Startup Guidelines from the Office of the Vice President for Research

The Office of Research (OoR), at the University of Cincinnati (UC), provides support to the college/school deans to assist in attracting new and outstanding faculty who will be engaged in research and scholarly activity as a major component of their appointment. The intention of these funds is to provide the resources needed to establish a scholarly research program that will lead to the generation of external research sponsorship and funding.

This document sets forth guidelines for requesting startup assistance from the OoR, contributions expected to start-up funds from academic units within the college, and expectations for expenditure of start-up funds by the faculty member.

Eligibility

Only tenured/tenure track positions are eligible for OoR start-up funds. Exceptions for non-tenured/non-tenure-track appointments involving research may be approved on a compelling case basis where a long-term appointment is being made and where the individual would be engaged in research, scholarship, or creative work.

Support Available

Start-up funds are allocated based on expressed needs for support that are reasonable for enabling the "start-up" of a new faculty member's research program. These funds are intended to support the initial launch of the faculty member's research, with the understanding that ongoing support should come from external sources.

- Start-up funds provided by the OoR may be used for research equipment, research supplies, post-doc/technical staff, user fees for University of Cincinnati service centers, and travel and professional development funds related to research.
- The OoR will not support requests for high-performance computing systems unless the research using such systems is hardware-based. The OoR will support requests for computational time at the Ohio Supercomputer Center or UC's Advanced Research Computing Center.
- The OoR will not provide funds for undergraduate or graduate students, scholarships (non-GIA/GAS funding), conference travel, summer salary for nine-month contracts, professional fees, subscriptions or memberships, relocation, office furniture and desktop computers. These items may be included in the support from the college or unit.

If faculty start-up funds are used to finance a research/technical position, the prospective employee must be informed, in writing, that funding is temporary and that there is no commitment of employment after the funding is exhausted. Funds must be adequate to cover salary and associated fringe benefit costs as determined through the fringe benefit rate established by the University.

Works of art, rare books, general office supplies and any cost unrelated to faculty research or scholarly activity are not allowable start-up expenditures.

The OoR will provide up to 50% of the requested start-up funding, subject to the category limitations noted above. Startup requests from STEMM units must exceed $100,000 (total startup package) to be eligible for OoR support. Startup requests from non-STEMM units must provide compelling evidence that the hire will be expected to secure external research/scholarship funding and supporting documentation that similar faculty have secured external research funding.

Process for Requesting Support for HPC

The following process must be followed to request HPC or another advanced research computing equipment support as part of a startup request. HPC equipment may include, but not be limited to, computer servers with multi-core CPUs, servers/appliances with GPUs or other high-end workstations performing modeling/simulation, artificial intelligence/machine learning or big data analysis. Available options can be found in the Faculty Startup HPC Equipment Process document found on **ResearchHow2.**

The College and/or prospective faculty hire will engage with the ARC team to review the available HPC resource options and discuss the research computing requirements/requests. Together they will identify the appropriate solution(s) leveraging university and/or statewide resources. To schedule a discussion with the ARC team, contact Jane Combs, Assoc Director, ARC facility, by email at combsje@uc.edu

Joint Hires

Requests for start-up funds for joint appointment positions should be made by the "lead" unit, the academic department where tenure would be applied. It is anticipated that the unit and college portion of start-up support will be split consistent with the effort of the recruit in each area.

Period of Support/Extensions/Early Termination

Unless otherwise stated in the faculty offer letter, all OoR start-up funds should be expended within three years of the initial hiring date. Exceptions may be submitted for approval via the Faculty Startup Extension Request form no later than 3 months prior to the end of the startup period specified in the faculty offer letter, together with an expense report. The form requires the faculty to state why the funds will not be expended within the allocated period, and the dean of the college is to provide a documented plan to help the faculty member succeed. College deans and/or their designees may approve a 12-month extension, on behalf of the Vice President for Research (VPR), for OoR startup fund balances that are less than or equal to 35% of the total OoR allocation. The college is required to notify the OoR when an extension is granted and submit the approved extension request to vprstartup@uc.edu. If the OoR startup fund balance is greater than 35% of the total OoR allocation, the extension request must be approved by the VPR via vprstartup@uc.edu. Any request for a second extension of the OoR allocated funds must be submitted by the Dean, on behalf of the faculty member, to the VPR for approval via vprstartup@uc.edu. These should be rare and have clear extenuating circumstances to support the Dean's request.

When OoR funding has been expended within the original startup period specified in the faculty offer letter, OoR approval for extensions for unit/college funds is not required. However, the unit/college is required to notify the OoR of their on-going college/unit commitments to delay the final distribution of support. The maximum period a final distribution can be delayed is 24 months after the end of the original startup period specified in the faculty offer letter, regardless of on-going college/unit commitments.

To ensure that the original commitments were expended, the OoR will evaluate the final distribution of funds. The percentage of OoR funds expended in the final distribution cannot exceed the original OoR percentage agreed upon in the approved startup package. Overages will be debited against future college startup allocations/pools.

