Large-scale Integrative Research Awards (LIRA)

Overview

The Provost and the Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement, in coordination with the Chancellor, will offer seed funds totaling up to $400,000 to support integrated team efforts to develop large-scale initiatives. The goal of this program is to empower creativity; to promote equitable collaborations, especially those that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion; and to attract substantial external funding. Preference will be given to projects that address large-scale societal problems, with potential for significant impact. The program will provide professional consultations to awarded teams on integrative teaming, equitable collaboration, and budget planning, and offer research development support for ideation and proposal development. LIRA topic areas should be well aligned with campus strengths, including, but not limited to, strategic emphasis areas, such as: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Sustainability; Healthy Aging; Society and Technology; and Data Science. Proposals focused on building regional partnerships, or co-creation and participatory research are also encouraged. The Provost and VCRE have also announced another seed funding opportunity – the Interdisciplinary Research Grants (IRG). IRG will focus on these same areas of emphasis but will target faculty teams at the earliest stages of collaboration who may not be targeting external funding.

The LIRA program has two tracks:

**Track 1 - Integrative Team Development awards up to $30,000.** Track 1 supports the development of integrated team research, often spanning multiple disciplines, leading to proposals for significant extramural funding of $1 million per year or more for at least 3 years. Track 1 awards will support integrative team development and may support research to demonstrate the viability of the concept. [See page 2 for complete information about the Integrative Team Development Awards program.](#)

**Track 2 - Center Development awards up to $60,000.** Track 2 supports the advancement of integrated teams, often spanning multiple disciplines, with a vision for a large, center-level grant proposal leading to external funding of $3 million per year or more for at least 5 years. Track 2 awards will support teams with pre-existing collaborations among participants. [See page 5 for complete information about the Center Development Awards program.](#)

Resources

Resources for collaboration from [UMass ADVANCE](#):

- [Equitable Research Collaborations Between Faculty and Graduate Students: Best Practices](#)
- [Research Collaboration Best Practices](#)
- [Resources for Equitable Research Collaborations](#)

- [NSF Leap to Large workshop series videos](#) – The National Science Foundation (NSF) sponsored a set of online workshops in 2021 to help principal investigators of small and medium sized research projects to "make the leap to large" to larger-scale projects that generally involve millions of dollars, multiple years, and very ambitious goals.
- [LIRA Team Development Process for Awardees](#) – includes a reading list

Informational Workshop

The Office of Research Development will hold a virtual LIRA informational workshop in Spring 2024 for potential teams to help them determine their level of team readiness and provide guidance on writing a successful application to the LIRA program.
LIRA - Integrative Team Development Award (Track 1)

**Program Description**

Track 1 supports the development of integrated team research, often spanning multiple disciplines, leading to proposals for significant extramural funding of $1 million per year or more for at least 3 years. Track 1 awards will support integrative team development and may support research to demonstrate the viability of the concept. Applying teams must target one or more specific multi-investigator funding opportunities and make the case that the proposed team has the expertise and leadership capabilities necessary to develop competitive proposals to the targeted opportunities.

To compete successfully for a large, multi-investigator grant, a proposing team must articulate a compelling research vision; they must convince the funding agency that the proposed research is of high potential impact and that an integrative approach is essential to achieve its goals. Successful proposals must fully meet the expectations of the funding agency, including, as required, a plan for integrating research with other programmatic objectives, such as: education and workforce development; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; knowledge transfer; and broadening participation.

The successful Track 1 application will target a topic area that builds on relevant campus strengths and identify one or more funding opportunities that align with the team’s research expertise and management capabilities. Applications will describe a diverse, multi-investigator team willing to dedicate the time and effort necessary to build a fair and equitable collaboration, do preliminary research, and develop and submit one or more large proposals.

**Funding Amount**

Proposing teams may request up to $30,000 for one year of LIRA Track 1 Integrative Team Development Award activities. Awards may be extended via a no-cost extension for a second year, contingent on progress, as measured against milestones set for the award.

**Eligibility**

PIs must be full-time, tenured faculty at UMass Amherst. Applying teams must include a sufficient number of individuals and disciplines to be competitive for the opportunity. Eligible faculty may submit only one proposal as PI or Co-PI. Eligible faculty may serve as a collaborator on multiple projects in roles other than PI or Co-PI.

