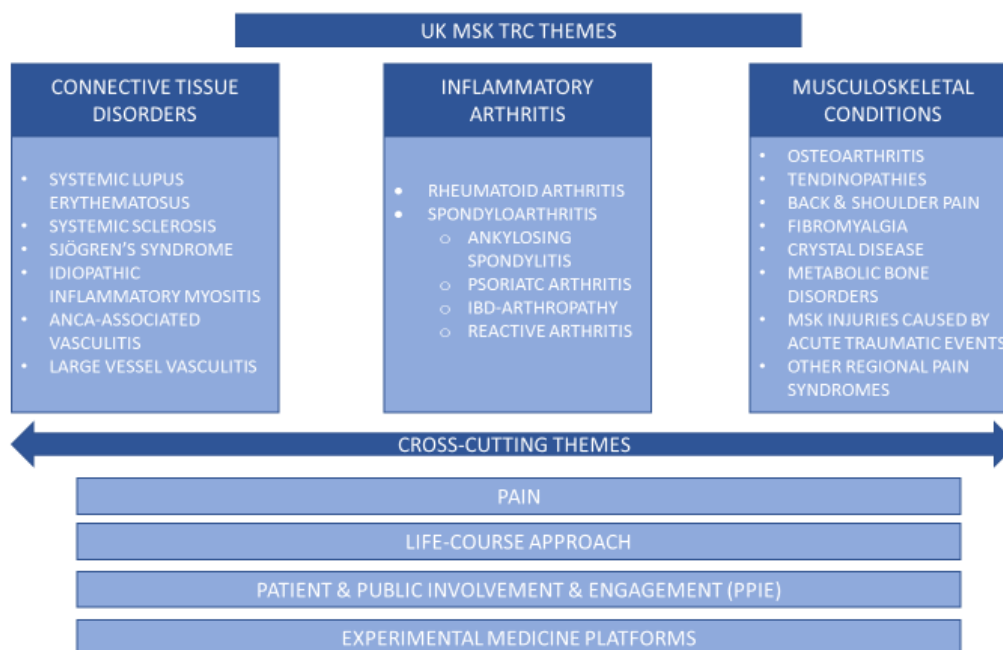


Accelerating New Treatments Versus Arthritis - Call for applications

Summary

The UK [Musculoskeletal Translational Research Collaboration \(MSK TRC\)](#) is a partnership between Versus Arthritis and the National Institute for Health Research. The partnership aims for the globally recognised centres of the UK to be at the forefront of musculoskeletal experimental medicine. The collaboration draws on the rich discovery, clinical and translational research landscape of the UK to accelerate new treatments and deliver cutting edge improvements for patients. The new collaboration operates an expansive, flexible, inclusive model. This builds on our previous investment in Experimental Arthritis and Osteoarthritis Treatment Centres and NIHR Biomedical Research Centres, welcoming and encompassing wider hubs and collaborators.



To bring momentum to the area, we will fund mechanistic experimental/translational medicine studies in humans across the areas of prevention, diagnosis or treatment that are aimed at priming the next transitional step (maximum duration of a project is three years).

Applications should be focused on an unmet arthritis need, within or across the collaboration's themes. Studies that tackle related COVID-19 questions are also encouraged.

- Studies can employ novel design, exploratory endpoints, biomarkers, imaging, big data or profiling/stratification approaches.

- Studies can include digital technology solutions and account for co/multi-morbidities.
- Applications should be patient insight-driven and involve people with arthritis in the development of the outlined work, identifying or corroborating an unmet need and collaborating with them in the delivery of the proposed research.
- Studies should carefully consider the population position in the life-course (younger to older). We are particularly interested in applications with a target population that includes the young or the elderly.

Applicants must carefully read the application form and guidance documentation before starting an application. Please ensure that the most appropriate language is being used in each section of the form and that the correct sections are completed.

Applicants are invited to submit applications to this one-stage process through Grant Tracker. The deadline for the receipt of applications is **16:00 on Monday 18 January 2021**.

If you have any questions about this call document, eligibility or would like to discuss your research proposal with the office please email research@versusarthritis.org

Scope

Through this call for applications, we are looking to fund proposals for mechanistic experimental/translational medicine studies in humans across the areas of prevention, diagnosis or treatment, which seek to address an identified unmet musculoskeletal need, within or across the TRC themes (shown in diagram).

Through this call we will be funding projects to develop disease understanding in humans and create novel treatments and interventions applying basic discovery science finding to the treatment and prevention of human disease. Proposed studies must advance the translational pathway towards new or improved treatments and it should be clear from the application what the next step will be beyond the proposed study. We will also be accepting studies that tackle related COVID-19 questions.

