HOWARD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

RWJF Aim 5 Faculty Re-Entry & Data Science Mini-Grant

Review Deadline: Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Committee Meeting: Week of February 9, 2026 (Zoom)

I. Program Context: The "Re-Entry" Lens

Unlike a standard NIH study section, this grant is a **"rescue and modernize"** initiative designed to restart stalled research programs.

- **Target Audience:** Mid-career or senior faculty whose research productivity has stalled due to heavy teaching, clinical, or administrative loads (the "Service Tax").
- **The Productivity Gap:** Do not penalize applicants for a recent gap in publications or funding. That gap is the prerequisite for this award.
- **Goal:** Provide seed funding (up to $30,000) to generate preliminary data for a federal grant submission (NIH R-type grant) or equivalent non-federal/foundation funding within 12 months.

II. Review Process

1. **Format:** Applications are short (~3 pages). You have been assigned 2-3 applications.
2. **Scoring:** Provide a score of 1 (Exceptional) to 9 (Poor) for each criterion.
3. **Comments:** Provide brief Strengths/Weaknesses bullet points to guide committee discussion.
4. **Submission:** Submit scoresheets by Wednesday, February 4, 2026.

III. Application Format

Applicants were instructed to submit the following components:

Component	Page Limit
Research Proposal	3 pages
Re-Entry Statement	1 page
Budget	1 page
Biosketch	Standard NIH format

Note: Some applications may exceed these page limits. Please review the full submission.

IV. Evaluation Rubric

1. Significance & Health Equity (25%)

Does the project address a critical barrier to progress? Does the proposal **explicitly address Health Equity** or health disparities, particularly regarding underserved populations in DC?

Note: Projects without a clear link to equity or disparities should receive a lower score.

2. Investigator & Re-Entry Potential (20%)

Is the investigator a mid-career/senior faculty member? Does the "Re-Entry Statement" clearly articulate how institutional service (teaching/admin) stalled their research? Is there a convincing argument that this grant will restart their research productivity?

Priority: Prioritize "rescuing" stalled faculty over funding new junior faculty ("Rising Stars") who likely have startup funds.

3. Innovation & Technical Modernization (20%)

Does the project represent a technical pivot for the investigator? The project **must incorporate a Data Science, AI/ML, or Computational component**. Are they moving from traditional methods to modern tools (EHR analysis, large datasets, bioinformatics)?

4. Approach & Feasibility (15%)

Are the overall strategy and methodology well-reasoned? Can this specific scope be completed in 12 months with the funds requested (up to $30,000)? Look for realistic pilot scopes (e.g., secondary data analysis) rather than expensive new clinical trials.

5. Sustainability & ROI (20%)

Is there a concrete return on investment? Does the applicant identify a **specific external grant mechanism** (e.g., "NIH R-type grant" or equivalent non-federal/foundation funding) and a target submission date (e.g., "October 2026")?

> **Note:** *Vague promises to "seek future funding" are insufficient.*

V. Overall Impact Score

Considering the weighted criteria above, provide a final Impact Score:

High Impact (1-3)	Strong re-entry case, clear Data Science/Equity focus, solid path to external funding
Medium Impact (4-6)	Good science, but weak data science integration or vague external funding plan
Low Impact (7-9)	Lacks mandatory components or applicant is already well-funded

VI. Reference: NIH Scoring Guide

Score	Descriptor	Guidance
1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses