

Fatigue evidence review 2023

Application Guidance

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1 Introduction

In 2020, Versus Arthritis and The Kennedy Trust held a workshop to identify priorities for musculoskeletal fatigue research. Participants from a diverse group of clinical and academic backgrounds, along with people with lived experience of fatigue worked together to identify tangible areas of research where collaboration between funders could achieve an impact on the lives of people living with musculoskeletal fatigue. Working with a small steering group we were able to stratify the outputs of the workshop into practical recommendations to be taken forward in partnership by Versus Arthritis and The Kennedy Trust.

We are looking for applications for a scoping review on ways to measure, assess and treat the chronic fatigue associated with musculoskeletal conditions. This can include

- the amount of evidence in each area
- the quality of evidence available
- where there are substantial gaps in our current knowledge
- the needs of people living with chronic fatigue
- future research priorities based on the information gathered

Reviews should include scientific and clinical evidence, as well as meaningful inclusion of the needs of people living with chronic fatigue. We expect the primary focus of the review to be on musculoskeletal fatigue, but encourage cross-disease applications, including outside musculoskeletal diseases where chronic fatigue is a key component.

The focus of this evidence review is on chronic fatigue related to long-term conditions. We welcome proposals that include CFS/ME in the analysis, but proposals that include CFS/ME as the primary focus will not be reviewed. Studies that also include COVID-19 in the analysis will be accepted.

We strongly encourage applications that carefully consider chronic fatigue across the life course (younger to older) and across diverse demographics and ethnic groups.

There is an expectation that applicants meaningfully involve people living with chronic fatigue in the development of the outlined work.

The outputs of this scoping review are expected to provide an important guide and inform future research partnership activity.

2 Eligibility criteria

Versus Arthritis research awards may only be held in universities, hospitals or recognised academic research institutes in the UK. Any academic, clinician or allied health care professional at an eligible UK institution can apply. The lead applicant must be based at an eligible UK institution. Individuals who are employed by, or whose salary derives from, a commercial organisation are not eligible to apply for a Versus Arthritis award but may be included as a co-applicant. International collaborators may also be included as co-applicants.

Please note all applications must have a lead applicant or another co-applicant that is tenured.

Applications can be from lead applicants and/or co-applicants that have expertise relevant to the area but do not have a track record of musculoskeletal research.

Applications are welcome that include an NHS service manager (or a manager with responsibility for delivering NHS services) as a co-applicant.

Multiple applications

We will not accept overlapping applications of the same research proposal to more than one Versus Arthritis funding scheme. We will accept an application that has been submitted to another funding body, however, please check the eligibility criteria of the other funding body before making an application.

Employees of Versus Arthritis or previously Arthritis Care/Arthritis Research UK are not permitted to be named as co-applicants or collaborators and letters of support from this group will not be accepted.

3 How to apply

All applications for Versus Arthritis funding must be received through our online grant management system Grant Tracker.

Further details on how to apply can be found on our [website](#).

The deadline for submission of applications is 16:00 on the stated deadline in the call document. No application will be accepted after this deadline. We strongly recommend that applicants allow sufficient time for submission before the deadline in order to obtain the necessary approvals, such as from your research or finance office and head of department.

For further enquiries on any aspect of your application, please email the Awards office at awards@versusarthritis.org or phone us on 0300 7900 403.

4 Note on language

We recognise that specialist language will be required to accurately convey the detail of your proposal and, as such, sections that require technical detail will be labelled accordingly.

In addition to scientific review, applications will also be reviewed by Versus Arthritis Research Partners (volunteers with lived experience). They assess the quality of the patient involvement, the relevance to the charity and potential for patient benefit. The application summary and involvement sections should be written in non-technical language, these are important parts of the application and require careful consideration.

For more information on how to write a clear and informative lay summary please use the following resources:


- [INVOLVE plain English summaries](#)
- [The Plain English Campaign](#)

If you have further enquiries on the use of appropriate language, please email the Patient Involvement Team at patientinsight@versusarthritis.org.

5 Guidance for completion of the full application form

The sections to be completed in the application form are presented below please ensure you reference each section before completing the online form.

Help icon

Additional information and guidance is also provided within the form for specific questions, this can be accessed by clicking on .

Application summary

Application title: The title should be descriptive. If relevant, please use PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) principals and include a project acronym.

Lead applicant: Details will be populated from the CV of the person who has started the application

Organisation: Insert the name of the lead applicant's host organisation.

