

FY2025 PMF - Frequently Asked Questions

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Overview

What are the Pitt Momentum Funds?

The Pitt Momentum Funds are a suite of funding mechanisms designed to support:

- the early stages of new projects – or to finish an existing project, such as a book manuscript – and primarily intended for individual faculty (**Priming Grants**)
- the planning and capacity-building stages for multidisciplinary team projects (**Teaming Grants**)
- the detailed project planning, gathering of initial evidence, proof-of-concept results, or reducing technical risk so that teams can competitively pursue large, complex, extramural funding (**Scaling Grants**)
- existing projects, works-in-progress, or to test project ideas in the Arts & Humanities where a smaller grant with fast decision-making could be transformative (**Arts & Humanities Microgrants**)

How narrow is the focus on research? And to what extent do Pitt Momentum Funds grants support curriculum development and student-centered projects?

Pitt Momentum Funds awards will support projects to grow research and scholarship. It is acceptable to integrate research experiences for students into your research project within the budget threshold; for regional campus faculty, that would be particularly appropriate. *However, curriculum development and student-centered projects are not the focus of Pitt Momentum Funds.* Note that the Office of the Provost administers the **Pitt Seed program**, which is intended to support instruction and student learning, so one of those mechanisms is likely to be better suited for purely curriculum development or student-centered projects.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to serve as a Lead Investigator on a Pitt Momentum Funds project?

Any Pitt faculty member with an appointment that includes research responsibilities is eligible to serve as a Lead Investigator on a Pitt Momentum Fund project.

- Exclusions: School of Medicine faculty are only eligible to apply for Teaming and Scaling Grants; they are not eligible for Priming Grants. For these individual-scale awards, School of Medicine faculty are encouraged to apply to the [Competitive Medical Research Fund \(CMRF\)](#).

What qualifies an investigator as having an appropriate amount of research responsibility?

The ability to independently pursue sponsored research funding and, since the precise nature of appointments varies among schools, the support of your department chair is required. For appointment stream faculty, the letter of support must clearly indicate how the individual has research responsibilities that include an independent research agenda. Postdoctoral scholars can serve on a team but cannot be an investigator.

Can an individual serve as a Lead Investigator on more than one Pitt Momentum Funds project?

Lead Investigators on Teaming or Scaling proposals are discouraged from participating in more than one project at a time. However, team members may separately apply for Priming grants to support their individual research agendas.

Can a Pitt Momentum Funds application include more than one Lead Investigator?

No. An individual Lead Investigator is responsible for managing the submission and award processes related to the Pitt Momentum Funds. Faculty co-investigators can be listed via the online application form.

Can I submit my Pitt Momentum Funds proposal using my secondary – rather than primary – appointment?

If your effort will be drawn from that portion of your time and any awarded funds will be allocated to that responsibility center, then it is appropriate to do so. Applying using your secondary appointment to meet the 3-school eligibility requirements is not appropriate.

If a co-investigator on the project is faculty at another university, will they count towards the 3-school participation minimum?

No. The teaming requirement of investigators representing 3 different schools requires 3 Pitt investigators, and research faculty in non-academic units (e.g. the University Library System) to count towards this requirement. Nonetheless we encourage you to collaborate with investigators at other institutions, and you may find additional support for your project at their home institution.

Faculty at minority-serving institutions maybe listed and count, as determined on a case-by-case basis, towards the 3-school participation minimum. These are “institutions of higher education enrolling populations with significant percentages of undergraduate minority students, or that serve certain populations of minority students under various programs created by Congress”as listed by the U.S. Department of Education. Contact us at researchdev@pitt.edu if you have a collaborator from an MSI.

If the lead investigator or a team member leave Pitt while the project is still going on, can they continue to serve as the lead investigator or as a project member?

They can continue to serve as a team member but not as a lead investigator.

Are visiting faculty eligible to serve on a team, and does their participation count towards the 3-school requirement for Teaming and Scaling Grants projects?

