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## Seed Funding Checklist

University of Massachusetts Amherst ADVANCE Program

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## CHECKLIST: EFFECTIVE AND EQUITABLE PRACTICES FOR SEED GRANT ADMINISTRATORS

Best practices for seed grant administrators start with dissemination of information about the program<sup>1</sup>. It is important from the outset to consider the goals of the program and how you will evaluate those goals. This preparation includes:

### *Develop the Request for Proposals (RFP)*

- Set a target date for notification of awardees/distribution of funds and work backwards to map out the timing and logistics

### *Consider the purposes and goals of the seed funding program and who will be eligible*

- Identify review criteria for evaluating proposals and communicate them in the RFP
- Develop metrics for evaluating the seed fund program and consider how to collect data. E.g., collect demographic information on PIs and team
- Recognize potential for inequities in the seed funding program – rank, positionality, etc. - and establish program priorities and review criteria to mitigate them
- Articulate budget restrictions or requirements clearly
- Decide if budget or in-kind matching is required, or other administrative sign off or support, and consider how this might limit participation.
- Require PIs to identify project compliance issues, e.g., Institutional Review Board (IRB), environmental health and safety requirements, and potential conflicts of interest

### *Get the Word Out*

- Advertise the opportunity widely – e.g., explicitly invite a diverse pool of applicants
- Host open ideation workshops for potential applicants to brainstorm
- Create opportunities for potential applicants to pose questions – e.g., information sessions
- Consider coordination to promote cross-disciplinary partnerships

### *Develop the Review Process*

- Identify and provide structure for reviewers, e.g., one phase committee review or two-phase review comprising ad hoc technical review followed by panel review and selection. Create guidelines rubrics and score sheets. Allow sufficient time for reviewers to complete their reviews. Consider what information is appropriate for different types of reviewers (ad hoc vs panel).
- Decide upon an approach to budget review, e.g., consider adequacy of budget, and recommendations for re-budgeting?
  - For re-budgeting - articulate a process for how to spread funding further
  - If partial funding is at play, identifying if/how reviewers will consider alternate/existing funding
- Establish a review process that identifies any potential conflicts of interest and addresses them
- Structure the review process to encourage reviewers to provide constructive feedback to PIs without adding substantially to their workload – e.g., Reviewer Guidelines, a Reviewer Score Sheet/Rubric
- Consider format and goals of the review process and a potential plan for feedback/invited resubmissions that takes into consideration the relative benefits to the PI of feedback versus the administrative workload involved in providing feedback – e.g., \ (Qualtrics, Excel, etc.)

### *Plan for Award Notification and Post-Award*

- Forestall misunderstandings by developing an official Letter of Award that spells out terms and conditions and requires PI acknowledgement
- Consider policies and processes for no-cost extensions, re-budgeting, etc.

### *Program Evaluation*

- Have a plan for project follow-up – e.g., final report or presentation
- Develop a program evaluation plan that measures progress towards seed funding program goals, including equity and diversity in awards
- Establish a format for PI final reports that includes appropriate metrics and solicits suggestions for program improvement
- Track progress beyond the award – e.g., proposals submitted, publications, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://research.gatech.edu/gt-community/funding/faqs>