Profession: This can be edited in the 'Manage my details: Basic information' section, accessed from the home page of Grant Tracker.

Relevant professional body: If you are registered with a regulatory body or council of your profession. This can be edited in the 'Manage my details: Basic Information' section, accessed from the home page of Grant Tracker.

Proposed start date: This should be no earlier than May 2023. Sufficient time should be allowed to gain NHS approval, if relevant, and all other necessary regulatory requirements such as Health Research Authority, if applicable. Also factor in the time to recruit relevant research staff. Please account for any capacity limitations in the clinical research environment and academic research offices.

Proposed duration: The overall duration should include the start-up time described above and a realistic estimate of how long the research will take, where appropriate considering realistic and feasible recruitment estimates based upon any capacity limitations within the clinical research environment. It should also include sufficient time at the end of the study for full analysis and reporting of the data. The maximum duration is 5-years.

Key words: Please enter up to six key words that describe your application.

Previously submitted: Please indicate if this or a related application has been submitted elsewhere, including Versus Arthritis. If a similar application has been submitted, please provide further details about the application, where it has been submitted and the outcome or date of expected outcome.

Abstract (written in non-technical language): Provide a brief account of the proposed activity in non-technical language, including the background to the problem; the aims and purposes of your proposal and why they are important; a brief experimental plan; and the relevance to Versus Arthritis potential patient benefit. This information may be used in public summaries of our funded researched and must be accessible by a wide audience. This section has a limit of 500 words.

What impact and potential benefits will the research have on those living with arthritis. We recognise that, depending on the nature of the research, the applications that we receive can have immediate patient benefit and others increase the knowledge basis for future interventions. In applications where the outcomes directly impact on the quality of life of people with arthritis, this should be clearly detailed in this section. Where benefit is less obvious, explain:

- why this study is necessary to inform a gap in knowledge that will be useful for subsequent translational research
- helping design study protocols and patient information
- what the potential next steps that would be required to get your research findings to clinical intervention are
- when the benefit might be achieved, with realistic justification of these timelines.

This section has a limit of 300 words.

Involvement and engagement

This section will be reviewed by Versus Arthritis Research Partners (volunteers with lived experience) and scientific experts. Please complete this section in non-technical language. Further guidance on writing for a lay audience is provided on page 2.

Meaningful engagement/involvement of people with arthritis could include activities such as:

- identifying and prioritising the research question
- helping design study protocols and patient information
- inputting into the application and/or ethics approval
- helping carry out elements of the study, rather than simply participating as a subject
- evaluating the research findings
- dissemination and implementation of outputs and outcomes.

To find out more on how to plan and carry out meaningful patient involvement please use the links below or contact patientinsight@versusarthritis.org

- <https://www.versusarthritis.org/media/21826/involving-people-with-arthritis.pdf>
- <http://www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/how-to-involve-people/>
- <http://www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/plain-english-summaries/>
- <http://www.invo.org.uk/posttypesresource/where-and-how-to-involve-in-the-research-cycle/>

How have people living with arthritis inputted into the design of the research? Explain how people with arthritis have inputted and informed this application: This could include: identifying and prioritising the research question, helping to design the study protocol and patient information, inputting into the application and ethics approvals. This section has a limit of 300 words.

How will people living with arthritis be involved in the conduct of the research? Explain how people with arthritis will input into the conduct of the research. This could include: helping to carry out elements of the research, evaluation of research findings, disseminating and implementing outputs and outcomes. This section has a limit of 300 words.

Describe how people with arthritis were involved in designing the end points and outcomes of the research. This section has a limit of 300 words.

How will results of the research be fed back to those participating and other people living with arthritis? Outline plans to disseminate the results of the research to participants of the research and the wider population of people with the conditions being researched. This section has a limit of 300 words.

Project details

Background: Provide a technical summary of background information and research in support of the application. It should outline past and current research, including that funded by Versus Arthritis, and highlighting the applicants' own contribution. If appropriate, where a systematic review has been carried out that summarises the available evidence, this should be referenced. If relevant, applicants should describe the policy relevance of the proposed research and the importance of its findings. This section has a maximum of 2000 words.

Hypothesis: The research should be hypothesis led and seek to answer a specific question. Outline clearly the full and null hypotheses and specifically the questions to be addressed. This section has a maximum of 100 words.

Objectives: Describe up to 6 objectives/milestones for the delivery of the proposed research (up to 100 words each) Clearly explain the rationale for each objective/milestone.