Studies should carefully consider the population in the life-course (younger to older). We are particularly interested in applications with a target population that includes the young or the elderly. Cross-disease applications, as well as single disease focused studies, will be accepted.

There is an expectation that applicants involve people with arthritis in the development of the outlined work and identifying or corroborating an unmet need as well as collaborating with them in the delivery of the proposed research.

Additional considerations within the scope of this call:

- Applications must be collaborative and involve at least two [key organisations of the MSK TRC](#) as a lead/co-applicant or collaborator.
- Collaborations with industry partners are encouraged.
- Collaborations with international partners are welcome.
- Applicants should take care to ensure future benefit for people with arthritis is clearly and reasonably discussed within the application.
- We welcome applications aiming to use novel methodological and experimental designs and/or making use of advances in technology and computing (such as artificial intelligence).
- Studies can employ exploratory endpoints, biomarkers, imaging, omics, big data or profiling/stratification approaches.
- Studies can include digital technology solutions and account for co/multi-morbidities.
- Clinical research applications can be situated anywhere on the clinical research pathway from first-in-human to larger phase studies.
- Studies must show feasibility evidence relating to outcome measure selection, study design and statistical methods, subject recruitment and retention and delivery of the intervention. Applications defining feasibility studies to identify these parameters will be accepted. Where relevant applicants should engage a UKCRC-registered CTU in advance of submission of your application.
- Applicants with proposals that have agreement for part-funding from a third party are not excluded, but applicants should contact us to discuss their application as early as possible.

If required, please contact the research team for guidance (research@versusarthritis.org) on the scope of the call and the relevance of your application.

Who can apply

Applications should ideally involve at least two key organisations affiliated to the [MSK TRC](#) (as a lead, co-applicant or collaborator). We welcome **collaborative applications** led either by investigators

- (i) at an organization affiliated to the TRC organisations together with affiliated partners within or beyond the core TRC centres or
- (ii) investigators beyond the core TRC centres together with affiliated partners at the key TRC organisations

In cases of applicants beyond the core TRC centres and with an absence of TRC linkage, investigators should speak with the office.

At least one of the applicants must have a tenured position within a UK university, hospital or recognised academic research institute.

Applications can include lead applicants and/or co-applicants with expertise relevant to this initiative, but who do not have a track record of musculoskeletal research. We expect applications to take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to

answering research questions. Patient partners may be included as co-applicants. Studies are encouraged to include industry partners.

What you can apply for

Awards of up to £300K, for up to 36 months, are available. Costs for salaries, expenses and small items of essential equipment can be requested. For further details on what you can apply for, please see the associated guidance document.

How to apply

Applicants must carefully read the application form and guidance documentation before starting an application. Please ensure that the most appropriate language is being used in each section of the form and that the correct sections are completed.

There is a single stage application process for all applications.

Applicants are invited to submit applications through [Grant Tracker](#), where the form is available. The deadline for the receipt of outline applications is **16:00 on Monday 18 January 2021**. Submissions after 16:00 will not be accepted.

How will applications be assessed

Assessment by people with arthritis forms a key part of the review process. Further information and guidance can be found on our [website](#) and in the call guidance document.

Applications will be reviewed by an assembled international panel of scientific, clinical and industry experts and people with arthritis and will be assessed on:

- i. Relevance to the scope of the call
- ii. Importance, novelty and whether it meets an unmet clinical need
- iii. Significance of the research outputs in driving translation and the route to patient benefit and impact
- iv. Involvement of people with arthritis
- v. Quality and appropriateness of the research design and methodology
- vi. Strength and make-up of the research team, including collaboration and proposed management arrangements
- vii. Applicants' track record and ability to deliver the proposed research
- viii. Facilities to conduct the proposed research
- ix. Feasibility and the potential to deliver the stated outcomes within the timescales and budget
- x. Value for money

This streamlined process will assess applications and make funding recommendations via a single-stage panel review and meeting without additional external peer-review. Due to the streamlined process there will be no opportunity for applicants to provide written rebuttal to address panel feedback.

Allocation of funding across the TRC themes is not pre-determined, awards will be made based on merit of the applications received. As part of the Charity's commitment to [Pain research](#), we plan to make an additional award where pain is either the condition to be studied or as a symptom, is the primary outcome to be studied. We plan to make between 3-5 awards in total.

Award management

It is expected that all awards will report annually via Researchfish, clinical study projects will report every six months to the Progress Review Committee. During the course of the award applicants may be invited to meetings with Versus Arthritis to discuss their research findings and/or asked to contribute written summaries.

Timelines

Call opens	Monday 19 October 2020
Deadline for applications	Monday 18 January 2021 16:00hrs
Panel meeting	February 2021
Notification and Feedback	Late March-early April 2021

Contact details

For all enquiries, please contact research@versusarthritis.org