



**LOOK TO MICHIGAN FACULTY EXPANSION PROGRAM**  
**Program Description, Request for Proposals, and Review Processes**  
**Academic Year 2026-2027**

(Changes from last year's RFP noted in red text)

Program aims:

The Look to Michigan Faculty Expansion Program (FEP) seeks to recruit to our campus colleagues with exceptional potential to expand our capacity for transformative inquiry in high-impact areas of research/scholarship and societal challenge. Targets of the program are mid-career tenure-track faculty (i.e., **associate and/or early full professors with tenure**) who will catalyze, collaborate, and provide intellectual and institutional leadership in areas aligned with at least one of the five impact areas articulated in the [Look to Michigan framework](#): Life-Changing Education; Human Health and Well-Being; Democracy, Civic and Global Engagement; Energy, Climate Action, Sustainability, and Environmental Equity; and Advanced Technology. Areas of strategic interest consistent with the Look to Michigan framework are also eligible.

The program will support both individual faculty hires and groups or clusters of hires in high-impact areas of transformational research/scholarship and societal challenge. It will afford some flexibility in the provision of support for research teams, as below. Hires should have a research focus or foci consistent with one or more Look to Michigan impact areas and should model and strengthen capacity for transformational interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary research innovation. Hires under this program should be able to articulate concrete plans to expand research and scholarship through existing and/or emerging external funding programs. Hiring that promotes interdisciplinary research activity across schools/colleges is strongly preferred. Early and ongoing consultation with the Vice Provosts for Academic and Faculty Affairs is encouraged.

Key components:

- There are two pathways for review: one for single hires and another with multi-stage review when cluster hires are proposed. In the instance of single hires with exceptional potential to align with the goals of the program, deans (or their designees) may submit to our office a brief letter of intent and the candidate's CV for consideration (details below). Deans or their designees should contact the Faculty Affairs team in the Provost's Office ([VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu](mailto:VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu)) with questions.
- For cluster hires, multi-stage review will occur. Units may submit Letters of Intent (LOI) and, for those subsequently invited to follow up, full proposals for final funding decisions. LOIs and proposals should describe hiring plans to bring new faculty to campus, targeting mid-career tenure-track faculty who can leverage, expand, or create new capacity at U-M for high-level, high-stakes, transformational research in areas of critical interest consistent with the Look to Michigan impact areas. Hiring that promotes interdisciplinary, cross-unit research activity, with potential for high impact and external

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funding, is a priority. Proposals focused on addressing or anticipating curricular or instructional gaps are not responsive to this program.

- We encourage the use of available resources and programs to ensure best hiring and recruitment practices as consistent with our commitments to institutional values. Successful proposals will summarize those existing commitments and show how the proposed hiring and related activity will leverage existing resources.
- We invite proposals that involve the creation of new centers for research activity or amplification of current centers, as well as proposals for hiring faculty with capacity to lead transformational research activity at this level and scope. In the case of new or expanded current centers, proposals must include specific plans for sunsetting or transitioning center activity toward a sustainable support model. Hiring that promotes transformational research activity across schools and colleges will be strongly preferred.
- For proposals involving center-level activity, either at the piloting or growth phases, we strongly encourage attention to the [Impact Institutes](#) support program led by OVPR. Funded proposals may draw on both FEP funding, which targets high-impact faculty hires, and Impact Institute funding, intended to propel interdisciplinary collaboration and high-impact innovation.
- Proposals that center around successful [Impact Institutes](#) or [Strategic Initiative Fund](#) awards are encouraged. Applicants should indicate the status of respective proposals when applying to the FEP program.

Review activity:

For this cycle, we will accept and review LOIs and subsequently invited proposals on a rolling basis, with a deadline of **October 16, 2026**, for review to occur this academic year. Deans and school leaders are highly encouraged to discuss ideas with the appropriate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs.

Among submitted proposals, the provost's office will identify proposals with the greatest potential for impact as described to receive the maximum level of base and start-up. Consistent with our Look to Michigan framework, we anticipate that successful proposals will leverage interdisciplinarity and excellence at scale.

Financial assumptions:

The program will provide cost-sharing (up to 50-50) on base and start-up with the unit(s), with up to a \$125K cap on strategic initiative fund contributions to initial salary and proportional benefits. In general, summer ninths and start-up bonuses, relocation funds, and other such expenses will not be supported by the program, but schools may provide summer ninths at their discretion. The program will also provide one-time startup funds of up to \$1,250,000 per faculty hire to partially support equipment and renovations. Please note that, among submitted requests, some will be chosen for the highest level of one-time funding support. Use of university core equipment is strongly encouraged (and should preferably be identified in full

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proposals). Startup contributions may also include costs for master's and doctoral students and/or postdocs for a time-limited basis, subject to justification and provost's office review.

Research and clinical track faculty, and staff research personnel, are ineligible for provost office funding.

Please note: for this hiring program, if multiple units are involved in the hiring of a faculty member, the Office of the Provost will provide up to 50% of compensation and startup up to the cap, and the remaining 50% cost-share on compensation and startup will be shared among the participating units.

Other funding expectations apply:

- Funds may be adjusted if faculty receive sponsored research support or substantial clinical revenue that overlaps with salary funding from this initiative.
- Should faculty leave their tenure-track positions or the University of Michigan, the portion of the base salary and benefits funded by this program will revert to the provost's office.
- Funds are subject to university policy for use of faculty research and discretionary accounts.
- The expiration period for startup funds will align with unit policy, with a maximum of five years of eligibility.