Outcomes: Describe up to 6 outcome measures for the proposed research (up to 100 words each). You must complete at least one outcome measure. Clearly explain the outcome measures including justification of the outcome measures used where a legitimate alternative exists. A decision not to use established validated outcome measures must be explained.

Impacts: Describe up to 6 anticipated impacts (up to 100 words each). You must describe at least one impact.

Statistical Analysis Plan: Detail the statistical analysis plan for the chosen design, highlighting statistical technique to be used, sub-group analysis if appropriate, proposed frequency of analysis and power assumptions. This section has a limit of 300 words.

Will the research include a secondary economic evaluation? Select yes or no. If it does include a secondary economic analysis provide details of the methodology for the economic evaluation. This should be arranged under the following headings: 1) how economic data will be collected; 2) economic evaluation methodology; 3) quality of life measurement. This section has a limit of 500 words.

Project Plan: Outline the arrangements for the management of the research, paying attention to the study design principals outlined in the Call for Applications. This should include a project timeline including any individual workstreams, plus arrangement for the day-to-day management of the research including details of who will carry out specific duties such as co-ordination, randomisation, recruitment, data handling and statistical analyses. This section has a maximum of 1000 words.

Please attach a Gantt chart to illustrate the work package and deliverables.

Facilities: Describe the facilities available to support delivery of the research. This section has a maximum of 300 words.

Risks/mitigation strategies: Discuss any potential risks to the success of the research and highlight mitigation strategies. Please consider all types of risk – commercial, technical, financial, and organisational. This section has a maximum of 300 words.

For clinically related studies: With the current clinical research challenges in the NHS, please indicate how any clinical capacity and capability required for the project, will be monitored, and maintained, continuing in an attached document if needed.

The NIHR CRN portfolio adoption criteria will include a new criterion on 'deliverability'. Co-applicants and collaborators at NHS sites are asked to support proposals only if there is surety that they can meet recruitment targets and timelines indicated. It will be taken that host institution signatories are wholly satisfied and supportive of the assurances provided upon submission of the application.

Scientific references

Detail all references (citing all authors) that are of interest for this application. Please include the full title and all authors.

Additional support

Is there any additional financial support for this application? Select yes or no. Additional support, including in-kind costs such as salary and provision of intervention. You will be asked to upload a letter of support from each provider.

Select yes for each type of support included – you will be prompted for the name, amount and description as well as a letter of support. Where support is in kind, enter 0 in the financial field and provide details in the description field.

- Institutional support – from either the lead or collaborating institutes
- Support from another funder
- Clinical Research Network Support
- Treatment Costs and excess treatment costs
- Industrial support (including collaborations and donations) Please refer to our [industrial support policy](#) and provide contact details, details of the support/collaboration and any conflicts of interest.
- Other type of support.

Intellectual property (IP)

Is there new intellectual property (IP) associated with the proposal? Indicate whether the proposal is likely to produce new IP. Select yes or no

If yes, provide information on the IP potential of your research. This section is 500 words.

IP means patents, copyright, trademarks, trade names, service marks, domain names copyrights, moral rights, rights in and to databases (including rights to prevent the extraction or reutilisation of information from a database), design rights, topography rights and all rights or forms of protection of a similar nature or having equivalent or the similar effect to any of them which may subsist anywhere in the world, whether or not any of them are registered and including applications for registration of any of them. Where appropriate explain how you will engage with your Technology

Detail the IP Management plan. Detail how the new IP will be managed. IP means patents, copyright, trademarks, trade names, service marks, domain names copyrights, moral rights, rights in and to databases (including rights to prevent the extraction or reutilisation of information from a database), design rights, topography rights and all rights or forms of protection of a similar nature or having equivalent or the similar effect to any of them which may subsist anywhere in the world, whether or not any of them are registered and including applications for registration of any of them.

Where appropriate explain how you will engage with your Technology Transfer/Enterprise Office.

For further enquiries on any aspect of IP, please email the Awards Team at awards@versusarthritis.org

Is there existing IP associated with the proposal? Indicate whether there is existing IP associated with the proposal. Select yes or no.

- **If yes, please provide further information on the existing IP.** This section is a maximum of 500 words.

Finance and costs

The total cost requested in the application must be up to £100,000.

