

## ESSIC Seed Grant Program

### Background

The purpose of the ESSIC Seed Grant Program (ESGP) is to provide an internal funding mechanism for our scientists to carry out innovative research in pilot studies that have strong potential to lead to future proposals for external funding. Calls for Seed Grants will be coordinated with the schedule for the *New Direction Fund FY2024 of the Maryland Catalyst fund*<sup>1</sup>. The program has recently been updated (December 2023).

The *Maryland Catalyst Fund* (MCF) program – formerly known as the Faculty Incentive Program – is the University of Maryland’s internal faculty research support program and a key resource in the university’s overall effort to expand its research activity, visibility and impact. The program is designed to enable innovative research, incentivize the pursuit of large, complex, and high-impact research initiatives, and help UMD faculty to be more competitive for extramural research awards.

The Maryland Catalyst Fund program is overseen by the Vice President for Research (VPR) and managed by the VPR’s Research Development Office, in coordination with UMD academic units and the Provost. All awards are supported by Designated Research Initiative Fund (“DRIF”) contributions from both faculty organizational unit(s) and central resources from the VPR and the Provost, and all award decisions are made subject to the availability of funds.

ESSIC’s Seed Grants will be aligned with the New Directions Fund, which is one of the programs within the New Catalyst Fund. It aims to enable important new lines of research and creative work with high potential for impact. There are three competition tracks:

- **Track A:** Proof of Concept awards support researchers pursuing a new line of research or collaborative partnership to help them be competitive for external funding.
- **Track B:** Limited External Grant Opportunity (LEGO) awards support particularly innovative research, writing, and/or creative work in fields where external funding is scarce.
- **Track C:** NEW: Racial & Social Justice Research awards supports research on the underpinnings of, consequences of, and/or solutions to address systemic, institutional, and structural racism and injustice.

Submissions to the New Directions Fund are once per year (March 1). 50% of the funds are provided by the VPR office, 50% by the college and operating Unit (in this case, CMNS and ESSIC will potentially provide 25% each). They are typically in the 25-50 K/year range. In 2022, eight grants were awarded, with an approximate 20% success rate; the program was suspended in 2023

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<sup>1</sup> <https://umd.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1925737>

but is restarting in 2024. The ESGP process will be used to determine ESSIC and CMNS Cost Share commitment for applications to the New Directions Fund. Depending upon funding availability, proposals that are not selected for the NDF may be considered for ESGP funds at a lower level.

### **ESSIC Guidelines**

**Eligibility** – You must be at the ESSIC Assistant Research Scientist or Faculty Specialist rank, or higher to apply.

**Cost guidance** – Up to \$50 K per proposal, 1 year in duration. Funds must be spent in one-year once the project starts.

**Due Dates** – Applications are due to ESSIC by January 15. They should be submitted to ESSIC Associate Director, Ralph Ferraro, [rferraro@umd.edu](mailto:rferraro@umd.edu). No late submissions will be accepted.

You should work with EBO on your budget in a similar manner with other proposals (e.g., use the ESSIC NOI system). The submission should include a one-page abstract with expected outcomes, a preliminary budget, the targeted solicitation/external funding source upon projects completion (e.g., agency, program, etc.), and a draft version of the Universal Request Form (URF)<sup>2</sup> required by the Office of Research.

**Review Process** – A review committee consisting of the ESSIC Director, Associate Directors, and Assistant Director will make a determination as to which requests can move forward to the Office of Research. This will be completed by February 1.

Upon acceptance by ESSIC, the PI will develop a formal proposal following the MCF requirements, which will include an abstract, project objectives, technical approach, milestones and budget, as well as the final URF. This must be submitted to ESSIC by February 15 so that required signatures can be obtained. In parallel, ESSIC will meet with the Research Development Office before a formal submission can be made by the PI.

Based on availability of funding, ESSIC envisions supporting at least one proposal each year. In instances where proposals are not funded by the VPR, ESSIC may still fund its portion of the proposal. In those instances, the ESSIC Director will make the final decision in consultation with the review committee and the PI of the proposal.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://research.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-05/Universal%20Funding%20Form\\_May2022.pdf](https://research.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-05/Universal%20Funding%20Form_May2022.pdf)