Yes, visiting faculty may serve on a team, but their participation is not credited towards the 3-school requirement. In the humanities and social sciences, a visiting faculty is counted as a) someone who is already in a position comparable to that of a tenure track faculty in another institution, b) recent doctoral graduate from Pitt who is serving as a Visiting Lecturer, c) a postdoctoral visiting faculty, or d) appointed by Pitt as a visiting Assistant professor for a term of more than one year.

Can undergraduate students be included as Pitt Momentum Funds project team members?

Absolutely! Engaging students in a Pitt Momentum Funds grant is highly encouraged. Lead Investigators proposing Priming Grants projects may include student-related costs within the \$25,000, maximum budget to support research experiences for undergraduates. Please do not list undergraduate students as investigators, however.

If I've received previous support through a Pitt Research seed grant (CRDF, SSRI, SIPSAH), am I eligible to apply to the Pitt Momentum Funds?

Yes, but you will need to describe why you require new funds (e.g., external funds are not available in my area of scholarship, this is a new project). You may serve as a Lead Investigator.

If I've received previous support through a Pitt Research seed grant (CRDF, SSRI, SIPSAH) is it better for one of my co-investigators to serve as the Lead Investigator on a Pitt Momentum Funds project?

Not necessarily: Please select an individual who is best prepared to act as the Lead Investigator – that person will be responsible for managing the Pitt Momentum Funds application, project, and progress reporting processes.

Expression of Intent (EOI)

Is the EOI required?

Yes, unless you are applying for an Arts & Humanities Microgrant or a Regional Catalyst Grant.

Does the EOI impact my application or influence reviews?

No, the EOI is not shared with the reviewers of your application. Pitt Research staff will use the EOI to ensure you are applying for the correct program, that eligibility requirements are met, and will begin to identify appropriate peer reviewers for your proposal. You will be able to revise your EOI or your project abstract before you submit a full proposal.

What should I include in the EOI?

1. Project title
2. Brief abstract (150 words)
3. Faculty investigators
4. Keywords (5)

We have a team working on an EOI for a teaming grant. They are currently working to identify the collaborator from a third school but may not have one pinned down before the EOI deadline. Would it be ok to submit an EOI with TBD for the third school/collaborator?

Yes, that is acceptable – the EOI does not limit the Lead Investigator from developing the project further between now and the full proposal deadline. *The 3-school requirement for Teaming and Scaling Grants projects must be met by the time a full application is submitted or the proposal will be returned without review.*

Why do I have to select a track to start my EOI?

The track selection will ensure that your proposal is reviewed by the appropriate review committee. If your project changes directions after you submit the EOI – for example, it has increased in scope from a Teaming Grant project to a Scaling Grant project – we will work with you to accommodate this change. If the review coordinators believe your proposal would be more competitive in a smaller scale track, they can recommend your proposal be moved (e.g., from Scaling to Teaming or Teaming to Priming). Staff will contact the Lead Investigator if such a recommendation is made to confirm agreement with the move.

Proposal Development

What should I include in my proposal?

If you are invited to submit a full application, you are required to include a project description and its scholarly contribution. All proposers should define project milestones and provide details on how the work will continue after the funding ends.

Teaming Grant applications should explicitly address their team-building strategy and how they will develop their follow-on funding plan.

Scaling Grant applications should describe any additional team-building efforts required, identify a credible target for large-scale, follow-on funding, and a detailed project execution plan. It is important that all initiatives are self-sustaining.

Priming projects with a definitive end that corresponds to when funding ends should note that end date in the application's sustainability section.

Are the listed page limits based on single-spaced pages?

Yes, the page limits are based on single-spaced pages.

Can you describe the various sections of a full application?

[Please click here to access the Guidelines to apply for a Microgrant Award.](#)

[Please click here to access the Guidelines to apply for a Priming Award.](#)

[Please click here to access the Guidelines to apply for a Teaming Award.](#)

[Please click here to access the Guidelines to apply for a Scaling Award.](#)

Budget

Do I build a budget for a Pitt Momentum Funds project the same way I would for an external grant (concerning fringe rates, indirect costs, etc.)?

