

AOFAS Research Grants Policy

The AOFAS Research Grants Program
is funded by generous donations from individuals and corporations to
The Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Foundation

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I. Objectives

The objective of the Research Grants Program and other third-party funded research grants is to advance foot and ankle investigation by providing seed and start-up funding for promising research projects and encourage supplemental submissions to national funding sources.

II. Application Deadline

Application deadline varies by type of grant. Currently, the application deadlines are as follows:

- a) Research Grants Program – First week of November
- b) Ronald and Wendy Smith Research Grant – First week of November
- c) Arthritis Foundation Grant - Spring

III. Awards Announcement

Award announcement varies by the type of grant. Awardees are notified via email. Currently, grant awards are announced as follows:

- a) Research Grants Program – January
- b) Ronald and Wendy Smith Research Grant – January
- c) Arthritis Foundation Grant – September

IV. Grant Period

Grant periods vary by the type of grant:

- a) Research Grants Program – May 1 after the application deadline through April 30 of the following year
- b) Ronald and Wendy Smith Research Grant – December 1 after the application deadline through November 30 of the following year
- c) Arthritis Foundation Grant – two years after acceptance of award

V. Review Process

Grant applications are reviewed and scored by the AOFAS Research Committee and its ad hoc reviewers on a double-blind basis using an NIH-style process. The committee decides upon the specific proposals to fund, and the AOFAS Board determines the total funding amount for all grants. The committee will work on supporting the goals and principles of the AOFAS, and foster mentorship of junior colleagues.

In order to ensure a fair and accurate review process, additional reviewer(s) may be invited to review grants in certain scenarios. These include highly specialized content outside the expertise of the review panel, and/or a potential conflict of interest such as an AOFAS research committee member submitting an application. AOFAS research staff and research committee chairs will determine whether grant submissions fitting either category will require a Special Review Panel (SRP, see below). The applicant who has a potential conflict must notify research staff and the committee chairs one month prior to the application deadline of intention to submit an application. The applicant will not be assigned proposals for review in the same grant category. The applicant will not participate in the grant ranking conference call discussion of proposals within the same category.

The SRP consists of 2-4 AOFAS members such as former AOFAS Research Committee chairs or previous Research Committee members with experience in critically reviewing research grants proposals. In the event that the subject matter of the project is out of the scope of expertise of the SRP, additional reviewers may participate in evaluating selected grant applications, including other AOFAS members or non-AOFAS members with content expertise. Each SRP committee member will be selected by the current committee chairs and will not have any conflicts with the specific applications to be reviewed. The process will be transparent, fair, unbiased, and the SRP reviews included in the ranking of proposals.

VI. Grant Categories

The AOFAS Research Grants Program consists of three grant categories, while the Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant and the Arthritis Foundation Grant do not.

The AOFAS Research Grants Program's three categories are:

a) Pilot Project Research Grant (Up to US \$5,000)

Encourages new investigators (especially residents and fellows) to participate in research to promote the development of new lines of research and improve the quality of research grant applications by providing seed funding for new pilot projects.

It is expected that the data obtained from funded Pilot Projects will be used to develop future grant applications. Pilot Project Research Grants may not exceed \$5,000, and no more than four Pilot Project Research Grants may be awarded in one cycle.

Resident Award (\$5,000)

Encourages Orthopaedic MD and DO Residents to engage a named mentor (AOFAS Active or International member) who will serve as the CI on a research grant project.

b) Small Project Grant (Up to US \$20,000)

Provides start-up funding for promising research projects and encourages supplemental submissions to national funding resources.

The Early Career Award can only be awarded once to an investigator. Prior awardees of the AOFAS Resident Award and the Pilot Research Grants are eligible for the Early Career Award. Applicants for the Early Career Award must disclose on the application if they were a PI or Co-PI on a government research grant, which makes them ineligible for the Early Career Award. Co-investigators for a government research grant are eligible to apply for the Early Career Award.

c) Established Project Research Grant (Up to US \$50,000)

Provides opportunity to support innovative research for basic science, clinical trial, or pre-trial work that could be used to obtain additional grants from national funding sources.

To be competitive in the Established Project Research Grant category, applications **must** provide background on preliminary work as well as publications and/or presented data or abstracts to demonstrate feasibility of projects and capabilities of the research team.

The Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant awards up to \$25,000. The award may be renewable for a second year, but not guaranteed (maximum of \$50,000 over two years.)

The Arthritis Foundation Grant awards between \$150,000 to \$300,000 until the full \$600,000 limit is reached. It is intended that all \$600,000 will have been awarded to grant recipients by year two of the research cycle.