**Budget**

Spending should be focused on team development activities, collecting preliminary proof-of-concept research data, engaging stakeholders, and preparing proposals for external funding, and may include:

- URAs, GRAs, and post-doctoral researchers working on activities directly related to Track 1 objectives
- Project-related travel, e.g., for meetings with collaborators, stakeholders, and program managers
- Meetings and workshops for team and proposal development, and with potential external stakeholders
- Equipment, supplies, and core facility fees directly related to Track 1 activities
- Project management, consulting, editing, writing, graphics, and other grant-development activities (in addition to staff support from Research & Engagement or other campus resources)
- **Funds may not be used for faculty salaries**
Review and Selection

Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Provost, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, and Deans from Colleges and Schools associated with the submitting team. Subject matter experts may be consulted, provided they have no conflict of interest and agree to confidentiality.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria, as described below: research problem and rationale; alignment of funding opportunity and campus strengths; team qualifications; team readiness; objectives and workplan; and budget and budget justification. Priority will be given to proposals targeting opportunities with a submission deadline within 12 months of the LIRA award.

Award Conditions

Teams that accept funding are required to:

- Conduct the proposed activities within the award period. A no-cost extension may be requested.
- Participate in professional cohort-based training on integrative teaming, equitable collaboration, and budget planning, and research development support for ideation and proposal development.
- Meet quarterly milestones agreed to at the time of award.
- Submit a proposal to one or more of the funding opportunities named in the team’s application.
- Deliver a brief report at the end of the award period.

Due Date – Applications are due on March 29, 2024.

Award Start Date – July 1, 2024

Contacts – Please direct any questions regarding this program to ord@umass.edu.

Review Criteria and Guiding Questions

Research Problem and Rationale: The team addresses an important research problem and communicates a vision and a rationale for the proposed research effort.

- Does the team articulate a strong problem statement?
- Is there a compelling vision for the proposed research effort?
- Is there a rationale for why the proposed research requires an integrative team approach?

Alignment of Targeted Funding Opportunities and Campus Strengths: Campus strengths strongly align with the requirements of the targeted opportunities.

- Does the proposed project align with the priorities of the campus, colleges, and departments, including one or more strategic emphasis areas, or a focus on building regional partnerships and/or co-creation and participatory research?
- How will the proposed project leverage existing campus programs, facilities, and other assets?

Team Qualifications: The team is qualified to pursue large extramural awards.

- Is the team’s expertise and experience appropriate to the targeted funding opportunities?
- Do the team’s strengths give it a perceived advantage on a national scale?
- Do members of the team have a history of working together on activities relevant to the targeted funding opportunities?
Team Readiness: The team is committed to building their capacity to pursue large, multi-investigator funding opportunities.

- Is the team committed to integrative team development and collaborative preliminary research?
- Do the PIs have sufficient time and the support of their department(s) to participate in the LIRA program and pursue one or more funding opportunities?
- Is the team committed to building the skills and team dynamics needed for successful multi-investigator collaborations?

Objectives and Workplan: The team has a workplan that will allow it to achieve its objectives during the award period.

- Does the team propose objectives appropriate to the development of one or more funding opportunities?
- Does the workplan include activities necessary to achieving the objectives, such as team development, visioning, competitive intelligence, stakeholder engagement, external review of concepts and narrative (e.g., “pink team” and “red team” reviews), and proposal development?
- Is the workplan feasible and does it provide clear milestones?

Budget and Budget Justification: The budget is reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

- Is the budget itemized and fully justified?
- Is the budget sufficient to support the activities proposed in the workplan?

Contact:

For more information or questions about applying, please contact the Office of Research Development at ord@umass.edu.
LIRA - Center Development Award (Track 2)

Program Description

Track 2 supports the advancement of integrated teams, often spanning multiple disciplines, with a vision for a center-level grant proposal leading to external funding of $3 million per year or more for at least 5 years. Track 2 awards will support teams with pre-existing collaborations among participants. Applying teams must target a specific center-level funding opportunity and make the case that they have the expertise and leadership capabilities necessary to develop a competitive proposal.

To compete successfully for a center-level award, a proposing team must do more than articulate a compelling research vision; they must convince the funding agency that the proposed research is transformational. The value proposition for a successful center-level proposal must be that the whole is substantially greater than the sum of its parts and that an integrated center (rather than a collection of discrete projects) is required to achieve the transformational aims. Funding agencies frequently expect a plan for integrating the proposed research with other programmatic objectives, such as: education and workforce development; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; knowledge transfer; and broadening participation.

The successful Track 2 application will target a topic area with clear potential for societal impact that builds on existing campus strengths and infrastructure, and will often involve participants from multiple disciplines. Applications will describe a diverse, multi-investigator team with leadership and collaboration experience that is prepared to dedicate the time and effort necessary to develop a center-level proposal by the end of the award period, including efforts to strengthen the team, refine the vision, and engage the partners and stakeholders required by the project.

Funding Amount

Proposing teams may request up to $60,000 for up to one year of LIRA Track 2 Center Development Award activities. Awards may be extended with a no-cost extension for a second year, contingent on progress, as measured against milestones set for the award.

Eligibility

PIs must be full-time tenured faculty at UMass Amherst. Applying teams must include a sufficient number of individuals and disciplines to be competitive for the opportunity.

Eligible faculty may only submit one proposal as PI or Co-PI. Eligible faculty may serve as a collaborator on multiple projects in roles other than PI or Co-PI.

Budget

Spending should be focused on development of a proposal for the specified center-level funding opportunity and may include:

- Summer salary or release time for UMass faculty
- URAs, GRAs, and post-doctoral researchers in grant writing and proposal management roles
- Travel to meet with program managers and attend conferences for the purpose of proposal development
- Meetings and workshops for team and proposal development, and with potential external stakeholders
- Project management, consulting, editing, writing, graphics, and other grant-development activities (in addition to staff support from Research & Engagement or other campus resources)
- Funds may not be used for research activities or equipment
Review and Selection

Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Provost, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, and Deans from Colleges and Schools associated with the submitting team. Subject matter experts may be consulted, provided they have no conflict of interest and agree to confidentiality. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria, as described below: center vision, goals and rationale; alignment of funding opportunity and campus strengths; team qualifications; team readiness; objectives and workplan; and budget and budget justification. The committee will make Track 2 Center Development Awards based on an evaluation process and availability of funds. Priority will be given to proposals targeting opportunities with a submission deadline within 12 months of the LIRA award.

Award Conditions

Teams that accept funding are required to:

• Conduct the proposed activities within the award period. A no-cost extension may be requested.
• Participate in professional cohort-based training on integrative teaming, equitable collaboration, and budget planning, and research development support for ideation and proposal development.
• Meet quarterly milestones as proposed by the team and finalized at the time of award.
• Submit a proposal to the center funding opportunity named in the team’s application.
• Deliver a brief report at the end of the award period.

Due Date – Applications are due March 29, 2024.

Award Start Date – July 1, 2024

Contacts – Please direct any questions about this program to ord@umass.edu.

Review Criteria and Guiding Questions

Center Vision, Goals, and Rationale: The team communicates a vision, goals, and a rationale for the proposed center.

• Is there a compelling vision for the proposed center?
• Is there a compelling case for the significance of the proposed research?
• Are there ambitious but attainable goals for research and integrated programs, such as: education and workforce development; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; knowledge transfer; and broadening participation?
• Is there a rationale for why the proposed center requires a center-level approach instead of a collection of separate projects?

Alignment of Center Funding Opportunity and Campus Strengths: The team explains how the proposed center would align with campus and external partner strengths.

• Does the center vision align with the funding agency’s purposes for the center program?
• Does the center vision align with the priorities of the campus, colleges, and departments, including one or more strategic emphasis areas, or a focus on building regional partnerships and/or co-creation and participatory research?
• Will the center leverage existing campus programs, facilities, and other assets, and those of external collaborators?

Team Qualifications: The team is qualified to pursue a center-level award.
• Is the team’s expertise and experience appropriate to the funding opportunity?
• Do the team’s strengths give it a perceived advantage on a national scale?
• Do members of the team have a history of working together on activities relevant to the center?
• Does the proposed center PI have the research credentials and experience to lead a center?

Team Readiness: The team is prepared to pursue the center opportunity.

• Is the team committed to a year-long effort to develop a center-level proposal?
• Do the PIs have sufficient time and the support of their department(s) to participate in the LIRA program and pursue a center-level proposal?
• Is the team committed to building the skills and team dynamics needed for successful multi-investigator collaborations?

Objectives and Workplan: The team has a workplan that will allow it to achieve its objectives during the award period.

• Does the team propose objectives appropriate to the development of a competitive center proposal?
• Does the workplan include activities necessary to achieving the objectives, such as: visioning, competitive intelligence, team development, stakeholder engagement, external review of concepts and narrative (e.g., “pink team” and “red team” reviews), and proposal development?
• Is the workplan feasible and does it provide clear milestones?

Budget and Budget Justification: The budget is reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

• Is the budget itemized and fully justified?
• Is the budget sufficient to support the activities proposed in the workplan?

Contact:

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