> Example – PI had $100K total startup package supported equally by the OoR and college. Expenses total $80K at the end of the startup period. OoR would only allow $40K (50% of actuals) to count against that startup package. If OoR had previously transferred $50K (50% of original budget), $10K overage is debited against future college startup allocations/pools).

If a faculty member terminates his/her appointment prior to expending all faculty start-up funds, any remaining balance will be swept back to OoR start-up fund pool for future distribution. Any start-up expense after the employment end date will be the responsibility of the college. Any faculty who leave the university and wish to take resources obtained from OoR start-up must receive written approval from the dean and VP for Research.

Re-Budgeting Guidelines

Minor adjustments in the approved start-up budget may be made at the faculty member's discretion. However, any budget modification amounting to 20% or more of the total allocation must be approved by the OoR. Total allocation is referring to the entire startup package regardless of the source of support. If the faculty want to re-budget among categories within 20% of the total, they may do so without VP for Research approval. Keep in mind, OoR only supports certain budget categories. Re-budget must be within those approved categories: research equipment & supplies, computing/IT supplies, post-doc/technical staff, and travel & professional development funds related to research.

Office of Research Expectations

OoR funds support of startup packages should not be assumed or committed without express approval of the VP for Research. The total level of startup support annually for each college/school will depend upon a number of factors, including but not limited to: university general funds budget, college/unit research productivity, the college/unit research culture, and specific university initiatives and priorities.

Process

The VP for Research will work with college/school deans, on a yearly basis, to determine the allocation of start-up funds for each college/school. Any department needing start-up funds for new faculty should work directly through the college deans. Academic unit heads in conjunction with the dean of the college are responsible for securing start-up needs from the faculty candidate before submitting a start-up funding request.

The start-up offer/appointment letter, CV and budget (using the OoR Start-up Budget Template) must be submitted to the VP for Research prior to seeking candidate acceptance for position.

The college business office will notify the OoR business office once an offer has been accepted or declined and forward a copy of the signed offer letter.

Prior to the start date of the faculty member, the OoR will send a funding letter to the college business officer and copy the department business manager. The funding letter defines the award amount and period of commitment. The funding letter also includes the reporting requirements, as well as account information for disbursement of funds and to process expenditures.

The college business office signs the funding letter and returns to the OoR. A fully executed letter will be returned to the college.

The new faculty member will submit an annual progress report using the template available at **ResearchHow2**. This brief report will explain how the start-up funds have advanced their research career. The summary should include activities undertaken to obtain external funding and any publications/presentations during the reporting year. Reports are to be submit directly to the VP of Research via research@uc.edu (subject line – faculty's last name/Startup Report) coping the faculty's Department/Unit Head, Associate Dean and Dean. The OoR will send an annual or semi-annual schedule specifying the due dates. Faculty who fail to submit timely reports risk losing current and future support from the OoR.

Business managers must submit an annual expense report for each faculty start-up package via vprstartup@uc.edu. This is comprehensive summary of expenses incurred from the different funding sources along with supporting backup. OoR business office will review all financial reports. VP for Research will review and approve financial reports where less than 25% of the cumulative allotted funds have been expended. Release of subsequent years of support will be made once the reports has been reviewed. Reports are due according to the dates listed on the OoR startup funding letter unless otherwise informed by the OoR Business Office. It's at the discretion of each college/unit to determine if they want to create a review process for the reports before submittal to the OoR. Future startup funding will be reallocated for colleges/units that do not meet financial report deadlines.

It's the responsibility of the faculty member, dean of the college, and the college's research officer to ensure that funds are expended appropriately. The timeframe for spending college/unit funds is at the individual college's discretion. Any funding provided at the conclusion of the 3rd year will be solely the college/unit responsibility. University financial policies and related budget and financial practices in effect at the time of developing a start-up package apply.

Startup Documents, Annual Reports and Extension Request Templates are available on the Research How 2 site:
http://researchhow2.uc.edu/
Click on Search Resources at top right
Enter **startup** in the "Enter Keywords" field

Financial Policies

https://mailuc.sharepoint.com/sites/af/SitePages/A&F%20Policies.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=xE6Drv

Asset Management Policies & Procedures Manual

https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/af/controller/AssetManagement/Docs/asset_manual.pdf

Additional Information

Answers to the following questions will assist in a smooth transition for your new faculty member.

YES / N/A Have all facility associated accommodations required for the installation and functioning of any instruments either included in the start-up or to be moved to UC from the candidate's prior institution been considered (funding and timeframe for renovation; consultation with Environmental Health and Safety) within this process prior to submission to the OoR?

YES / NO Will this research involve specialized research needs such as the use of human subjects, vertebrate animals, hazardous or radioactive materials, recombinant DNA, or pathogenic organisms, that require review by a University research committee?

YES / NO Does this prospective faculty member have any involvement in a startup company or are there other disclosures the candidate will be required to make on a financial basis?

YES / NO Does this prospective faculty member have research equipment to transfer to UC?