VII. Eligibility

The following members are eligible to apply for research grants:

	Research Grants Program (see Grant Categories for details)	Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant	Arthritis Foundation Grant
Active Member	✓	✓	✓
Candidate Member	✓	✓	✓
International Member	✓	✓	
<i>Surgeon-in-Training</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if Surgeon-in-Training member is in the US, and if PI or CI is an Active Member or Candidate Member in the US</i>
<i>International Surgeon-in-Training</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	
<i>MD-Affiliate</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if MD-Affiliate member is in the US, and if PI or CI is an Active Member or Candidate Member in the US</i>
<i>Honorary and Allied Health Associate-Basic Science</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if PI or CI is an Active Member, Candidate Member, or International Member</i>	✓ <i>if Honorary and Allied Health Associate-Basic Science member is in the US, and if PI or CI is an Active Member or Candidate Member in the US</i>

Access to research grants is a benefit of AOFAS membership. Either the principal investigator or co- investigator on an application must be an AOFAS member in good standing in one of the following membership categories:

- Active member
- Candidate member
- International member

Surgeon-in-training, International surgeon-in-training, MD-affiliate, Honorary and Allied Health Associate – Basic Science Members may apply with an AOFAS active member, candidate, or international member as primary investigator or co-investigator.

Arthritis Foundation grant funding is limited to investigators and institutions in the United States only. Only active members and candidate members may apply.

Additional eligibility policies for the Research Grants Program and Ronald and Wendy Smith Program include:

- 1) Investigators may not be awarded more than two grants in any four consecutive years.
- 2) No more than one grant per institution per year will be awarded.
- 3) For the Research Grants Program, projects based on the same topic or research question may not be submitted in more than one grant category (Pilot Project, Small Project, and Established Project categories) in any one cycle.
- 4) For the Research Grants Program, Pilot Project grant category eligibility is not limited to AOFAS Surgeon-in-training or International Surgeon-in-training members, but applications from a Surgeon-in-training or International Surgeon-in-training member must include a co-investigator from one of the following AOFAS membership categories (Active, Candidate, or International)
- 5) Members of the Research Committee and its ad hoc reviewers may apply for grants in the year in which they review applications. If a project is submitted by a current member of the AOFAS Research Committee, the submission will be reviewed by the Special Review Panel or the Research Committee member submitting the proposal will abstain from participating in grant review or discussion in the category of their grant proposal.
- 6) AOFAS Board Members and AOFAS committee members may apply for all research grants provided they identify themselves as Board or committee members when filling out the application forms.
- 7) First time PIs receive an additional 10% in their final score during the review process.

VIII. Application Procedure

The application is now exclusively online. To start applying, go to:

<https://www.aofas.org/research-policy>

IX. Who Completes the Application

Applications may be prepared by the principal investigator, co-investigator, or another designated person on behalf of the principal investigator. Before beginning the application, if the person submitting the application (the “Applicant”) is not the principal investigator, please consider the Applicant’s availability to serve as primary contact through the grant award term.

The applicant is responsible for:

1) Completing the online application content.

2) Designating the names and e-mail addresses of the other related persons (all investigators and institutional representatives, including institutional grants officer and financial officer and departmental chair) whose signatures are required.

3) Triggering an email invitation in the online system to those persons to complete their required reviews of the program description, policies and guidelines document and the application content before signing via a time-stamped and date-stamped e-signature.

X. Important Reminders to Applicants

When completing the online application, please keep in mind that the grants review process is blinded. **Do not include information that would “unblind” the application.**

The names of the investigator(s), names of their institution(s), and any other information that would identify the applicants or their institution should **not** appear anywhere in the application **except** in the sections specifically designated for investigator and institutional information.

Identifying information may include the names of collaborating bodies or organizations such as labs, vendors, partner institutions that, by association or geographical proximity, might “unblind” the application to reviewers. Applicants should take care to remove such specifics or refer to them generically to maintain application blinded status.

If an application contains such identifying information, AOFAS reserves the right to remove it from consideration for review.

XI. Disclosures of Conflicts of Interest (COI) and Signatures

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Forms of all investigators must be completed with the Grant Application. The form can be found in the online application portal.

NOTE: Applicants should complete the application and related persons information and trigger email invitations for application review and signature to the other associated persons **well in advance** to allow time for any delays due to institutional review processes or requirements, holidays, personnel absences, etc. Other associated persons (Co-Investigators and Institutional Representatives) must review the application and sign **after** the Applicant completes the online application and **before** the **application deadline**. The associated

persons' signatures must be complete before the Applicant may submit the application.

XII. Notification of Awards and Research Funds

The AOFAS will notify the designated contact person (the "Applicant" who submitted the application in the application system) by email. The Funding Agreement acceptance statement must be signed by the principal investigator, co- investigators, and institutional financial officer within thirty (30) days following notification. Principal investigators, co- investigators, and institution staff are NOT allowed to alter the Funding Agreement acceptance statement.

