
- Describe past and future efforts to engage the broader campus community to use the requested item(s) or resource(s).
- If space, infrastructure, or renovation is required, describe the requirements and the proposed location and/or scope. Specifically, denote what, if any, support from the administration 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. Also, please explain whether the project would 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 resources will be sustained beyond the initial investment from the RDF.
- Explain quantitatively, if relevant, to what extent 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 detailed budget, with justification (as appropriate, quotes and related materials may be included in the 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 the 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 6-8 weeks of the deadline. Feedback on submitted applications will be provided, with award notification expected within 10 weeks of submission.

Evaluation Criteria

Successful requests **must demonstrate the importance of the facility for use by the greater research community and the impact of the facility on the research enterprise.** 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.