All hiring funded on this program must conform with our standard Authorization to Extend Offer (AEO) process. Selected candidates, following Regental review and approval, will receive a titled professorship, a Michigan Impact Professorship, for one five-year non-renewable term.

Assistant professor candidates are not the target hires for this program, given the emphasis on leadership and scholarly expertise to advance transformative inquiry. Any candidate considered at the rank of Assistant Professor requires pre-approval from our office. In the instance of cluster proposals, there must be demonstrable evidence across the cluster for sufficient leadership expertise to pursue transformative scholarship. Conferral with the corresponding Vice Provost is highly encouraged in these instances.

The program will continue until the funds allocated for salary and benefits cost sharing are fully expended.



Look to Michigan Faculty Expansion Program Review and Selection Process:

The RFP and review process will begin with a Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted to both Vice Provosts for Academic and Faculty Affairs (Sara Blair and Christopher Friese) by deans, or where appropriate to the proposed activity, center directors with the dean's approval. **Submissions should be sent in PDF form to [VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu](mailto:VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu).**

There are two pathways for applications:

1. Single Opportunity Hires. Mid-career faculty candidates who align with goals outlined above are eligible. Deans (or their designees, cc'ing the Dean) should provide a 1-page cover letter that summarizes the candidate's scholarship and potential to catalyze transformative research and scholarship in the respective area through existing and/or emerging external funding mechanisms, outline the potential timeline for the hire, proposed recruitment package, and a copy of the candidate's CV. The appropriate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs will review and follow up with deans, as necessary.
2. Cluster Hires. Cluster hire proposals will undergo a two-stage process, as outlined below. They may originate from school leadership or faculty teams, but should secure appropriate school approval prior to submission.

Letters of Intent (LOI) (2 pages maximum) must include:

- I. An overview of the hiring and activity plan, logic, and aims:
  - Sponsoring unit(s), number of hires, and likely mechanism (target of opportunity, open search)
  - How the hire(s) will leverage, expand, or create new capacity for high-level, transformative, interdisciplinary research in an area of impact, interest, and commitment
  - How the proposed activity will align with the unit's response to the Look to Michigan framework (specify which pillar(s)) and meet longer-term goals in impact areas
- II. Overview budget, with breakdowns for base and one-time funding consistent with our general funding support categories (see program description section above). If the proposal includes creation of a new research center, or amplification or extension of a current center, please provide an account of the planned trajectory, including funding transition or sunseting, for its activity.

LOIs will be reviewed within the provost's office with reference to the program's selection criteria:

- Potential for research innovation
- Alignment with the Look to Michigan framework and campus strategic aims
- Likelihood of high impact
- Creation/leveraging of interdisciplinary and transformational research capacity; creation/leveraging of research activity across schools and colleges

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- Attention to sustainability of the proposed activity and funding model, where it involves a center
- Clear plans for the faculty hire(s) to pursue external funding and/or advancement potential, through existing or emerging funding mechanisms.
- **Connections, if any, to awarded Impact Institute and/or Strategic Initiative Fund proposals.**
- **Proposed recruitment strategies. In the instance of cluster hires, coordination across searches is expected, using approaches such as single search committees and/or cognate membership and participation in search activities. While not binding, providing examples of types of faculty candidates under consideration is helpful to reviewers.**

Selected LOIs will move forward, with an invitation to the appropriate dean(s)/director(s) to submit a full proposal for further review for final funding decisions.

Full Proposals (5 pages of text with one additional page allowed for itemized budget):

Full submissions must include:

- Review of current assets on campus in the relevant area(s) and an account of how the proposed hiring and activity will expand or enhance them or enable transformative research capacity, particularly interdisciplinary research capacity
- Description of the specific research activity and capacity supported by the proposed hiring
- Metrics for assessing the success of the activity
- Any shared research resources or cores that could be leveraged
- Plan for the sustainability and transitioning or sunseting of the activity
- Attestation of participation from all participating deans
- **Proposed search strategies and in the instance of cluster proposals, strategies for coordination and communication across searches.**
- Budget details. In one separate page, please provide a table to summarize:
  - Base salary for Year 1, proportional benefits
  - Start-up costs, itemized
  - Within the table, please show department and school contributions and requested contribution from this program (see Financial Assumptions section, p. 2). **In general, summer ninths and relocation expenses are not covered by this program.**

Final selection of invited proposals to be awarded faculty positions and associated funding will be conducted within the provost's office. As part of this process, the provost will consult with colleagues on campus with subject area expertise.

**Funded cluster hire leads will join the Vice Provosts for a kick-off conversation to clarify expectations and discuss strategies to support successful searches.**

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# ACADEMIC AND FACULTY AFFAIRS

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

LOIs for this round of the program may be submitted at any time from this point forward. **The submissions process and review will be conducted on a rolling basis, with a preferred submission for LOIs by **October 16, 2026.****

For both LOIs and subsequently invited full proposals, we strongly encourage communication with our office. Please direct any questions or concerns to the Vice Provosts for Academic and Faculty Affairs ([VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu](mailto:VPS.Academic.Faculty.Affairs@umich.edu)).