Yes, prepare your budget for the Pitt Momentum Funds as if you were writing an external grant. Exceptions: there are no indirect costs, and faculty salaries are not a permitted budget item. When budgeting for graduate student assistance, please consult the Academic Regulations for GSRs and GSAs. If the graduate student's responsibilities could be considered academic training, they should be appointed as a GSR/GSA rather than an hourly worker._

A budget template can be found on the InfoReady application pages, and includes fields for you to input various budget categories and has information about current fringe rates. If you have further budget questions, please coordinate with your department or school grants administrator.

Are there restrictions on how Pitt Momentum Funds can be spent?

Momentum Funds awards cannot be used to support or supplement salaries for either Pitt faculty or external co-investigators; neither are the funds intended to be used to hire new permanent staff. Priming Grant awards cannot be used for travel to meetings or conferences (although travel for research purposes, such as visits to archive, is permitted); computer equipment is not given priority and will be considered on a case-to-case basis.

Teaming and Scaling Grant awards are not intended to be used to extend existing, externally funded projects or for projects that already have preliminary results in hand sufficient to obtain funding from external agencies (e.g., NIH, NSF). Momentum Funds are not bridge funds.

Funds can be used to hire temporary workers, travel, capital equipment purchases or other acquisition of materials, consulting or contracting other technical support, software and other expenses needed to successfully implement the project. A listing of budget elements

is available in the budget template. Award funds must be expended in accordance with University policy. Supplemental, overtime and temporary wages are subject to tax reporting and withholding but are not eligible for defined contribution deductions or matching.

Can we conduct research with Teaming Grants funds?

While the performance of research is not the primary intent of Teaming Grants, some sources of follow-on funding may require evidence of prior research collaboration. In such cases, include a justification for research as an element of building the team.

Can Pitt Momentum Funds be used to support a conference?

No, not if that is the sole purpose of the request. A conference may be a legitimate tool for a Teaming grant, but proposers should explain how they will use the conference in pursuit of follow-on funding for their research project. Humanities and Social Science Faculty in the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences who are seeking to fund conferences in support of faculty scholarship should apply to the Humanities and Social Science Research Fund in the Dietrich School.

Can Pitt Momentum Funds be used for administrative support (e.g., project coordinator salary support) for the proposed project?

Yes, the funds can be used for administrative support costs within the budget guidelines. Because credible efforts at building cross-disciplinary teams that can tackle large-scale research efforts require administrative support, applications for Teaming and Scaling grants must include a letter from the dean or department chair of the team lead offering at least partial in-kind administrative support. Supplemental, overtime and temporary wages are subject to tax reporting and withholding but are not eligible for defined contribution deductions or matching.

If I have an existing, current project funded through another Pitt internal funding mechanism should I include information about that in my budget?

Yes, this should be included as 'current support' in your CV/biosketch, narrative, and budget. This should also be described in your application in the section labeled, "Pitt Internal Funding history."

Faculty salaries are not an allowable expense, but is salary support for a co-investigator at another organization an allowable expense?

No.

The Pitt Momentum Funds do not support faculty salaries, but is it acceptable for a dean or department chair to provide time buyout/course release as an in-kind contribution?

Yes, note this in your budget, and have it highlighted in the support letter.

Graduate Student tuition remission/benefits are calculated at 50% of Graduate Student stipends but I'm paying graduate students by the hour. Should I be adding anything to that?

Hourly pay rates should use the appropriate fringe rates. Tuition remission are only used for stipends. Please double-check with your department's grant administrator, which may be helpful in general as you prepare your budget.

When budgeting for graduate student assistance, please consult the Academic Regulations for GSRs and GSAs. If the graduate student's responsibilities could be considered academic training, they should be appointed as a GSR/GSA rather than an hourly worker.

Can Pitt Momentum Funds be used to compensate people who are external to Pitt?

This is permissible for a professional services contract that complies with University purchasing policies. Expenses incurred would be included in the contract and paid via invoice. Momentum Funds awards cannot be used to support or supplement salaries for either Pitt faculty or external co-investigators.

Do we need to follow University policy regarding all purchases?