Seventy percent (70%) of the grant award is distributed upon receipt of the signed Funding Agreement acceptance statement. Payment of the remaining 30% is contingent upon receipt of the final project report (including financial expenditures), abstract submission for the following AOFAS Annual Meeting or AOFAS Winter Meeting, and submission of the paper to the AOFAS journal, *Foot & Ankle International* (FAI) for review.

For Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant awardees, funding requested and approved in addition to the initial \$25,000 grant will be disbursed at study completion after the final report is submitted along with the final budget report, abstract submission for the AOFAS Annual Meeting or AOFAS Winter Meeting, and submission of paper to *Foot & Ankle International* (FAI).

Investigators are required to submit an INTERIM REPORT FORM at the midpoint of their funding year to report on progress in their study. If studies have not concluded by their deadlines, PIs or CIs may submit a STUDY EXTENSION REQUEST to report the study's progress, and to provide reasons for the request for extension.

At expiration of the grant, any unexpended balance of \$100 or more must be refunded to the AOFAS within sixty (60) days.

The grant recipient may terminate a grant prior to the normal expiration date by notifying the AOFAS in writing and stating the reasons for termination. Unexpended funds must be returned to the AOFAS within sixty (60) days, together with a final report of expenditures. The AOFAS reserves the right to terminate grants at any time upon three months written notice.

XIII. Policy of Animals in Research

Use of animals and institution must justify the number of animals requested for the project. If applicable, provide IACUC approval and OLAW assurance approval, regarding use of and number of animals requested for project.

All animals used in research supported by AOFAS grants must be acquired lawfully and be transported, cared for, treated, and used in accordance with existing laws, regulations and guidelines. Scientists and institutions must make decisions as to the kind and sources of animals that are most appropriate for studies. AOFAS policy requires that such decisions be subject to institutional and peer review for scientific merit and ethical concerns and that appropriate assurances be given that NIH principal governing the use of animals are followed.

XIV. Policy on Human Subjects in Research

Use of human subjects and sample size must be justified. If applicable, IRB statements from your institution's human subjects committee must be provided. IRB approval is required for patient X-rays and other tests by deadlines specified by AOFAS for each research grant award..

AOFAS grant recipients are entrusted to assure adequate protection of human subjects. NIH regulations regarding human subjects should be followed:

<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/humansubjects/policies-and-regulations.htm>

XV. Interim Progress Report and Final Report

Report formats for the Interim Progress Report and the Final Report will be sent with notification of the grant award. Reports should be sent to the AOFAS via e-mail to: research@aofas.org.

A.

For grant application, the following documents are to be submitted via the online portal:

- 1) Grant Application document (provided in the grant portal)
- 2) Conflict of Interest/Disclosure document for each PI and CI (provided in the grant portal)
- 3) Biographical Sketch of PI-Download the NIH Biographical Sketch form (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). Use the sample format on the "Biographical Sketch with Sample" (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>) to prepare this section.
- 4) Budget/Financial Report (PDF)
- 5) Research Strategy document (PDF)
- 6) Bibliography (PDF)
- 7) Contact information of each PI, CI, and the organization's contact person such as Department Chair, Grant Administrator, Financial Officer (provided in the grant portal)
- 8) Tax ID number of your institution (provided in the grant portal)

B.

After grant awardees are announced, the following documents should be sent to AOFAS via research@aofas.org. Please reference your Grant ID number on the reference line (example: Grant # 2021-123-P).

- 1) Signed agreements
- 2) IRB approval (if applicable)

C.

During and at the conclusion of the study, the following documents should be sent to AOFAS via research@aofas.org. Please reference your Grant ID number on the reference line (example: Grant # 2021-123-P)

- 1) Interim Report – November 1 of the funding year
- 2) Final Report – April 30 of the year following grant award. Final report must include financial report, receipt of abstract submission for the AOFAS Annual Meeting, and receipt of submission to *Foot & Ankle International*.
- 3) Six-months Extension Request - Starting 6 months from the ending date of funding. Additional extensions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

xvi. Policy on Delinquent Financial/Research Reports

The AOFAS reserves the right to deny additional grants to any institution or investigator, where after proper notification, an investigator has not submitted his/her final report within 18 months of the acceptance letter date. This policy will be enforced when reports are one year past the final due date. Upon receipt of these reports, the institution or investigator shall again become eligible for AOFAS grants.

xvii. Policy on Changing Aims of Grant

If the principal investigator and collaborators find that the original aims of the grant cannot be accomplished, and that to continue the project substantial changes in aims or methodology must be considered, the principal investigator must request permission from AOFAS to modify the aims. This request must be made in writing and must include the reasons for the change.