Full economic costing

In line with other UK medical charities, Versus Arthritis does not provide funds for administrative costs or overheads, and funds directly incurred costs only. Ineligible costs include directly allocated costs and indirect costs:

- Directly Allocated Costs – shared costs, based on estimates and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis, such as:
 - Investigators: the time spent by tenured lead applicants (Chief Investigators) and co-applicants
 - Estates

- Other Directly Allocated: the costs of shared resources, such as staff and equipment
- Indirect Costs – necessary for underpinning research but cannot be allocated to individual projects, and cover computing and information support, central services, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs.

Lead applicants and co-applicants can apply for their salaries if they don't hold a tenured position. Please note all applications must have a lead applicant or another co-applicant that holds a tenured position. Lead applicants and co-applicants that are employed on full time NHS contracts can apply for funding to release them from clinical commitments to conduct research activities.

Eligible costs within an application:

- The percentage of inflation used must be included in the application and be in line with the most recent pay award agreed by the Institution and no more than 2% (as of May 2015 and this will be periodically reviewed)
- London weighting applies to any applicant applying from an institution in London and will be payable at the rate appropriate to each host institution
- A maximum spine point 43 on the national scale is allowed for postdoctoral research staff, special justification is required for funding senior postdoctoral research staff above point 37
- Requests for external consultancy costs should be included in expenses
- Training and supervision of staff costs by non-tenured applicants within the project must be justified
- Any requests for computers must be fully justified and integral to the success of the research

Ineligible costs within an application:

- Costs relating to staff recruitment and relocation costs
- Good clinical practice (GCP) training
- Funding to provide maintenance of equipment
- Office stationery costs unless required for the project and justified accordingly
- Indemnity insurance
- Apprenticeship levy
- Travel support and open access are not to be included within standard grant applications, these are additional awards that can be applied for by a Versus Arthritis grant holder

Complete the relevant financial detail for your application.

Salaries: Add each position on the award.

- Select the closest description for position from the dropdown list.
- Describe the role of the staff member. This section is a maximum of 100 words
- Indicate the % inflation applied to the costing
- Input the costs broken down by basic salary, employer contributions and London weighting if applicable.

- Input the full time equivalent (FTE) as a percentage (1-100), the total will auto-complete
- (i) Requested salary costs should be based on a recognised pay model or the host institution's local salary scale, including London weighting if appropriate. We must be advised of the pay model used and, where a local pay model is to be applied, a copy of the appropriate scale must be attached.
- (ii) Annual increments must be included which should be based on the host institution's own salary scale, including London weighting if appropriate.
- (iii) London Weighting allowance will be payable at the rate appropriate to each host institution.
- (vi) Inflationary salary increases for funding in future years must be included in the costs requested. A compound allowance should be factored into the costing for this purpose. The percentage used to calculate the compound inflationary allowance must be the same as the most recent pay award agreed by the institution for the grade on which the individual is to be employed.

Lead applicant details

The lead applicant is the individual who will lead the work on the award and be responsible to Versus Arthritis to ensure the conditions of award are met. They must be based in a UK university, hospital or recognised academic research institute in the UK.

The principal/lead applicant must open the application form on Grant Tracker and add the other key personnel who can then add information.

The details displayed in the application form for the lead applicant are those that are stored on Grant Tracker. To amend them, please save and close the application form and visit the 'Manage My Details' section on the Grant Tracker Versus Arthritis homepage.

Basic information: Please ensure all fields marked with a red dot are completed (these are compulsory fields).

Update CV: Degree/Qualification - please add any degrees or professional qualifications that you hold and feel would aid your application. Employment – Please list your present and last position held as a minimum. Please list any further positions that feel would aid your application. Grants – Please list all current grants held.

The application must include at least one tenured academic at the lead UK university, hospital or recognised research institute, this can be as the lead applicant or as a co-applicant

Other roles in the application:

Co-applicants

Co-applicants are individuals who will have had intellectual input into the application and are expected to be involved in the project. All co-applicants are expected to make a substantive contribution to the delivery and management of the research described in the application. For further details on how to enter a co-applicant see:

<https://www.versusarthritis.org/research/information-for-researchers/research-funding-opportunities/applying-for-a-grant/>

Please add details of all co-applicants involved with the project. You will be able to select individuals who already have an account with us. Individuals who do not have an account with us will be asked to register and will be sent details via an automated email.

There are no restrictions on the number of additional co-applicants.

If you wish to add a co-applicant that is based outside the UK please contact Versus Arthritis' Awards office (awards@versusarthritis.org).

People with arthritis or service users who are named co-applicants should include in their CV a summary of any knowledge, skills and experience relevant to their role in the application.