Yes. Per University purchasing policies, University-wide contracted suppliers must be used when available. Purchases from other suppliers and service providers must comply with the University's competitive bidding and directed or sole source policy.

Could we establish a postdoctoral fellowship under this grant?

Given the scale and 1-year duration of the Priming and Teaming awards, partial support for an existing postdoc probably makes more sense than using this mechanism to bring on a new postdoc. Support for a postdoc makes more sense in the context of a 2-year Scaling Grant.

Can funds be used to pay for professional services from another Pitt organization, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning?

Yes. And it may be helpful to look into services offered through the University Center for International Studies (UCIS) for travel or translation support, and the University Center for Social & Urban Research (UCSUR) for data and statistical support.

Is there a limit on what fraction of the budget can be used for external to Pitt consultation or services?

No. There are no designated budget percentage requirements based on expense type.

Does this program allow to budget for instruments, such as a microscope?

Yes, adhering to University policies.

Can we use these funds for student housing?

No.

Can we use these funds for student travel (to/from campus for research purposes)?

Yes. Funds may be requested for student travel.

Can we use these funds for research materials and supplies?

Yes, adhering to University policies.

Can we use these funds for socialization activities?

Yes, but you would need to explain why this is an integral part of the work outlined in the application. In addition, business entertainment expenses must comply with University policies.

What, if any, expectations exist for in-kind contributions?

There is no set percentage or dollar amount for unit level support/matching funds. However, it will be considered a positive attribute if units are willing to commit some type of support for a proposed project. This information can be included in your budget. Applications for Teaming and Scaling grants must include a letter from the dean or department chair of the team lead offering an appropriate level of in-kind administrative support.

Can we claim contributions from our partners (meeting space and catering funds, for example) as matching funds?

Yes.

Letter of Commitment/Department Chair Support

Is a letter of commitment required?

Yes, one letter of commitment from the lead investigator's department chair is required as part of the Pitt Momentum Funds application. As a courtesy to your recommender, please give them advance notice of your request for a letter.

What is the purpose of the letter of commitment?

The letter for Teaming and Scaling grants must describe the in-kind administrative support or other resources the dean(s) or department chair(s) will provide to the team.

Should my letter(s) of support be confidential?

No, Lead Investigators are responsible for requesting, securing and uploading the letter as part of their online application.

I am a department chair planning a Pitt Momentum Funds project, who should write my letter?

Your school's associate dean for research should write the letter.

Funding

When will Lead Investigators be notified of decision?

Lead Investigators will be notified in February.

What time period is covered during this cycle of funding?

Priming and Teaming grants may budget funding for up to one year, and Scaling Grants may budget for two years of funding. The budget template (available online) includes separate tabs for each year of funding.

When will funds be available to awarded investigators?

Funds for Teaming and Scaling Grants will be disbursed shortly after lead investigators are notified of their award. Funds for Priming Grants will be disbursed in July. Projects requiring IRB or IACUC approvals will receive funds as soon as the appropriate approvals are shared with OSP staff. Once funds are disbursed, the corresponding award timeline begins (1 year for Priming and Teaming, 2 years for Scaling).

Will the Pitt Momentum Funds be offered again next year?

Yes, the Pitt Momentum Funds are an ongoing commitment that we will continue to review and enhance to support the University's research community.

If we were to form a partnership, would the University commit ongoing budgetary support, such as paying the salary for a key staff person?

Pitt Momentum Funds projects are intended to support projects that have a plan to become self-sustaining with a particular focus on projects that can attract on-going external sponsored research support. It is permissible for your Dean or Department chair to fund on-going staff support deemed important to sustaining a partnership nucleated by Pitt Momentum Funds.

What cost center/unit will the funding be allocated to for the project?

The specifics of budget logistics will be communicated to Lead Investigators and to their unit's business administrator.

Who has the access to the funds? Is access limited to the Lead Investigator?

Access is limited to the Lead Investigator and their unit business manager. Level reports must be reviewed and reconciled each month in accordance with University policy.

May this money be used for tuition remission?

No.

