

Research Expansion Funds Grant Program

FY 2025 Request for Proposals

Fall deadline: Sept. 27, 2024 **Decision:** Nov. 8, 2024 **Award start:** Dec. 31, 2024

Spring deadline: Feb. 14, 2025 **Decision:** April 4, 2025 **Award start:** May 15, 2025

Introduction

The Research Expansion Funds (REF) program will support acquisition of new preliminary data or the development of new research methods or procedures that will be used in subsequent proposals to external funding sources. Full-time faculty at Montana State University who have earned terminal degrees are eligible to apply.

Criteria:

A faculty committee with a history of external funding will evaluate proposals according to the following criteria:

- The project's alignment with an external federal agency or other funding sponsor(s).
- The project's intellectual significance and its potential impact and contribution to the field.
- The appropriateness of the project's methodologies and approach, as well as the feasibility of the work plan.
- The qualifications and expertise of the researcher in relation to the project goals and the stage of the applicant's career.
- The potential for success, including the likelihood that the project will be completed within the projected timeframe, and the appropriateness of the budget.
- If applicable, provide a succinct discussion of how the proposed work addresses any Grand Challenges of MSU's Strategic Plan.

Please address **each** criterion in your proposal and write in a way that is accessible to your Montana State University colleagues who may not be in your discipline.

Each applicant may submit only one application to the REF program over a 12-month period, unless invited to resubmit. Preference will be given to the following: 1) tenure-track faculty that have spent their start-up as originally intended and are on good trajectory toward tenure; 2) soft-funded researchers within the first five years of their appointment that have demonstrated success with external funding and scholarship; 3) tenured faculty and senior research faculty with consistent and demonstratable success, who are aiming to scale their research or transition to a new and promising research direction

Within **three months** of completion of the project, successful applicants shall provide a written report of grant activities and outcomes to the Vice President of Research, Economic

Development, and Graduate Education (VPREDGE) Office, their dean, their department head or center/institute director, and the chair of the REF Grant Review Committee. To be eligible for future REF funding, this report should include brief description of the external grant submitted (or in progress to be submitted). The submission of this final project report is required as a criterion for future REF proposal consideration.

Questions about program requirement and expectations may be directed to [Lee Spangler](#), while questions concerning electronic submission and budgets can be directed to [Tawnya Morgan](#).

Budget:

Applicants may request funds for supplies, an approved course buyout, travel, personnel (including graduate students), and other expenses necessary to complete the proposed project. REF grants will not support summer salary. Award amounts will vary, but most will range between \$30,000 and \$50,000 (maximum). Requests for under \$30,000 may be considered but should be discussed with Lee Spangler before submission. Please consider that the program is trying to seed as many quality new projects as possible and budget for what you need as opposed to automatically requesting the maximum. **These funds will expire and revert back to the VPRED Office after 12 months from award activation.**

- If a course buyout is requested, the application must include a letter of support from the department head. The cost of a course buyout should be the salary for someone to teach the course (rather than based upon the faculty member's salary). Explain the need for a course buyout in the budget narrative.
- For travel expenses, explain projected travel expenses in the budget narrative, being as specific and realistic as possible about the cost of transportation, lodging and other expenses. When budgeting for travel, please follow State approved In-State, Out-of-State and International rates regarding per diem, mileage and lodging found on the [Travel Recap Sheet](#).
- Budgets must include the 6% admin fee that will be assessed to your award by the Vice President for Finance and Administration Office.
- The following items are unlikely to be funded unless specifically justified: computers; equipment, unless it has a direct and clearly explained relation to the proposed project; post-production costs of books, articles or other creative activities; travel to professional conferences regularly attended by the applicant.

Submission:

Please submit your proposal electronically to [InfoReady](#).

Click "Log in" in the top right-hand corner of the InfoReady homepage and log in with your MSU NetID and password.

From this page, find the Table that lists funding opportunities.

Click the down arrow under the column labeled "Category" and select "Internal Opportunity."

From there, select "Research Expansion Funds" in the "Title" column and click "Apply."

Proceed to complete the required fields and upload the necessary documents. An application may be saved as a draft before submission. You will receive a system notification when your application has been received. Decisions will be announced via InfoReady. New InfoReady users can contact ord@montana.edu for assistance.

Applicants should submit the following as a **single PDF document**, which will be distributed to external reviewers and REF Grant Review Committee members.

- A narrative of no more than five single-spaced pages addressing the significance and impact of the project, and how it will significantly advance the competitiveness for external funding; a plan of work, including brief descriptions of methodologies and approach to be used; and a timetable for completion of the project.
- A budget, including budget notes or a narrative explaining budget items.
- A maximum 5-page curriculum vitae/bio-sketch.
- The narrative, budget and final report of any REF grant you received in the last three years.

Review Process:

Once a REF grant is submitted, it will be forwarded to the chair of the REF review committee (Dr. Spangler). With assistance from the Office of Sponsored Programs, the chair will identify three reviewers for the grant, with at least one reviewer being from a different department/college. Reviewers will be asked to provide their comments and recommendation within three weeks. After receiving the independent reviews, the REF chair will share comments and recommendations with the REF executive review committee. The REF executive review committee will review comments and make a recommendation to the VPRED. Potential outcomes of the review would be 1) highly meritorious and fund immediately, 2) meritorious and consider for subsequent funding round, 3) not competitive and do not fund.