Recruiting centres do not necessarily have to be co-applicants they can alternatively be collaborators or listed as a recruiting centre only.

Collaborators

Please list any collaborations that are not listed as co-applicants. Collaborators are individuals who are named in the body of the application who supply research materials, specific expertise or access to patients, but will not be involved in the day-to-day execution of the research.

To enter a collaborator select add collaboration and enter the name of the collaborator, their institution and details of the collaboration into the box.

All collaborators associated with an application are required to provide a letter of support with the application.

Award administrators

Award administrators can access and edit the application form however their details will not appear explicitly on the completed form.

Relevant grants and publications

Before adding relevant grants and publications to this application, the lead and co applicants should ensure that all their profile is up to date in their Grant Tracker account as follows:

Research grants and fellowships

Go to 'Manage My Details' section followed by "Update CV" to check or amend the list of grants and fellowships held.

Publications

Go to "My Research Outputs" to check or amend the list of publications held.


Please refer to our [guidance document](#) for full instructions on how to use the Research Outputs section.

Once the profiles are up to date, each participant can then add their own relevant grants and publications in the **Relevant grants and publications** section of the application form.


This section allows the participants to choose which grants and publications to list as part of their CV. The participants can each choose to list up to a maximum of ten grants and ten publications that are most relevant to the application. This section will appear different to each individual filling it in and only the individual's own publications and awards as listed in Grant Tracker will be visible to that user.

The participants must individually complete this section before the form can be submitted.

To add a grant

Use the  button to add a new field then select a grant from the drop-down menu. If the grant you wish to add is not listed in the drop-down menu, you can add it to your CV in the Manage My Details section of Grant Tracker.

To add a publication

Use the  button to add a new field then select a publication from the drop-down menu. If the publication you wish to add is not listed in the drop-down menu, you can add it to the My Research Outputs section of Grant Tracker.

There is a link to additional online guidance within this section of the application form in Grant Tracker.

Signatories

Enter the details of the signatories required to sign-off the application. The head of department and finance officer details should be completed. Before submitting your application to Versus Arthritis, you must obtain the necessary signatories prior to the deadline.

Attachments

Only text can be added to the fields of the online application form. Where additional files are required, they can be uploaded in this section.

The maximum size per attachment is 10MB.

The following documents should be included as attachments where relevant

- Additional figures / data referenced in the project details section
- Gantt chart
- Statement of how clinical capacity and capability to deliver the project will be monitored and maintained, if needed to supplement the answer given to 'Risks/ mitigation strategies'
- Letters of collaboration/support
- Ethical approval
- Animal licence(s)
- If the application is a resubmission, a cover letter should be attached detailing how the application has been altered in response to the feedback received from the original submission.

Disease category

In this section, we ask you to provide some research classification information on your application. This will be used by Versus Arthritis to categorise the applications it receives and the work that it funds. Please select all relevant disease classification using the dropdown list.

UKCRC HRCS

We subscribe to the use of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration's Health Research Classification System, more information and guidance can be found at hrcsonline.net

- Please select up to 5 of the UKCRC Health category classifications that you feel best fits your proposal using the dropdown list.

- Please select up to 5 of the UKCRC Research activities classifications that you feel best fits your proposal using the dropdown list

Suggested reviewers

Here you may add names of potential reviewers (not connected with you or your proposal) or any reviewers that you do not wish to be approached. Please note, these will be treated confidentially.

Validation summary

To complete the application process, the final steps are listed below.

1. Validate your form

Click the Revalidate button on the left. This will check that you have completed all of the sections within the application, and that your co-applicants have confirmed and approved their role(s). Any incomplete sections will be listed with a description of the issue.

2. Click Save and close

This will return you to the details page of your application. The Submit button on the right hand side of the page should be available.

3. Click View/Print

Download a PDF version of your application and check that all the content appears as you expect.

4. DECLARATION

Please confirm that you have downloaded a PDF version of your application and checked that you and the co-applicants on the application have each completed the Relevant grants and publications section. Acknowledging that failure to do so may cause your application to be rejected.

5. Click Submit

Once you have submitted your application an automated email will be sent firstly to your finance officer, once they have approved the application a second email will be sent to your Head of Department. It is only upon your Head of Department's approval that the application is finally submitted to Versus Arthritis. **This must be completed by 16:00.**

6. Receipt of your application will be acknowledged by email

If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your application, please contact us on awards@versusarthritis.org or 0300 7900 403.