XVIII. Policy on Grant Transfers

In general, AOFAS research grants are not transferrable. In the case of an investigator who moves to a new institution, a request to transfer an awarded grant will be considered on a case-by-case basis, upon written request from the principal investigator. The investigator must provide the AOFAS Research Committee with a written request including specific information on the new environment to ensure the project can still be reasonably completed as detailed in the initial grant proposal.

XIX. Budget

The budget for the project should include direct costs only. No salary or wages amount may be allotted to the principal investigator or co-investigators. Funds may not be used for travel.

Equipment purchases over \$5,000 are generally not permitted. Budget items taking a significant portion of the budget, particularly equipment and personnel costs, require explanation with rationale in the Budget Justification section.

Additional guidelines for completing the Budget section of the application include:

- 1) Please provide budget justification for each expense and category listed in the budget. Budget justification depth and detail should be commensurate with the grant category and level of funding requested.
- 2) Provide specifics about other funding sources that have been secured including organization or company providing funding, dates of funding, and dollar amount.
- 3) For Research Grants Program awards: While the total budget may exceed \$5,000 for Pilot Project Research Grants, \$20,000 for Small Project Research Grants, and \$50,000 for the new Established Project Research Grants category, only \$5,000, \$20,000 or \$50,000 respectively, can be provided by AOFAS.
- 4) The AOFAS funding will not be released until other sources of funding needed to meet the total budget have been secured.

XX. Presentation and Publication

Grant recipients are **required** to submit an abstract for presentation of their research at the AOFAS Annual Meeting or the AOFAS Winter Meeting upon conclusion of their study.

Foot & Ankle International, the official scientific journal of the AOFAS, has the right of first refusal for publication of research findings by grant recipients. The primary paper from the supported research must be submitted to FAI, and any secondary papers from this original research may be

submitted to other journals for publication.

For Research Grants Program awardees, the following acknowledgment should be used as a footnote on the first page of the text: *“Supported by a grant from the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society with funding from the Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Foundation.”*

For Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant awardees, the following acknowledgment should be used as a footnote on the first page of the text: *“Supported by a grant from the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society with funding from the Ronald and Wendy Smith Grant.”*

For the Arthritis Foundation Grant, the following acknowledgment should be used as a footnote on the first page of the text: *“The authors wish to acknowledge the Arthritis Foundation financial support for this work.” Any publications supported in full or in part by this funding must also cite the grant Digital Object Identifier (DOI) that will be assigned at the time of award activation.*

The above credit line must also be included when a grant recipient presents a paper at a professional scientific meeting. The grant award recipient must send reprints of all papers and publications resulting from work done under a grant, including those that appear after the grant has been terminated.

xxi. Application Format

Application materials should be submitted via the online application system, per the instructions indicated in this document, as well as throughout the online application.

The **Project Title** must contain a reference to the clinical relevance of your project.

The **Research Strategy** may be prepared and formatted in Microsoft Word, with figures, tables, and images incorporated. The document should be 6 pages maximum, with a font size not smaller than 10- point. Minimum margins must be 1/2 inch for left and right, 1 inch for top and bottom. Convert to PDF file format for upload into the online system.

Documents that need to be uploaded should be in PDF file format, with files named as indicated in the instructions. Please adhere to page/word/character limitations as indicated in the instructions throughout the online application form.

Graphics (figures, tables, photographs or other image files, medical images, data tables) should be converted to PDF file format, where practical; named as indicated in the application form; uploaded into the online system under Appendices; and referenced by the relevant file name where appropriate in other sections of the application form.

Institutional approval documents (IRB approval, human subjects’ protection program, institutional animal care and use, site review, etc.) should be named as indicated and uploaded as separate files in the appropriate place in the application according to instructions.

XXII. Resubmission

If the application is a resubmission of an application submitted on the same or a similar topic, with or without the same title, within the past four years, the applicant must select “yes” on application form in the appropriate space to indicate this. An application may be resubmitted twice.

A resubmission must include a statement of how the applicant has responded to previous critique(s) and summarizing changes made from the original application. If extensive changes have been made or the entire application has been rewritten, the main points of change should be summarized.

XXIII. Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted via the online application system which can be accessed from the link at <https://www.aofas.org/research-policy>. On the right side of the screen, click on the appropriate grant to view the application. Paper, faxed, or emailed applications **will not** be accepted.

Specific instructions for each part of the application are provided at the appropriate places throughout the online application.

The “Applicant” may be the principal investigator, a co-investigator, or another person on behalf of the principal investigator. The “Applicant” and principal investigator will be contacted for correspondence related to this application or any grant awards. All correspondence will be sent by email to the “Applicant” and principal investigator email addresses.

XXIV. Questions

Email: research@aofas.org

Phone: 1-800-235-4855 or 1-847-698-4654 (outside US)