Do we get a purchase card or are expenses reimbursed?

A budget will be established in a defined account for each Pitt Momentum Funds project, and spending of these funds must comply with existing University policies.

Will there be a Pitt Momentum Funds renewal option?

Renewals are only intended for scholarship in areas where there is a demonstrated lack of external funding. Investigators would need to compete again to receive funding as part of a future application call, recognizing there is a very strong preference for supporting new, rather than continuing, projects.

Review

Can you describe the evaluation process?

All proposals are reviewed by faculty peers. University Research Council (URC) coordinators for each track consider those peer reviews when recommending slates of proposals for funding to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research, in the case of Priming proposals, or for oral presentations, in the case of Teaming and Scaling proposals.

Up to six Teaming proposals, depending up on funds available, will be invited to make 10-minute oral presentations before a committee comprised of URC coordinators for the Teaming track; the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research in the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Related Fields; and the Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Research Strategies. That committee will recommend a slate of 2-3 proposals for funding to the Interim Provost and the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research, who jointly make the final selection. Up to six teams applying for the two Scaling Grants will make presentations directly to the Interim Provost and the Senior Vice Chancellor for Research.

Miscellaneous

Will there be resources available from the University to support program management?

Unfortunately, no. We encourage you to include the necessary resources within your project budget, and please be sure to note any resources that have been contributed in kind to your project.

Will we be assigned a grant manager by Pitt Research?

No. The Lead Investigator and their business administrator will be responsible for managing the administration of the project.

Can Pitt Momentum Funds projects be reallocated to individual research projects?

Reallocation to projects not described in the proposal should be explained and justified in the proposal, but such a use is unlikely to align with the intent of the Scaling Grant program. A strategically deployed set of smaller individual projects may make a credible Priming or Teaming Grant, but a high bar will be set for demonstrating the relevance of that reallocation to the goals of the Priming and Teaming Grant programs.

Can Pitt Momentum Fund be used to support other pilot projects?

Reallocation to projects not described in the proposal should be explained and justified in the proposal, but such a use would likely not align with the intent of any of the Momentum Funds.

If awarded, is there a specific reporting process that we need to follow?

Yes. All Pitt Momentum Funds awardees are required to:

- Ensure that resources are utilized according to what is outlined in the concept document.
- Submit a midyear and year-end report online. Scaling projects will be reviewed at the conclusion of the first year of funding for satisfactory progress against milestones before the second tranche of funding is released.
- If applicable, submit metrics on an annual basis for a minimum of three years post-implementation to PMF-Info@pitt.edu.

What happens to intellectual property when the university supports my project/idea? If my project is funded, what percentage of equity does the university share?

The award funds will be transferred to a University account designated by the awardee. Award funds must be expended in accordance with University policy. After completion of the seed funding activities, the awardee will submit Invention Disclosures to the Innovation Institute in order to document, assess and protect any new intellectual property developed by the investigator during the course of the award. If the University licenses or commercializes any intellectual property, inventors, creators or developers will receive a share of proceeds consistent with the terms of the University of Pittsburgh Intellectual Property Policy (RI-10, effective April 5, 2021).

What happened to the Central Research Development Fund (CRDF), the Special Initiative to Promote Scholarship in the Humanities (SIPSAH), and the Social Science Research Initiative (SSRI) programs?

The Pitt Momentum Funds programs refresh and build upon the mentioned small grant programs with a suite of funding mechanisms that have clear demarcations between funds where individual scholarly excellence is the goal, and funds where multi-disciplinary, team-based research effort is the goal. The three types of grants within the scope of Momentum Funds and their varied award thresholds invite projects that vary in scale and readiness to attract external funding. The new structure of funds allows faculty to find support that best matches their ambitions and needs.

Do any of the changes to the CRDF, SIPSAH, or SSRI affect the UPMC Competitive Medical Research Fund (CMRF)?

No, the integration of these funds into the Pitt Momentum Funds does not affect the CMRF, which supports faculty with primary appointments in the Schools of the Health Sciences. The CMRF is administered separately by the Office of Research, Health Sciences.